

*Oral Questions***ENERGY**REQUEST FOR PROGRESS REPORT ON DISCUSSIONS WITH
ALBERTA

Hon. Bill Jarvis (Perth): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question with respect to energy supply. It is to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who has just returned from Alberta.

Within the limitations existing in question period, can the minister comment on the progress, if any, that he made in Alberta? Particularly, will the minister take the opportunity to assure us, or guarantee to the country that an agreement will be reached by the end of June?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I had a very fruitful and friendly meeting with my colleagues, particularly with my colleague in Alberta.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lalonde: However, as my hon. friend knows from the experience of his own government, these negotiations can be lengthy and sometimes difficult. It took them, as he will remember, six months not to have an agreement, so he should not be surprised at the necessity of one or two more meetings before I can answer the question raised by my hon. friend.

● (1420)

Mr. Jarvis: Madam Speaker, I am even less surprised that we have not received the assurance or guarantee I asked for when I put my supplementary question to the minister. The present agreement, as he knows, ceases to exist on June 30. Can he confirm that, in the absence of a new agreement, one of two scenarios will exist: one, unilateral action by a level of government, one or the other, within the confines of its constitutional jurisdiction; or two, in the absence of such government action, that free market conditions will prevail—market conditions of supply and demand? Will the minister confirm that will be the situation on July 1?

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I have to pay homage to the perceptive analysis of my hon. friend.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

HEALTH AND WELFARE

UNIVERSALITY OF MEDICARE PROGRAM

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Last November, the minister said two important things about the need to maintain a universal system of medicare. First, she said, "Medicare should be free and when I say free, I mean free; not two bucks here and two bucks there." She said in the same speech, "We can't wait six months; we have to take measures now."

Since the government of Alberta recently increased their health premiums once again—this time by 13 per cent—will the minister now practice what she preached and take immediate action to restore medicare as a universal right across Canada?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, the hon. member could immediately contact the New Democratic Party of Alberta and ask them to exert local pressure to explain to their provincial members that they will not accept that, in order that the population at large in Alberta can do what the people of New Brunswick were successful in doing, namely, eliminating user fees and additional financial barriers to medicare.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, what a classic Liberal cop-out that is!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: For the minister's information, the leader of our party in the Alberta legislature has already done what she said should be done. Since the problem with medicare does not just exist in Alberta, but there is double-billing in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Ontario—

Some hon. Members: And Saskatchewan.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The Chair cannot even understand what is going on. There is too much noise in the chamber. Would hon. members please keep their comments until after the question period.

Mr. Broadbent: The minister said, in the same speech, that the then government—which was a Conservative government—should take immediate action to terminate such practices, and this was Liberal party policy. I now ask her, while she has the authority to so act, what is she waiting for?

Miss Bégin: The Leader of the New Democratic Party should give us the example, instead of copping-out of the referendum campaign.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Bégin: That would be a good start. To get back to medicare, I do not know why the hon. member suddenly wakes up today. We have often discussed this in this House, and we said that all parties were going to make an effort—which some