

Battle brews over social spending [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Canadian premiers foreshadowed a coming clash with Prime Minister Stephen Harper Friday over his pledge to diminish Ottawa's role in creating national social programs, warning that poorer Canadians could suffer.

"I'm a bit concerned about it. Are we talking about preventing the federal government from at some point in the future setting up social programs like daycare or pharmacare? Because I don't support that," Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty said as the premiers wrapped up their annual meeting.

"I'm a proud Ontarian. Proud to lead this province. But I'm a proud Canadian first."

Mr. McGuinty made the comments days after Quebec Premier Jean Charest said he wanted to begin bilateral negotiations with Ottawa about curbing the federal government's power to spend money in areas of federal jurisdiction. The pledge is a key Harper plank from the 2006 election campaign and is seen as an effort to win seats in Quebec, where federal spending power is opposed by the various provincial parties.

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- reprinted from the Globe and Mail

Region: Canada ^[2]

Ontario ^[3]

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