

Government Orders

I was a part of the health and welfare committee which did a very long study and made some recommendations to this House. I do not know where those recommendations are with regard to government policy. I see the minister across the way shrug his shoulders. I am sure he has read the report and is very familiar with the recommendations.

There were some good recommendations in there that related to the modernization in the realm of communication, which is an area I know the minister is very familiar with, and in the realms of the medical profession and the health care delivery systems. There were some good recommendations about prevention.

The hon. member from Calgary sat on that committee for part of the time with me and she agrees with a lot of those recommendations. We should not be looking at the question from a purely financial point of view. Every one of us knows that there is a problem with government spending. We have a deficit that we have to look after.

As a government we have to lead—when I say as a government I mean the whole House of Commons—in pressing the health care system in this country to come into the latter part of the 20th century. We have to talk about prevention. We have to talk about community clinics. We have to talk about making our population healthier, thus costing us less money in the long run.

We should not be putting the cart before the horse and talking about things like user pay or private insurance companies *vis-à-vis* the public system. Those matters will push us into a situation similar to the United States, where again I say 96 million people do not have the benefit of the kind of medical care and medical treatment that we have.

I say in closing that this bill has disastrous implications for my own province, for my region and for this country as a whole. We have to realize that one of the things that keeps us together are those traditions in education and health care which are sacrosanct to the vast majority of Canadians.

For the federal government to back off from those commitments, to start withdrawing in a significant way the funding for those programs, is a betrayal of trust. It is a contribution to the break-up of this country.

Mr. Felix Holtmann (Portage—Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I intend to participate in this debate, but I have a question for the hon. member for Halifax.

It is encouraging always to see a member stand up and defend her province as a major contributor to this country. I think we will all admit that the province of Nova Scotia, through its educational institutions, has been a major contributor. It is nice to see the member stand in her place and defend her province and its right to continue that wonderful tradition.

It would be somewhat helpful if the hon. member would actually look at the facts of the particular transfers that take place to her province. I would like to remind her and all those who listen here today that if she looked at the figures, the over-all growth at an annual rate of 5.6 per cent since 1984–85 to this day is not a negative growth; it is a positive growth; it is additional moneys to her province every given year since 1984 at a rate today which is significantly higher than inflation. She will admit, as her party did, that inflation has been wrestled to the ground and clearly, we are all happy about that.

Look at the other facts. Her province has received the highest increase in the fiscal years 1991–92 to 1992–93 of the equalization payments of 11 per cent. For goodness' sake, there is no restriction for her provincial government to use these moneys toward program financing such as education. All levels of governments, we will admit, have cash flow problems, but to suggest that this government is responsible for less moneys going to education is purely ridiculous and nonsense.

In excess of \$1 billion is flowing to the province on equalization alone this year, the highest increase compared to any other province. This government clearly did not see that the province should have received less. The hon. member's argument should be with her province because it could reroute a good part of this additional money.

If you look at the facts, the moneys from this government of Canada count for 43 per cent of all of Nova Scotia's revenues, not insignificant, for a total of \$2,000 per capita, per year, this year. That is 55 per cent higher than the national average.

With all due respect to the province, and we all think it has great places of learning, how can she stand in her place and suggest that this government is at fault when it is the provincial government of Nova Scotia?