

The way in which ministers exercise their responsibility for the actions of their officials will depend upon the circumstances and whether an official has acted, for example—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry but the time is over.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I rise to elaborate on a question I posed in June.

Canada is facing a crisis in health care and it is based on two things. The cutbacks by the federal government and transfer payments that the government was anticipating.

Those cutbacks by the turn of the century will amount to \$2.4 billion or about \$10 billion a year. This year alone the cutbacks are crippling the provinces' ability to deliver health care. All one has to look at is cutbacks to health care, particularly in the weaker provinces of Newfoundland and the other Atlantic provinces. Newfoundland had to lay off 10 per cent of its nurses.

In my home province of British Columbia, the cutbacks amounted to a loss of income of \$500 million this year. In the province of Ontario, it was \$2.5 billion this year in money that it had been promised to provide health care to Canadians.

What does this mean in my community, Surrey, which is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada? It means that we have 1.1 acute care beds per 1,000 population instead of the 3.3 that is necessary. Forty per cent of the population must leave its own community to receive basic health care.

The federal government's response is that we should be putting more money into preventive health care. Surrey, because of the cutbacks, is not able to provide the preventive health care that is necessary.

• (1810)

We are 35 full time public health nurses short in the municipality of Surrey. We are 27 health inspectors short. These are the people who provide preventative services that save money down the road. One of the things that is threatening our health care is the cutback in the transfer of funds. The other is the erosion of national standards.

This government has waffled when it comes to upholding national standards. Right now we have three things

happening that are threatening national standards with the introduction of user fees in Canada.

We have the Tory convention clearly saying and going on record that it wants to introduce user fees.

The province of Quebec has introduced user fees in some emergency hospitals. This government has not taken any action in relation to that and shows no indication that it is going to take any action and uphold the Canada Health Act.

In my province we have the premier, Rita Johnston, that great Socred. In B.C. we know what Socreds are. They are just a combination of Liberals and Tories who get together to form power. The premier has come out supporting the introduction of user fees.

What we have in Canada is a threat to our national medicare program. I would like the government to clarify what its commitment to national medicare is, that is a partnership between itself and the provinces with joint and equal financing and with the federal government setting standards it will uphold.

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is unequivocally committed to supporting our national system of medicare and the five principles of accessibility, universality, comprehensiveness, portability and public administration will be protected.

The government this year provided over \$16 billion in transfer payments under the EPF, Established Programs Financing. This is double the amount the federal government transferred to the provinces just ten years ago.

Maintaining the national standards of underlying medicare is not just about money. Canadians realize that both federal and provincial governments cannot endlessly allocate substantial new financial resources to meet the increasing costs of health care. Most provincial and territorial task forces and commissions have acknowledged that more money is not the answer to the problem in health care.

The federal government has to ensure that health care costs remain affordable. To do this, it must join all the stakeholders in the field of health, be it the government, health care professionals or consumers of the health care services. Everyone has to participate in seeking and implementing solutions to the challenges that are facing us.