

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**HEALTH CARE**

## EXTRA BILLING—ONTARIO ELECTION CAMPAIGN

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. The federal Government has been burying every issue it can which might publicly embarrass the provincial Conservative Party in Ontario. We have received no straight answers for the delay in the presentation of the Budget by the Minister of Finance, for the potential gas tax increases, or for the situation regarding the import quotas on Japanese automobiles.

This morning, from a letter written by Premier Frank Miller to the doctors of Ontario, we learned that we do not have the straight story in this House about secret negotiations between the Province of Ontario and the federal Government on extra billing by doctors. Would the Deputy Prime Minister tell us why the Government is denying this Parliament the reasons and the facts? Is it to protect the very shaky position of the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario?

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Prime Minister—the Leader of the Opposition that—

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** That might be the best forecast the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to hear, but his future is probably behind him.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition that he is wrong when he says that there are secret negotiations. He is absolutely wrong. There are negotiations on this basis: after the election of this Government I met with all the Health Ministers and subsequently we have been meeting on the issue of the interpretation of the Canada Health Act, which had not been completed, and the regulations, and we have been meeting on the future of the health care system. I believe that is a responsibility I have.

For too long, I think, health care in Canada has been a battle zone rather than a co-operative area between the provinces and the federal Government. So I say to the right hon. gentleman that there are no secret negotiations, but there is very much an approach of co-operation between all provinces and this Government.

## POSITION OF ONTARIO PREMIER

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, Premier Miller has told the voters in the Province of Ontario that he has not made up his mind about extra billing. But in a letter he wrote to the doctors of Ontario he said that

the right to extra bill is a “symbolic principle”—those are his words for “sacred trust”—even for doctors who choose to take part in OHIP. Would the Minister of National Health and Welfare tell us what the Premier of Ontario has said to him in private about his intentions with respect to extra billing? And would he reveal to this House the position of the federal Government with respect to any initiatives which Mr. Miller might take to further extra billing?

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to do so. First, I have had no negotiations with Premier Miller, nor has he asked me to have any negotiations with him. As I said to the right hon. gentleman in my first answer, I have been meeting with the Minister of Health for Ontario, as I have been meeting with all other Ministers of Health, both in the provinces and the Territories, on the issues which I have already explained.

• (1420)

I want to inform the right hon. gentleman that the Canada Health Act, which was supported by this Party when we were in opposition, and which is the policy of this Government today, does not outlaw extra billing. What it allows for is a withholding of funds if extra billing is continued in the province, or if there are user fees.

## AGENDA FOR MEETING OF MINISTERS

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I, of course, accept the word of the Hon. Minister. However, the Premier of Ontario has been telling audiences that he has been hopefully negotiating the province out of extra billing penalties. He has been saying that quite consistently across the province. He has been writing to doctors that he intends to allow extra billing. Therefore, my question is: why has the topic of extra billing been eliminated from the agenda of federal and provincial Health Ministers for the next meeting of those Ministers on May 16 and May 17?

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to ask questions, but it would be much more helpful if those questions were not based totally on speculation, or involved a fishing expedition. May I tell the right hon. gentleman that the issue of extra billing and user fees is an integral part of the Canada Health Act, and that is the first item on our agenda on May 16 and May 17.

## REQUEST THAT CORRESPONDENCE BE TABLED

**Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed as well to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. We have had the revelation that the Premier of Ontario is telling the people of Ontario one thing publicly, tells the doctors of Ontario something different in a letter, and is failing to protect the interests of the people of Ontario who are very worried about extra billing. Therefore, will the Minister do the honourable thing and at least table the correspondence between his Department and the Premier of Ontario's office so