

Supply

job. This is just one example of how the cycle of poverty manifests itself.

The link between poverty and education is incontrovertible. Eighty per cent of the heads of poor households receiving welfare have not completed high school. With the national drop-out rate in the neighbourhood of 30 per cent, we clearly have a problem of serious proportions and one which the government has taken initiatives to address.

Poverty is also associated with a number of other social and health problems. For example, poverty tends to become one of the factors which contributes to crime. As well, although Canada's rate of infant mortality is enviable by any international standards, Canadian children born in poor neighbourhoods face an infant mortality rate almost double that of their wealthier counterparts.

I would like to move now to set out the approach taken by the federal government since 1984 in addressing this problem. As I stated earlier, the years since 1984 have seen significant improvements, with 956,000 fewer Canadians, including about 300,000 children, in low income situations.

The government's approach has recognized both the need for a healthy, well managed economy, which will provide opportunities for families to support themselves, and a variety of programs and policies for people in need.

The government has worked to develop a climate in which job creation can prosper. Families want to be self-sufficient. They want to control their own resources, their own lives, and the lives of their children. They do not want to be dependent on others. Canadians have created over 1.6 million new jobs since 1984, more than 80 per cent of which were full time and about 60 per cent of which have gone to women.

A healthy economy also helps to support and maintain much needed social programs. Since 1984 the government has taken many steps toward these goals. We have removed 850,000 low income Canadians from the tax rolls; increased the value of the child tax credit by over 50 per cent; introduced a new child tax credit for pre-schoolers, a supplement now valued at \$203; doubled the allowable limit of the child care expense deduction for pre-school aged children from \$2,000 to \$4,000; and increased maternity leave to 15 weeks for the

mother, with an additional 10 weeks for either parent under unemployment insurance.

It is easy for the opposition simply to demand further programs. On this side we do not have that luxury. We are also forced to consider the mounting burden of debt; a burden of debt that today amounts to a debt in the name of each and every Canadian, man, woman and child from one coast to another of over \$13,000. To spend uncontrollably today and to leave our children to pay the bills later would be the cruelest, most inhumane thing that we could do to them. This must be an issue that is kept before this House as this debate proceeds.

Members opposite simply propose to spend more money and to increase the debt load on our children. It steals from our children. It steals from generations yet to come. Our children have a right to expect that they will inherit a government, an economy, and a country which is well financed and which provides opportunities for them, and not a mountainous burden of debt.

We have made tough decisions but, when we did so, the most needy were protected. That is why when the 1990 budget introduced the family allowances benefit recovery, we made the threshold \$50,000 on an individual income basis, a figure that was high enough that lower income recipients of family allowances would not be affected.

• (1630)

When the 1990 budget introduced the 5 per cent limit on the growth of Canada Assistance Plan expenditures, we made sure that only the wealthiest provinces were affected. This measure does not cut social assistance nor does it prevent increases in provincial improvements to social assistance or social services. Federal contributions under CAP will continue to increase for all provinces. They are only limited for a two-year period to 5 per cent in three provinces in the strongest fiscal position.

Provincial governments will continue to be responsible for administering assistance programs, deciding priorities and allocating resources in these areas.

The Canada Assistance Plan provides approximately \$6 billion to support these programs. And over the past four years, we have worked with provinces towards more innovative uses of CAP funding. For example, we have developed the employability agreements which help