

To cut back on the national commitment to the funding of post-secondary education will short change future generations of young people whose education will suffer as a result. On a broader plane, Canada's ability to survive and prosper in more and more competitive world markets will be impaired. At a time when the universities and other post-secondary institutions have already been severely squeezed by provincial budgetary restraints and growth in enrolments, it seems socially regressive and economically short-sighted to cut back on the federal commitment to funding of post-secondary education.

I see Your Honour signalling that my time is up. In conclusion, Bill C-96 is a fatal error of the Government. It is attacking the health care system in which Canadians have taken such great pride. It is attacking the post-secondary educational system which has already been suffering and needs direct assistance and support as it has never needed them before.

We have no way of stopping Bill C-96. It is under the guillotine; it is under closure. I believe the effects of the Bill will be around for a long time, and I believe the effects of this piece of legislation will come back to haunt and to plague members of the Party opposite who supported it and in fact even went so far as to bring in a closure motion to get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ricard): Questions or comments. On debate, the Hon. Member for Guelph (Mr. Winegard).

Mr. William C. Winegard (Guelph): Mr. Speaker, the debate today has been an interesting one. It is not a debate which everyone in the House really wanted to see take place—

Mr. Benjamin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ricard): Does the Hon. Member want to raise a point of order?

Mr. Benjamin: I rise on a slight point of order. I think if Your Honour checks your list, you might have missed something.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ricard): I do not think that is a point of order. I do not have a list of the opposition speakers in front of me, so it is very difficult for me to recognize anyone who did not point out to the Chair that he wanted to speak.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but I am talking about the list of the numbers used by the Chair, not a list sent by any Party. I invite the Chair to reconsider who it recognizes next. In fact, when you called for speakers on debate, I was standing up.

[Translation]

Mr. Prud'homme: I could move a motion calling for the Hon. Member for Regina-West (Mr. Benjamin) to be now heard, if you wish, but I will not do so officially.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ricard): Since the last speaker was a member of the Liberal Party, I think the next speaker may be somebody from the Government side.

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

Mr. Benjamin: You just had two from over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ricard): I will be in a position to recognize the Hon. Member right after the Hon. Member for Guelph (Mr. Winegard), if that is what you want.

Mr. Foster: No only do they want closure; they want to put up every speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ricard): Order, please. The Hon. Member for Guelph has the floor.

Mr. Winegard: Mr. Speaker, this has been an interesting debate. As I said earlier, it is not a debate which anyone in the House really wanted to see take place, but sooner or later it had to come. The Government is committed to returning the country to fiscal reality, a fiscal reality which has evaded all Governments of Canada for over 20 years.

Let us look at the Bill before us. Does it cut transfers to the provinces? The answer to that question is a clear no. It slows the rate of growth, and that has been admitted many times on the floor of the House today. It slows it to 5 per cent per year in a period when the Consumer Price Index is increasing at about 4 per cent per year. Is that so terrible?

Is it so terrible to ask the provinces to hold the line as we are trying to hold the line? Is it so difficult or is it so heartless to say that the federal Government of Canada will continue to pay one-half of all insured health care costs? Is it so heartless to say that the federal Government will continue to pay one-half of all operating costs of post-secondary institutions?

Let us look at some of the figures for just a moment and challenge some of the things which have been said by my colleagues to my left, particularly in respect of post-secondary education. It is true now, and it will continue to be true, that the federal Government pays over 50 per cent of all operating costs of colleges and universities in the country. When we consider that students pay 15 per cent, the provinces have been paying 35 per cent. In some instances they have not even been paying that so the federal Government has been paying substantially more than 50 per cent.

We should tell the people the facts. Do they know the split in university and post-secondary spending? I do not think so. From what we heard today, one would think that changing the rate of the EPF would destroy the post-secondary system. What utter nonsense!

Do the people know what happened to funding in universities over the last few years? Do they know that most of the provinces have not put in the money which has been transferred? Do they know the amount of money which has been transferred every year under EPF and the percentage increases?

Members of the House know that the provinces have not been using that money for post-secondary education. The figures are available. We can ask the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada what have been the federal