

*Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements*

piece of legislation it should not be playing the same games as were played by the previous Government. It has brought in legislation for the first day of debate on March 19 and has said that we have to get through it quickly. A legislative committee must study this matter. The provinces must come forward to explain how they feel about it.

We need to have other legitimate representatives of the population and groups from each province who are concerned about what equalization does for their province come forward. Obviously, the school boards and hospitals will be concerned. Obviously, those people who work for the federal and provincial Governments will be concerned.

There are those who have a strong feeling that we should have an adequate level of services, services that guarantee people in St. John's, Saint John, Moncton, Halifax, Charlottetown, Quebec City, Sherbrooke, and other centres right across the country the right to some guaranteed equal level of services. They should have the right to appear before the committee. It should not be done as it has been done in the past when five or six witnesses appear back-to-back. In the case of the patent drug legislation, witnesses were allowed to come in, speak for 40 minutes, and were then shoved out the revolving door as new witnesses came in.

Equalization legislation, legislation which the Government feels cannot be in place for just one year, legislation which the Government believes must be in place for the next five years, despite the fact it said it will bring in drastic tax reform in that period, is not something that should be rushed through. It is not something that affects a small community somewhere as a local by-law would. It is a major piece of legislation. I heard the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Hockin) a few minutes ago agree that it is major legislation. If it is, then why are we in such a rush? We certainly do not want to hold those cheques back from the provinces. But members of the Government should not try to blame the Opposition. They should not try to suggest to us that we are responsible for delaying necessary cheques from going to the provinces if we say that we want to have a thorough discussion of this matter and if we say that there must be adequate time for witnesses to come forward. As my Liberal colleague mentioned earlier, there must be a chance for us to try to prevent this legislation from being put in place for five years when, obviously, tax reform is on its way within the next year. Obviously, then, this legislation should be in place for but one year.

What the federal Government should be saying at this time also is that the EPF legislation, legislation which provides money for medicare, hospitalization and post-secondary education, should be amended so that it is only in place for one year instead being in place for the unforeseeable future.

I do not want to prevent other people from speaking. I know there is a concern that we allow Members representing Quebec and the prairie provinces time to speak. I know that my colleague, the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom), now that he is representing a have-not province, for the first time in history—

**Mr. Nystrom:** No, the second time.

**Mr. Murphy:** Pardon me. I understand that it is not completely new, but it is startling to see Saskatchewan on this particular list. There are people who wish to explain the concerns of their provinces and their regions. It is important that they have the opportunity to do that in this debate.

We have no intention of keeping this matter in the House at second reading stage for a long time. However, we do insist on the right to have speakers from the various regions speak. After that has taken place, it will be important for the Government to ensure that Members on the legislative committee do not try to gag it. It is important that those Members do not try to limit the number of witnesses. It is important that those Members allow recognized groups to come here and talk about how this legislation can affect them. It is important legislation. There is nothing more important to our Canadian unity than to have a sense that each one of us will be treated fairly regardless of whether we come from Newfoundland, P.E.I., Quebec, Manitoba, B.C., or any other province. Right now that is not the case. I have quoted Premier Peckford. I could have quoted any number of provincial Premiers or Ministers. They do not feel that they are being treated fairly by the Government. They certainly have reasons for feeling that way. That is important.

What is more important is that we recognize the duty of Parliament to do all that we can to ensure that children growing up in all parts of this land have an adequate educational system, a system which is comparable right across the land. We also have to ensure that the provinces can produce and maintain adequate medical services. We also have to ensure that seniors feel that their provinces can maintain them in a decent way of life. We have to do so in such a way as not to bankrupt the poorer provinces. And we have to do it in such a way as not to bankrupt the taxpayers of the poorer provinces. That is what equalization is all about.

To get back to where I started in this speech, this is why, when we changed the Constitution with all-Party consent, and which was supported by nine, unfortunately not ten, of the provinces, we insisted there be a clause recognizing the role of equalization. It is important that we pass a law, not just recognizing equalization in principle and throwing a few more dollars into the pot, but that we actually put a system in place which will lead up to the meaning, the thoughts and beliefs behind that clause in our Constitution. It is easy to pass constitutional amendments. It is easy to put any words in place in the House of Commons. But it is much more important to provide the adequate means, the adequate financing, to make it happen.

**Mr. George Minaker (Winnipeg—St. James):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak on the Bill that is before us and to support it. I had the opportunity to address this matter last year in the House of Commons. So my thoughts are already on the record regarding the supplementary equalization payments that came forward last year. I am