



What have MDs done to deserve this? CMA president asks

Unfair application of the goods and services tax had cost Canadian physicians more than \$350 million by the end of 1996, Dr. Judith Kazimirski told the Standing Committee on Finance during pre-budget hearings held this fall. Physicians don't want special treatment, said the CMA president, but they do want to be treated like other self-employed professionals who are allowed to claim input tax credits.

"Physicians are being singled out and discriminated against because medical services are designated as tax exempt," she said. "No issue has raised the ire of individual practitioners as much as the imposition of this unfair and inequitable tax." Kazimirski said physicians pay \$57.2 million annually — roughly \$1000 per practising physician — in excess GST payments because they are not allowed to use the input tax credits claimed by other professionals such as lawyers.

NS gambles on counselling service

Nova Scotia is going to wage war on the dark side of lotteries, casinos, video lottery terminals, bingos and other wagering activities with a toll-free counselling, information and referral service for problem gamblers and their families. Ironically, governments have created this need because of their voracious appetite for gambling profits. A report prepared for the Department of Health indicates that gambling rates in Nova Scotia are comparable to other provinces: 96% of adults have gambled at some point in their lives and 52% of current gamblers are consid-

ered "occasional." However, 43% of current gamblers play at least once a week and about 4% of adults have experienced problems because of their gambling within the last year.

Health Minister Bernie Boudreau said counsellors will have training in addiction and mental-health counselling, and will refer callers to a range of services. All calls will be confidential and callers will have the option of remaining anonymous. The service, which will cost taxpayers \$700 000 over 2 years, will operate from Sydney, site of one of the province's two casinos.

Newsletter promotes breast-feeding

The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC) hopes its first newsletter, *Breastfeeding Canada*, will help establish breast-feeding as the cultural norm for infant feeding within Canada. Formerly known as the Canadian Expert Working Group on Breastfeeding, the BCC comprises independent experts and representatives of about 20 national associations, including the CMA.

The first issue outlines the BCC's objectives and structure; the spring

issue will focus on the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. Corresponding membership (\$10) is encouraged, with members receiving the newsletter. Contact the BCC, PO Box 65114, Toronto ON M4K 3Z2.

MD criticizes shift to generic drugs

A British Columbia physician has taken Canada's brand-name drug companies to task for remaining silent while companies that make generic drugs capture more market share. In a letter to *PMAC News*, published by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada, Dr. William Arkinstall of Kelowna said companies that make generic products enjoy large profit margins while sharing none of the risks or costs associated with the development of new drugs.

"I am surprised that your members seem to be taking such a passive role," wrote Arkinstall. "If this continues the erosion of market share will escalate, with the result that we can anticipate less money being allocated for R & D and fewer new drugs becoming available. Everyone will suffer, particularly patients."

MD Management retains prestigious award

MD Management Ltd. has retained its status as one of Canada's 50 Best Managed Private Companies in a 1996 competition sponsored by Arthur Andersen & Co., Canadian Airlines International and *The Financial Post*. Judges said the company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the CMA, outdistanced hundreds of other entrants because of its growing list of products and services, commitment to service excellence, innovative use of technology and corporate expansion.

