

Adjournment Debate

some days ago, and as I tried to indicate in my questions on January 13, finding it increasingly difficult to get the treatment which they need and deserve, and which would be available if the facilities were what they ought to be.

I raise the question for two reasons. First, I am very concerned about the needs of cancer patients which are not being met. I also raise it because the needs and shortages which are apparent are symbolic of a deeper crisis, that of the shortage of funds for some of the most important programs which provide needed services to the people of Canada.

What are the problems, Mr. Speaker? We have had the decision of the Government to reduce funding for the Established Programs Financing which are funded in part by the federal Government and in part by the provincial Governments. The programs fund our medicare system, our hospital system, and our post-secondary education system. Similarly, the Government has decided that by 1990 it will reduce by \$6 billion the funding which would have gone to the provinces to help finance these programs.

I make it clear that I am not talking about cuts in programs. I am talking about reductions in funding by the federal Government which would have been in place had the Government not unilaterally changed the agreements which it had with the provinces. By the year 1990 the federal Government will reduce funding to these programs by \$2 billion a year; by 1990 the reduction in funding for these programs will amount to \$6 billion.

The federal Government obviously has plans to reduce funding for the research councils, in social sciences and humanities, natural sciences and engineering, and the medical sciences. We are seeing progressive cuts, not only for Established Programs Financing but in funding for the Social Science Humanities Research Council such that a \$20 million addition is needed to get the operation back to the 1971 level.

There was a budget cut of \$29 million in 1985-86 in the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council funding so that equipment purchases and support of joint university and company research are not possible. We see a chronic under-funding of the Medical Research Council's budget despite a promise in the last election that this would be rectified. It would require a \$30 million funding increase to meet the minimum requests by the Medical Research Council revised five-year plan. There has been an over-all reduction in research spending in all departments and agencies of \$140 million set out in the budgetary statement a year ago last November. These have continued to accelerate throughout the past year.

● (1805)

I remind Members of the House that when they were in the Opposition, and during the election campaign, the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) pointed out very clearly how poorly the research efforts in Canada compared with the research efforts in virtually all of the other western industrialized countries. The Conservative Party promised to increase the percentage of gross national product devoted to scientific

research and development from the present 1.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent, an amount which is spent or exceeded by virtually all of the other countries. The Tories have broken their promises about what they would do if the people of Canada elected them to govern. The Tory Government is ignoring one of the most fundamental needs of any country in the world in this decade and the next, that is, to provide the education and scientific research efforts which are required if Canada is to play its role and meet the needs of the 1980s and 1990s.

I call on the Government to rescind the actions it has taken and to provide the funding required for these programs.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gabrielle Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to provide some clarification regarding what was incorrectly referred to by some members as cuts in transfer payments to the provinces for health care and post-secondary education.

My colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), has stated on a number of occasions that federal transfer payments for health care and post-secondary education will continue to increase from year to year. In fact, the Minister said that federal transfer payments should increase at the same rate, at least, as expenditures for all other federal programs. It will guarantee that total outlays for transfer payments to other Government levels will not decrease.

One thing for sure is that our Government is firmly committed to health care. With respect to the general question of federal transfer payments for health care programs over the next five years, the total amount to be paid to the provinces under established programs financing will be \$66 billion, or about \$19 billion more than all such transfer payments to the provinces in the last five years. There is no way such an increase can be described as a cut-back.

Along with increases in other transfer payments, including equalization payments to have-not provinces, those higher health care transfer payments guarantee that all provinces will be in a position to maintain health care programs which compare favourably with those of other countries. That is what Canadians expect and appreciate. The health of Canadians will not be jeopardized by this Government.

Some Members of the Opposition would have us believe, among other things, that cash shortages in Ontario cancer treatment centres are the direct result of federal under-funding of health care programs under established programs financing. Let me set the record straight.

Pursuant to the provisions governing such financing, the provinces are free to allocate health program funds as they see fit. The Government believes it would be acting quite inappropriately and even unconstitutionally if it were to tell the provinces just how much they ought to set aside for health programs, thus unduly affecting their priorities.