

• (1500)

My question to the minister is this. Will the minister say that he is prepared to uphold the Canada Health Act and say no to deterrent fees anywhere in Canada, whether that be B.C., Alberta or Quebec?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member will know the Canada Health Act specifically forbids extra billing.

I have asked that my officials get in touch with the Government of Quebec to seek information with regard to the proposals made last Friday by the minister of health of Quebec. We will be looking at those closely. We will be also drawing to the attention of the Quebec our determination to ensure that the principles underlying the Canada Health Act are fully respected.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I am most pleased to hear that the minister intends to uphold the Canada Health Act. However, the minister knows that his power to enforce national standards become weaker each day as the federal share of medicare costs decline. At the present rate, all federal cash payments to Ontario will cease by the mid-1990s.

Will the minister tell the House how he will enforce national standards when all federal moneys to the provinces cease and he is left with no means of enforcement?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member is dealing with is simply conjecture. For a good deal of time yet to come there will be significant cash payments made to the provinces of Canada in order to help fund their expenses under Canada's medical care system. There is no program in Canada which has broader support from Canadians than Canada's medicare system.

It is a system that this government is determined to see remain and enhanced. We are determined to ensure as well that the principles that underlie Canada's medicare system, principles of ensuring that Canadians receive the best possible health care in Canada, continue to be enforced.

Privilege

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of a number of members of a delegation visiting our country from Kuwait.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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PRIVILEGE

STATUS OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of privilege or a point of order. Without getting into a dispute as to what it is, I have given notice to the Chair with a copy to my friend on the opposite side, the Government Whip. I will try to be short and also try to exercise common sense, which sometimes is in short supply here, Mr. Speaker.

Very briefly, the point of order/privilege is the question of the status of an independent member. I want to say right at the start that this has nothing to do with the status of parties in this House and/or their status as far as the Elections Act is concerned. I know and members know that under the present Elections Act, we have to run in an election as a member of a designated official party or as an independent.

The history of this Chamber is full of parliamentary precedents, with members who, having been elected under one label, made a decision, for whatever reason, to have themselves declared another affiliation. I am not going to go through the hundred or so more who go back into interesting history. I am going to quote some.

The one I am going to quote is a fellow called Gordon Churchill. This brings back memories. I was here when Gordon Churchill stood in this House as a Conservative and made a very succinct statement to the House, and one perhaps that I should have followed, and explained why he had to in a most regretful way to dissociate himself with his then party and sit as an independent and as an independent Conservative. There have been so many that we do not have to take too much time.

Some members in this House, I would venture to say, with respect, do not appreciate that there was no such thing as a party label on a ballot until 1970. I rest my case first on the fact that when I was elected in 1965 there was no party affiliation. I was elected as a person, an