

Government Orders

On the government side, there is a former university president. If the University of Guelph lost as much money when he was president as it is losing now, I wonder what his comments would have been. I think he would have been pretty upset with the fact that his system—and he is now a minister responsible for it—had made a decision to pull \$12 billion out of post-secondary education.

If you look at it by province just in the current year, for example, Newfoundland loses \$71 million in health, \$29 million in education. Prince Edward Island loses \$16 million in health and \$7 million in education. Nova Scotia loses \$111 million in health and \$45 million in education. New Brunswick loses \$90 million in health and \$37 million in education. Quebec loses \$843 million in health and \$340 million in education. Ontario—and this is the crisis the Ontario government is going through—loses \$1.2 billion in health and \$489 million in education. Manitoba loses \$136 million in health and \$55 million in education. Saskatchewan loses \$125 million in health and \$50 million in education. Alberta loses \$308 million in health and \$124 million in education. British Columbia loses \$390 million in health and \$158 million in education. The Northwest Territories loses—even it does not escape—\$6 million in health and \$3 million in education. Yukon loses \$3 million in health and \$1 million in education. That is a total of \$4.6 billion being taken out of the system.

Sooner or later this is all going to catch up to us. It is up to us as parliamentarians to begin an earnest debate in which we recognize that the time is coming very rapidly toward the end of the system and that we have to fight back now and begin to reform and finance it properly.

The conclusions of this report are worth our consideration:

The recent reductions in federal support for provincial health and health care programs are a matter of grave concern. These reductions are large and growing, to borrow a phrase from the former Minister of Finance. The \$3.3 billion shortfall in respect to health programs in the current year will grow to \$4.2 billion next year and to \$6.6 billion in 1995-96.

This problem is compounded by the fact that cash payments in respect of insured health services will begin to disappear in the second half of the decade. The federal government has recognized it will then no longer be able to enforce the program criteria and conditions in the Canada Health Act, and accordingly has indicated that legislation will be introduced to permit withholding of an amount otherwise payable under the programs.

That is the nub of the problem that we are coming to today.

There were several groups that showed up to meet with the Standing Committee on Finance. It should have been a health matter, but it was sent to the Standing Committee on Finance. Each of these groups had a common theme. We do not expect you to open up your cheque book in an unlimited fashion. We know there is no money in the system. We know we have to reform, but quit using the stick. Every time we hear a budget, you are saying less and less. Quit refusing to recognize that we are trying to change things. There are new groups, such as the HEAL group, which is an extension of several important groups in the health area that want to work together. You cannot work together unless the people who are funding the process understand the dilemma and understand that this is not the 1960s, as the minister says, it is not the 1970s. Everybody knows that. That is a cliché.

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It does not mean that you have to be mean and miserable to get the results you want. These groups came forward time and time again to say: "Quit doing this to us because we would like very much to participate and to reform this system. We know there is not going to be more money, but if you give us less and less then you are going to miss this opportunity in this window for reform".

The Canadian Federation of Students noted in its brief that it wished Bill C-20 withdrawn so that it could begin meaningful discussions on the future of post-secondary education in Canada. "Enough is enough", it wrote. What could be a clearer message for the government.

The Canadian Federation of Labour wrote: "The continuing freeze in transfer payments will have serious implications for the future of medicare. Medicare is a national program which Canadians hold in the highest esteem. For many Canadians medicare has become much more than a social program, it is a good part to what defines Canada. The erosion of medicare will not only have serious health and financial implications for many Canadians, it will further damage our national identity". This is a clear message to the government.