

reference to the Minister's refusal, or certainly negligence, in not complying with the requirements of the Canada Health Act in ensuring that all provincial governments are not breaking the Act by charging user fees. There is a specific reference that the Minister of National Health and Welfare is negligent in not reporting to Parliament on specific requests from Members.

I submit that certainly as a Member of Parliament and critic for Health and Welfare, my privileges are being abused when I cannot get the basic information from the Minister about how many provinces are charging user fees, in what areas they are charging user fees and how much it is costing the people of Canada.

The Auditor General's report indicates that Canadians are paying user fees in the millions of dollars, and the Minister's refusal to provide this information to Parliament is in breach—

Mr. Speaker: Of course, I hesitate to interrupt the Hon. Member but I felt that her remarks were getting well beyond what was the actual question of privilege.

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member has expressed some points of view which simply do not square with the facts or my responsibilities under the Canada Health Act. The Canada Health Act came into effect in July, 1984, and contained provisions that did not make illegal either extra billing or user fees.

The act provided that an amount of money commensurate with that collected through extra billing or user charges by any given province would have to be withheld by the federal Government, relative to the amount of money collected under those two terms.

I became Minister on September 17, 1984. No province at that time had been in conformity with those two provisions under the Canada Health Act. Specifically, there had been no changes prior the passage of the act. The federal Government indicated that it would first reduce the amount of acrimony and division between the federal Government and the provincial governments in the area of health. Therefore, I discussed exactly that fact with provincial Ministers of Health.

Today, and in fact prior to the end of the three-year hiatus period for which the Act provided, there is not one province today reporting extra billing. There is not one province today reporting user charges. Therefore, under the terms of the act, that money is not being withheld.

Second, the Auditor General stated that I had to make an annual report, which I have done.

I could go another route, and perhaps this is what the Hon. Member is suggesting, that I now ask the new Minister for health in Ontario, for example, to report on a daily, weekly or monthly basis on how the province is running its health care system. Is the province meeting its obligations under the health

care system? What I am doing is asking provincial Ministers of health to give me a report and, under all Parliamentary traditions and rules, when our provincial Ministers, our provincial colleagues, our federal Ministers, our federal colleagues, put their reports on the Parliamentary table, it is accepted as their word, and I intend to do that, too.

• (1510)

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to remind the Minister that I asked him on April 12, 1987, for a list. I have been waiting ever since. He promised it to me.

I would like the Speaker, in making his decision on this matter, to refer to Section 12.146 of the Auditor General's report in which the Auditor General is very specific about the faulty reporting mechanisms of the Department of National Health and Welfare. He suggests that because the Operational Plan Framework contains no reference to non-insured health benefits, despite the fact that they represent 40 per cent of this activity's costs, that information to Parliament about the \$400 million Indian and Northern Health Services activity is inadequate.

It is the Auditor General who has suggested that the Ministry is deficient in reporting to Parliament and it was, indeed, the Minister himself who gave me a commitment last April that he was going to provide Parliament with the tools with which we can examine whether in fact the Canada Health Act is being complied with. We believe that there are breaches going on under the nose of the Minister because he is trying to shield the provinces rather than laying all the facts on the table for Parliament to make a judgment.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) has raised a matter and I have, of course, listened carefully. The Hon. Minister has replied. I am not completely satisfied that it is a question of privilege. However, I will, out of courtesy to the Hon. Member, consider carefully the *Hansard* report of the exchange and shall return to the Chamber with the matter as soon as it is appropriate.

I thank the Hon. Member for Hamilton East and I also thank the Hon. Minister for rising in his place and putting his own explanation of this matter at the service of the Chair.

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PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED ACCUSATION BY MEMBER

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I rise with relation to a question of privilege of which I gave notice earlier today pursuant to Section 20(2) of the rules of procedure. My question relates to statements made by the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) during and immediately after Question Period yesterday. I raise this question of privilege at the