

Government Orders

Let me tell the House why it is so important to do this. It is important for the sense of equity and fair play. The present piece of legislation dealing with equalization payments transfers an extra \$422 million to seven provinces this year. We are not against that transfer. We think that it is an important transfer to take place, but let us be very clear about who receives this money.

Out of \$422 million which this government is seeing it gets to provinces in addition to what they received before, 47 per cent or \$198 million goes to a single province. Other provinces receive some support too. Quebec, as I say, receives \$198 million; \$60 million goes to Saskatchewan; \$55 million to Manitoba; \$39 million to New Brunswick; \$35 million to Nova Scotia; \$31 million to Newfoundland; and \$5 million to Prince Edward Island.

We do not object to these new improved transfer payments. What we do object to is other provinces that are facing serious problems as a consequence of the economic difficulties associated with the recession in this country, those other provinces that need the money badly, are not being treated fairly by the federal government.

Let me speak for a few minutes about my own province of Ontario. I do not speak about Ontario because it is the only province that is being hurt. If we look at the whole transfer payment question, we see that all provinces have lost since the 1982-83 year \$41 billion in money which they expected to receive from the federal government and which they have not received. If we take 1992-93, all provinces will lose a total of \$9.3 billion as a result of the caps and freezes and controls which the federal government has unilaterally put on transfer payments.

• (1540)

Transfer payments have always been something which were agreed to in the past through federal-provincial conferences. Since 1982-83, under both the Liberals and the Conservatives, these agreements have been undercut. This year the result for all provinces is a total loss of

\$9.3 billion. In this coming year Ontario will lose \$4.5 billion of that \$9.3 billion. That is almost half of the total.

This has hit the Canada Assistance Program especially hard. The province of Ontario, because of changes in unemployment insurance and the recession, has seen massive increases in the number of the people on welfare. For instance, the city of metropolitan Toronto has seen an increase in the last year of 29 per cent in the number of people on welfare. We have gone from 98,000 cases to over 105,000 cases.

That means that the province of Ontario gets only 31 per cent of its costs under the Canada Assistance Program covered while every other province except British Columbia gets 50 per cent covered. British Columbia gets 37 or 38 per cent of its costs covered.

This is not right. It is not something that can continue. We move this amendment to impress on this government the urgency of doing something about the Canada Assistance Program and other transfer programs to make them fair to all provinces in Canada.

Mr. Ron Fisher (Saskatoon—Dundurn): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but concur with what my colleague for Essex—Windsor has just said. The devastation wreaked by successive Liberal and Conservative governments over the years on the concept of equality, justice and dignity in this country is something that has to be brought to the attention of the Canadian public again and again.

We have gone from 50/50 cost-sharing on the Canada Assistance Plan to where, for the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario, the government has put a freeze on the transfer payments on the basis that they are have provinces and therefore do not require as much assistance from the federal government as the other provinces do. The Canada Assistance Plan was instituted to help people and for the federal government to make an assessment on the provincial governments on that basis is extreme and cannot be tolerated.

The fact of the matter is that the poor people, the less well off people of British Columbia have suffered a loss in 1991-1992 alone of \$166 million and that by the year 1994-1995 the total will be \$1 billion.

In 1992-1993 the estimated cost to the province of Alberta is \$223 million. In Ontario in 1990-1991 the