

*Health Resources Fund Act*

We in the Progressive Conservative party believe that if we can ensure that federal policies give adequate weight to legitimate provincial concerns, we will have gone a long way toward easing the present tensions of the system of government which has created unnecessary conflict in Canada, and toward ensuring that a government and Parliament of Canada will be an accurate reflection of our current realities.

**Miss Bégin:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) agreed to accept a question at the end of his speech. For the majority of his speech, he did not refer to the Health Resources Fund but spoke of medical research. We agree that more money would be welcome in medical research. He spoke of the bill under consideration for only a few minutes, and in that time referred to a broken contract. I have tried to show in black and white that all contracts presented have been signed and have been fully honoured. I would like the hon. member to clarify his statement.

**Mr. Yewchuk:** Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the health resources fund was a commitment made in 1966 by the Liberal government of that day, for \$500 million to be allocated to the provinces for the various projects which I outlined in my speech. That commitment was made by the then federal government in good faith. That was before the current Prime Minister and minister came to office with their own approach to federal-provincial relations.

The provinces accepted that in good faith in 1966. They were instructed at that time that they had to present five-year plans and submit specific projects. They were told that if they abided by the rules set out by the federal government, the commitments at that time would be met. The minister has now broken those commitments. Regardless of how she tries to weasel out of it, she cannot escape the fact that a commitment was made to the provinces, and today that commitment is being broken.

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few comments on the speech just made by the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) who spoke first in this debate on behalf of his party. His speech today was like virtually every speech made by members of his party, either in this House or in committee, when estimates are being discussed. They always oppose the government's proposal for a reduction of funds, in this case for the health resources fund, and pledge, directly or implied, that a Conservative government would do more.

I have not been able to understand, and still cannot understand, how that party can propose to cut expenditures, as it has said it will, and reduce the number of people working for the federal government by 20,000 for each of three years, and at the same time oppose every suggestion made by the present government for reductions. There is a basic dishonesty in that approach to which the members of the Conservative party ought to give serious consideration.

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

**Mr. Yewchuk:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. I would not do so because I have made my comments, but he accuses us of dishonesty, something I do not like. I think he should withdraw that remark. If the hon. member had not been sleeping in his seat while I was speaking, he would have heard me outline how increased expenditures on research would save this country money in the future. Our approach is that you can reduce health care costs in the long term by increasing research in this country.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member that is not a point of order, but a point of debate.

**Mr. Orlikow:** As you correctly pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that was not a point of order but a point of debate. I am not saying that the hon. member for Athabasca was dishonest. I am saying there is something improper, incorrect and, I think, dishonest in the arguments constantly advanced by the members of the Progressive Conservative party. They would spend more money on medical research, scientific research, or cultural affairs, as the hon. member who has just left the House has said, or agriculture or anything else, and at the same time substantially reduce expenditures of the federal government without reducing the standard or level of service. I think they would find, as the Conservative government of Manitoba has found, that there is not that kind of fat in any of the government's operations, and that if they really propose to cut expenditures they must do it by cutting standards of service.

● (1642)

I want to spend most of my time dealing with this proposal which has been put forward by the government and explained by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin). I am sure she will not be surprised when I say we intend to vote against this bill. This bill is part of the cutback program announced by the government back in September of this year as part of its plan to defer, review, and cut back some \$29 million which would have been spent under the provisions of the Health Resources Fund Act passed more than ten years ago. Under these cutbacks a total of \$370 million was to be cut from federal-provincial programs. Cuts in such programs as the health resources fund amounted to \$150 million, along with \$220 in transfer programs between the federal and provincial governments. What the federal government has done by its recent action is this: it has already exceeded that cutback goal, and therefore we see no reason for proceeding with this bill. The minister shakes her head. She says no. We have the figures, however, and if she disagrees with them I am sure she will have plenty of time in which to disprove them.

The cutbacks to date are as follows: \$55 million in equalization grants, \$150 million by deferring the community services program, \$160 million by deferring the social services legislation, and \$25 million under the public utilities income tax transfer, making a total of \$390 million. Proceeding with this bill would increase the cuts by a further \$29.5 million, up to \$420 million.