

Oral Questions

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, first I have to say that the member is wrong. We have consulted about what has been implemented following the report by the Auditor General in 1987 on the lack of adequate management and control of the non-insured health benefits for aboriginal people.

We implemented a national program directive and administrative procedure coupled with implementation of an health information claims processing system under contract with Ontario Blue Cross. It is already being done in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Quebec and moving in Manitoba and phased in in other provinces.

Everything has been done normally. There is more resistance in Manitoba. We have had consultations and we will again. However, we will proceed.

Mrs. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister. He may have listened but I do not think the people were consulted. The contract for non-insured native health services was given to Blue Cross by selected tender. I am sure that was not the advice given. First Nations were not even offered a chance to bid.

In the last round of constitutional discussions the minister and his government claimed to have endorsed the inherent right to self-government. Can the minister explain how this new health policy furthers the cause of self-government?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I believe the government is always committed to self-government. That operation is not basically directed to applying that principle or not. This operation has been necessary because once again there was a lack of control in the way payments were made and information was given. Therefore, based on tenders provided, when Ontario Blue Cross won the contract we decided to move.

The aboriginal peoples have been involved. In Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec it is working normally. I believe that it should work normally in Manitoba where I admit we have more problems today. We are continuing to work with the leadership in the province.

My colleague will understand that to provide a better administration of what represents \$100 million for aboriginal people, the best way is the one we are presently using. We intend to continue to do that with the collaboration of the aboriginal people.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a question with the Prime Minister. Five years ago a federally funded report warned of an epidemic of child sexual abuse breaking out on the reserves in Manitoba. That report was ignored.

Today, sadly, on the Sandy Bay reserve there are over 50 cases of child sexual abuse pending. There is a continuing pattern of suicide among young people and the breakdown of families continues at an atrocious rate. The minister still refuses to respond to the pleas for help.

I want to appeal to the Prime Minister this afternoon to instruct the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to pay attention to these calls for help for better counselling, better treatment and better housing conditions so that we can break this vicious cycle of poverty affecting this native community and native communities right across Canada.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I have been informed of the problem raised by my colleague. I know the department of Indian affairs has been sensitive to the problem.

However, my hon. colleague knows that in the Department of National Health and Welfare the government recently decided to put up \$160 million in order to deal with the social problems in Indian communities particularly. Some of our targets relate particularly to family violence, child abuse and sexual abuse.

We are now working with the leadership of the aboriginal people and in that case I would like to assure my colleague that we will act very quickly.

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, recent events at Big Cove, at Davis Inlet and at numerous other communities across the country illustrate that aboriginal Canadians are crying out for our help, yet this cry is falling on deaf ears.