

*Oral Questions***HEALTH CARE**

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the unavoidable reality of health care financing is that federal financial support of health care is declining in absolute terms. Under this government, federal funding has fallen to 22 per cent of the overall health care bill, with \$7 billion in cuts in health care transfers projected.

The provinces are wondering, the Canadian people are wondering, how the minister expects the provinces to replace the health care transfers she is withdrawing. She says they cannot charge the patients. She is against facility fees and she does not want private capital involved.

Is the minister therefore proposing that the provinces impose additional health care taxes to replace the federal medicare funding she is withdrawing?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can explain to the hon. member what was contained in last February's budget. We will have a combined transfer called the Canada health and social transfer which, yes, will be cut. It includes not only health care, but many other services.

Let us look at this in the proper context. For instance, in education, social programs and health, expenditures amount to about \$100 billion in one year. Next year the cut will be in the neighbourhood of 3 per cent or slightly less. While it will be a challenge to manage this, we do believe that a less than 3 per cent cut is manageable.

• (1425)

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I know when the minister took this job they told her there would be no math, but there is.

There are only four sources of health care financing: federal transfers, patient contributions, private capital and provincial tax dollars. The minister is reducing the federal transfers. She is against the patient contributions. She is against the private capital. Therefore the only other source to replace the federal transfers is provincial tax increases.

If the minister is against all these things in reducing the transfers, will she not admit that she is in effect telling the provinces to get the additional revenue through provincial tax increases? Yes or no?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat again what has been stated by all health economists across the country: It is not more money that is needed in the system; it is a different way of spending.

What the hon. member is suggesting is the easy way out: a U.S. two-tier style system, one where the rich get the best treatment and for the rest of Canadians thank you, it is too bad.

We are challenging all Canadians to work together to embrace those values which mean that we all get the same kind of access based on need. It is first class service that we want for everyone.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Constitution assigns responsibility for health care to the provinces. The federal government only gets involved through the exercise of its spending power which is now declining. The minister is the first federal Minister of Health to preside over annual reductions in federal transfers to the provinces for health care which is resulting in closing beds, waiting lines and friction with the provinces.

Will the minister acknowledge that there are now distinct limits to the federal power over health care policy? Will she tell the House how those limits will affect her dealings with the provinces of Canada?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to transfer considerable dollars to the provinces. As long as we transfer dollars to the provinces, we can ask that they respect certain principles. We say to them, yes, manage the system. We are giving them as much leeway as possible. We are very flexible but flexibility does not mean tearing up the Canada Health Act.

This government stands for something which is valuable and which all Canadians stand for. Reform Party members are the only ones who believe in tearing up the Canada Health Act.

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[Translation]

STABILIZATION PROGRAM

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

After trying in vain for a reimbursement of \$127 million for fiscal year 1991-92 under the stabilization program, Quebec is forced to appeal to the Federal Court in order to win its claim. Unperturbed, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs responded cynically and arrogantly that it was perfectly normal for Quebec to apply to the courts. Are we to understand that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs considers it normal for Quebec to have to apply to the courts to obtain what Ottawa has owed it for the past four years? Is this what they call flexible federalism?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, flexible federalism in recent years has worked very well through negotiations with the various provinces. Specifi-