

have no compunction whatsoever about putting on these kinds of restrictions.

The fact of the matter is that most of the people on assistance in Canada are not as these people envision them to be. Most of the people in Canada who get social assistance are children, which says a lot about how knowledgeable this government is on the conditions of the citizens of Canada, regardless of what age they may be.

Another large group of people who receive assistance are the elderly. If you add these two groups together, you find well over 75 per cent of the people who receive social assistance are the elderly or children.

It is interesting to speak of children. We all know and certainly the government is fond of saying that our youth is the future of our country. If it really believed that, it certainly would not be doing what it is doing.

I think it is interesting to look at some of the figures surrounding the matter of children and their plight in Canada today. One in six of the children in Canada are poor. A million children in Canada live in poverty. There is not enough time in a 10-minute speech in Parliament to be able to cover all the topics. I am not going to cover the whole matter of food banks.

We certainly all know the situation in the communities across Canada. In the rural communities, where one would hardly imagine that the situation could become so bad, people have to avail themselves of food banks. Food banks are becoming a commonplace occurrence in the rural areas as well.

Certainly we have this devastating effect on the children of our land and the elderly particularly. There are others such as disabled people who, through no fault of their own, mostly because of systemic and institutional biases in our society against them, are not able to make a living in our land. There is certainly no other reason in most cases that is not possible.

We ask ourselves another question. The second question is why is the government putting this cap on the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario? It has the perception there that these are the three richest provinces in the country.

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The provinces look at the debt, I suppose, per capita or the deficit per capita and they see that they are not anywhere near as bad as the federal government is. We will get into why the debt per capita on the federal side is as enormous as it is later. It looks at these three provinces and says: "Their debt is not as serious as ours".

• (1210)

An hon. member: It is soon going to be that bad in Ontario.

Mr. Fisher: That may very well be, but having succeeded a Liberal government which was doing exactly what the Conservative government has been doing federally, it is hardly any wonder.

In any event, the federal government looks at these three provinces and says: "We cannot let them get away with this. We are going to have to punish them for being, even giving them the benefit of the doubt, marginally good managers of the economy, and for not being in debt as seriously as the federal government is."

I am not going to go into great detail in all cases, but look at British Columbia and the condition of the people who receive social assistance in that province. Remember that most of these people are children and the elderly and others as well, and they are addressed here. Look at a single employable person, as they say, in British Columbia on social assistance for a lot of reasons, and we will get into some of those later. They receive social assistance to the tune of \$5,900, approximately.

Look at the poverty level, as determined by the Canadian government's own report, the National Council on Welfare. It has that wonderful Canada symbol with the Canadian flag on it. We certainly have to take its numbers as being gospel. It still leaves a deficit for a single employable person in British Columbia of \$6,823. A disabled person receives in welfare \$8,204, but the poverty level is the same as for a single employable person, \$12,727, leaving a deficit for a disabled person in British Columbia of \$4,523.

A single parent with a child, and these are certainly among the most impoverished people in our land, would receive \$11,687, but the poverty level for this group of people is almost \$16,800, meaning that they are \$5,000 short of even being at the poverty level. These are all negative figures.