

Medical Care Act

Huron county. We wonder if they really will become available in our present time of restraints. Will other hospitals place these services on top priority if they involve additional costs? How can they hire Clinton nursing staff to provide the nursing care for these services if they already have sufficient staff but are limited in funds to hire, train or develop?

Has the minister examined the referral system in this county and seen that patients, if referred, usually go to London rather than to other hospitals, or that they come to Clinton for service? They do not go from Clinton to other local hospitals because the service and the care is not the same. Is the minister assuming that the feelings and patterns of people in the district about the surrounding hospitals are going to change so that they will go to the doctors using these hospitals, even if Clinton doctors' privileges are granted elsewhere, and be content with the services they provide, when you deny them the hospital, staff and service they have built and developed?

If the minister's argument really is on the basis of geography, then he ought to recognize that persons in the outlying areas of Huron county could, and do, more readily come to Clinton than travel across country to these outlying areas. It is for this very reason that Clinton public hospital has in the past few years continued to improve service rather than stagnate, and has provided increased service at reasonable cost.

If people have to travel across-country for service, for example, from Clinton to Exeter or from Clinton to Seaford, they might just as well go a little bit farther on to London or Stratford, where comparable services are found. But these latter areas are to have restraints imposed upon them as well. These facilities also cost more. Where, then, is the dollar saving? Clinton is now providing the needed services at far less cost per day. How can the minister justify deleting this facility if the alternatives he proposes cost more?

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): This is all provincial.

Mr. McKinley: I take off at anyone I think is doing wrong.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Hear, hear!

Mr. McKinley: We submit that by closing Clinton public hospital the minister is promoting a decrease in service to citizens of Huron county. By not planning for alternatives or ways to maintain these services he is abdicating his responsibility to provide service and the best use of the health dollar to the people of Huron county. At the same time he prohibits the citizens of Clinton area from contributing toward making the best use of their health dollar by closing their hospital—not on the grounds of inefficiency,

mismanagement, overstaffing, lack of service, but on the grounds of geography.

The minister has a responsibility to prove to us that we are mismanaging and deserve to be closed, and that other hospitals are not mismanaging and deserve to be left open. But the ministry has not, neither privately nor publicly, stated this. We also submit that the minister has little considered the economic impact that this closure, the second in Huron county, will have on the people in this community. The minister has forced this upon us, yet has made little provision for the community to retain these employed citizens or to relocate elsewhere in this province where needed.

An hon. Member: Six o'clock.

Mr. McKinley: I shall just be one more minute, Mr. Speaker. Nobody desires to go on unemployment to impose an extra drain on our coffers, yet this is what many will be forced to do. This is unfair financially and morally. The minister has stated that the people of Huron county should provide alternatives to the closure of Clinton public hospital between now and the date of an appeal. Yet he is well aware that at present there is no district health council to present such a proposal that is acceptable to all of Huron county. In order to remain, the minister has stated that our only apparent recourse is to prove that we are better and that other facilities should go rather than Clinton public hospital. By so doing, Clinton would be forced to become a villain in the eyes of the public and our colleagues in health care.

The citizens of Clinton community are very loth to declare that other facilities in Huron county are inferior to theirs. It is insufferable that in this day and age the government should indicate to us that this is the tactic we must adopt in order to survive and provide what we believe is quality service to the people of Huron county.

I have one suggestion to make to the minister. Instead of closing down hospitals like Clinton completely, I believe sufficient money could be saved, without a shocking decrease in the availability of health care, by cutting back some beds in all hospitals or by charging a user fee or initial fee to those using hospital and doctor care. I hope the provincial government will reconsider its decision to close the Clinton hospital, and I reiterate my willingness to attend a meeting with the Premier of Ontario and Mr. Miller, if it can be arranged.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) rising on a point of order?

Mr. Nystrom: I was going to call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is already past six o'clock. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

At 6.01 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.