

Oral Questions

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, there is not within the allocations that have been made sufficient takeup to take all the money. I expect there will be other opportunities for reallocation. In that situation we certainly are committed to proceeding with the highway 416 project. It will be up to the province to bring forward a proposal within the Canada-Ontario infrastructure works program to do so.

• (1435)

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

The Canada-Ontario infrastructure program specifically states that all programs are to be initiated by the municipalities and, moreover, that all projects are to be financed equally by the municipality, the province and the federal government.

Why has the minister committed funding to a project that is clearly outside the restrictions of his own program in the case of highway 416?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, there are different agreements in each province. There are many projects in different provinces initiated by the provinces. We did allow for that possibility, not entirely the municipalities.

It would take an amendment to the agreement which the Ontario government would have to propose in order to provide this. It would be completely in accordance with the goals, the objectives and the criteria of the infrastructure works program which is quite successful right across the country. If the Ontario government wants to do it, we are prepared to be there with it.

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[*Translation*]

NATIONAL FORUM ON HEALTH

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister, who claimed that the National Forum on Health would give us the opportunity to discuss the precarious situation of the health-care system and enable us to find solutions to the existing problems. We have learned that the forum might be postponed.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that the National Forum on Health will be postponed as a result of the criticisms expressed by the provinces, which were excluded from this consultation process, although they are mainly responsible for health care?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we had many consultations. The Minister of Health had consultations with the provinces and, at one point, the ministers even established a committee of five ministers to make sugges-

tions to her. She received these suggestions and included them in her proposal for next month.

All of a sudden, the provinces came up with other suggestions. Since we are a very flexible government, we said that we would look at their other suggestions. If, unfortunately, a few extra weeks are needed before we hold the conference, we are ready to delay it because we were elected for five years and we will not complain about another five weeks.

However, I would like to point out that the Minister of Health held consultations. She received a report prepared by five ministers. I think she accepted all of their requests, and they then asked for other things. Of course, we will look at what they want, but I am not ready to blame the Minister of Health. On the contrary, I wish to commend her for listening to the provinces and including their studies in her proposal. All of a sudden, they found her too flexible and asked for more concessions. I am certain that she will study their requests and, if they are reasonable, she will accept them.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister confirm that the federal government, whose goal is to centralize, directly harms the provinces by trying to impose national standards while withdrawing financially?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, frankly, it is a word I have been hearing in this House since 1963. Every time members want to speak against the federal government, they say it wants to centralize, when there has been such a major decentralization that Canada has become one of the most decentralized countries, like Switzerland. But we are still willing to look at suggestions. We have a national health act passed by this Parliament, which requires us to offer free, universal and publicly administered health-care services so that we do not have hospitals for the rich and other hospitals for the poor. That is the goal we will continue to pursue with the conference on health that I will chair.

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[*English*]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

I have in my possession lists of prisoners in federal penitentiaries that are receiving old age security, Canada pension plan and GST rebates. Among these lists are murderers, rapists and thieves that get room and board, education and recreational facilities in addition to old age security.

These are better benefits than many senior citizens are receiving. Could the Solicitor General explain to Canadians, in particular the senior citizens of our country, why in the world the government treats criminals better than our senior citizens?