

*Oral Questions*

ment of Alberta, and whether or not she has any contingency plans, either by amendment or regulation, to address this issue should the Government of Alberta proceed in this way?

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the Member's impatience to see the Canada Health Act fully implemented and respected. However, in the case to which he is referring, it is not a runaround by the Government of Alberta. Rather, it is a document from officials which has been leaked, and the Alberta Minister of Health has denied it. I must go by his word. In theory, if a province were to try to bypass the law of Canada by declaring residents of a province to be non-residents, it would be an obvious case against the Canada Health Act. My officials are monitoring the situation daily.

## PROPOSED NATIONAL HEALTH COUNCIL

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might also ask the Minister a question with respect to the implementation of the Canada Health Act. Perhaps she could bring the House up to date on her plans for a national health conference out of which might come a national health council as recommended by the Canadian Nurses' Association and other groups. How are those plans proceeding? Can we expect that that kind of event is being organized and will happen shortly, so that we can get on with the debate about the future of medicare?

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes, we are working on it, but the top priority for my Department and myself in which we are investing most of our efforts and energies is the drafting of the regulations and the consultations with the provinces about the regulations under the Canada Health Act. Today I sent draft regulations to the provinces. That is my first priority. A small group of people within the Department has already started working on the next step, which is a national health conference. As soon as the work on the regulations is done we will invest all of our time and energy in this very important project.

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## PUBLIC SERVICE

## COMPUTERIZED PAYMENT OF SALARIES

**Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. What were the results of the test project on direct funds transfer, whereby public servants' salaries were not paid by cheque but were paid directly into their bank accounts by computer hookup? Does the Government plan to extend the use of direct funds transfer?

● (1500)

**Hon. Herb Gray (President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, the pilot projects have not been completed. They are

carried out on a very limited basis in a way which is voluntary for the public servants involved. We have not made a decision to extend these projects across the Public Service. A decision will not be made until the pilot projects have been completed and the results have been thoroughly evaluated.

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## FINANCE

## ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO TAXES

**Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance, who is presently getting a Sports Pool tip on what to buy.

My question is not related to the Sports Pool. It is related to the task force report on alcohol and tobacco tax indexation. In early May the Minister stated in a press release that he would make a decision on the task force report after the Ontario and Quebec provincial Budgets were brought down. Now that both of those Budgets have been tabled—without any increases in alcohol taxation and only a minor increase in tobacco taxation in Quebec—can the Minister honour the commitment which he made in his process release? Can he tell the House and the industry what recommendations of the task force report he is prepared to consider or he is prepared to agree with?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that I will study the task force report. As the Hon. Member said, there was a tax increase on cigarettes in the Budget of the Province of Quebec. I am also considering the implications of that tax and will make my decision public in due time.

[English]

## REQUEST THAT TAXES NOT BE INDEXED

**Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton):** Mr. Speaker, it is because of this type of delay that the tourism industry is suffering so badly. I wish the Minister would act. He promised a decision after the Budgets were tabled. Those Budgets have now been tabled. May I ask the Minister if he could at least assure the tourism industry that the present unfair and unproductive *ad valorem* tax will not be indexed to the CPI, in order to give the industry some breathing room this year?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps one of the best ways the Hon. Member might make himself useful to the tourist industry would be to stop being ridiculous by making the kind of allegations we have just heard.

**An Hon. Member:** Ah, come on!