

Government Orders

time will be made more difficult by the decision of the federal government to cap the Canada Assistance Plan.

CAP was a program that was put in place by the former Liberal government. It was a way to bring some order out of the chaos which existed before then with the multiplicity of programs in which the federal government simply assumed half the costs for people receiving welfare assistance for dental care, essential living services for disabled persons, foster homes for abused children, safe houses for abused women and subsidized child care for low income families. Those are some of the parameters the Canada Assistance Plan provides.

It certainly is not the time for the federal government to be capping that assistance when provincial government welfare costs are going right through the roof after a period of massive sustained growth. Now we see unemployment in the province of Ontario, the income to the the government dropping dramatically, and at the same time the federal government is cutting back its assistance.

The House leader for the government indicated that they would be bringing in a new budget in the third week of February. Clearly this Bill C-32 is an unctuous bill. It is unfair to the provinces which generate the wealth to provide deficiency and transfer payments to those provinces with fewer fiscal resources. Now their resources from the federal government are being capped by 5 per cent per year. To bring that in at any time I think is a most unfair move. It brings it in now when welfare costs for the province of Ontario are going through the roof and when there are many communities such as northern Ontario and the Algoma district which need a more generous arrangement.

These communities were probably not getting it from the provincial government because of the federal government's action in capping the Canada Assistance Plan which is so vital and so important to maintaining the integrity of our safety net system.

• (1550)

Last fall at this time we were debating Bill C-22, an act respecting unemployment insurance. At that time we said to the government that it was increasing the contributions massively. It has already increased them again. It

is loading training on employees and on employers across the country. It is reducing the benefits. Communities in which the unemployment was at a certain level would be receiving previously perhaps 50 weeks of UIC benefits and suddenly would find they were receiving 35 or 41 weeks of UIC benefits.

What we have is a domino effect. Those communities consist of people who have been laid off for 40 or 50 weeks and suddenly are going on welfare. Then the local municipality or the province which does not have to make any contribution to UIC benefits suddenly is being loaded with these welfare costs.

In the case of Ontario it is having its Canada Assistance Plan funding capped at 5 per cent. Its welfare costs have gone up to a higher percentage, in some cases perhaps an increase of 10 per cent over and above previous levels. It is simply an intolerable situation and this bill is a reactionary piece of legislation which ought not to be passed.

I certainly hope that if the government does force it on the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, the new budget will rescind it because it is a Draconian measure and is being brought in at an improper time.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I too wish to enter into the debate. The government has introduced Bill C-32 which would cap federal contributions to the Canada Assistance Plan for the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario.

I have been one of those who have advocated that there should be environmental review assessments on major projects. I would also advocate that there should be a social environmental review process when the government undertakes major initiatives like this.

I would like to know what the social impact of this legislation is. I would like to know how much more crime would be committed because of the increased poverty that this bill would put into effect.

I would like to know how many more suicides we will see because of this bill. I would like to know how much more hunger and poverty there will be. I would like to know the effects on children that this bill will have. I would like to know the effect this will have on future generations as we see more and more people, particular-