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Questions by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

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THE SENATE

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[Translation]

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CANADIAN HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the Nursing Research Fund was wound down in March 2009 as its government funding was not renewed. These investments were just beginning to yield results. The \$55 million fund, disbursed over ten years, helped improve access to, as well as the quality and safety of the health care system and benefited the health of our population.

Does the government intend to restore this important source of funding for health promotion for all Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, my answer is the same as the previous answers when the honourable senator or her colleagues questioned me on particular programs brought in by previous governments that had a certain lifespan or sunset date.

We have undertaken other plans and initiatives and we have put more money into the health care system. A plan set up many years ago does not mean that it must continue in perpetuity. Our government was elected to carry out our own set of policies and plans, not to carry on the policy and plans of previous governments, and we intend to carry out the plans we were elected on.

[Translation]

Senator Tardif: Honourable senators, this fund also supported recruitment in the nursing profession.

Does the government agree that the nursing profession is essential to maintaining the health sector, especially when there is a shortage of medical services? Does it agree that it is important to improve the scientific foundations of nursing to benefit future generations?

• (1450)

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, we have increased funds through our research grants to many medical organizations. We have provided increases to the provinces and territories in our health care spending. Of course, I agree that the nursing profession is crucial, but the honourable senator's question assumes that we are not supporting the nursing profession, which is not the case. Significant research funds have been put into the medical research field and the overall health care system.

Again, I reiterate that we, through the Minister of Health and her counterparts, have devised a good working arrangement. The health care costs continue to go up, but this government, unlike the previous government, will not cut the health care system on the backs of deficit reduction.

Senator Comeau: Right on.

[Translation]

Senator Tardif: I hope that the Leader of the Government in the Senate will agree that nursing is based on specialized science. Thanks to research funds, nursing best practice guidelines have led to the reduction of pressure ulcers from 21 per cent to 10.6 per cent in five years. This has led to savings of \$2.9 million for every 1,000 patients.

These best practices not only improve patient health but also reduce health care costs.

When will the government invest in this health promotion fund?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: I will take that question as notice because significant funds have been invested into health research. Also, significant funds have been invested into attracting nurses and doctors which members, of course, were depleted completely in the early 1990s when people like the honourable senator's new-found colleague, Bob Rae, cut back on the entry-level admission of nurses and doctors into our medical schools.