

municipalities in providing social assistance and welfare services to needy Canadians.

The primary objectives of the Canada Assistance Plan are twofold. One is to support the provision by provinces of adequate assistance and institutional care for persons in need. The second is to support the provisions by provinces of welfare services designated to lessen, remove or prevent the causes and— I underline these words, Mr. Speaker, which I am sure that you as the arbitrator of our proceedings here would want to give careful consideration to—the effects of poverty, child neglect or dependence on public assistance.

When we are talking about the ceiling on payments under the Canada Assistance Plan, we are not only talking about governments, whether they be in Ontario, British Columbia or Alberta. We are also talking about municipalities that in many instances are the first group in our society to be confronted with those hard core social needs which my colleagues who have spoken before me have brought to the attention of this House.

More important than governments and more important than municipalities are the individuals who were involved. As my colleague from Broadview—Greenwood has alluded to, if you are poor in downtown Toronto or in St. John's East, you are still poor.

The hon. member opposite gives us a sigh as if there was a distinction that we as a national government should make for a poor individual in one end of the country from a poor individual in the other. I suggest to the hon. member that if you are hungry, you do not have a job, you cannot find child care for your children, you cannot provide the necessary clothing, the necessities of shelter, lodging and food, if you cannot do that anywhere in the country, we, as a national government, must come to the forefront and participate in trying to resolve those hard core realities of Canadian society.

• (1720)

The response, unfortunately, of the government opposite has been to say: "Look British Columbia, look Alberta, look Ontario, your respective municipalities, the people who reside in those provinces, that is tough. You go out on your own and you do the best you can." What an irresponsible way to proceed. Is that the Canadian mosaic? Is that the generosity and the toler-

ance that the Prime Minister not more than a few hours ago talked about? Hardly not, Mr. Speaker.

This decision to cut back in British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta was taken to the British Columbia Court of Appeal. It was stated by judicial minds that the Government of Canada in its unilateral move to put a ceiling on transfer payments to those provinces was illegal.

The Government of Canada appealed that to the Supreme Court of Canada which said very clearly, and note the wording, Mr. Speaker, that: "Yes, the Government of Canada had the legal propriety to make the decision to unilaterally cut back on transfer payments." Yes, the government has that authority, but I ask the question to you, sir, and to members opposite, having the legal authority, does that give you the moral authority? I think the answer is unequivocal for my party that it was wrong for the government to proceed the way it did in this particular instance.

What do we mean when we talk about such things as Canada Assistance? We are talking about dental care for children. We are not talking about dental care for the president of the Bank of Nova Scotia. We are talking about dental care for kids in Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton, Calgary, Edmonton and Victoria.

Members opposite say: "Ah well, they are rich those provinces." Those kids are not rich. They have the same needs that your children and my children have. Essential living services for disabled persons, I guess you are saying to disabled persons in Ontario: "Get on a boat and go to Newfoundland because they get equalization payments. You cannot get it in Ontario so move to another province." I mean if that is not Tory logic and Tory sense, it is beyond me, Mr. Speaker. Foster homes for abused children is where we cut into. Safe housing for abused women. Well, we are also talking about subsidized child care for low income families.

Yes, there are lots of Canadians out there who would like to take their shots at Toronto. There is no question that they would like to do that, but the hard core reality is that if a kid lives in Toronto, Hamilton or anywhere in the province of Ontario and is poor and does not have those basic necessities that I have referred to, or a kid lives in my constituency or anywhere else in this country, a poor kid is a poor kid is a poor kid. I find it very unflattering that government members opposite would try to paint a picture for those citizens by throwing away