

Government Orders

Bill C-32 is a two-page bill. It is amazing how much damage two pages of paper can actually do in legislative form. As most members of this House know, Bill C-32 allows for the extension of the 5 per cent limit on the Canada Assistance Plan for the provinces of B.C., Alberta and Ontario. You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that Bill C-69 capped at 5 per cent the federal funding increases until 1992. Bill C-32 extends the cap to 1995.

Most people are not familiar with the way the federal government has worked to try to build that caring and sharing society, and are probably not aware of just what kind of work the Canada Assistance Plan does. In fact, CAP is really the only mechanism that the federal government has where it funds social assistance and social services across the country.

We talk about transfer payments and government assistance. It is in that never-never land of a host of different programs. In many cases people are not aware of the tremendous impact programs like CAP have across the country. The unfortunate part, of course, is that this government desires to off-load its social responsibilities and fiscal responsibilities. The new government in British Columbia has, according to the information I have been provided, estimates that the cuts in Bill C-32 will amount to something like \$1.2 billion over the next five years.

• (1140)

The new government is reviewing the state of the finances before the next session of the legislature which will likely be some time in March. That government is finding out the rough financial situation it is in with the departure of the Social Credit government. It did not just clean off the shelves, Mr. Speaker, it took the shelves as well. The safe is empty. The Socreds are running around wondering just exactly what went on and, of course, the public of British Columbia is wondering as well. The onerous debt forced on the people of British Columbia by Social Credit is now being forced on those people by this government with its cuts to the CAP program.

CAP provides for 50/50 cost-sharing between the federal government and the provinces for social services. The breaking of this agreement represents a withdrawal of the commitment by the federal government to Canada's social programs. That clearly sets a dangerous

precedent for the future of all federal-provincial agreements.

I have been corresponding on a regular basis over the last year with the city of Prince George. It has a delivery mechanism for assistance to community groups that provide valuable services to our residents. It provides funding from the Canada Assistance Plan. I thank His Worship Mayor John Backhouse for the discussions we have had and also, of course, the officials at Prince George city hall.

I think the people of that community will be very surprised to learn not only what the contribution is that the federal government is making in this case to three particularly important organizations, but also what is going to be the outcome now that this government is going to put a cap on CAP. Do I have to tell these organizations and the city of Prince George that the Scrooges and the Neanderthals of the Conservative Party have decided that the services being provided by the Cerebral Palsy Association of B.C., which runs the very well and highly acclaimed child development centre in Prince George, the St. Patrick's House Society and the Canadian Paraplegic Association will be affected?

Those three organizations have been helped by the Canada Assistance Plan. Unless there is a change of heart by members of the Conservative Party, what do we tell these groups that have done this work? We will have to tell them that the assistance they are now receiving will be cut back. They will obviously be looking to the Government of British Columbia to help where it can. Of course, that government is dealing with a tough financial situation as well, as I already mentioned. A report is due soon which will show exactly how this government and the former government of B.C. ravaged the accounts of the Government of British Columbia.

The Cerebral Palsy Association, which finances the child development centre, has just over \$11,000 in applications pending for fiscal 1989-90, 1990-91. St. Patrick's House Society, which receives upward of \$30,000, has an application pending, as does the Paraplegic Association. We have made a contribution, Mr. Speaker.

The Government of Canada has gone into these communities with this program and the help of the local governments and said: "We can help. We can help make a better society, a more caring society". I challenge the