

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that all these things are done all the time in consultation and collaboration with the provinces.

We have many meetings with them trying to co-ordinate the actions of all the governments so the people of Canada can have very good services in health, education and in the welfare system.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The Minister of Human Resources Development continues to claim, and I quote: "That is the whole point of consolidating the existing transfer system, to give the provinces the freedom of choice to look at programming which suits the individual needs of their own areas. At the same time, it is a national program. There are basic conditions and those conditions must be met".

Does the Prime Minister realize that this federalism, based on the imposition of national standards, is radically opposed to Quebec's wish to have control over the intervention tools, particularly in the manpower training sector?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not at all. Under the proposed consolidated transfer the provinces will have a great deal of flexibility in choosing priorities as to which issues they wish to handle and how they wish to handle them.

Moreover, as we have put in the omnibus bill, there are some basic fundamental principles such as those contained presently in the Canada Health Act or those presently in the Canada assistance plan which protect residency requirements that provide the bear minimum requirements we expect the provinces to adhere to.

When it comes to choosing programs or priorities it is up to the provinces. We are giving them the flexibility to make those as opposed to many of the restrictions that held back provinces from doing the kind of innovative work they wanted to do which was clearly and explicitly put forward as one of the assessments and recommendations from the House of Commons committee which assessed this problem as part of the social review.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government's position includes two components. The first one talks about flexibility, while the second one provides that, if necessary, national standards will be applied to other social programs.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to convene a federal-provincial conference to inform the provinces that, from now on, his government will impose its views, not through its spending power, but by making deeper cuts in the transfers, if the national standards are not complied with?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development will consult the provinces on his reforms. We are currently reviewing the committee report on this issue. In the coming weeks and months, the minister will hold bilateral meetings with his provincial counterparts.

If necessary, and if he feels that it is everyone's wish to have a meeting of federal and provincial ministers, I am sure that the Minister of Human Resources Development will have no objection. Consultations will take place. We do not intend to act unilaterally. On the other hand, it is our responsibility to make sure that adequate services are provided to all Canadians.

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*[English]***MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT PENSIONS**

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, baseball is back and so am I. We will play some hardball.

On March 13, while I was away, I became a reluctant member of the Liberal's pork pension for life club, a club that will give the Deputy Prime Minister over \$2 million, my immigration minister friend over \$3 million and the new president of the CBC, Perrin Beatty, over \$5 million.

I want to opt out of this ludicrous plan. Yet under government guidelines I am trapped at the trough.

Will the government extend the opting out clause to include MPs with six or more years service, not just new MPs as it says?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very happy to see the hon. member back and in good health. She is sometimes better than her leader, so we are happy to have her here.

For the last six years that she has been here she has not minded being trapped. Now that she knows she is trapped she wants to get out. It is kind of a coincidence because we never heard about that when she was to be trapped.

This is a subject I find terribly disappointing. As of tomorrow I will have been a member of Parliament for 32 years. I have contributed to the pension plan 15 years too many. What I do not like about that kind of question is the implication that when one is a member of Parliament one does not earn every cent for the service one renders to one's constituents and the people of Canada.