

*Canada Health Act*

reading gutted to the point where nothing is left save penalties to be imposed on provinces which might permit extra billing or user fees. What is left in its place is a shallow piece of legislation which ignores the pressing concerns those witnesses brought before us for our consideration.

At the heart of any discussion of medicare is funding, that is, cost containment in relation to the quality of medicine delivered to Canadians. Canadians want and expect the best medicare system their Government can provide. But, as I pointed out at the time of second reading, what can Canadians really afford to pay with respect to this social assistance program, the most desirable one perhaps of all social assistance programs in this Government's legislation? The cost of our health care system is running today at about \$30 billion a year, \$22 billion of which comes from the public sector. This would put each taxpayer's annual medicare tab—check it out, Mr. Parliamentary Secretary—at \$2,200. Drugs, for the most part, dental bills, eye glasses and so on, will be added to that amount.

Staggering though these costs may be, it is still not enough to support the kind of medicare system that we would like to have and that we are asking for from day to day. Therefore, alternate sources of financing are being sought. The Minister of National Health and Welfare has rejected altogether the use of extra billing and user fees to close that gap. Well, we on this side agree and we will support the Bill. We agree that extra billing and user fees are not desirable, nor are they generally acceptable. Nonetheless, now that the Minister has said she will not accept user fees or extra billing, what will she accept? The Minister has little to say with respect to assisting the provinces as they are faced with a cost of increasing needs for health care. It is a long time since 1977 when we entered into block funding. Times have not stopped and we are not stagnant at the level of medicare of 1977. Province bashing by the Minister or anyone else does not serve our national interest when it comes to Canada's medicare system. A Government committed to the best possible health care system cannot be helped when it gets into province bashing or bullying everyone around the block. One is left to ask what the commitment of the Government to medicare is.

● (1630)

I remember participating in the sports pool debate and Bill C-95. The Government wanted the necessary legislation passed so that it would get the necessary funds to conduct medical research and so that the beneficiaries of fitness and amateur sport and the arts and cultural council would receive the millions of dollars which would follow therefrom. There is a commitment by Government to the welfare of Canadians. That was a real commitment for medical research. I hardly need to emphasize the importance of medical research and the promotion of physical activity among Canadians. Over the long term these two aspects represent perhaps the best chance of reducing health care costs. Huge benefits would also flow from an emphasis on medical research and on an improved medical fitness improvement program. Those benefits would flow through to our economic side when the record spending of

this Government is considered. Yet consider the contrast in pouring the billions and billions of dollars into medicare and the less than \$8 million spent on fitness programs under the Fitness Canada umbrella. That has been the legacy of not one but four Ministers of Fitness and Amateur Sport since 1980.

Additional funding for medical research and fitness and amateur sport is not only necessary but should be a priority. Even if the sports pool ever gets off the ground, this is no way to respond to that need. Quite frankly, it is an insult to those who have a real concern for the future of the health of Canadians. That the Government can continue to tell Canadians that health care is a priority when medical research and fitness and amateur sport programs such as these are left to the whims of the lottery buying public is simply a continuation of the Government's fiction. No one can plan on a secure or long-term basis what number of Canadians will purchase what number of tickets in the next draw, nor should anyone have to. From the standpoint of those directly concerned with the success or otherwise of the sports pool, the ineptitude displayed by the Government in establishing a sports pool corporation is even worse. It has been quite a spectacle, Mr. Speaker. The Government wants to establish a betting pool on professional sporting events, so no effort is made to reach an agreement with the sporting groups regarding scheduling of baseball or hockey. No contact has been made. Their own advisers tell them they should be able to go ahead, and there is no one to stop them. They are going to face litigation in that respect.

The Government wants to maintain the existing lottery agreement with the provinces, so no effort is made to negotiate a settlement by which the sports pool could complement rather than destroy that agreement. Now the provinces are entering into a court case with the federal Government on the sports pool. Finally, the Government claims to want to operate a sports pool, but it absolutely refuses to enter into an agreement undertaking that it will not go back into lotteries or will not enter some electronic get rich quick scheme tomorrow, the day after, or next year. Meanwhile, medical research and the other sports pool beneficiaries go begging. As I mentioned earlier, it is a rather nebulous commitment to the health and well-being of Canadians when you consider the development of that piece of legislation.

The debate on Bill C-3 could easily have led to a reappraisal of medicare if the Government had entered into negotiations, discussion and co-operation rather than heading into a confrontation with respect to Bill C-95 and now Bill C-3. The new Canada Health Act should be addressing the future. The emphasis should be on prevention, research and physical fitness. There is no foresight or direction in this new Bill, just as there is none in the Government across the aisle. That, Mr. Speaker, is the tragedy confronting the House at third reading of Bill C-3. An opportunity has been lost. An opportunity has been thrown away. Bill C-3 looks backward rather than forward.

I would like to see, as would all Canadians, a commitment by the Government to address the funding problems which have led to the symptoms of extra billing and user fees. Unless