

*Government Orders*

We are in a unique position in rural Canada, and indeed, in Haldimand—Norfolk, my riding. The problems are twofold, Mr. Speaker.

First, the agricultural sector is facing its worst attack ever in the history of this country, as many farmers are moving away from the family farm and trying to move into other areas. The government has to realize that many of the problems with rural farming have to deal specifically with their own economic policies in Canada.

The second problem facing my riding is that southwestern Ontario is deindustrializing. More and more jobs throughout southwestern Ontario, especially in the manufacturing plants in the region, are being lost as these plants shut down and move to the United States. We will not get into the debate about why this is happening, although free trade does come to mind.

Increasingly in rural Canada we need a government to support us. Many of these people are facing economic hardship for the first time in their lives and they really do not know how to deal with the situation. They are applying for social services and welfare for the first time in their lives. They are scared, they are worried and they do not know where their future is going to lead them.

What do they do when they lose their jobs and see no hope at all for the place they live? They move away and as a result, unfortunately, the rural infrastructures begin to disappear.

When the government pulls these funds out of rural areas, the burden is inevitably put on the local tax base. The Minister of Finance is constantly saying: "What would you have me do, increase taxes or increase the deficit?" I tell the minister that what he is doing to my local constituents is increasing their local tax base.

If he has not gone to his own riding, I will tell him that in my own riding, people are sick and tired of paying taxes. This program is going to put more of a tax burden on them. Frankly, whatever level it is where you pay taxes, you are inevitably going to have to pay taxes because of this bill.

The effects of the decrease in Canada Assistance Plan payments on my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk will be far reaching. Rural ridings in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario really have a lot at stake. The Minister of Finance would say that they can best bear the extra burden of this. Why should the federal government

transfer this burden of national debt or the federal deficit on to the backs of the poor in rural Canada, in rural Ontario? Why should people who have just lost their farms or their jobs suffer because the province of Ontario has to bear this extra burden?

Obviously people should not have to. So let us stop putting this debate in terms of provinces or in terms of levels of government, let us start putting this debate in terms of people. People have a right to know why the government is doing this. During these tough economic times they need this government assistance.

This is why I question the government's timing of this issue. Why is it so intent on passing such a piece of legislation? I ask the government to reconsider this bill given the hard economic times.

I would like to conclude by saying that I am not trying to be partisan. I am not disagreeing with the government just for the sake of disagreeing. In fact, this bill, by limiting the increase in federal contributions to the Canada Assistance Plan until 1995 for the provinces of Ontario, B.C. and Alberta, is a bad idea at the worst possible time. I am sure many members on the other side of the House agree with that. It is going to affect a portion of our society that does not deserve any further hardship, including those misfortunate as a direct result of this recession.

It would seem the proud Canadian values of caring, sharing and compassion are disappearing on that side of the House. I implore the government, I implore members within its own caucus to talk to the Prime Minister and ask him to reconsider, to withdraw this bill and at the very least allow Canadians the right to tell him that this is a bad bill at the wrong time.

**Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of my party and speak on Bill C-32, an act to amend the Canada Assistance Plan. I want to speak on behalf of the constituents of my riding of Prince George—Bulkley Valley who, in many cases in the research that I have done on the Canada Assistance Plan, have told me some of the difficulties and problems that are resulting from this legislation that has been introduced by this government.

In the short time that I have I would like to outline some of the concerns we have with the legislation and point out where the impact will be felt the most.