

Canadian senate told to fast-track budget

by UPI

OTTAWA - Canada's federal finance minister told the senate Tuesday to skip academic exercises and pass the federal budget before considering a March break.

Speaking to senate finance committee, Minister Jim Flaherty said the global recession was affecting the country too severely to wait weeks for passage, the Canwest News Service reported from Ottawa.

"I'm going to urge you today to deal with this bill right away, and I mean right away," the Conservative minister said. "I don't mean that you go on March break and come back after March break and deal with it. Canadians are entitled to better than that."

Some Liberal senators requested splitting the bill into the economic stimulus package and all other matters, but Flaherty refused.

"I do not want the bill divided," he said. "You're making an assumption that the stimulus package is severable. It is not."

The opposition Liberals have a senate majority of 59 seats in the 105-seat chamber to the Conservatives' 38 seats. Flaherty said he didn't want to see that used as a delaying tactic.

"This can be an academic discussion around this table, or in the House of Commons but it's not an academic discussion for people who are not being paid by the government, or people who are losing their jobs or have lost their jobs, and their families," Flaherty said.

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