

# Weaken Ottawa, hobble the nation [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

Editorial

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Here we go again. Fresh from pocketing Prime Minister Stephen Harper's reckless move last year to "recognize that the Québécois form a nation" within Canada, and having wrung an extra \$700 million from Ottawa in equalization payments, Quebec Premier Jean Charest's government is at it again, lobbying for more.

...

Charest has begun pushing Harper to spell out what the "Charter of Open Federalism" he promised in the 2006 federal election campaign means for Quebec. Harper vowed to "recognize provincial autonomy," to clearly define federal and provincial jurisdictions and to rein in Ottawa's "outrageous spending power."

Charest now wants to know whether the Conservatives are prepared to formally surrender Ottawa's ability to create and support nationwide programs like health care, education, pharmacare, child care, welfare and manpower training. That is what Quebec nationalists have long demanded, and what giving up the power to spend federal tax dollars in areas of provincial jurisdiction would imply.

Given Harper's antipathy to what he sees as Ottawa's "domineering and paternalistic federalism," he may well be inclined to shed powers past governments have used to build a caring and sharing society.

Federal Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion should fiercely challenge any such agenda, as should New Democrat Leader Jack Layton.

As Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty rightly put it at the premiers' meeting last week, "are we talking about preventing the federal government from ... setting up social programs like daycare or pharmacare? If they're going to move down that path, then they better bring this out into the open. My concern now is that there's a bit of an under-cover-of-darkness aspect to it." There is indeed.

...

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

**Region:** Canada <sup>[2]</sup>

Quebec <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** federalism <sup>[4]</sup>

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