

Supply

level and decide what is the role of the provincial governments in how they interpret national health care standards. At the first opportunity they have simply backed away from them.

The Prime Minister was very much in favour and supportive of medicare when he was in opposition. He indicated that the federal government needed to maintain and restore its 50 per cent funding of medicare.

Let us not have blinders on and think there are not problems which the health care system in this country must address. Changes are taking place in health care across this country in which the federal government has to take leadership. It must work with the provinces to deal with them. I want to spend just two or three minutes outlining what some of the problems are.

Before I do, I just want to correct something I may have inadvertently said a minute ago, namely that the Nova Scotia government is a Liberal government. I believe that is a Conservative government, but I have difficulty telling the difference between Liberal and Conservative governments. When one comes from B.C. one has great difficulty because in B.C. we have this amalgamation of Liberals and Tories and they are called Socreds. We have difficulty sometimes distinguishing between a Liberal and a Tory, particularly at the provincial level.

There are three or four things that I think the federal government has to show some leadership in, in working with the provinces to deal with medicare. I see my time is starting to run down, so I will just mention them.

First is the changing demographics in this country with the aging population, where increasingly people are living longer and the elderly rely more upon our health care system. We have to resolve that by developing community based alternatives to acute, institutionalized care. That is something we all must do.

The whole question of high technology is expensive, often unproven, and sometimes leads to heroic interventions that do not either prolong the life expectancy, the comfort or the functioning of the person. We have to start looking at and dealing with when we actually use high-tech constructively to improve the health and functioning of people and when we simply say: "Look, it

is not beneficial to the patient or to the total community to spend that amount of money".

Another whole area we have to look at is the question of personnel. There are indications we are training far too many physicians, that they are concentrated in urban centres, and that the rural areas of this country are not being served.

I want to go back to the Prime Minister's statements in 1983 wherein he talked about the need to restore the 50 per cent cost sharing, the partnership. He was quite passionate about it and said that was what was needed to restore the viability of medicare in this country.

Because of that, I think I would agree with him. Therefore I would propose the following amendment, seconded by the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley, British Columbia:

That the motion be amended by adding the following words:

"specifically its original commitment to restore 50 per cent federal funding for provincial health care costs".

If we are to have a commitment to reaffirm our commitment to medicare, we should do so in concrete terms, not simply in hollow rhetoric.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to my hon. friend. What particularly peaked my curiosity was his reference during the course of his speech to concerns that he had about the maintenance of standards under the Canada Health Act.

He made considerable point of the fact that the balance is shifting in Canada between transfers to the provinces in the form of tax points as opposed to transfers in the form of cash. He made it clear that he would prefer that those transfers take place in the form of cash.

What was most interesting though to me was he followed that by talking about the government's proposal that as we shift to tax points away from cash, we would be able to protect the standards in the Canada Health Act by being able to attach other funds transferred to the province. He attacked that proposal.

My question for my hon. friend is very simple. It is not what would be the optimal method of enforcing standards but his party, as will all members of this House, will be forced to deal on a yes or no basis with a bill which