

should support more research, particularly among women, and maybe it would help to supply more money.

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HEALTH

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the minister of health.

The joint meeting of the federal-provincial ministers of health and finance is extremely important for the survival of our national medicare program. It is no secret that the minister's colleagues are primarily concerned about the unilateral federal withdrawal from the cost-shared partnership in financing health care.

Does the minister agree with the statement by the Newfoundland minister of health, Chris Decker, that the federal government cannot afford a universal health care system or, in the words of Mr. Decker: "They talk about it but they cannot deliver"?

What has happened to the federal government's commitment and obligations under medicare to all Canadians?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong when he says that the provinces are particularly upset by the unilateral withdrawal of resources.

If he looks at information that we released in September in Winnipeg, all the provinces, except Quebec because it was not there, but including British Columbia agreed at the time that the problem is not a question of money. Once again, it is the most expensive public system in the world. We have to use the resources we have. In that respect we work with the provinces and continue to do that in light of the fact that we can improve the management and the system and keep the best system in the world.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the same minister.

The minister of health for B.C. said: "I think medicare is being threatened and largely responsible are the federal cuts in transfer payments to the provinces". The National Council on Welfare, the government's own advisory group, has calculated that the cuts to the federal financing formula for health will amount to more than \$60 billion by the year 2000.

Oral Questions

Can the minister tell the House what kind of a health care system will result from these unilateral cuts? Will it be a patchwork with different standards in each province, including user fees, higher premiums, extra billing by doctors or a two-tiered U.S. style health care system?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many times I have to tell the member that there were no cuts. There were reductions in the way we transfer payments. Of course, that is the usual language of the NDP and we are used to that. I would appreciate having the same kind of interesting question I got from the member for Nepean.

I repeat, \$60 billion in the health care system in Canada is a lot of money. It is the most expensive in the world. We are trying to work within those resources. I can say that the provinces are encouraged to do that. I will continue to work with the provinces which want to work in that respect.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is to the same minister.

Can the minister explain how medicare can still be considered a cost-shared program when the federal share has declined from 50 per cent in 1980 under successive Liberal and Tory governments to 31 per cent that it is today? How much lower will the federal share shrink in the remaining three years of the present freeze? Will it be 25 per cent, 20 per cent, 15 per cent or even lower?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that maybe the direct transfer payments have been reduced, but the tax points have increased since 1982-83, which means that we give more money today than we gave 10 years ago.

The meeting tonight between the ministers of finance and the ministers of health will not be to say we will put in a billion dollars more. We will be there to determine how we can keep the system working the way it does, keeping in mind that we have to protect the system in light of the fact that we have reduced resources at the federal level. The ministers agree with that. They agreed last September and they will continue to agree.