

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
CO-OPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI

Madam Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of the House to the presence in our gallery of His Excellency Mr. Edouard Nzambimana, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of the Republic of Burundi.

* * *

[English]

MEDICAL CARE

EXTRA BILLING BY PHYSICIANS

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. However, she is not in the House today, and we have been told by an assistant in her office, Miss Anita Biguzs, that we will no longer know when the minister is coming to the House unless we give her the content of our questions ahead of time.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mrs. Mitchell: That's undemocratic and it is disgusting.

Mr. Murphy: Therefore, under those circumstances, I will put my question to the Prime Minister. Right now we have five provinces that are levying user fees. We have three provinces that are charging a premium increase each year for medicare, and \$55 million is coming from Canadian taxpayers' pockets for extra billing. Will the federal government support universal health care services by amending the Medical Care Act to eliminate all forms of extra billing?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I would not want to pre-empt the minister on this question. However, I have to remind the hon. member of the New Democratic Party that the law concerning medicare was adopted in this House after agreement with the provinces. The hon. member will recall that the Constitution does not authorize the federal government unilaterally to legislate on the delivery of medical services. The law was a compromise reached with the provinces. I personally think that the minister was very successful in moving the provinces closer to our view on this matter that extra billing should be frowned upon. If we could legislate that, I would be happy to hear from the New Democratic Party under what section of the Constitution they would contemplate legislation.

● (1440)

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT TAKE ACTION

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. I should like to quote from the absent Minister of National Health and Welfare who is on record as saying, "if you allow surcharges to the system, very soon medicare will collapse". Despite all legal

arguments, we have had the minister saying on a number of occasions that she will not allow extra billing. If that is the position of the government, if that is really the position of the government, then do not call conferences; start the constitutional process.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Well, Madam Speaker, the hon. minister is on record, as is the government, as feeling that extra billing is regrettable and should be dispensed with.

An hon. Member: Withhold it.

Mr. Trudeau: I put the question to the hon. member that the Constitution does not permit us to legislate in this area. We can only proceed by agreement. I have heard a member of the New Democratic Party shout across the way that we should withhold the money. If that is the position of the New Democratic Party, no doubt it would have effect. It would destroy medicare and extra billing with it. If that is the policy of the hon. member, or if they have some secret approach to the Constitution which will permit us to legislate in areas of health delivery, I would like to hear them.

* * *

PUBLIC WORKS

TASK FORCE REPORT ON PAYMENT OF GRANTS TO
MUNICIPALITIES IN LIEU OF TAXES

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Public Works. In almost all ridings and municipalities in Canada there is federal property in respect of which the Minister of Public Works annually makes a grant in lieu of real property taxes. The House will recall that Bill C-4 passed on July 15, 1980. The House will also recall that a task force, chaired by Mr. Isodore Pollack, was formed and was asked to consider two questions which arose in committee study—first, the right of municipalities to appeal from the discretionary powers of the minister in respect of assessed value of properties and, second, the right to appeal from certain exclusions from grants in lieu of taxes.

Could the minister tell us whether the task force has made its final report? If it has, could the minister tell us what conclusions were reached and what measures he intends to take to implement the recommendations?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. It will give me an opportunity of responding to other members on both sides of the House who took an interest in the legislation and the issues which were raised in the question. That study has been prepared and made available to my ministry. In committee deliberations I indicated that that report would be made available to the committee. I intend to make it available to the committee, and all hon. members will have an opportunity to