

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1530)

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier today I inadvertently forgot to present a petition. I wonder if I could have the unanimous consent to allow me to present a short petition at this moment?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

CROATIA

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my generous colleagues in the House for this gesture.

It is a petition on behalf of a number residents throughout western Canada. They point out that 94 per cent of the population of Croatia voted for independence, that Croatia instituted a democratic government in a multi-party election conducted in April 1990, that like all other peoples Croatsians are entitled to freedom, democracy and their right to self-determination, and that Canada has an international reputation as a moral authority and as such can initiate this democratic process without compromising world peace.

The petitioners call upon the government to take the initiative to recognize Croatia fully as an independent and sovereign democratic nation.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Monday, December 9, consideration of Bill C-32, an act to amend the Canada Assistance Plan, as reported (without amendment) from

the Standing Committee on Finance; and the motion of Mr. Langdon (p. 5964).

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to speak too long. I just want to review a few comments with regard to this bill.

[Translation]

I can say without any hesitation that I am definitely opposed to Bill C-32, a measure that demonstrates this government's failure to defend the poor in this country.

Faced with a situation in which more and more Canadians will have to resort to welfare, the Tory government is putting a cap on our Canada Assistance Plan. This measure will put a 5 per cent cap on funding for welfare plans in Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta. Unfortunately the need for funding will probably be greater in these provinces as a result of the negative impact of Tory policies such as the GST and free trade on our economy.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Canada Assistance Plan is a major component of the kind of program vision that requires close co-operation between the federal government and provincial governments. The Canada Assistance Plan is a shared cost program. We also have Established Programs Financing, which focuses mainly on post-secondary education and health care which is in bad shape and the comprehensive financing formula, under which the federal government works together with the provinces in the areas of health care and education.

The purpose of all these programs is to ensure that Canadians, especially those in greatest need, receive government assistance. However, the Tory government's policies have clearly shown us that the government has chosen to ignore Canadians and the fact that many are living in poverty.

The number of homeless people, people who live on the street and who are barely surviving, is increasing. There are young people on our streets who are getting into drugs and prostitution and who will never be able to get out of that world. Obviously this would not be happening if the community could offer them alternatives, some kind of programs and social assistance to tide them over difficult periods.

The government is acting irresponsibly by capping the Canada Assistance Plan.

According to the federal government's figures, the three provinces affected will lose \$2.135 billion in federal