

Adjournment Debate

The federal government has already laid the ground work for ongoing dialogue and possible approaches to improve the health care system.

One example is the positive and very beneficial meeting between the federal and provincial health care ministers last June and also their agreement to a follow-up meeting this week.

Another example is the creation, in conjunction with our provinces, of the Canadian Co-ordinating Office on Health Technology Assessment.

The federal government welcomes all contributions of the stakeholders to this debate on how we can improve a good health care system. We can improve it, we can alter it, we can streamline it, but we will preserve it.

* * *

ARMENIA

Mr. Bill Attewell (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, September 18, I will be leaving Canada to journey to Soviet Armenia. I will be Canada's official observer at the referendum for independence which is to be held on Saturday, September 21.

An aide from our embassy in Moscow and Vazken Tertian are accompanying me. Mr. Tertian is a Canadian Armenian leader who lives in Thornhill.

This will be an historic trip for both of us, but it will be an emotional visit for Mr. Terzian. Born in Lebanon, this is the first time Mr. Terzian will visit Armenia where his parents were born.

His parents had to flee Armenia during the 1915 massacre. His father to be was three years old and his mother to be was four years old at the time. Thousands of children had to flee. His parents walked almost 1,000 miles in search of freedom. This cruel and arduous ordeal took six months. His mother's aunt was the only adult to help them. His family eventually settled in Lebanon.

In 1920, Armenia was taken under communist rule as a result of the revolution. This communist yoke was to last 70 years. Finally, with the growth of Gorbachev's Perestroika and Glasnost, the flames of freedom burned.

In December 1989 the oppressive communist regime was buried with a democratically elected Parliament in Armenia.

The next milestone in Armenia's fight for democracy and freedom was in August of 1990 when the newly elected Parliament put forth a road to independence.

This road to independence included the plan for a democratically conducted referendum on independence. This referendum will, as I said earlier, be held on Saturday, September 21.

Both Vazken Terzian and I are thrilled and honoured to have the opportunity to be in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, to witness this historic referendum with our own eyes.

While we fully expect overwhelming support for the referendum, it is important that the referendum be conducted with absolute integrity and fairness.

We will be monitoring the process by investigating the preparation of voter lists, finding out how ballots are distributed and other details such as the identification necessary for voting.

We want to ensure that results are tabulated correctly and fairly. These are just a few of the many steps that we will be monitoring.

I am proud to say that this will be my second trip to Soviet Armenia. My last visit was in March 1989. It was a sad journey. I led a group of Canadian Armenians to examine the tragic devastation caused by the December 1988 earthquake. My good friend Apkarian, from Scarborough, was one of the Canadian Armenian leaders on the trip.

It was physically and emotionally exhausting to visit the ravaged sites and to witness and learn about the incredible death and destruction that occurred.

On our trip, Mr. Mirakian and I had the thrill of attending a special service on Easter Sunday at the Atchmiazin Cathedral.

I have tremendous respect for the resilience displayed by Armenians over the past decades. They survived the genocide of 1914-15. They survived 70 years of communism.