

*Government Orders*

The Canadian Hospital Association joined in. The Canadian Public Health Association made the same notes when it said that Bill C-20, as a result of the budget, an act to amend the funding of health care, will not be sufficient to prevent the erosion of these principles over time.

The city of Toronto's Department of Public Health stated: "As one of the largest public health departments in Canada, we are responsible for preventing disease and promoting health for approximately 623,000 Toronto residents". It as well argued that Bill C-20 would seriously undermine its ability to deliver health care.

The Concerned Friends of Ontario, citizens in care facilities had the same opinion. End Legislative Poverty had the same opinion against the legislation. Home Support is made up of people who are very much innovative in the process. It stated: "We believe that the freeze in transfer payments in place since 1990 seriously affect the ability of many provincial governments to adequately finance health care services. We also feel that the ongoing reduction in cash transfer payments will undermine the federal government's authority and ability to enforce the standards of the Canada Health Act". Is anybody listening to groups like that?

The Hospital Council of Metropolitan Toronto had a strong statement. The National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation said: "The continuing freeze in transfer payments will have serious implications for the future of medicare. Medicare is a national program which Canadians hold in the highest esteem. It will further damage our national identity to end this program".

The Occupational Health Centre in Winnipeg had the same strong viewpoint.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care said: "We believe the potential implications of Bill C-20 to be far more far-reaching than any single piece of legislation to date. All Canadians should have the opportunity to make their voices heard on such an important issue".

The St. Boniface General Hospital wrote in for an opportunity to speak with the same reasons. The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs also had something to say.

These are not your cry babies, these are not people you would expect to have out at your local neighbourhood meetings when you know you are only going to get social policy groups, these are mainstream organizations which are realizing that the fundamentals of this country are being undermined.

"Canada has a future in which she will be required to be more and more competitive in the world marketplace. Without a work force properly trained in the skills and technology necessary to meet this challenge, we doom our businesses and citizens to an ever increasing downward spiral with ever lower standards of living. As women we are particularly conscious of this fact. The majority of people living below the poverty line in Canada are women and children. Without the necessary funds to ensure that schooling programs are available to continue to teach and upgrade skills and to ensure that financial assistance is available to assist women in benefiting from post-secondary training, we will never be able to break the poverty cycle". Again, this is a clear message to the government.

I would like to use the major part of my speech to address what I consider to be the fundamental flaw in this legislation. This was raised with the government when it tabled its budget in February and raised again subsequently in the debate in the House and in committee and that is the constitutionality of clause 4.

Clause 4 is an effort by the federal government to extend its authority in health care legislation to ensure that the health care system is protected. Nobody in their right mind would say they wanted to undermine the health care system. Since the federal government is conceding that there will be less cash transfers in the system, therefore less leverage it will have with the provincial governments due to cash, it has recognized that it has two choices; either to abandon the field or to extend its authority over the provinces through the back door.

The implication of Bill C-20 is to open up this back door. We object to this back door approach because it makes other groups very vulnerable to the vicissitudes of a government which without cash wants to protect its political base. This government knows that if it is caught in any way, shape or form appearing to undermine medicare that it is "done like dinner". It is one in which