

the provision of assistance to anyone in need. *The Task Force notes this concern and recommends that*

the Minister of National Health and Welfare undertake to review the extent to which provinces are meeting the Canada Assistance Plan conditions, and to consult with provincial colleagues on a more precise definition of the conditions.

The Task Force has also noted that a comprehensive summary of provincial programs cost-shared under CAP is not readily available. The Task Force believes that such information should be regularly compiled, so that members of Parliament and the general public may know what programs the federal government is assisting financially in each province. *The Task Force therefore recommends that*

the Canada Assistance Plan requirements for statistical and financial information be strengthened to improve understanding of the programs cost-shared under the Plan.

Maintenance of Funding

As the review of its development has shown, the CAP provided the foundation for the development of social assistance and social services in Canada. Most groups appearing before the Task Force to comment on CAP acknowledged this role; so did most provincial governments. The first question asked by many witnesses was thus whether any overall reduction in funds for social programs was being contemplated. In fact, many briefs were so intent upon making a strong case against cuts in social program funding, that positive suggestions for improvements were absent. The joint brief of the Ontario Welfare Council, the Committee of Social Planning of Ontario and PROACT summarizes much of the concern over possible cuts:

Any reduction in the financial support for these programs [now cost-shared under CAP] can have a tremendous impact on the services provided to many of Ontario's citizens. Human service organi-

zations would be unable to respond to expanding needs, and could face severe restrictions in existing programs. Municipalities which have initiated cost-shared programs would be forced to rely on their own inadequate property tax base to continue them, or to reduce or abandon the services entirely. But it is the individual who would suffer the most. Consider the client population who would be affected—the aged, the sole-support parent, the day-care user, the recipient of social assistance, the family in need of support, the abused or neglected child. These are the vulnerable members of our society and they are most in need of continued and increased support from the services available to them.²⁶

It should also be noted that if the needs of Canadian women are a high priority of the federal government, then funding of social programs now cost-shared under CAP must also have a high priority. This is because women are the main recipients of assistance or services under these programs and “women have the most to lose if reductions in social program spending are effected”.²⁷ This point was made by J. E. Green in his submission to the Task Force:

It is now very evident that for the most part both the welfare assistance and the social service programs are directed towards meeting the needs of women and dependents. In the case of the welfare assistance program, approximately 83% of those supported are women and dependents, while fully two-thirds of all assistance accounts show a female “head of household”.

In the case of the social services, these are almost entirely addressed to the needs of women, in the sense of addressing problems which conventionally fall to women within family households.²⁸

The Task Force shares these concerns and recommends that

there be no reductions in the overall fiscal commitment for programs now cost-shared by the Canada Assistance Plan.

The Task Force hopes that with this basic question clearly answered, it will be possible to discuss more fully potential ways to improve fiscal arrangements for these programs, along the lines discussed in this chapter.