

Five good measures to cut health costs

Several means readily available for cutting health care costs

There are several readily available means of reducing health care costs. Some can be implemented at very little cost, while others involve a shift in emphasis of existing programs. For example:

1. Introduce mandatory seat belt legislation. Such legislation can be effective in promoting the use of automobile seat belts, thus reducing both the severity and number of traffic injuries. Patients suffering from traffic injuries are among the highest cost type of patient in the health care system.
2. Reduce the number of extended care patients in active

treatment hospital beds. Many patients spend months in active treatment hospitals simply waiting for space in a lower cost auxiliary hospital. The government could free up to one-third of the active treatment beds by spending more money on new extended care facilities.

3. Improve the home care system and include it in medicare. Many patients could go home earlier if adequate support services were available in their homes. Because these services are not readily available, a high-cost hospital bed stays in use.

4. Shift some of the focus of health care to prevention. The earlier a threat to health is

detected, the more inexpensively it can be treated. In some cases, illness need not develop at all. Improvements in health education, sanitation and immunization can lead to less illness and less hospital utilization. Most preventative health programs do not require costly doctor's services.

5. Provide government support for community-based health clinics. Such clinics have proven their worth as an alternative to use of costly hospital emergency wards. There is only one such clinic in Alberta, and the provincial government seems reluctant to develop additional clinics of this type.

Federal Transfers (cash and tax) to the provinces for 1982-83.

Provinces Amount (\$millions)

Newfoundland	197
Prince Edward Island	42
Nova Scotia	295
New Brunswick	242
Quebec	2,239
Ontario	3,010
Manitoba	358
Saskatchewan	340
Alberta	801
British Columbia	963
Northwest Territories	16
Yukon Territory	8

TOTAL 8,511

(Information provided by the government of Canada. This represents a 12 percent increase over \$7.6 billion in 1981-82. Estimated contributions for 1983-84 to total \$9.3 billion, an increase of 10 percent.)

	Family cost/month	Daily hospital charge	Extra billing
BC	32	8.50	none
AB	28	20 (Jan)	extensive
SK	—	—	moderate
MB	—	—	minimal
ON	54	—	extensive
PQ	—	—	none
NB	—	6	minimal
NS	—	—	moderate
PEI	—	—	minimal
NFLD	—	5	minimal

Association mismanaged

from page 3

Finance Manager Ryan Beebe who went through the ASA records at their request.

Nobody seems to know where the remaining \$95 went to and even some of the money which was 'accounted for' is under question.

Says ASA Secretary Opazo, "We really don't know what the money was spent on, we only know when and where it was spent."

Sheila Brown comments, "It's not that we think the money wasn't spent on legitimate things - we just don't have receipts and documentation."

"Gunnar failed to keep any ledgers, receipts or records."

Asked why nobody was acting as a watchdog on Gunnar's activities recently resigned ASA treasurer Allan Johnson replied,

"We didn't feel we needed one. We didn't anticipate the amount of Gunnar's activity in the summer."

Brown adds, "We had no reason to believe this would occur."

Councillor Don Davies does not lay the blame solely on Blodgett. "Every one of those people (the ASA executive) are in part responsible."

And there is yet another twist to this sorry tale of ASA ineptness. Last August, Blodgett rented a photocopier for ASA use at a cost of \$450... of his own money.

Blodgett failed to go through the proper ASA channels in his purchase of the machine - and nobody on the executive knew the details of the acquisition.

Blodgett thought in signing the contract he was signing a rent-

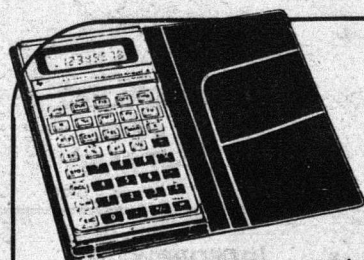
to-own agreement. Later investigation by other ASA executive members proved this was not true, the contract was solely a rental agreement.

Blodgett explains this, "I never read the contract." Blodgett also thought he was getting a coin-operated copier. This was not the case.

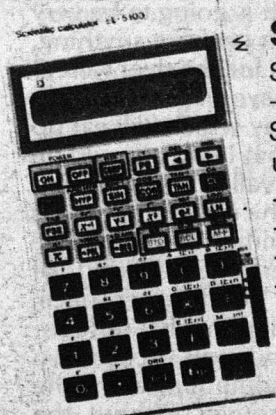
The ASA returned the copier about one month after its acquisition.

Secretary Jaime Opazo describes Blodgett's chances of being reimbursed by the ASA as "unlikely."

Students' Council representative Brian Wolfman describes the whole affair optimistically and says, "I think they (the ASA executive) have learned from their mistakes and will be more careful in the future."



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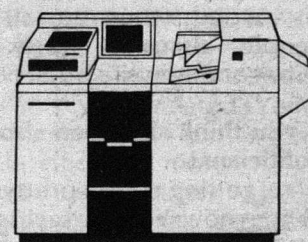
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