

Supply

I am also told that there are communication systems that can be set up where reports of that nature, pictures, and so on can be sent on an electronic or computerized system.

What I am saying is that we may have to look at tremendously innovative ways of reducing the cost of the health care system, but let us not look at that reduction by reducing quality and standard of care to Canadians or by reducing the absolutely imperative standard of universality.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): On debate. The hon. member for Saint-Maurice has the floor.

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people following this debate on our health care system must be wondering. Since this morning, we have been hearing opposition members paint an overly bleak and pessimistic picture of health care in Canada. Yet, when we leave that kind of planet away from earth, get out of Parliament and take a look at the situation in the field, with both feet well on the ground, as we say in Quebec, we realize that it is quite different.

The Canadian people who pay their income taxes each year know how expensive the Canadian health care system is. And I think it is normal to want to afford the Canadian people the best health care services in the world. However, we must remember that all that costs money. If we were to implement all the good ideas the Liberal and NDP members have come up with up to now—I am not mentioning the members of the Bloc Québécois, Mr. Speaker, because they did not show more than one quarter of one hundredth of one per cent of interest in this very important debate on the universality of health care in Canada—we would have to double, triple and even quadruple the income taxes collected across Canada to finance their projects.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people have to know that, in 1991, their health care system will cost them the tidy amount of, not \$60 million, but \$60 billion. This is no big thing, of course, only the largest amount ever spent on health care in Canada's history. Yet, when listening to the Liberal and NDP members, one gets the impression

that almost all hospitals in Canada are closed, that there are no old folks homes left and no community health care services in the various provinces of Canada.

That is far from the truth though. The health care system in Canada got gradually better over the past few years. The provincial governments as well as the federal government invested billions and billions of dollars to finally reach that \$60 billion we will be spending this year, that is to say \$2,500 per capita. This means that the health care system is costing \$2,500 per capita to the taxpayer, and heaven knows we have a lot of taxes to pay in this country.

I think that the Canadian people are nevertheless entitled to one thing—and the big difference between our philosophy and that of the opposition members is that we learned to be realistic.

The members on this side of the House have learned to say: Considering the present state of government finance, considering the current national debt, the major part of which was created by the successive Liberal governments in the 1960s and 1970s, considering this extremely difficult situation we are in today, this is no time to increase government budgets, whether at the municipal, provincial or federal level. I suggest we have reached a crucial point where we must master the art of managing whatever money we have and ensuring that the \$60 billion that health care will cost in Canada in 1991 will be used in the most efficient way possible instead of just investing more and more money in the system. As I see it, Mr. Speaker, the key element of our present situation is to know how to use the funds available to deliver the world's best health care system to the Canadian people.

I say this because it is a very important question. But there is one thing that Canadians have to know, something which Liberals are wont to forget: the federal government is not responsible for the management of hospitals and health centres throughout the country. That responsibility belongs to each and every provincial government. Earlier I heard the hon. member from Nova Scotia blame the federal government for the long hospital waiting lists in her province, as in other provinces indeed. That is not a federal responsibility. The