

*Supply*

These observations are not coming from partisan politicians. They are coming from the Canadian Medical Association and the director of government relations for that august body. He says that the CMA's concern is the impact that this freeze on transfer payments will have on the quality and accessibility of health in the country as a whole, but in particular, in the Atlantic region.

It is the same old story. If it hurts anywhere in Canada, and my friend from South Shore knows this and knows it well, it is going to hurt even more in the Atlantic region.

Since the inception of medicare in 1965, Canadians have had a tremendous boon and a tremendous gift. They have not had to worry. They have not had to worry about paying for their health care and the health care of their children. This was brought home to me in a very significant way in the late 1960s.

In 1967 a very close friend of mine, who was a student in university, married an American student and they went back to the United States for two years. During that two-year period they had one daughter. They came back to Canada in 1970 to resume their university careers in Halifax. They were barely in the country a week when their daughter contracted pneumonia and had to be hospitalized. Because my friend had been out of the country for two years, she had to be back in the province for three months before being covered by medicare.

I remember very well two very frightened, very young parents with a very sick baby. Every one of us I think can empathize with that situation. Certainly my colleague from Winnipeg North as a paediatrician has seen that many times and the fear, the stress and the anguish of parents in that situation. Added to my friend's fear, stress and anguish was there they were living on the money they had managed to save for two years, living with a small amount of student loan, the fact that both of them had part-time jobs and they were going to be faced with an horrendous medical bill for their child's health care because they had fallen through one of the cracks, a crack that we need to have I suppose. I understand the situation. It certainly brings forward how crucial, how important medicare in its original state is to the health and well-being of this country as a whole.

I remember another evening, shortly after I was elected, spending some time after a committee with two of my colleagues, the member for Willowdale and the member for Dartmouth. We each started talking about the reasons that we had such a strong commitment to social programs in this country. It turned out that each one of us had a story about what it was like in our families to suffer incredible medical bills and the incredible insecurity *vis-à-vis* the cost of health care in pre-medicare Canada.

Every one of us in the House can delve back into our families and find a story that relates to those that I have mentioned here today. Every one of us is committed, at least to the principle of medicare, but we need more today than just the principles.

I have heard over and over again, I heard it today in Question Period, I have heard it ever since this budget came out, that there is not really a cut taking place because the federal government is transferring tax points to the provinces. Well, maybe that works in B.C. Maybe it works in the hon. minister's province of Manitoba, although I am sure my colleague from Winnipeg North will have something to say about that. Maybe it works in Alberta and Ontario. As the hon. member from South Shore will have to agree, it does not work in Nova Scotia.

You could transfer tax points until the cows come home, and if you have an economy that cannot support that kind of a tax base, that does not engender that kind of a tax base, all the tax points in the world are just points on paper. They are not dollars for medical care, and they are not going to assist in the payment of medical care for Nova Scotians. They are not going to give any sense of security to the people in my province who woke up this morning and read in their newspapers that cuts in federal payments put the medicare system in danger.

Mr. Geekie from the Canadian Medical Association said that what provinces decide to do is going to be on an individual basis. But the very fact that the cuts are taking place is going to pretty well erode or eliminate national standards or criteria from health care.

We live in perilous times for this country. Every one of us in this House at some point, at many points during our day, thinks about the country. We think about the future of the country, and we think about what Canada means to us. I was 17 years old when medicare came in. One of