

*Oral Questions*

Immediately after last week's meeting of the federal and provincial ministers on medicare, the minister publicly questioned the high cost of providing medicare to the elderly.

Could the minister please indicate to the House why he has singled out the elderly? Does he not understand that these people have paid for medicare all their working lives so they would not have to worry about some government in their future deciding they are too old to be taken care of?

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, that is quite an extension to what I said last Thursday.

I will explain to my colleague that first, figures were provided by the province of Manitoba minister which showed that 50 per cent of the cost to the health care system is due to costs for people over 70 years of age. But I said, and he should know this, that there is no way the health care system which we have today, based on the five principles, will not apply to senior citizens. It means that any request for care by a senior citizen under the Canada Health Act will be provided. There is no reason to make any cuts.

We must consider the appropriateness of the ways and means we use money at all levels, particularly at this one. It does not mean that the ministers said there would be cuts. They said they will make an analysis of expenses to see the way to do it.

I repeat what I said, I confirm and I will always say that the five principles will apply, particularly to senior citizens.

**Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister. The minister will know that when he introduces facts like 50 per cent of the cost goes to people over the age of 70, those people are sitting there listening to the minister speak and are very concerned about whether or not they are going to be under additional pressure.

The minister will also know that he has a responsibility to all Canadians under the Canada Health Act, despite pressures coming from the provinces, to defend medicare for everyone.

I would ask the minister to assure the House that he is not about to introduce any amendments to increase the so-called flexibility to the provinces.

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I repeat, I never said that.

May I ask the member something? How does he think the senior citizens consider a member who, when the minister said something is not true, repeats time after time that the minister said that? What do we call that kind of member?

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[Translation]

**FRENCH-LANGUAGE COLLEGES IN ONTARIO**

**Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State. Last week, the Government of Ontario announced at the convention of the *Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario* that the provincial government intended to help fund two French-language colleges in Ontario. When will the federal government also announce that it is taking part?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Secretary of State of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, negotiations not only with the Government of Ontario but also with other governments are going well. Agreements in principle have been negotiated. Funding, specifically the amounts to be allocated, is being discussed. The government will make an announcement on this in a reasonable time, further to the discussions that have taken place so far.

[English]

**Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair):** Mr. Speaker, there is great concern in the francophone community in Ontario about the fact that some 50 per cent of those who participate at the elementary and secondary level drop out at the post-secondary level. They are anxious to know when this government is going to make its announcement that it has committed itself, as has the Ontario government, to the quick initiation of these two colleges.

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Secretary of State of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, negotiations have been ongoing for six to eight months with Ontario, as they have with other provinces. They are going very well and I think we have reached an agreement in principle on all the issues. The