

Oral Questions

provinces, we are trying to maintain—as the Leader of the Opposition said, and I agree with him—the main criteria for the system, with the knowledge that the capacity to finance the system is there, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question of the minister. In the discussions he is having with the provinces at this moment, will the minister tell them very clearly that there is absolutely no possibility in Canada that we will go for user fees in medicare for Canadians and that hospitals in Canada are for sick people, not for rich people and that this very important regime will remain as it is for the benefit of all Canadians?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, all the provinces in light of the resources we provide are subjected to the Canada Health Act which directly forbids any province charging what we call a user fee. There is no problem at that level. We would have to amend the legislation to be able to do that.

To the credit of the provinces also, we have to say they are trying to do a lot, trying to manage the resources they have in spite of increasing costs. It increased during the eighties about 12 per cent, which is too much for the capacity we have to pay today.

We give the guarantee that the law will not be amended, that we will keep it. At the same time, Canadians have to know, and I think they share this view, that all efforts have to be made to protect the best system in the world, but within their capacity they have to pay for it.

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BREAST CANCER

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of health.

This week's report on breast cancer highlights a social problem of near epidemic proportions. Last year, this government gave the Medical Research Council \$849,000 and only \$189,000 of that money went to direct research for breast cancer.

Will the minister and this government recognize that funding for this research is a matter of urgency and provide the recommended funding now that is recommended in this report?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I gave an answer to the same kind of question to my friend from British Columbia yesterday.

I said we definitely have to look at all the questions of research on cancer and breast cancer in a particular way. I repeat what I said yesterday. I believe that all those issues dealing with women and health have been seen too many times from a man's perspective.

Having said that, the hon. member has to know, and it is easy to know, that funding for breast cancer is not predetermined. We can fund \$3 million, \$4 million or \$5 million now if the project submitted to NHRDP and the Medical Research Council has the quality to warrant funding. Yes, I am ready to give more money and to at least consider the possibility if it can be confirmed that any project dealing with breast cancer has been turned down because of a problem with money.

It never happened to my knowledge or to the knowledge of the Medical Research Council.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, yes, I heard the minister's comments yesterday. If you ask any pure scientist, \$189,000 is not enough money.

There are five women whom I know in the Pratt family, two with breast cancer and three of them very high risk. We know that cancer runs in families. We know that there is a shortage of radiation technologists. We know there is a shortage of radiation equipment. We know there is not enough research money and this is a women's issue.

Will the minister indicate to this House what this government's action plan is going to be to deal with this very serious situation?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, once again, I think that I confirmed twice yesterday and again today that I am ready to listen and look at what we can do. Immediately I see a kind of slippage of the member when she says we have to provide more equipment. She knows that at that level the provinces have full responsibility and the federal level cannot go to the province of Ontario and say it will supply equipment.

Once again, I repeat what I said, we have to be more sensitive to breast cancer particularly. I am ready to look at the full report provided yesterday and to do my best. We have not predetermined money. Maybe \$800,000 is not enough, but it has not been determined by the department or by the Medical Research Council. It is based on projects submitted by researchers. Maybe we