

*Medical Care Act*

member of parliament, it is important to request a six months' hoist from the government and the minister responsible, to allow the minister and the provincial ministers of course to reach a fair agreement for all eleven governments. Moreover, the parliamentary secretary was saying yesterday that the federal government wants the provinces to indicate clearly what they intend to do in the next five years as regards medical and hospital care. We ought to know what the financial needs will be if we want to invest in less expensive services, and we cannot expect the government to supply money without knowing what are the long term projects of the provinces.

I think the federal government is fully justified in wanting to know how much the provinces are prepared to contribute, no doubt about it. I think it is the very reason why we request and support this recommendation to the House for a six months' hoist in the application of this legislation, in order to allow the minister to get what the provinces have apparently failed to give him, and to find a solution that the provinces need to know. I know very well that on April 27 and 28, I think, a federal provincial conference will be held, gathering the provincial ministers around the same table; the province of Quebec and other provinces will certainly make propositions and, considering the increasing costs, I wonder to what extent this issue was discussed.

The provincial ministers recognize that the cost will increase, so it is unthinkable to accept that this legislation freeze the federal government's share when we all know, and there is no need to repeat it, that the federal government invited and, in certain cases, forced the provinces to participate in this plan. Obviously, for a long time the provinces have been establishing goals, getting organized in the firm belief they could count on very generous assistance from the federal government; I would think they planned their objectives counting on the 50 per cent share which, until today, was unlimited. To what extent does the federal government have to correct abuses and waste? Maybe it did in some provinces. But to ratify a legislation which takes away, or rather allows the federal government to freeze its involvement, which leaves to the provinces the task of paying these increasing costs for reasons which may be beyond control, is unacceptable, we say, and it is for this reason that we ask the minister to reconsider his position and his decision.

Madam Speaker, I do not want to prolong the debate, but I feel that when we find that the agreement is not accepted by the provinces, in my opinion it is inconceivable, I would even say it is indecent that the government refuses to listen to the provinces and to find a solution. I wonder how the members of this government can refuse to listen to the provinces at this stage. We know perfectly well that the citizen's health is something essential. We agree that the government makes some efforts. We are aware of it. We recognize it, but we also recognize that it is impossible in such a short period on the one hand to prevent these eventualities, and on the other to embarrass the provinces and abandon them in a bad situation for which they are not alone responsible.

The involvement of the federal government was welcome by the provinces and by all Canadians, and we do not think, for the reasons mentioned by the minister or the

government, that this legislation should be applied in the short term. We recognize however that the provinces are being placed in a very difficult position and, for that reason, I take the liberty of making my comments this afternoon, because I think the government should respect the desires and needs of the provinces. I suggest this government could cooperate more and coordinate the efforts of the provinces in order to ensure public health.

Under the circumstances, Madam Speaker, I have no hesitation in saying that I will support the amendment, because I am convinced it is imperative to wait a few more weeks, that is until April, when the provinces, with the federal government representative, will have a very special opportunity to reopen discussions on this matter.

And this is the question. Why does the government refuse to wait for this conference to discuss the matter and try to reconsider this federal government proposal? Why does the government want to call upon us to agree to this legislation whereas the provinces are quite willing to return to the bargaining table here in Ottawa, to renegotiate these agreements, trying to correct abuses that have taken place, one must admit. Subsequently, it would be necessary to assess in the light of discussions a formula that is acceptable to the provinces and that will provide the maximum of medical services to those who need them in this country.

This is, Madam Speaker, what I wanted to say in an attempt to bring the minister to these negotiations, to this opportunity of discussing with the provinces, by calling upon him to think seriously of the respect his government must have for the provinces. I also urge hon. members to ask their own government to consider the arguments put forward by opposition members in this House, who try to serve the interests of the Canadian society. This legislation is not more discriminatory for one category than for another, but we are looking for equity and justice for all Canadians as well as respect for the provinces that make up our country.

In these circumstances, Madam Speaker, I will conclude by asking and pleading with the minister to at least postpone the debates in order to enable the provinces to discuss the matter with him, to give them the opportunity to provide the minister with as much information as he may need, and his parliamentary secretary did outline this need. The provinces should be able to answer the federal government when it states its intentions. It is also the federal government's responsibility to be prepared to listen to the provinces' needs and obligations and not to reject its involvement that is required to provide good services to the Canadian people.

Madam Speaker, I hope the minister will take the time to reconsider his position, and in light of the arguments made in the House and those that will follow, I think this amendment aimed at delaying the application of this bill for six months is quite valid. Even if it were only two months, this would at least allow the provinces to come back and make the proposals they want and thus hope that the minister will pay more attention to the recommendations of the provinces. The opportunity is there at the end of April when the meeting could accomplish the objective we seek—refrain from placing the provinces in a straitjacket, as Bill C-68 will do, but rather being as open as