

We do not have to just look at the writings. We look at the actual words of our justices of the Supreme Court. Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Brian Dickson, and former Justice of the Supreme Court, Bertha Wilson, have decried the loss of this program. During their tenure these judges were particularly interested and sensitive to the need of the charter and to the needs of disadvantaged Canadians.

My friend from Port Moody—Coquitlam and my colleague who has sponsored this motion, the member for Ottawa—Vanier mentioned the words of Bertha Wilson. I want to mention another segment of her presentation and her petition to the Government of Canada. She said: "I have difficulty with a policy that places the burden of that restraint on those who can least afford it". That is exactly what we are doing when we are cancelling the Court Challenges Program.

This is just another means. We have to be truthful. We have to come right down and say what this is. This is a move by this government to silence critics. It is no more than that. It is a complete abuse of the Canadian system. It is an abuse of what this country stands for. Worst of all, it is an unmitigated move to silence the critics of this government, a government that has abandoned the Law Reform Commission, the Science Council of Canada, the Economic Council of Canada.

The demand for this Court Challenges Program is growing every year. In 1986 there were 120 applications. By 1989 that figure had doubled and it has continued to grow since then.

That does not mean that everyone who applies is going to be approved. There is a non-partisan board which approves who will be able to benefit from this program.

My heavens, this country has benefited from that program. We have such good jurisprudence as a result of the cases which have been brought before the courts as a result of this program.

It is incredible. It is absolutely incredible that this government would cancel this program. This government has money to allow escort services as a tax deduction but it cannot find money for the Court Challenges Program.

This government increased the litigation budget of the Minister of Justice by \$16 million. That is not the program, that is just the increase for this year. Yet it

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cancelled the Court Challenges Program, which was \$2.75 million. That is an absolutely diabolical move against the disadvantaged people in this country.

As Canadians we have to continue to petition this government. We cannot let this matter rest. We have to continue to petition this government to reinstate this program. We cannot possibly let this subject go. It goes right to the fibre of what Canada is all about.

If we for a minute turn away from this decision of the government and ignore what this government has done, then we as members of Parliament and politicians in this country are losing a piece of ourselves and a piece of what we are here to do.

When the minister talks about this program he says: "Times are what they are". The minister said that the government must make hard choices. Well, there are more and more people going hungry in Canada. There are more and more people sleeping in our streets. Now there are more people who will not get justice before our court system. Those kinds of problems cannot be answered by saying that times are what they are and hard decisions have to be taken.

I know the minister is not responsible for this decision. I know the minister to be a good person. But I want to say to the minister that he is a member of a government that has callously jettisoned the disadvantaged people in our society. The Liberal Party is not going to stand for that. We are not going to let this matter go.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague and fellow critic on his speech.

The minister must detect that while my colleague is normally level-headed, more level-headed than I am, we are both rather disturbed today. It showed in both our speeches.

We are both lawyers. We have been trial lawyers and we know what it is like in the courts as to who gets to go to court. Here was a program that helped poor people get to court. People that you do not normally see in court.

I want to ask the member to comment on that particularly, on who does go to court if you cannot get any help. He mentioned the moneys that the government could find. Was it \$16 million for the litigation budget? I wonder if he would agree with me that it was