

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Anguish:** What steps is the Minister of Finance willing to take to honour the requests of the Auditor General to, in fact, put the books of this country in good order?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I invite the Hon. Member not to argue the point too much in the way he has done because he will raise questions as to his own statement about himself. I will just repeat what I told him, that for years there has been an honest division of opinion. We can list a number of accountants who will argue one side of this issue and a number who will argue the other side. That debate is well known. It is public. The facts are available for everyone to see. I do not personally intend to pursue the matter in this regard. I am sure this matter will again be examined. If there is a change of view in this regard, I will let the Hon. Member know without delay.

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**WELFARE****INCREASE IN NUMBER OF TORONTO RECIPIENTS**

**Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Earlier this week the Chief Executive Officer of Metropolitan Toronto announced that he had the largest number of people on welfare in Metro's history. Mr. John Kruger said "the number is at an all-time high and will grow as more of Metro's 170,000 jobless exhaust their unemployment insurance benefits." He went on to say that we are going to have 50,000 more on welfare by Christmas alone. I would ask the Minister, since she has a responsibility under the Canada Assistance Plan, what she intends to do about this situation.

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Madam Speaker, the CAP Agreement under which we reimburse 50 per cent of all welfare costs to the Provinces is an agreement between the federal Government and the Provinces and, unfortunately or not, not with the municipalities. The Province of Ontario has its own agreement by which it redistributes our funds and theirs to the municipalities. I have no control over that nor, to my knowledge, do I have any reports and factual information. Therefore, as far as the federal Government is concerned, we will continue under this agreement to reimburse as quickly as possible all welfare bills presented by the various Provinces in order to assure Canadians of the cushion needed in these very difficult times.

**REQUEST MINISTER ACT TO CHANGE COST-SHARING AGREEMENT**

**Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale):** Madam Speaker, welfare costs in Metropolitan Toronto for next year, in response to this problem, will go up by 53 per cent. In response to that problem, Mr. David Dodge, an Assistant Deputy Minister in the Employment Department, said "the problem is that the municipalities don't have the money to pay for these people and, that, clearly is a federal responsibility". This is not a problem only for Metropolitan Toronto. It is a problem that is

going to affect all municipalities right across the country. Surely the Minister can take some initiative and offer some leadership to change the CAP Agreement so that the municipalities will not be, as Ron Anderson said last week, bled dry by the fact that all of these people are now coming on to welfare rolls.

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Madam Speaker, I do not think we should enter into a constitutional debate on something that has to be provided to those on welfare. Ontario is a province which has decided to use the municipalities as agents for distributing welfare. I do not know what the Province of Ontario gives to the municipalities. Neither do I know, nor is it my responsibility under the Constitution, to check whether the Province gives proper moneys to the municipalities. This is a constitutional problem the Hon. Member wants to open that does not even exist. We pay 50 per cent of every welfare bill in this country. We pay it to the Provinces. It is their responsibility to match that by 50 per cent and no less. Past that point, I suggest the Hon. Member write a letter to the Province of Ontario and to continue to inquire about the municipal onus.

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, may I put a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare which I put to the Prime Minister the other day. Will the Government accept the unanimous recommendation of the all-party task force that the federal Government's share of contributions under CAP be increased to those Provinces where unemployment is higher than the average and the number on the welfare rolls is higher than the average? Will the Government, in the spirit of leadership, move on that all-party unanimous recommendation of a committee of this House, supported by individual Liberal Members of this House of Commons?

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Madam Speaker, I do not know the text of the recommendation, but the spirit is surely met by the nature of the Program. The Program is such that the Provinces decide on their own initiative what amount they pay for the various allowances, etc., provided basic human rights are respected. We automatically reimburse 50 per cent. Therefore, any Province in a deeper situation of hardship automatically receives far more. An additional part is distributed to these provinces, and that should not be forgotten, through the general transfer payments of the Government of Canada, the equalization payments.

● (1200)

**REQUEST THAT MINISTER ACCEPT RECOMMENDATION**

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Surely the Minister knows what the all-party task force recommended. It recommended that in the case of Provinces that are