

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 28, 1987

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### HEALTH AND WELFARE

#### NATIONAL ORGAN DONOR AWARENESS WEEK

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to take this opportunity to remind Members of the House that this week, the week of April 26 to May 2, is National Organ Donor Awareness Week.

The purpose of having a week so designated is to heighten public and health professional awareness of the benefits of organ and tissue donation and transplantation, to encourage families to discuss and make a decision on organ donation before a tragedy occurs, and to urge health professionals to examine how they may participate in the organ donation process, thus making organs and tissues available to improve and, in many cases, save a life.

There is no question that today organ transplantation is an effective treatment, in many cases, of end-stage organ disease. A kidney transplant can free a patient with kidney failure from dialysis, a procedure which ties the patient to a machine for up to 40 hours a week, disrupting his or her social, family, and work life.

Heart and liver transplants offer the only hope for survival for those with terminal heart and liver disease. Also, thousands of people have had their sight restored through corneal transplantation.

Bone transplants have spared some from the amputation of limbs, and skin transplants have helped save the lives of victims of severe burns.

The statistics indicate that Canadians support organ donation. Yet, today, one of the most significant factors limiting the number of transplants performed is the supply of donated organs and tissues.

Last year, over 1,000 Canadians were waiting for a kidney transplant. More than 1,000 waited for corneal transplants, and that despite a doubling of the number of corneal transplants done in 1986 over 1985.

Sadly, a number of Canadians in need of a heart or liver transplant died because an organ did not become available in time.

My Department, in co-operation with a number of voluntary and health professional associations, has undertaken a number of activities to address this shortage of donor organs. To mention but a few examples, guidelines for establishing organ and tissue donation services in hospitals, as well as for vital organ transplant programs, have been developed and will be distributed to hospitals soon; we have assisted the Canadian Federation of Medical Students in conducting awareness campaigns on university campuses, and we have produced an inventory of educational resources on organ donation and transplantation, to assist professional and voluntary groups in planning information sessions; and we are participating in the development of a national computerized system to facilitate the distribution of organs, as well the establishment of a transplant database.

I commend the voluntary and health professional associations for the steps they have taken to increase awareness in this area. The Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Medical Association have both passed resolutions in support of organ donation and transplantation.

The Canadian Medical Association, with the support of my Department, launched an awareness campaign for physicians earlier this month, and the Canadian Council on Hospital Accreditation has included a statement on organ donation in its accreditation standards.

The Kidney Foundation of Canada, the Liver Foundation, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and Transplant International (Canada) are continuing their efforts toward encouraging Canadians to consider organ donation; and, of course, the provincial organ and eye donor programs are carrying on with their efforts to increase and co-ordinate organ and tissue donations. Many of these organizations are staffed by volunteers, and I commend those volunteers today.

To commemorate Organ Donor Awareness Week, my Department is distributing a cheque insert, with a detachable donor card, to Members of Parliament and employees of the federal Government, the House of Commons, and some 18 corporations, numbering approximately 304,000.

We hope that the radio and television stations will air the public service announcements on organ donation that we have distributed.

I am pleased that several of the federal employee union newsletters, popular magazines and health professional