

I am not talking about new programs. I am not taking about day care which was promised by this government in two elections and should have been in the Canadian system by now. I am not talking about that. I am talking about social assistance.

Because I am talking about social assistance I wish to go back and explain for the benefit of the Canadian people what the Canada Assistance program is. The best place to take this definition from is from the government's own Canada Assistance Plan annual report. I will say something about this before I give the people an explanation of the Canada Assistance program.

The basis of the annual report is four pages. This is an annual report on one of the best programs and one of the best models of federal-provincial co-operation. It is the best program for a social safety net for Canadians. It is an example to the world of what our social programs are.

Oddly enough the annual report for this was combined. This is what the government loves to do. I have seen it for Fisheries and others. It combined three fiscal years in four pages. What fiscal years did it combine? The most prosperous years that Canada has had in probably 15 years were 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89. This government could not even take a report in one year and try to see how the Canada Assistance program in good times might be made more flexible for tough times. But no, it comes in February of 1990—and I spoke immediately after that in the House on it—with a cap on the Canada Assistance program for the have provinces.

Canadians should realize, and we have 10 provinces and two territories, that when the Canadian government collects all the taxes, it has agreed to provide under the Established Programs Financing a return and a transfer payment to the have not provinces under the equalization program. In February 1990, seven provinces received transfer payments under the Established Programs Financing. The three provinces that did not need it were Alberta, B.C. and Ontario.

Mr. Wilson, the then Minister of Finance representing downtown Toronto—where there is so much suffering today with the economic policy and programs of the Conservative government—capped the payments under

Canada Assistance at 5 per cent for two fiscal years for those three provinces.

The federal government may have wanted to stop any growth in new payments to provinces that it would have to pay out, but I am sure it did not mean to cap the social assistance that is needed in tough times. That is exactly what it did. Then the next year in the budget the same minister capped it again, or was it the new minister. I cannot remember. That is the bill that we have before us. The government capped it until 1994-95.

We see here an unimaginative government which combines the reports for the Canada Assistance program into one report given at the end of 1989 without any imagination. It is the largest cabinet we could possibly have with the least amount of work coming from it. We see a report of the most important universal program that we have in Canada, combined into three reports, with no new ideas coming from it except a budget in 1990 that puts a cap on the have provinces.

Who would have expected what happened as a result of this? I will get to that.

However, because my area is perhaps quite aware of the Canada Assistance program, I want to tell Canadians that this was a model in Canada of the federal and provincial governments working together. In 1966, my party's former government of Mr. Pearson came up with the Canada Assistance program. I am reading from the report, and I wish the government members would read it: "The Canada Assistance Plan was enacted in 1966 to encourage the development and extension of assistance and welfare services throughout Canada. Under the plan, the federal government has entered into agreements with the provinces and territories to share the costs incurred by the provinces". There you have the first safeguard: The province must put up the dollars first. The province must put up the 50-cent dollars before the federal government has to enter into a national type program.

This applies not only to the provinces, but to municipalities too. As everyone in this House knows, the municipalities first see the people in need at that local level. They see the need for social assistance and welfare services for needy Canadians.