

Health Resources Fund Act

I mentioned earlier that about one-quarter of this fund has been allocated toward medical research. We already know from previous comments that I have made in this House along with other members, and indeed representatives of the research community both inside and outside of parliament, that funding of medical research has already been seriously eroded. Unsalvagable damage has been done to the research capability of this country as well. Numerous laboratories are idle. Hundreds of research workers have left the country, or have left their careers to do other things in order to keep body and soul together. Various technicians have been relieved of their duties and are on the unemployment rolls which are already bulging. In general, the policies of this government have been creating havoc in research and have caused stagnation in the general attitude toward research. In Montreal, the minister's own city, a researcher said last April that he was close to a breakthrough in successful eye transplants. However, he did not carry on his experiments any further because his laboratory was "broke". This researcher made a public appeal for funds in order that he could continue.

There is no doubt about it that biomedical research in Canada is in a critical phase. In my opinion, the minister's words sounded rather hollow, if not cynical, when she stated she wished the research community the best. On the one hand she is wishing the research community the best, and on the other she is cutting their throats. It seems to me that she cannot have it both ways. If she wishes them the best and understands the value of their work, she should not be cutting their throats.

I have mentioned that hundreds of research workers are out of work in Canada. As long as this government is in power nothing will be done about that. The reason that nothing will be done stems from the fact that perhaps research contributions in the past have not created enough political drama for this government. They have not given the government the kind of political expectations it expects, and the research community is therefore being dumped. It is time that this government realized that it is foolish to think that by cutting research spending, it will make significant savings in the health field. It has been proven, over and over during the past few years by various researchers, that spending on research is the only way that health care spending can be cut in the long run without reducing the effectiveness of the service. In fact, one can cut health care costs through research and improve the health care that is delivered to the Canadian people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yewchuk: That is exactly what this party wants to do. I hope it will have the chance to do that when the time comes following the next election.

Just to outline some examples, a well-known researcher in Saskatchewan has recently concluded a study which clearly shows that for every dollar invested in research today, ten years down the road \$20 will be saved in permanently reduced health care costs. If the minister is really concerned about

saving money on health care, it is obvious that research is the best way to accomplish that.

● (1632)

Cutting research is not a saving. Indeed, it increases the cost to the taxpayer. I will give some examples of what I mean by that. It cost \$41 million to develop the polio vaccine. That was the total cost. Since it has been in use in this country, since 1955, it has saved the people of Canada \$200 million per year. Just that one successful piece of research has saved this country more than four times the amount of the total expenditure on research each year since 1955. It is astonishing, to say the least, that any government that has the slightest concern about its people and the cost of health care would say it can save money by cutting research. That one example clearly shows that increasing spending on research is the only way to save money in the long run.

I will give another example. Measles immunization represents a saving of at least \$10 million per year in permanently reduced health care costs. Research on hemophilia, a bleeding disease, has saved \$20 million a year in hospitalization costs alone.

The research project on blindness in premature babies cost \$34,000. The annual saving from that research has been \$24,000 for every one dollar spent.

I could give a lot of other examples. However, I will just refer the minister to the speech I made on this subject in this place on October 30, 1978. If she reads that carefully, she will be more informed as to why cutting research funds is not the way to reduce health care costs in this country.

The role of government has changed drastically. With this change has developed increasing confusion about the relationship between national and provincial governments. Moreover, the responsibilities of both levels of government have become blurred, with tremendous overlapping and confrontation in inter-governmental relationships. I have already touched on that. Evidence of confrontation is the provincial reaction to the amendment to the Health Resources Fund Act now under discussion.

In a federal system, direct consultation among the responsible governments is essential as a means of ensuring that the goals of all governments are better integrated and more sensitive to the regional and national requirements. For a federal-provincial system of government to operate smoothly, effectively, and for the benefit of the people, there must be mutual respect between the provincial and federal governments. There must be a mutual feeling of trust.

The provinces need to trust the federal government. If the federal government makes a commitment, they need to rely on that in order to do their planning for the future. When the federal government takes the position that commitments are made to be broken, the feeling of trust breaks down. This is why the federal-provincial system has broken down and why unity in this country has been so shattered in the ten years of this regime.