

There are a number of questions that need answering. That is why we are looking forward to the Canada Health Act to discuss exactly these issues.

Mr. Evans: The question I would like to get at relates to the answer to the first question. The provinces had contended that they were to receive this under the formula. They had not budgeted for that because the federal Government had been arguing that indeed it should not be that way. Now that issue about these moneys flowing has apparently been resolved.

Regarding the underfunding issue that has been raised over the last year, were the provinces saying that they were underfunded by the money that you are giving them, or they were underfunded according to their calculation of what they should have been receiving? I contend it was the former and therefore the extra money that is now flowing to the provinces was money that they had not counted on. Although they had held that they should receive it, they had not budgeted for it. If that is the case, does that not reduce the issue of underfunding that the provinces have raised? I would like the Hon. Member's contention on that.

The second question, Mr. Speaker, relates to what amount of funding should be provided, according to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would there be unanimous consent by the House for the Hon. Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) to comment? The time allotted has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is unanimous consent.

Mr. Epp: Could the Member just repeat the last part of his question because I just did not hear it.

Mr. Evans: In his answer he indicated that the question of expanding the 50 per cent cost sharing to other areas would be a position that his Party would take. Has he any estimate of how much that would increase the federal contribution to medicare under such a regime?

Mr. Epp: Mr. Speaker, on the last point first, I hope the Government does this or any Opposition party that is trying to take over government, as soon as the Hon. Member and his colleagues will screw up their courage and call an election. We obviously have figures in mind but we are not going to release those figures—

Mr. Evans: That is not fair ball.

Mr. Epp: Well, I am going to do it the Liberal way. I will sit down with the provinces and discuss an issue which is their primary responsibility. I say to the Hon. Member that that is what I am going to do.

On the other point of underfunding, there are provinces who argued from the beginning that money was withheld from them which legitimately was theirs according to the formula. The real question that should be asked is to what extent, if the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the Minister of

The Address—Mr. Desmarais

Finance had forwarded that money, would we now not be seeing the difficulties in the health care system that we are now experiencing?

Mr. Louis R. Desmarais (Dollard): Mr. Speaker, as we fight our way out of the recession there are a lot of tough questions facing Canadians today. Must this happen again? Are we forever doomed to be sort of a coat tails economy, depending on others for our prosperity? Or can we do something really different? Is there a bold new course that we can take as a nation to build a brighter future for ourselves and our children? There most certainly is.

Nature has provided Canada with a priceless key to its own economic salvation. With this jey we can both unlock the doors of our dungeon of economic dependency and offer world leadership in a crucial area of global concern to bring fresh hope to humanity's hungry millions. This key is water, the white gold of the 21st century. Through imaginative, efficient management of this most precious resource we can generate wealth. We can create and sustain a vast range of new and meaningful jobs for Canadians and we can enhance the overall quality of life on this continent from the Arctic circle through to the heartland of Mexico. All the ingredients are at hand. We have the resources, the technology and a heaven sent geographic blueprint for success. What we need is the vision to grasp this opportunity and the will and courage to transform it into concrete reality.

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Let us take a look at what we have. Canada enjoys a greater abundance of water wealth than any other nation on earth. With well under 1 per cent of world population, we have more than one-quarter of all the global reserves of fresh water. This accident of nature has shaped our history. Its enormous potential somehow fails to occur to us in our normal planning for the future. Unless we wake up and realize all the implications of this position in today's world, realization will very soon be thrust upon us.

Across the world, inequitable distribution of water lies at the root of untold human hunger and misery. As we approach the crossroads of the year 2000, the stark reality carries the seeds of mounting international tensions and the risk of global conflict. On our own continent the crisis is not so acute but the same pattern of inequitable distribution is evident. More than 90 per cent of Canada's population is concentrated in a 300-kilometre strip along the Canada-U.S. border. Yet over 60 per cent of the fresh water flow of our mighty rivers is northward. Thus, every day these northern rivers pour countless millions of gallons of pristine pure water into the salty Arctic sea. At the same time our Great Lakes are desperately in need of flushing with fresh supplies. Our agriculture is threatened in a growing number of areas across the country, industrial development is curtailed or halted by lack of water availability and we have a mounting pollution problem.

The magnitude of the water problem in Canada's West was pointed out a couple of weeks ago in a brief to the Royal Commission on Economic Union by the Minister of Agricul-