

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

Sherbrooke, Quebec, the Prime Minister promised, and all the Conservative Members present in this House were there, he promised, crossing his heart, to provide funding, to maintain the health insurance plan, to maintain hospital insurance. To top it all, he promised that no legislation would be modified without consulting the people concerned. Mr. Speaker, what we have is exactly the opposite. We have seen that with the old age security pension case, we have it again with the New Horizons Program, we get it with respect to health insurance, post-secondary education, unilateral redistribution of transfers to the provinces, and we have it today with the change in the Canada Pension Plan, Mr. Speaker. The Minister tables a Bill and says: This is final, but we are listening, you can say what you want, but this is what must be passed. That is not good enough.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me tell my colleague the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), the Conservative Members and the Prime Minister that although they just laugh at other people and they do not give a damn, there is one thing for sure, and it is something Mrs. Denis was telling me today when she came to Parliament Hill and other people that you meet everywhere tell you, even in the constituencies of Conservative Members, and it is that the people of Canada will laugh best because they will get rid of them at the next election.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Questions and comments, the Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou (Mr. Gagliano).

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to my colleague, the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) who has led the fight that forced the Government to reconsider its decision to reduce pension benefits paid to older citizens and who has stoutly supported all issues in east-end Montreal. I should like to ask him the following question: If Bill C-96 deprives Quebec of \$66 million, how will Quebecers manage to get all the health care, the university programs, etc. Can he tell us what will be the direct harmful consequences of such a federal measure in Quebec?

Mr. Malépart: Mr. Speaker, some of the consequences have already been felt. In the last budget brought down by the Liberal Government of Quebec, taxes on businesses and professionals have been raised to recover the \$66 million that were cut-off by the federal Government. And those people had to increase the price of their products and services so that down the road Quebec consumers will have to pay.

During the present negotiations in the public and parapublic sectors, the government proposals had to account for the loss of federal funds. As a result of strikes, rotating strikes and threats of strikes in educational institutions, and hospitals, Quebecers will have to pay for those workers because of the unacceptable decision of this Government.

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There are also reduced services and we have to consider the level of dental care provided to Quebec children. I am convinced that some people will get downgraded health care due to the shortage of funds and the obsolete equipment which should be replaced but on account of the reduced payments made by this Government, Quebec and I am sure all the other provinces are in the same situation, cannot replace the necessary health care equipment.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to the question I was asking earlier and follow up on that asked by my colleague for Saint-Léonard—Anjou (Mr. Gagliano) about the impact, and the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) referred to it when he replied that the taxes would mean an additional source of income for the Quebec Government which must make up for the amounts it had expected to receive from the Federal Government. However, there is also the impact on hospital services. As an Ontario resident, I know that we are already feeling the effects in my province. In spite of its valiant efforts to meet the need for hospital beds, the Provincial Government can only do so much to extend its services to more people. We must therefore reassess our priorities.

Does the Provincial Government in Quebec not have to reassess its priorities rather seriously since the amount it had expected to receive over the next four or five years is being reduced by \$2,083 million? I think that the level of services will suffer. Can the Hon. Member make a comment about this issue?

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) for having steered the debate to this subject.

We all know that the main problem for health care in Quebec was the overcrowding of emergency rooms. It is not much fun for someone who has just had an accident and who is in pain to have all kinds of trouble to get help. The Provincial Government, both under the PQ and the Liberals, has sincerely and honestly tried to improve the situation. But with the cut-backs, it will not be easy to do so now.

I am sure that the Quebec Government had projected to build the necessary foster homes and chronic care centres to free up . . . In my own riding, there is the case of the Notre-Dame Hospital: They have to use part of the wing to find accommodation for long-term patients, even though it should be used for short-term patients.

Mr. Speaker, there are sick people who have to wait longer to get treatment or be operated because of a lack of hospital beds. The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier was right to emphasize the situation in Ontario, but I can tell him that we have exactly the same situation in Quebec; I am sure there are Hon. Members opposite who could tell us that the situation in New Brunswick and Newfoundland is exactly the same.