

country elevator, however, has gone a long way toward improving that situation.

I believe other things can be done of a minimal nature in trying to improve the system, but I do not see any basis for terminating the general approach of an open policy with regard to feed grains. I have told those who want to terminate it that they should first have an answer to the question we were asking in 1971 and 1972 as to how we could have fair pricing in feed grains across the country. If they come up with another solution to that problem which is superior to the open market system we now have, I would, of course, be happy to consider it.

**Mr. Murta:** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Are the government or the Canadian Wheat Board giving consideration to ideas being put forward in western Canada to introduce more competition at the elevator level in order to allow any aspect of the elevator companies to have more say in the control of boxcars, for example? This has been suggested by the United Grain Growers and one of the pool organizers. Is this idea being considered, and could the minister comment on whether anything will be done about it?

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, I would say, generally, that the whole question of the control of cars and the maximization of their use is under consideration, both because the consultants will be looking at that aspect and also because it is obviously of vital importance to the whole question of grain movement.

● (1502)

I think that over the years the Wheat Board has tended to give preference to non-board grain, because it was controlling the cars and did not want to appear to be favouring its own grain. With the importance of non-board grains of a variety of types, this becomes a questionable procedure and some alternatives may certainly be required in that regard.

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### NARCOTICS

#### BRITISH COLUMBIA—FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO REDUCE HEROIN ABUSE

**Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South):** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

On Friday, my colleague from Fraser Valley East asked the minister whether there were any federal funds available, or about to be made available, to the province of British Columbia to assist in the health entry program, a program for the treatment of heroin addicts. The minister indicated there were not. If that is so, why was it the former minister of justice, the hon. member for Vancouver Centre, stated four weeks ago that there would be money available, and why is it there is a letter to the former minister of justice from the attorney general of the province of British Columbia complaining that the word of the government has been broken in this regard?

### Oral Questions

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I think that part of the question which has to do with the accountability of my colleague, the former minister of justice, should be asked of him. I do not know what the statement was. I can explain my contribution and responsibility.

As Minister of National Health and Welfare for Canada, responsible for health in Canada and social services, I stated that there is no way in which we can give to one particular province an additional \$16 million—which was the original request—when, if I remember correctly, that province is now being given close to \$586 million in block funding for health purposes only, plus another amount for social services, which it can apply to any new hospital facilities it wishes to develop for the treatment of drug addicts.

Under what is really left to the federal government, namely, experimental development, I have offered to the province a special, additional fourth year extension of the program called Alternatives. That is what I referred to last Friday in this House.

**Mr. Fraser:** Under the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I will direct my supplementary question to the Deputy Prime Minister. Reports and information have been received that a commitment was made by the former minister of justice that there would be funds, not for the government's Alternatives program but for this particular program which British Columbia is launching because British Columbia has the largest number of heroin addicts in the country; consequently, it has incurred greater cost in dealing with them.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether the government, through the former minister, made a commitment, or did the government not make a commitment? I understand perfectly the problems of the Minister of National Health and Welfare; however, I think the people of British Columbia are entitled to know whether a commitment was made or not.

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council):** As far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, the situation is quite clear. The Minister of National Health and Welfare speaks for the government with respect to matters within her portfolio. She has already indicated the position with respect to her responsibility.

**Mr. Fraser:** With the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, the question directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare was not adequately answered; that is why it is now being put to the government.

The question remains, did a former minister of this government make a commitment to the province of British Columbia to assist, or did he not? Surely that is a question the Deputy Prime Minister can answer. That is the allegation; that is the suggestion; that is the information I have obtained. Surely the Deputy Prime Minister can give an answer to that question. I do not want to hear anything more from the Minister of National Health and Welfare, because she does not have an answer.