

Oral Questions

You cannot tell me that people who are waiting 48 hours to get into an ICU are not suffering. They are suffering. Go into the hospitals and find out. I will take you by the hand and show you.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to please address the Chair in his comments and I would ask him to put his question.

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, because of the void that we have, private companies are now having to offer to people on waiting lists to get their medical services done in the United States. Canadians are forced to pay for private insurance to have this done.

• (1440)

Will the minister amend the Canada Health Act to enable the provinces to get their health care financing under control?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I will not hold his hand. Second, I have not heard this much self-serving rhetoric in a long time.

We do not have to amend the Canada Health Act to allow the provinces to get their fiscal houses in order. As a matter of fact, it is very important that we maintain the principles of the Canada Health Act as we all get our fiscal houses in order so that we can remember who we are here to represent. It is the people, all kinds of people; wealthy people, sick people and everyone else in the country.

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[Translation]

PURCHASE OF EH-101 HELICOPTERS

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The Canadian government is currently negotiating with the Agusta company the compensation to be paid following the cancellation of the EH-101 helicopter contract worth in excess of \$5 billion, which, despite the cancellation, has already cost half a billion dollars. As a result of the investigation into the murder of a Belgian government minister, Agusta is now in hot water in Belgium for allegedly paying \$12 million in bribes in connection with a contract to purchase helicopters for the Belgian army.

Given the allegations of corruption made against Agusta, does the Prime Minister promise to suspend all negotiations with this company until the government has completed a judicial inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the EH-101 contract agreement, as the Minister of Human Resources Development called for on April 13, 1993?

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, negotiations have indeed been undertaken but, since legal

proceedings are under way, I think it would be inappropriate to comment publicly at this time.

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that the Prime Minister would answer my question. I do not think it is inappropriate to initiate discussions.

Since Agusta is under investigation in Belgium and Italy for influence-peddling, corruption and arms smuggling, how can the Prime Minister justify continuing negotiations with Agusta without first looking into this company's profits in the Canadian helicopter deal?

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, in the preamble to his question, my hon. colleague said that discussions should be held, but a little later he says that negotiations should not be undertaken. He should first make up his mind; then, we will talk.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

When the public service downsizing initiative was announced last month, the government committed to ensuring that departmental officials at the local level would be given the flexibility necessary to adjust staff and program requirements prior to final regulation and legislative proposals.

Would the minister please update members on what steps have been taken to ensure that local management has the ability to respond to individual and community needs in the downsizing exercise?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in carrying out the downsizing which has been necessitated by the reduction in programs and services arising from the government's need to meet its deficit reduction targets, we have established labour-management committees in different communities across the country to help assist our employees in their adjustment from the public to the private sector.

Furthermore, we have given flexibility to the departments. I would trust that the departments would consult with regional councils so that the downsizing can be managed within the context of a region as well as meeting the needs which are set out in the budget.

Let me assure the hon. member that we will deal with our employees, those who are departing and those who are remaining, in a fair and reasonable way.