

In Ontario 16,287 residents had to declare bankruptcy and another 2,907 businesses followed suit.

Here is another interesting statistic. Some more red ink. There are currently 1.5 million people unemployed in this country as the unemployment hovers over 10 per cent.

According to the Canadian Association of Food Banks, the number of people receiving emergency food aid each month in this country is 186,000, including the stark, tragic statistic of one in six children.

I have reams of numbers I can quote for the folks at home and here in the House. This bill would put a cap on the amount of money transferred from the federal government to the three provinces which do not receive equalization payments, but nonetheless rely on federal funding. The provinces are B.C., Alberta and this province of Ontario.

People are lined up at the food banks and this government proceeds with limitations on what it will give provinces like Ontario to provide social assistance programs.

In my riding of Hamilton West the unemployment rate has matched the rate of factory closures. Here are some statistics. In April the unemployment rate was 8.1 per cent; in May, 8.5 per cent; in June, 9.7 per cent; and in July, 10.8 per cent. Last month that rate climbed to 11.4 per cent; 38,000 people unemployed in Hamilton. Where are these and the 1.3 million other unemployed Canadians to turn if they cannot rely on their governments? If the economy does not pick up soon, the three provinces will bear the burden being imposed on them through this bill, by receiving \$2.135 billion less.

What are the low income families with three children to do if their mother or father is laid off? Sometimes one parent works at night, others work shifts and others are trying to make ends meet.

In conclusion, these were all called the sacred trusts. They are sacred. They are sacred to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have lost their manufacturing jobs. They are sacred to the other millions of Canadians who desire a decent standard of living but are finding it increasingly difficult because of this government's fiscal mismanagement. I wish I could go on.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The hon. member for Mission—Coquitlam—PS 2000; the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Montreal's economy; the hon. member for Edmonton East—Petro-Canada; the hon. member for Northumberland—External Affairs; the hon. member for Bonaville—Trinity—Conception—Fisheries.

The hon. member for Gatineau—La Lièvre.

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Mr. Speaker, if you are agreeable, I would like to provide some brief background information on the bill before the House today. The purpose of the Canada Assistance Plan, which goes back a number of years, to 1966, to be exact, was to help the neediest in our society. This was part and parcel of a tradition we have always had here in Canada which is to look after our neighbours, to be our brother's keeper. The attitude has always been that special measures are needed to help those in greatest need.

• (1620)

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the way the Canada Assistance Plan works, for many years it has helped to redistribute wealth in this great country of ours. Unlike most countries in the world—one example is the United States—we have a number of social mechanisms to ensure that all Canadians have the minimum they need.

Of course, many people envy the fact that Canada has always ensured that Canadians had their old age pension, subsidized housing and federal assistance for provincial welfare payments, so that people always had something to fall back on when times were hard.

Today, these principles in which we take so much pride may be threatened. I would like to show you how important the Canada Assistance Plan is and read the objectives of the plan as they were drafted 25 years ago: to support the provinces in providing welfare payments and institutional care appropriate to the needs of the needy; and to support the provinces' social welfare services aimed at alleviating, eliminating or preventing the causes and effects of poverty, child neglect or welfare dependency.