

[English]

Mr. Evans: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Speaker: The questions as enumerated by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary have been answered. Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS FINANCING ACT, 1977

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Lalonde that Bill C-12, an Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments today on Bill C-12, which is an Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977 and, with a new title, separates to some extent the health portion and the post-secondary education portion of this Act. I have been patiently waiting for the last two days for some of my Progressive Conservative colleagues from Saskatchewan to protest this Act. So far, none of those Members has indicated any concern about this particular Act.

The Act, Mr. Speaker, is retroactive in that it goes back to April 1, 1983. Consequently it takes away money which some of the post-secondary education institutions have already budgeted and, in many cases, spent. Therefore, it is going to have a very detrimental effect on many of those institutions. Clause 5 does make this division between health and post-secondary education. I must say that is not all bad. In the past it has been quite common for the provinces and the federal Government to hide behind block funding. Provinces say that they have not received the funds or the federal Government says it has given more than the provinces have received or say they have received. Consequently, this may have the effect of making it possible to check the exact amount of money which the federal Government gives, an amount which is going to be considerably less in the next few years. Not only is the federal Government attempting to reduce the amount from last year and for next year but it is reducing the base from which those calculations are made.

Established Programs Financing

● (1530)

Clause 7 in the Bill indicates that the name of the Bill is really a cutback for post-secondary education. The Bill limits the escalation in growth of the per capita entitlement to 6 per cent in 1983-1984 and to 5 per cent in 1984-1985.

In Canada we have a long tradition of public education. We have made the attempt municipally, provincially and federally to provide education which is universal and of which everybody can take advantage. Education is accessible to everyone whether or not a person is able to pay a high price. We have also made it comprehensive. We have tried to cover all the fields of education. In the process, we have spent a good deal of time and effort making the Canadian educational system one of the best in the world. We used to accept universal education as elementary education up to grade eight. It is now extended and takes in high school as well. In the last decade or two we have come to the conclusion that it is necessary to have in place an educational system which provides the necessary training, post-secondary in most cases, for people to take their place in life and to accept jobs. In the past, the federal Government has assisted to a considerable degree in the development of post-secondary programs by providing funds for the building of facilities, and in some cases funds to operate those facilities. The provinces and the school boards which operate these programs have appreciated that assistance, although in the fairly typical approach of this Government, it has often given money, provided the program, got them started and then withdrawn from them, leaving the provinces or the school boards holding the bag. That is exactly what the Government is doing again. The Government is reducing the amount of money that will be available for the operation of the programs to such an extent that many of the programs will be detrimentally affected in the next few years. In the process of effectively reducing the funds for post-secondary education, this Government is attacking the quality of education, the universality, the accessibility and probably the comprehensiveness of it.

We have developed an educational system which has made itself available to everyone, as far as possible, to everyone in all corners of Canada. The Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of the Yukon have in place popular and very strong programs which have allowed students to go to universities or training institutions even if those institutions are not in their own area. Accessibility is also attacked by cutbacks because accessibility can be affected by a program costing too much for an individual. It is only accessible to a person if that person can afford it. The moment that accessibility is changed, we eliminate the lower strata of the income group. We eliminate those students who might want to go to a university or get other training and thus we eliminate the ability and the right to get that kind of training. We eliminate those students who are unable to afford the cost. By cutting back on the amount of funds available to the provinces to carry on their programs, we do affect the accessibility of programs. Students can be affected by this cutback, not only because of