

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

Changes in Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Threaten Health Care", the association had the following to say about the Atlantic provinces:

Although the Atlantic provinces spend more of their provincial revenues on health care than do other provinces, there are disparities in the range of services available to their populations. . . . If special provisions are not made for the health care system in the Atlantic provinces we can only expect disparities to widen and the national character of health care in Canada to be seriously endangered.

I call the attention of the Government to that plea from the Canadian Medical Association. If it persists in its move in the area of health care, it will not only have an impact upon the country as a whole, but a more serious and greater impact in the Atlantic provinces. There is nothing more important than health care. It is a primary consideration of all Canadian citizens.

I should like to refer to the comments of Justice Hall in his review of the health care system of Canada. He provided us with a reminder that Canadians supported the concept of medicare in the first place, that almost all Canadians were agreed. Justice Hall argued:

—that the trauma of illness, the pain of surgery, the slow decline to death, are burdens enough for the human being to bear without the added burden of medical or hospital bills penalizing the patient at the moment of vulnerability. The Canadian people determined that they should band together to pay medical bills and hospital bills when they were well and income earning. Health services were no longer items to be bought off the shelf and paid for at the check-out stand. Nor was their price to be bargained for at the time they were sought. They were a fundamental need like education, which Canadians could meet collectively and pay through taxes.

Those words of Mr. Justice Hall are accurate, correct, and true; they are just as valid today as they were then.

We should be proud that we have one of the greatest systems of health care in the world. The ongoing battle in the Province of Ontario simply dramatizes and highlights that. It brings it to our attention very dramatically. We in Canada are not prepared to let individuals, particularly those who cannot afford to bear the burden, bear the undue burden of health services. We are not prepared to put that burden on the backs of the economically weak in society. We believe that it should be shared by all people. However, if the funds for doing that are cut, then it will be impossible for provincial Governments to carry on and to keep up the high standard of which we in Canada have been so proud for so many years.

● (1230)

I plead once more with the Minister of Finance to review his words of 1982. I will read them to him again because he is here in the Chamber. He said:

Taking the action of unilaterally cutting the financing, which the Government is now proposing, and then having some discussions with the provinces, surely puts the cart before the horse. We should be reversing this procedure.

I say to the Minister now that indeed he should reverse this procedure. He should keep up the transfer of funds for health care all across the country, but particularly in the Atlantic provinces where I have just shown that we are going to be more affected than other regions of the country. The Minister should review his words of 1982. He should abide by those

words and abide by his position because the position which the Minister took in 1982 was the correct position. The position he is taking now is the wrong position. It will hurt health care in Canada. It will hurt ordinary Canadians, particularly the elderly, particularly the sick, particularly the young, particularly single mothers and families and those are the people we should be looking after. I plead with the Government again to review its decision on health care, to change its mind and to keep up the transfer of payments for health care.

With regard to education, and I have spoken on this before, since I spoke there have been other voices raised in the country constantly and consistently to amplify our position on this most important issue. The voice raised most recently that has been given wide respect, as it should be, is the voice of the Chief Justice of Canada. The Chief Justice spoke recently and talked about the second-class future of universities and post-secondary education if the present measures are adopted. Here are some of the quotes from the speech of the Chief Justice.

Second-class funding of universities will inevitably lead to second-class teachers, second-class students and—ultimately—a second-class nation.

He went on to say:

—the lack of funding is bordering on tragic.

The Chief Justice urged Governments not to choke off universities and went on:

It has been said by many people that education is too important to be left to educators. That may be true. But it is also true that education is too important to be left to ministers of finance.

His is a respected voice in Canada. It is a voice that I think spoke with knowledge or forethought, knowing what he said, knowing who he was, knowing what position he commanded and knowing that he was going to be listened to. I hope the Chief Justice will be listened to, Mr. Speaker. I hope all of us who raise our voices on this side of the House and in other parts of the country will be listened to by the Government on this most serious issue.

As I said at the beginning, this affects one of the most important groups, if not the most important group, our young people. The Liberal Party has just finished a task force review of post-secondary education in the Atlantic provinces. We visited Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and my own Province of Newfoundland. In all of those provinces we heard from university presidents and student groups. The message was the same; this action if it goes ahead will seriously impact on the quality of education and the future of young people, particularly those in the Atlantic area. At Memorial University in Newfoundland, the student population is increasing, yet because of the lack of funds to pay for post-secondary education there is a great danger of a faculty outflow. Memorial University, because it is getting less money than it got in the past, cannot afford to pay its faculty the same rates as faculty are paid in other parts of the country. The order is something like 10 per cent or 15 per cent less. Therefore, faculty are only going to go to the Atlantic provinces if there are other reasons than financial. It is not the