

Government Orders

of per capita wealth and we're going to cap them to this particular level?"

Once you have started to do that—

[*Translation*]

It is obvious, in my opinion, that we could continue to do so, that we could come up with a new formula. Given the great priority that the government seems to put on controlling the deficit and the debt, especially on the backs of the provinces and their population, that possibility should not be disregarded.

[*English*]

When you talk about other provinces possibly being capped, you should not forget that there might be some other programs that are also capped, reduced, or eliminated. Why? Because the government wants to try to pretend to the Canadian people that it has controlled the deficit and the debt. It will take on any measure in order to try to make that point, even though it is most misleading. As I indicated before, it is not a control of the debt, it is simply giving it to others to accept. It needs to respond to the concerns of its citizens.

• (1620)

Let us review very quickly some of the negative effects this particular bill will have on Canadians. Dental care for many Canadians will be affected, as will essential living services for disabled persons. Disabled Canadians are among the poorest of the poor and they will be affected. We know that.

There is the issue of foster homes for abused children. We have talked a great deal during the last day or two about the need to respond to children. Here we have a government program that runs counter to this. I find that terribly disconcerting, contradictory, and certainly misleading.

There is the issue of safe housing for abused women. You and I and all of us here have heard the rhetoric with respect to what the government intends to do in this area. Here is a decision that is being made that is going to affect women who are abused. It cannot simply continue to say things that sound right and on the other hand act differently or completely opposite to what is being said. It does not wash any more.

There is the issue of subsidized child care for low income families. I have spoken about poverty.

[*Translation*]

As for poverty in this country, one of the richest in the world, five million Canadians live at or below the poverty line.

An hon. member: It is unfortunate.

Mr. Duhamel: Yes, it is very unfortunate and there are over a million children in that group.

I mentioned the food banks that will feed almost two million Canadians this year, 40 per cent of whom will be children.

[*English*]

Here we have a bill that will remove the subsidization to child care for low income families. We all know that the Supreme Court decision has given the federal government the right to cut welfare transfers to the provinces, but it did not provide the government with the moral right to abandon its responsibilities to poor and disadvantaged Canadians.

While I recognize that it is extremely difficult for any government to look at what it has done and admit it has done something really frightening and fundamentally wrong, I would hope that in the spirit of Christmas and the spirit of the holiday season it might for once do the right thing.

[*Translation*]

Those are my comments. I hope that they will be given some serious thought.

[*English*]

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I spoke before on this bill and here I am speaking on it again. Before I proceed with that, I would like to congratulate the House of Commons committee on the good report it has introduced trying to deal with this question of poverty and child poverty across Canada.

It is my hope that the government will look at those recommendations with an open mind and try to set up some sort of a strategy to deal with child poverty in a very effective and direct way early in the new year.

There has been a lot of discussion on this question of child poverty in Canada and there have been a number of reports. The Senate committee on Social Affairs,