

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

THE DISABLED

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, despite advances in recent years in services to disabled persons, there are still many areas of federal legislation that must be amended in order to address their rights. While appearing recently before the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons, representatives from various disabled groups repeated their demand for some form of omnibus legislation to address these concerns.

I call on this government to introduce omnibus legislation to include, among other things, amendments to the Canada Elections Act to ensure the accessibility of polling stations, amendments to the Immigration Act to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability, and amendments to the Access to Information Act to allow disabled persons equal access to information.

Disabled persons are tired of having their interests put "under consideration". It is time for this government to finally take action that will really help our 3.2 million Canadians who are disabled.

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MEDICARE

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, what next for medicare, our most valued national program?

In February, the Minister of Finance froze federal contributions to health. Since then we have had four provincial budgets which have brought about the lay-off of 300 nurses and closure of hospital beds in Newfoundland, a 16 per cent increase in health premiums in Alberta, a freeze on nurses' salaries in New Brunswick, and the determination by Quebec to proceed with user fees.

Yet the minister of health has repeatedly said he will enforce the Canada Health Act to ensure that national standards for medicare are met.

Will he restore universal medicare in Newfoundland and give the residents of Port-aux-Basques back their hospital? Will he restore accessibility to the middle-income families in Alberta who cannot afford medical premiums? Will he prevent the imposition of user fees on the poor in Quebec? Will the minister enforce national medicare standards and will he indicate to the

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provinces where they will obtain the funding to meet these standards?

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CITIZENSHIP

Mr. J.W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, there are few words used throughout the world which convey the vision of freedom and democracy more clearly than these two words, "Canadian citizenship". It is often said, for example, that a Canadian passport is the most prized document in the international community.

Among Canadians here at home there frequently seems an apathy about the values of our own citizenship, almost as though we have lost our meaning of country, our sense of pride in it, and our sense of patriotism for it.

Surely this is a state of mind that we must revitalize for ourselves and for future generations of Canadians. Surely the common denominator of Canadian citizenship must be reinforced as the mantle under which the rich potential of our bilingual and multicultural heritage can be attained and fulfilled. That is a current challenge for each of us, more important now than ever before.

Otherwise, without such a primary and premium commitment to the unifying spirit and deeper meaning of Canadian citizenship we shall be little more than a collection of separate languages and cultures existing together on Canadian soil. I believe Canada is much more than that and I am confident most Canadians believe so to.

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REFUGEES

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, today, I and other members of the human rights committee met with the president and other representatives of Canada's Kurdish community about the genocide in Iraq which has killed 60,000 to 80,000 of their Kurdish friends and relatives.

Although Canada has responded with financial aid, to date no Canadian supplies have reached the Kurds. Canada needs to take concrete action to end this human tragedy and speak up for the Kurdish people. They suggested than an urgent appeal to the UN and President Bush would end the killings, that Hussein be ordered to cease immediately the genocide of the Kurds in the whole of Iraq, that Turkey and Iran be requested to open their borders immediately, that the UN conven-