

*Tabling of Documents***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[Translation]

**PETITIONS**

## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 106(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Government's response to Petition Nos. 332-1662, 332-1861 to 332-1870 inclusive, 332-1899, 332-1900, 332-1920, 332-1935, 332-1948 to 332-1951 inclusive, 332-1965, 332-1984 to 332-1989 inclusive and 332-2053.

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● (1110)

[English]

**HEALTH CARE SERVICES**

## NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, for over 300 years, dedicated and competent nurses have been serving Canadians. Nursing has been developing and growing as a profession since the time of Jeanne Mance, who is considered to be the first lay nurse in Canada, in the early years of the 17th century. Nurses have played an active and valuable role in the development of our national health care system.

This year, the Grey Nuns will celebrate 250 years of service in Canada. They, as well as others, continue to distinguish themselves and their profession through their excellence in the provision of high quality health care.

The importance of nursing in our health care system is illustrated by the fact that more than 200,000 nurses who practice in Canada constitute over 50 per cent of Canada's health professionals. The nursing profession touches everyone. Nurses serve the community by caring for all groups of people, from the newborn to the aged, during health and during illness. Their presence is felt in a variety of venues as they provide care in homes, in occupational settings, in clinics, in hospitals, in nursing homes and in all other types of health care institutions.

The contributions of nurses have been recognized internationally for many years with the declaration of May 12, Florence Nightingale's birthday, as International Nurses Day. Canadian nurses, with their colleagues in other countries, have adopted the theme "Occupational Health and Safety" to mark this week.

In recognition of the many contributions of our nurses to our health and well-being, I hereby endorse the Canadian Nurses

Association proclamation that each year the second week of May shall be National Nurses Week.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak on behalf of my Party and add my comments to those made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp). It is a pleasure to recall the work accomplished not only by lay nurses but also by the Grey Nuns whom my family has known for years, since they were active for many years in Northern Ontario.

[English]

Of course, it gives me great pleasure to associate myself and my Party with the remarks of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) with respect to National Nurses Week. I think, however, at the same time, I would like to sound a warning bell. One only has to look at newspaper headlines across the country to realize that nursing is in a crisis situation. There is a critical shortage of nurses, for example, in the lower mainland of British Columbia. The hospital bed closures this summer are as a result of a nurse shortage. We see in northern Ontario that elective surgery is being delayed because of the lack of available nurses. We have to look at why we lack nursing personnel.

It is quite true, as was stated by Glenna Cole-Slattery, who is the new Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Nursing Association that:

The bottom line is that women do not have to come into nursing anymore—the poor working conditions, pay scales that don't recognize gruelling shift work and special skills, and apathy in government and among administrators are driving people to quit.

If we use Ontario as an example, Mr. Speaker, chances are that two out of three nurses in Ontario who are registered to practice their profession are not practising. We have to address this situation nationally. Alberta is losing nurses in droves and Quebec is facing a nurse shortage. Until we begin to address the root causes for the nurse shortage, that is lack of fulfillment, the burn-out suffered by nurses who are thrown into 10 and 12 hour shifts and who are forced to carry on the very difficult job of having one or two nurses on a ward looking after 20, 30 or 40 patients, then we will continue to see a further erosion and shortage. We will continue seeing nurses being recruited south as we have seen recently.

Recognizing that this is National Nurses Week and applauding the Minister for making the commitment to have the second week of May dedicated to the nursing profession and, of course, in lauding Florence Nightingale, we must also ask why we have a nurse shortage. That is something we have to address seriously in the coming months if we intend to keep the stellar quality of nursing that we have known in Canada.

**Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus and congratulate the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) for the declaration that he has made in the House today declaring this as National Nurses Week. It is very