

Government Orders

Finally, I ask the government to revise its policy of capping CAP so the destitute can have what they need to survive. In this holiday season, it is important to give a little hope to people who need it most, so that they can look forward to better days.

[English]

Mr. Littlechild: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am wondering if there would be unanimous consent, without debate and without amendment, to move the following motion:

That this House take note that the 1991-92 season marks the 75th anniversary of the National Hockey League; and

That this House take note that the long-standing role of hockey in Canada's culture, heritage, pride and national unity; and

That this House in the 125th of our country's existence recognize January 1992 as the National Hockey League month in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is there unanimous consent for the motion?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): There is not unanimous consent.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words this afternoon about Bill C-32 because this bill, brought in by the government at this time, is causing extreme hardship in many communities in the province of Ontario certainly.

The bill itself caps assistance provided under the Canada Assistance Plan to 5 per cent per year. Of course the government has gone to the Supreme Court to force this on the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia at a time when these three provinces, which are the only ones that do not receive transfer payments themselves from the federal government, are facing extremely high welfare and government assistance demands.

In fact in the Algoma riding I do not think that we have ever faced as high a demand for welfare assistance since the 1930s. Several weeks ago I attended a meeting of the Algoma Municipal Association meeting in which the welfare officials pointed out that the cost of welfare is really going through the roof in those communities. This is mostly because there were massive lay-offs in the summer and fall of 1990 in the community of Elliot Lake

due to the downsizing of the uranium mine operations. There were also lay-offs in the fall of 1990 in the city of Sault Ste. Marie because of the downturn in the steel industry, the strike that took place at Algoma Steel and the subsequent lay-offs that occurred.

What we have in this bill is a tremendous increase in the responsibilities of the provincial government. Take the province of Ontario which is the energy and the engine of the Canadian economy. It has been in a very prosperous situation for the past six or seven years. There was an unprecedented growth period in Canadian history from 1983 through to 1990. Suddenly the whole economy of the province of Ontario goes into one of the worst slumps in history. The federal government caps the Canada Assistance Plan funding at 5 per cent at a time when unemployment and welfare costs are simply going through the roof.

After attending this meeting of the Algoma Municipal Association I wrote to the premier to suggest that the province of Ontario should be doing the same as most provinces in this country. I believe all the provinces with the exception of Nova Scotia and British Columbia should be jointly sharing the costs of welfare and assistance to people. They should be sharing these costs with the two senior levels of government, federal and provincial, and not be loading the municipalities of Algoma and municipalities across this province of 9 million people with 20 per cent of those costs.

Clearly, when there is a district like Algoma going through high unemployment, high UI payments and many thousands of those people coming off UI benefits, it is not the time to be loading more welfare costs on to the municipal taxpayers.

I have suggested to the premier that it should be taking on this responsibility jointly with the federal government. I suspect that there will be more difficulty in persuading the New Democratic Party government in Toronto that it should assume this responsibility which has been assumed by seven of the ten provinces in Canada, because of this capping of the Canada Assistance Plan.

I am told that the losses to the three larger provinces with the greatest fiscal resources amount to some \$2.135 billion over the next five years. Therefore, persuading the Ontario government to do what it should do at this