

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 2, 1975

The House met at 11 a.m.

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

### SOCIAL SECURITY

#### ALLEGED DELAY OF FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE AND HIRING OF CONSULTANTS TO DETERMINE COST OF PROGRAMS

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Would one be right in stating that the federal-provincial conference on welfare had to be postponed to prevent the collapse of his welfare policy review program?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** No, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Is it true that even after the six meetings the minister had with his counterparts on the review and all the preparations, a proposal was made to them to retain the professional services of a group of consultants whose task would be to assess the cost in each province of the new programs proposed by the federal government? The purpose of the study would also be to determine to what extent the government is better able to supervise those new programs and many other elementary matters.

**Mr. Lalonde:** No, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

**Mr. Stanfield:** Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of National Health and Welfare make a statement on motions at his earliest convenience to inform the House precisely where matters stand? I ask this in view of reports coming out about the difficulty the minister is having and in view of the vast importance of this whole question to not only the taxpayers of Canada, but the people of Canada who may need to benefit from this program.

[Translation]

**Mr. Lalonde:** No, Mr. Speaker, but I shall be pleased to table the communiqué of the conference as soon as I can.

[English]

#### GUARANTEED ANNUAL INCOME—REASON FOR NEED FOR CONTINUING STUDY OF SUBJECT

**Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. After some six conferences over the past two years costing some \$2 million to \$3

million, why did this week's conference have to instruct officials to get back to work on some concrete proposals?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I would not want to accept as accurate the figures mentioned by the hon. member. As for the second part of his question, we have agreed at each level of government that the work performed on the general formula for the guaranteed income supplement discussed at the last conferences did meet the objectives of all government levels; we agreed to proceed immediately within that general framework. We have thus agreed to examine specific proposals concerning the cost of the proposed program, especially the kind of recipients covered by such a plan and various other technical questions which we will be in a position to consider at least partly at the next conference to be held, I hope, in September.

● (1110)

[English]

#### GUARANTEED ANNUAL INCOME—AREAS IN WHICH NO AGREEMENT IN CABINET—POSSIBLE USE OF OUTSIDE CONSULTANT

**Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West):** A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. It appears to me there is no agreement as to cost, no agreement concerning the administration of the program, no agreement with respect to income, no agreement with respect to an appropriate time period, no agreement with respect to taxation, and no agreement with respect to what constitutes a family unit. Has the minister been able to reach an agreed position with his own colleagues on these specific matters and, if so, have proposals been submitted to his provincial counterparts?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, officials from both government levels have been working on various hypotheses in the past two years, especially over the last six months; numerous alternatives have been considered by them. Efforts now remain to be made with a view to agreeing on a specific proposition or a very limited number of alternatives in respect of which the ministers could make much more final and specific decisions than those arrived at so far. That is the normal evolution of the reviewing process. This corresponds to the approach to the situation that we had proposed two years ago, and we are still within scope of the objectives we had set in the working paper submitted in the House two years ago. I have no reason to believe that we are not meeting all the objectives we had laid down when the paper was submitted in the House two years ago, and I sincerely hope that the programs whose implementation we had proposed within a certain time schedule mentioned in the working paper will be ready on time. I must also inform the hon. member that yesterday