

the people of Ontario can see what exactly is in store for them after the election tomorrow?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Official Opposition critic that there is no letter to table because no letter has been sent. I cannot table something which has not been sent. I do have a copy of the letter from the Premier to the doctors, and what the Premier says in this letter—and this has been the position of the Ontario Government and was the position of the former Government as well—is that doctors negotiate with their provincial Government or through the hospital service if that is the system the province has established. I do not know if he has it, but if he checks the letter the Hon. Member will find clearly that the Premier gives the doctors the right to opt out of OHIP, a position that was accepted by all Parties in the Canada Health Act. So there is no letter to table because there was none received.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Ontario, Mr. Miller, has indicated that he is in the process of negotiating a lesser penalty than that which was stipulated under the Canada Health Act. Why is the Minister now going to back off the principle that he and his Party agreed to under the Canada Health Act when they were in opposition? Will he live up to those responsibilities and protect the interests of Ontario, because we can clearly see that the Premier of Ontario is going to allow extra billing in that province?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, again my hon. friend should take a look at what he is asking and what has happened. If he looks at extra billing in Ontario at the end of the first year, which was April 1, he will find that the amount of extra billing today compared with that of a year ago, without any legislation in Ontario, has dropped. The amount withheld per month was based on that first year's calculation of extra billing. Obviously, if there is a reduction in extra billing, as we hope there will be, whether it be in Ontario or other provinces where the same trend is occurring, then the amount withheld would have to be less. That is the discussion we are having, and I say to the Hon. Member that I intend to continue those discussions on Friday with a newly elected majority Progressive Conservative Government of Ontario.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PREMIER'S LETTER TO DOCTORS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): I do not know what the Minister has been smoking, but I have a question for him on the same subject.

Some Hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Ontario has said that the extra billing fine the people of Ontario are

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paying, which is costing the ordinary people of Ontario about \$1 million a week, is not harmful to the medical health system of Ontario. Those are Premier Miller's words. Does the Minister not agree that the system now in place in Ontario, which costs the average person, cumulatively, about \$1 million a week, is harmful to that province?

● (1425)

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I know what I have not been smoking. I do not know whether it is the Jamaican cigars or the Cuban cigars that he is smoking that are making him ask that kind of question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp (Provencher): The Hon. Member may have a bent for a centralized system for everything. Under the Canada Health Act and health care in Saskatchewan, the fundamental principle is for the provinces to have the right of delivery of the system.

The Hon. Member has asked me to express an opinion, but I will not do that. It is the responsibility of the provinces to deal with their doctors and to deliver the system. That is the principle on which I function and the manner in which I will continue.

COST TO PROVINCE OF EXTRA BILLING

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, a Bill which was brought before the previous Parliament was supported by all Parties precisely because we saw that national leadership was required to deal with certain provinces if we were to maintain a universal system of medicare.

In light of the concern that was expressed in Parliament on the need to maintain a universal system at reasonable cost for the people of Canada, would the Minister consider the outrageous statement made by the Premier of Ontario that \$1 million a week is nothing to the people of Ontario? If he thinks it is significant, will he take steps to introduce an escalating system of punishment for a province that does not maintain a low cost and universal system of medicare?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): The Leader of the NDP probably does not understand this, or chooses not to understand it the day before the election.

Mr. Gauthier: Don't be arrogant.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): I mean that. I am sure that he would like to get an answer from a federal Minister which would be seen as interference in a provincial system. I will not do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp (Provencher): The Government would like to see the elimination of extra billing. There is no change in that. During the days of the Diefenbaker Government, when Mr. Douglas was Premier of Saskatchewan, there was a similar