

Adjournment Debate

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Before recognizing the hon. parliamentary secretary, I just want to remind the hon. member for Laurentides that she should not use the name of a minister but his or her title instead.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to respond to the hon. member and clarify yet again the federal government's role in this important matter.

All members will surely agree that the availability of influenza vaccine for school children and the elderly across Canada is an issue which should be far removed from partisan political considerations. The health and safety of Canada's children and the elderly is this government's first priority. I hope the same is true for my friend across the floor.

I am proud of the role that the department of the minister to whom I am parliamentary secretary and the federal government have played for the past twenty-one years on behalf of the provinces and territories.

With Public Works and Government Services acting as the purchasing agent of the vaccine on behalf of a joint federal-provincial-territorial committee, we have been able to achieve the economies of scale which bulk purchases represent. The price per dose for one large national order is lower than if a number of smaller purchases are made by the different jurisdictions.

The result is a sterling demonstration of joint federal-provincial-territorial cooperation and efficient use of taxpayers' dollars.

• (1750)

Members should note that the value of these purchases is now approximately \$7 million per year, of which 99 per cent is paid for by the provinces and territories. The federal government uses and pays for less than 1 per cent of the vaccine.

As has been announced in this House on several occasions, and following a competitive process, an agreement in principle was concluded on April 13, 1994, between the federal-provincial-territorial committee and two Canadian drug manufacturers. The contracts will be split 50/50 between IAF BioVac in Laval, Quebec, and Connaught Laboratories in Willowdale, Ontario. These contracts are scheduled to be signed later this month. I should point out to the House that the hon. member mentioned that there was a significant reduction in one particular year, but if we look at the average for the last three years, the proportion has gone from 38 per cent then to 50 per cent now. That is 12 per cent more.

Prices are lower than in past years, and they are going down. This year's price of \$1.77 per dose is lower than the 1992 and 1993 prices.

To reiterate, both companies, the provinces and territories have agreed to this arrangement. In questioning the government on this issue, the member and her party have made a number of factual errors. If one did not know better, one might conclude that there is a deliberate attempt to mislead members of this House and the Canadians we represent.

I sincerely hope that this is not the case.

2002 OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis): Madam Speaker, on April 22, I asked the Deputy Prime Minister a question about the federal contribution to Quebec 2002. That was a two-part question. First, I asked her when her government would appoint a negotiator to determine with Quebec 2002 the amount of funding needed.

"Soon", answered the Deputy Prime minister. On this issue, I am quite satisfied, since the daily newspaper *Le Soleil* reported, on April 30, that the federal government had appointed, a day or two before, Mr. Laurent Tremblay, executive director of the Quebec office of the Department of Canadian Heritage, to act as spokesperson for the federal government. One week is not that bad a delay and we are satisfied with this part of the answer.

But we fail to see why it took six months and a question in the House for the federal government to reply to an organization's request. Six months is a long time. Will we need to press the government in the House on all issues so that they finally reply to organizations' requests?

We were satisfied with the answer we got this time. A negotiator was appointed within a week. Unfortunately, negotiations have not started yet and the deadline for Quebec 2002 has not been changed. Indeed, the final bids must be in by August 18. They would like a definite answer from the federal government within the next month, by the middle of June.

That was the second part of my question. I asked the Deputy Prime Minister if she was prepared to give a mandate to a negotiator modelled on what was done for Calgary in terms of federal assistance when it bid on the 1988 Winter Games. I have not received an answer to my question, either from the government or from the negotiator.

I would like to remind this government that although governments do come and go, it does have some responsibility since in 1992, the former prime minister did make a verbal commitment. However, since a new government is in office, this commitment needs to be reaffirmed and confirmed, since we are dealing with relatively tight deadlines.

Calgary received \$240 million in financing guarantees. I cannot understand why the federal government is so reluctant to commit to a similar amount when a study has shown that this project would generate in the neighbourhood of \$200 million in terms of direct and indirect jobs, the GST and so on. Why is the government taking so long to decide when it could earn these