

Supply

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The five-minute period for questions and comments has already expired. We now begin the second ten-minute period of debate. I therefore give the floor to the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing.

[*English*]

Mr. Flis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know the 20-minute period has been cut down to 10, but I understood that after each speaker there would be a 5-minute question and answer period.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It was held. There was a question from the hon. member for Halifax West and there was an answer. As both the question and answer were long, the five minutes have expired.

Mr. Flis: I apologize, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Madam Speaker, it is important that Canadians know where the various political parties across this country stand on health care. It is important because Canadians rightly view their health care system as an indicator of how society is organized and how it reflects our concern for those who are less well off.

What we have done in Canada, to Canada's credit and in fact with the participation of all the political parties, is institute a health care system which is the pride of Canada and the envy of the world. We have managed to develop a health care system which ensures that nobody fears for their home, for their security, or for their family in the event that they get sick. It provides for a system in which they are provided with health care services to the extent that they need them when that need arises.

That is an important indicator of how Canada and Canadians feel about addressing issues and concerns of people who are in adversity.

It is also important that all political parties stand and be accounted for with regard to their view on health care. We have seen over the last few years cuts by the Progressive Conservative government into the support services, the financial support to the provinces to maintain their health care systems. In doing so, the present government built upon cuts which were instituted by the Liberal governments before it.

At the federal level we have seen both Conservative and Liberal governments cutting financial assistance to our health care system, in a sense pushing the costs of health care further to the provinces and in the end

building pressure as we have seen for user fees and deterrent fees for Canadians themselves to be forced to pay some of the costs.

It is important at this time in our history to know that Liberal premiers of Quebec, New Brunswick and Newfoundland have been arguing for, pushing for, and asking for the right to institute user fees and deterrent fees. At a time when Canadians are buffeted by a recession, by increasingly high unemployment rates, and by tough, tough times, these Liberal premiers are pushing a further burden and a further worry on to Canadians citizens by telling them that they want to institute user fees for health care, that they want to institute deterrent fees for health care.

We all know—and the studies show it clearly—that the institution of user fees in the health care system would, as Mr. Justice Emmett Hall, the well-known Canadian expert on health care indicated, simply deter the poor and have no effect on the demands of those in the middle and high income categories.

In other words, if we institute user fees it is a direct attack on those in Canada who are less able to support themselves and less able to access the services that they need.

Pushing for user fees is a direct attack on the rights of those Canadians who are less able to fund the services they need in times of health problems.

In Canada we essentially have a conspiracy against our health care system in which we have the Reform Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party ganging up on health care and ganging up on the right of Canadian citizens to access health care free of charge, paid for through the tax system but free to them at the time at which they access those services, free to them at the time when they most need it, and free to them at the time when they are most desperate.

At the beginning of this month we had Preston Manning of the Reform Party arguing that we should do away with the universal aspects of medicare. He said that we should charge people for hospital services and institute user fees.

We have, then, the Reform Party arguing for user fees. We have resolutions passed at Conservative Party conventions arguing for the institution of user fees. We have the former minister of health, the member for Provencher, arguing for user fees in discussions in Manitoba. We have important elements of the government arguing for an end to universality and institution of user fees. We heard just a minute ago from the member for Halifax