

*Government Orders*

Mr. Speaker, all Canadians know that these are the principles that guide our social policy. For some time there have been various cuts in our social programs because of the deficit. The GST was supposed to deal with our deficit, but nevertheless, the government has managed to put a cap on spending that will affect the neediest in this country. Our point is, that although we have had a long tradition of providing social services in this country, gradually and very subtly, the government is cutting costs.

Mr. Speaker, the three provinces that are affected are British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario. These provinces have welfare plans, and now they have to raise taxes provincially and even at the municipal level to cover the shortfall, because they want to maintain national standards. This does not augur well for the rest of the country, Mr. Speaker.

Gradually, we notice that these major social benefits are undermined. I use that word because the various provinces are making efforts to help those in greatest need and see these funds being cut. Certainly the provinces in question will in turn have to cut if they do not find the financial wherewithal. What we should keep in mind is the national government's responsibility to ensure that all Canadians have the minimum required to keep them from extreme hardship.

Almost every day, or at least every week, we see on television countries that are incredibly worse off than we are. It is true that if we compare, we realize that we have a great country that cares about people's welfare, and rightly so, because it is part of what makes us Canadian. And we are proud of it. Of course, it was paid for by our taxes, but we were proud to take part because we knew that the least advantaged in our society would have our help, not directly from each one of us, but with some contribution of ours. However, such measures have called this into question and are not in keeping with our ideal as Canadians. We want to preserve this tradition of helping those in need. And I think that as a society that calls itself Christian, we want to maintain such things. Here we see a subtle way to undermine our basic rights.

Mr. Speaker, I would like Canadians to realize that some people are not affected by these cuts. Who is to say

that tomorrow, other cuts will not affect you? That is the issue. We want an egalitarian system. If we see that part of our society is deprived, believe me, we could be the ones to be hit by cuts tomorrow in a most basic area in a society like ours. We realize that we have moral obligations to those in greatest need.

Mr. Speaker, I would not like to elaborate on that too much; I think the message is very clear for the government. Nevertheless, there have been many demonstrations. Many briefs were presented by volunteer groups of people who give freely of their time. They realize that we must always be alert and vigilant to ensure that the most disadvantaged have a chance to obtain the basic necessities like health care and housing. Many studies show that if suitable housing is available, there is less illness, people are less discouraged and hospital admissions are down. It is as simple as that.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I would say to our fellow Canadians that we should not let this go by in silence; we should say that there comes a time when cuts in such a fundamental area as our social welfare cannot be tolerated. It is up to you and not only members of this House. We are representatives and servants, but we would like all Canadians who are aware of what such cuts imply to communicate with government members, tell them that you are aware of what they are doing and that you will not let some of the most basic programs that are in keeping with this country's greatest traditions be continually undermined in silence.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening very carefully to some of the addresses in the House this afternoon with regard to Bill C-32.

I would just like to take a few minutes to participate in the debate today and address some of the major financial hurdles that all Canadians face, the fact that we are really living beyond our means. That means that we spend more than we take in.

This fiscal year it will be around the \$30 billion area. We have to curtail our spending. It is difficult in certain areas and we certainly have not zeroed in on the health care of the lower income people and the social services.