

If the federal government wanted to increase equalization to Newfoundland or Nova Scotia ... as this government has done since 1984 ... how much would it have to give to Ontario? Not one cent.

If the federal government wanted to more than double the funding for regional development in Atlantic Canada ... as this government has done since 1984 ... how much would it have to give to Ontario? Not one cent.

If the federal government wanted to build roads, ferries, airports and improve small craft harbours in Newfoundland or Nova Scotia, if it wanted to develop institutions like the Marine Institute, the Centre for Cold Oceans Research or the fighter base at Goose Bay, if it wanted to commit \$2.6 billion in support for offshore petroleum development, if it wanted to commit \$6 billion to build frigates in Saint John or if it wanted to help clean up Halifax Harbour ... all of which this government has done since 1984 ... how much would the federal government have to give to Ontario? Not one cent.

Mr. Wells is right about one category of programs where money would have to be offered to Ontario just as it would have to be offered to Newfoundland or Nova Scotia. That category is for new national shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

One example would be a new national Child Care program. All provinces ... at least all provinces that join the federal program or otherwise achieve the national objectives set out under the federal program ... would receive federal contributions toward provincial expenditures. And why not?

That money ... like expenditures for existing programs like Medicare or the Canada Assistance Plan ... would be for have-not Canadians, not for have-not provinces. That is how national shared-cost programs have been used in the past and should be used in the future, to exercise national leadership in providing key social services for all Canadians wherever they may live. The Meech Lake Accord confirms that that national leadership role can continue and it does so without limiting our ability to redress regional disparities.

Clyde Wells is wrong about the Meech Lake Accord. He is wrong and, worst of all, he is putting his own biases from the Trudeau years ahead of what he should recognize as the interests of his country and his province.

As Premier Joe Ghiz has said,

"I think that [the Meech Lake Accord] demonstrates, clearly and unequivocally, to Canadians all across our country that through co-operation, conciliation, compromise and goodwill this country works."