

member must realize it is there for a real purpose and not just to spend. If we do not spend it on the equipment we intend to one year, we do it the following year. We are not going to disrupt those major capital equipment projects for the Canadian armed forces.

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[Translation]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE PROJECT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Herb Breau (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister.

In view of the comments made by the Prime Minister at his press conference the day before yesterday to the effect that Quebec Premier Lévesque has managed to lull Canadians to sleep concerning his real intentions, could the Prime Minister tell the House whether the government of Quebec is still pursuing its project for independence in the context of its relations with the federal government? Furthermore, what is the position of the federal government in view of the threat made by the Quebec government to hold a referendum to get a mandate to negotiate the province's withdrawal from confederation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this question could lead to a lengthy answer. I think it would be summarized by saying that no one is being misled on the intention of the PQ government which is to lead Quebec to independence. No one on this side of the House, anyway. It is true that the statements of the PQ premier in Regina last summer seem to have slightly lulled the other provincial premiers to sleep but I do not think that any Quebecker entertains any doubts whatsoever as to the real intention of the PQ which is to try to make an independent country out of Quebec.

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[English]

HEALTH AND WELFARE

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEALTH CARE OF INDIANS

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As the minister knows, the federal government is now planning the transfer of Indian health care to the provinces. She knows that the Indian people are very concerned about this and have been to Ottawa to see us, as well as sending telegrams to the minister.

I should like to ask the minister whether she will consider suspending that action and restating a commitment to Indian health because of the great concern Indians have about Indian

health being guaranteed under their treaty rights with the government?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, there has never been such a plan: I want to make that extremely clear. I do not know what the hon. member has in mind. There is no need to say it is very easy for me to reaffirm, as he has asked, a firm commitment to better health for all Indians of Canada.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, that is rather strange. Representatives of the Saskatchewan Indian Brotherhood, the National Indian Brotherhood, the Manitoba and Yukon Indians have been down here to see members of various parties. They sent a very lengthy telegram to the minister. She replied to the effect that the government is still very committed to transferring Indian health from the federal government to the provinces. That telegram is dated October 18.

Today, the minister reversed her position and I want to be clear about this: is she saying now to the Indian people that Indian health care is going to rest with the federal Department of National Health and Welfare, and not transferred, as her telegram indicates, to the provinces and to the territorial governments?

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, the telegram was probably too long for the hon. member to read. If he had taken the time to read it and study it, he would have seen that the National Indian Brotherhood delegates, who came for a very good meeting in Ottawa this week, asked me questions and made very good representations to me concerning what we call, in the jargon of the health delivery system, the uninsured items or expenditures. That has nothing to do with health care per se. Health care remains exactly as it is, and we are following completely the historical relationship by which we are in it. That means eyeglasses—and I told them there would not be several pairs per year, per person—it means dental equipment or expenditures, it means transportation costs and drugs.

This question is very serious, and if the hon. member is honest, he will listen. There is no point giving to any segment of the population open expenditures that will create abuses to which everyone else will object. We were going bankrupt with the expenditures because there were no guidelines. We have set guidelines, which I issued in September, giving Indians on welfare 50 per cent more than the provinces give them.

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POST OFFICE

INCREASED POSTAL RATES TO COVER INCREASED DEFICIT—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Postmaster General. On November 21, 1977, the then postmaster general announced significant increases in postal rates affecting all classes of mail, to be effective April 1, 1978. A year later, because of the continuing turmoil in the Post Office, that means the deficit for the fiscal