

Government Sharing Cost of Medicare

In order to cover to some degree the period during which this review has been carried out and consequently provide a measure of retroactivity, the employer's contribution for the four months commencing on January 1, 1970, will be at double the agreed rate.

The government has decided that, as employer, it should continue to contribute 50 per cent of the premium required for the basic Group Surgical-Medical Insurance Plan still operative in Quebec, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, in the Territories and outside of Canada. The government has also agreed it should continue to contribute 50 per cent of the premium of the supplementary medical insurance plan which is operative in medicare provinces.

The government has undertaken to continue its contribution of 50 per cent of the premium for optional hospital benefits.

Other participants in the Group Surgical-Medical Insurance Plan such as Members of Parliament, members of the Armed Forces, the RCMP and pensioners would also benefit by these decisions.

These decisions have been taken by the government following detailed consultation with employee organizations through the National Joint Council. The government wishes to express its thanks to the council, and particularly to its committee on health insurance plans, for its assistance.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank the President of the Treasury Board for having sent us in good time a copy of the statement he has just made. This is a practice we can encourage. I am pleased to say that we welcome this statement.

I recall that in July last I raised this question in connection with public servants in the province of Alberta, members of the Armed Forces and members of the RCMP who at that time were under a considerable disadvantage with respect to the medicare plan in that province. Now we find that persons in these groups, along with participants in the Group Surgical-Medical Insurance Plan, will, in one form or another, benefit in the same way as citizens who are not in government employ. I think this decision will be welcomed and that it will become the pattern for good employers. I am glad to see that in this respect the government has attempted to rehabilitate itself.

[Mr. Drury.]

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to thank the President of the Treasury Board for sending us in advance a copy of the statement he has just made. I should also like to commend the government on the decision which has been announced. One could remark that it has taken a few months for the government to reach this decision, but it has corrected that by the proposal to pay double amounts for the first four months of 1970.

In effect, what the government has done has been to place its employees and the others who are covered by this announcement back in the position they occupied before they were shifted to provincial medicare schemes. It has put them back in the same position as far as paying their medicare premiums is concerned in that the federal government will pay 50 per cent of these premiums, or up to a certain level. I have studied the formula carefully and, despite my penchant for finding something wrong with what the government does, I must say the formula that has been agreed on is a good one and that we welcome this announcement.

I realize that the President of the Treasury Board could not have overlooked this, but nevertheless I am delighted that the arrangement does include all those pensioners who come under the various federal pension schemes, such as federal superannuates, retired RCMP personnel, retired members of the Armed Forces and others. I am glad that they too will benefit from this announcement.

Speaking of pensioners, it is good to have this problem solved. It is one of two problems about which I have been bugging this minister for a long time. I hope the minister will soon rise in his place and make a similarly favourable announcement concerning increases in the pensions of our federal superannuates.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I should like, in my turn, to thank the President of the Treasury Board for sending us a copy of his statement in good French.

I should also like to thank the government for having accepted, for once, a National Joint Council's recommendation. We sometimes feel that the government pays little attention to its employees, but the decision it has just taken shows that it followed the recommendation resulting from previous