

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

A province or the federal Government alone cannot by itself improve the situation in our country. Everybody must work together. That is exactly what we have been trying to do since September 4 with a good measure of success. Unfortunately for the Opposition, it is working.

Mr. Speaker, the other question of my hon. colleague concerned a reduction in transfer payments. Again, Mr. Speaker, the transfer payments to the provinces are not decreasing but increasing by as much as 5 per cent, while our own expenses are increasing by as much as 3.5 or 4 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we are proving once again that harmony works and that the economy is working.

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. McCurdy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two questions. The Minister is prepared to cut spending in two very important areas. He is prepared to risk major cut-backs in medicare and post-secondary education. Rather than rush into this on a unilateral basis and force spending cuts and service cuts on the province, would the Minister or the Government consider entering into two or three national conferences on health and post-secondary education so they can set out the objectives at the various levels of government in these two important areas before he cuts spending, and before he causes closures of hospitals and post-secondary education? That is the first question. As my second, to see if we cannot put into perspective what the Hon. Member has said, I would simply ask him this. Supposing he had a contract for a 10 per cent salary increase for the next five years each year and the boss turned around and said you are only going to get 5 per cent, would you not regard that as a cut?

[Translation]

Mr. Vincent: First of all, Mr. Speaker, as far as a national conference is concerned, I suggest that would be the responsibility of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) and the Secretary of State (Mr. Bouchard). One only has to watch them operate to realize that these two Ministers are doing a great job.

I will convey to them this suggestion and they will do what they have to do at that level.

Mr. Speaker—

[English]

Mr. McCurdy: Actually it was the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Wilson) suggestion.

Mr. Vincent: It was not the Finance Minister, it was those two Ministers.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, if I get a salary with an expected increase of 10 per cent per year over the next five years and if I am advised two years before the end of the five-year period that

the increase will be 5 per cent, that's not a cut, that's a reduction in my rate of increase. That's quite different.

Mr. Speaker, we may have a little difficulty understanding . . .

[English]

Mr. McCurdy: It is not a cut; it is a decrease?

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Order! Order, please. I must regretfully advise the House that the time allocated for questions and comments is over. Debate. The Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau) has the floor.

Mr. Raymond Garneau (Laval-des-Rapides): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that I intend to support my hon. colleague's motion to postpone consideration of the Bill for six months, because I agree this legislation requires further analysis before letting it come to a vote in the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, the main reason is, unlike what was said by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Vincent) in his speech and what was said by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State of Canada (Mr. Scott) in his speech on April 25, the main reason is that there has not been what I would call consultation. And I would refer Hon. Members to what was said by most participants at recent federal-provincial conferences. If having consultations means being informed and being told: take it or leave it, Mr. Speaker, I don't think I would call that consultation. However, if I may refer to what was said by most provincial representatives from provinces of every political stripe, whether they were Liberal, Conservative or New Democrats, it is easy to conclude that the statements made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State do not stand up.

[English]

The Premier of Ontario, after Bill C-96 had been tabled, and also in the context of the federal and provincial conference, David Peterson, said the following:

This reduction in the funds provided the province will translate into a reduction in services. "There will be fewer hospital beds", warned the Ontario Premier, David Peterson—

Mr. Robert Nixon, the Ontario Treasurer said the following:
There was uniform opposition to Ottawa's plan.

Mr. Gérard D Lévesque, the Minister of Finance in Quebec said the following:

It is unfair to the provinces, because they have been counting on the amounts agreed to in the accords.

Mr. Richard Hatfield, Premier of New Brunswick said the following:

I will have no choice but to increase user fees for health services.

The Minister of Finance for New Brunswick said the following: