

### Supply

As opposition critic for the status of disabled persons, I would like to offer my views on the effects to the disabled community. Disabled Canadians are among the poorest citizens of this country. Approximately 80 per cent of them are unemployed. Of those disabled people fortunate enough to be employed, the majority are ghettoized and underemployed.

In 1986 almost two-thirds of those employed had a total income of less than \$10,000. The dependants of disabled persons on social programs such as universal medicare is the highest of all economically disadvantaged groups.

Disabled persons must face the daily challenge of trying to cope with the extra burden of their special care and living needs while in most cases having insufficient resources to make ends meet. It is a fact of life for most disabled Canadians that they are severely constrained financially, a situation that is only marginally alleviated by government programs.

It is also a fact of life that their chances of gainful employment are still very slim. Opening the door to the possibility of user fees or lower quality medical service will severely hurt the disabled community, which can least afford it.

The disintegration of universal medicare will further marginalize and isolate the disabled community. Once again, it will relegate its hopes of economic integration to the back burner.

As members of a society who need medicare the most, the disabled will be the first casualties of federal withdrawal from health care. There can be no question that there are financial challenges involved in maintaining medicare at its current level.

By cutting health care funding, the federal government has turned financial challenges into economic impossibilities. It has made a bad situation into a disaster.

Why did it not examine alternative means to reduce health care spending? Why, when many provinces have begun their own studies into the health care system, has the federal government decided to run away from the problem?

Health care professionals have claimed for years that health care costs can be greatly reduced through prevention. It is estimated that reducing the occurrence of low

birth rates even by 1 per cent could save billions of dollars a year.

The point is that there are many other ways of making the health care system more cost efficient without trashing the fundamental principles of medicare. An honest examination of the issues of health care in Canada is needed. We on this side of the House support this. We do not, however, support empty promises and the dismantling of medicare which this government has already begun.

The cuts in federal health care funding attack the most basic principles of equality, caring and fairness that make up the Canadian identity. For the sake of Canadians and Canada, the government must restore health care funding.

**Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North):** Mr. Speaker, again I listened intensely to the comments of the member about the commitment toward medicare. It is very nice to make, as she called them, empty promises. I think the government has been good at that, but I think the Liberals have even been better at empty promises.

It is all very nice for them to talk about what they should do, but the reality is that when the Liberals were in power and had the right and ability to demonstrate their commitment to medicare, what did they do?

Would the member like to explain what was the commitment to medicare of the previous Liberal finance minister when he put a cap on medicare in 1975? What was the commitment to medicare when the Liberal government in the early eighties \$1.2 billion in transfer payments from the provinces, the same amount of money that the federal government is taking this year? What was the demonstrated Liberal commitment to medicare when they started gutting medicare when they had the power to protect it?

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** Perhaps I may point out that we now have five minutes for questions and answers. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

[*English*]

**Ms. Phinney:** Mr. Speaker, I have been here all day and there is something that confuses me. I have heard these gentlemen on the left, and they have been gentlemen today who have been speaking. The member has gone on and on and on all day, commenting on what the