

Supply

As my colleague has indicated, the Liberal Party of Canada is more than prepared and willing to come to the defence of Canadians everywhere, no matter what their stripe.

It is instructive to keep in mind that the proponents of that motion fail very selectively to indicate that at the premier's conference of February, all premiers together, with the Prime Minister of Canada—that does not include the Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada who was already on the record as being very much in favour of universal access to medicare—agreed to review the medicare process in Canada. It was only after the conference that the NDP premiers came out and said: "Guess what? We did not like what transpired in that discussion. It was not to our advantage, and so we have rediscovered our support for universality of the medicare system. We do not believe in user fees. We do not believe in any kind of limitation". They sure as heck believed that when they went in and accepted that as an agenda item in that First Ministers' Conference. We were not there, but your representatives were there.

• (1250)

My colleague from St. Boniface has introduced some very important items in this debate. I wonder whether my colleague would be so good as to reiterate for the NDP movers of the motion that we are here to discuss substance, and would he please advise them what the essence of that substance might be.

Mr. Duhamel: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for his comments and for his questions.

There are three points I want to make. If my colleagues from the NDP want to be as fair as they claim they want to be, they will acknowledge that the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada has publicly defended universality.

I would like to see one of them stand up and say it.

Second, I take serious offence with the NDP's manipulation of data, and I want to give one example with respect to Quebec. Please listen. You have one seat and I have to tell you it is going to get worse from here on in.

I want to read this into the record. This motion by the NDP has criticized Quebec, accusing it of intending to impose user fees. Is this criticism fair? I too would be concerned if the Quebec government were to proceed

with the application of user fees, "but I did not pass judgment", says my colleague from Winnipeg North.

The government of Quebec's 1989 report *Improving Health and the Well-being of Quebec: Orientations* states: "Some of the advantages generally attributed to deterrent charges are most theoretical and this formula has major drawbacks that outweigh the advantages."

The report concludes: "Therefore, recourse to the deterrent changes cannot be an acceptable source of financing and the department favours turning to alternate sources of revenue."

If only the NDP health critic had read this report he would not be so quick to prejudge and impute ill-intention to the Quebec government. That is the blatant kind of political cynicism that is going on.

With respect to the issue, it is a very simple one. There are a number of changes that are occurring. From 1986 to 1995, \$30 billion fewer dollars will be transferred for health and education. Roughly \$20 billion of that was for health. That is a major problem to which the provinces need to respond in order to attempt to accommodate current realities.

I mentioned the changing demographics. We have a population that is living longer. We have more people in the seniors range. When people live longer, normally they require more health care. As they become more and more sensitive and knowledgeable as to what is available in terms of health care, they require and request better health care.

We have those various factors at play.

What is it that we need to do? Rather than trying to be petty and suggesting that someone has done something to someone else, what we need to do is come to grips with those basic problems.

How are we going to find the nurses and the doctors for the smaller and isolated areas? How are we going to provide the health care that Canadians need? That ought to be the essence of this debate.

As I said at the closing of my remarks, I would hope that the whole rest of the day would be focused upon finding solutions, rather than make petty political points because the Liberals happen to be higher in the polls than the NDP. It figured out, finally, that we are its biggest political enemy.