

*Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act*

● (1350)

[English]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there questions or comments? The Hon. Member for York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata).

**Mr. Nunziata:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the Hon. Member for Laurier (Mr. Berger) for his submissions this afternoon. I know from my association with the Hon. Member that he is very troubled by Bill C-96, given his very sincere concerns, specifically with regard to post-secondary education. He has spoken out eloquently and with considerable passion on many occasions in terms of maintaining and enhancing the level and quality of education throughout Canada. One hopes that Members opposite share in the concerns raised by the Hon. Member, or that they at least recognize the impact that Bill C-96 will have on post-secondary education in Canada. It is obvious, or at least it appears obvious, given the method by which this legislation was introduced in the House, that there was very little forethought given to its impact.

As my hon. friend has pointed out, through this legislation the Government intends to cut \$8 billion from federal transfer payments over the course of the next five years. It is obvious that the Government is motivated by its paranoia with respect to the deficit. We all recognize that the deficit is something that should be dealt with and, indeed, that it is a serious problem. However, we on this side of the House have always maintained that if the goal of the Government is to reduce the deficit then it must be done in a fair and equitable way. It must be done in a way that does not affect some very basic and fundamental institutions or values in our society. Therefore I ask the Hon. Member whether he agrees with me when I say that the Government must certainly lead by example. Second, does he agree when I say that it must not try to reduce the deficit on the backs of the disadvantaged?

With respect to the first point, I would like to ask him whether he considers it leading by example when the federal Government, through Bill C-96, intends to cut back on federal financing for post-secondary education to the tune of \$8 billion. Is that fair when, on the other hand, Conservative cabinet Ministers spent 53 per cent more on the personal political staff last year as compared to what the Liberals spent when they were in government in the last full year of their mandate? Does the Hon. Member feel that that is leading by example? Does he feel that there is fairness or equity when on the one hand cabinet Ministers are increasing their own personal budgets for their staffs while on the other they are asking the provincial Governments to cut back in the crucial area of post-secondary education and health care?

**Mr. Berger:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his comments. He asks whether the Government is leading by

example. The only place it is leading us is to great public cynicism—

[Translation]

—increasing disappointment at this Government's actions, as opposed to the promises that were conveyed during the last elections, and for quite some time before that.

[English]

For two days last week I attended a national forum on science and technology policy in Winnipeg. Earlier today I heard the Hon. Member for Windsor—Walkerville (Mr. McCurdy) talk about his feelings following that forum. It was an astounding experience. For two days the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Oberle) repeatedly said that we do not have any money for increased spending on research in science. He said that throwing money at the problem is not an answer to it. He said that we have to spend better and spend smarter. He used all the catch phrases. However, the consensus of the people from all across Canada at that meeting was that we have to spend more money on research in science and technology. After this Academy award-winning performance by the Minister in Winnipeg, what did we come back to in Ottawa? What do we see? We see that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) is building a couple of airports in his riding, or that he is having installed at airports sophisticated instrument landing equipment which will cost several million dollars. These are airports at which such expenditures cannot be justified on the basis of any rational criteria. If one looks at the reports concerning this matter on will see that there are other airports in the country which are far more deserving of federal funds.

Another example, after the poor mouthing that we heard in Winnipeg for several days, was with respect to news reports concerning the Prime Minister taking with him a Department of Transport plane equipped with sophisticated video equipment to ensure that his every move would be recorded for posterity. How can we call that leadership by example when at the same time funding for education is being cut?

The problem is fundamental. Representatives from the University of Waterloo who appeared before our committee two weeks ago told us that for every dollar the university receives for the support of the basic educational system for teaching students their basic roles it would receive \$1.50 were it located 200 miles to the south. For every dollar the university receives for research it would receive \$2.50 if it were located 200 miles to the south. On that basis alone I cannot for the life of me figure out how our universities can compete with American universities. The only answer I have come up with is that in a free trade agreement we should get the Americans to finance our universities.