

• (1220)

If it had not been for the combined efforts of the NDP in raising the question with the government and the personal commitment of the minister of health and welfare at the time, Monique Begin, nothing would have happened. It certainly would not have happened as a result of the efforts of the Official Opposition.

The only commitment that exists on that side of the House is not to reveal, in any open way, the fact that it does not have any commitment to medicare. It was against it from the first.

Mrs. Marleau: Madam Speaker, I have been advised that you are prepared to rule against our amendment based on the fact that you claim there are some new concepts being introduced in our amendment.

Let me remind you, Madam Speaker, that this motion is about the threat to our health care system and that you certainly recognize that health care is a shared responsibility of all levels of government in this country, and that governments are interdependent under our system of co-operative federalism.

This opposition motion expresses the concern of this House about the threat to the Canadian health care system by the actions of incumbent government cutbacks.

It is this motion which introduces the concept of incumbent governments. The amendment merely enlarges on the descriptive part of the motion. The motion itself refers to the expressed intentions of certain premiers of some of the incumbent governments which threaten the health care system.

Our amendment adds to this bill of particulars the actions of other incumbent governments and provincial premiers and really sets the situation in its proper context.

The provincial premiers are being compelled by the federal government into this action. It is the federal government which really poses the threat.

In other words, the amendment does not add any new concepts to the main motion. It merely clarifies the nature of the threats referred to in the motion. That is why I believe the motion is in order.

Mr. Blaikie: I would submit that this opposition day motion before the House has a clear scope. It is an expression of concern for views expressed by the leaders

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of three provincial governments, specifically the Liberal premiers of Quebec, New Brunswick and Newfoundland.

What the Liberal amendment seeks to do is add an entirely new element to the motion. It adds references to the actions of three other governments, as opposed to the opinions of three leaders.

Beauchesne's sixth edition is clear on this point. Paragraph 579(1) states:

An amendment setting forth a proposition dealing with a matter which is foreign to the proposition involved in the main motion is not relevant and cannot be moved.

This is based on a Speaker's ruling of 1923 which has been consistently applied over the past decades. I am sure that when you have had an opportunity to consider the matter you will see that the motion we have before us in the form of the Liberal subamendment is out of order on the face of it.

Mr. Pagtakhan: Madam Speaker, I would like to debate and argue that our amendment to the motion is very much in order.

Why do I say that? Citation 929 indicates:

On an allotted day, during consideration of the business of Supply, an amendment must not provide the basis for an entirely different debate than that proposed in the original motion.

Fortunately, Madam Speaker, before you could have had the time to decide on the procedural correctness of the amendment, debate in the House has already ensued.

We already heard the argument of the member for Winnipeg Transcona that there is a relationship between user fees and cutbacks from the federal government. That is now a fact in so far as an argument is concerned.

You cannot divide user fees and cutbacks. That is what the member from Winnipeg Transcona said. It is part of the debate. Who made the cutbacks? The federal government made it. You cannot isolate the federal government from this debate or we will have no debate.

If you look at the main motion by the NDP, the main focus is the threat to Canada's health care system; the system itself. It is not the stated intention of the Liberal premiers. It was only used as one.

Is the New Democratic Party telling us, the members, that the threat to the health care system is due to only one factor? During its arguments it has admitted it is not. I would submit, to allow for full debate on this issue, that the Chair allow the Liberal amendment to prosper so that we can have a healthy debate.