

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

The systematic underfinancing of Canada's university system is reaching tragic proportions, the Chief Justice of Canada said yesterday in a speech that delved unusually far into public policy issues.

Chief Justice Brian Dickson implored governments to save the higher education system before it begins producing second-class teachers and students "and, ultimately, a second-class nation".

[Translation]

And these words have a particular impact in New Brunswick. Why? Because we in New Brunswick do not have the same resources that certain other provinces in Canada enjoy. It is going to have a very severe impact on us. We will be far worse off than the rest of Canada.

And I could go on, and I want to quote the Canadian Medical Association, which is very concerned about the changes Bill C-96 will bring. The Association recommends, in its first recommendation:

[English]

That this legislation be restricted to a short-term basis only—and only if absolutely essential to the future economy of the country;

[Translation]

And it goes on with a second recommendation.

[English]

That the financially disadvantaged Atlantic provinces be excluded from the provisions of this legislation, i.e. that they continue to receive increasing financial support for health care programs on the basis of the existing Established Program Funding formula;

[Translation]

And the same CMA goes on to say that—

[English]

The Atlantic provinces must be excluded from proposed federal legislation which would reduce the amount of money expected by the provinces from the federal Government for health care and higher education.

"We are alarmed with the potential impact of this legislation in the Atlantic provinces," said Dr. William Vail, President of the Canadian Medical Association—

[Translation]

And it went on to say:

[English]

The federal Government must ensure that its proposed legislation regarding changes in federal-provincial fiscal arrangements be applied on a short-term basis only and that it exclude the Atlantic provinces. In addition, the federal and provincial governments should proceed immediately to negotiate a formal agreement for the future financing of health care in Canada.

[Translation]

So when we say that Atlantic Canada will be particularly affected, Mr. Speaker, you can see in light of everything I have been saying that we will indeed feel the direct impact of this Bill. I am really concerned that the people of New Brunswick will be very seriously affected, in the sense that our services will be reduced and especially that our young people will not have the same opportunities as others elsewhere in Canada. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would mention the University of Moncton, the institution which provides young Acadians with an opportunity to continue their studies. Well, this young

university will be very hard-pressed because it is just starting and needs more funding than it is getting, ever more. There is no doubt that this Bill will harm the University of Moncton as well as the other universities in New Brunswick and all people, all New Brunswickers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Before proceeding to the questions and comments period, I should like to make the following statement:

[English]

Earlier today the House accepted a motion to debate an issue under the provisions of Standing Order 29, which debate the Chair has set down for three o'clock p.m. this day. Since the provisions of Standing Order 29 do not allow for Private Members' Hour, I have instructed the Table Officers to drop to the bottom of the list of the order of precedence the items scheduled for debate in the name of the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm).

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my comments and observations on the proposal of the Government in Bill C-96 to cut substantially spending health care and post-secondary education. I think it is important to state at the outset that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has not given Canadian people a clear picture of the intentions of the Government. For the Prime Minister to say that the federal Government has not cut spending on health care and post-secondary education is wrong. The Government has reneged on a commitment and obligation to provide adequate funding with the provinces to ensure that people have free access to a decent level of health care, and equal access to education.

● (1420)

The Prime Minister is going to put in place, knowingly and deliberately, a two-tier system of health care and post-secondary education. Those with an adequate income will be able to obtain a post-secondary education. Over the years, as costs increase and the federal Government's share decreases, people will gain access to learning institutions only by paying the user fees required. As time goes by, those with more money will have access, and those with less will not.

Many of my colleagues have spoken today about the post-secondary education crisis precipitated by this Government. I would like to make some observations about health care. Earlier this year the Government of Newfoundland produced a Green Paper which showed that the province could no longer afford to provide health care to its citizens if the federal Government reneged on its commitment to pay a share of those costs. The cost of health care was rapidly moving beyond the capacity of the provincial Government to deal with it.

The Green Paper pointed out that Newfoundland had strained its revenue sources to the very limit. It pointed out that the provincial sales tax was among the highest in the country. Corporate and personal income taxes were the highest of any province. If Newfoundland increased its taxes it would