

*Supply*

It was not my party that called for user fees at the national convention. It was not my party executive who wrote to the finance minister asking that user fees or user pay become policy for the government. In fact, I am very proud that during a recent trip to Washington the leader of the Liberal Party defended medicare while others remained silent. Even the NDPers were silent. Did they come and join our forces? It was the Liberal leader who stood before all Americans and said that the Canadian health care system is the best.

What a hypocrisy on the part of the New Democratic Party.

**Some hon. members:** Where are they?

**Mr. Pagtakhan:** Nowhere to be found. If you do not believe that I, as Liberal health critic, have defended the Canada Health Act with every ounce of my strength then you must have been asleep for the past four years. Inside this House and beyond I have never ceased to protect our right of citizenship to our health care system.

I have articles here from *The Montreal Gazette*, the *North Times* in my constituency of Winnipeg North, *The Ottawa Citizen*, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Medical Post* and Saint John's *The Telegraph-Journal* all telling the country just how I feel on this issue. I will not belabour the point and quote them at this time. Anyone, particularly the member for Surrey North who brought this very unsavoury motion, can call my office and I will urgently deliver all these clippings.

Without question I believe and so do my colleagues, that user fees will block access to medical treatment for the poor. The need for user fees is unfounded and their collection calls for additional bureaucracy. Fees also tie up the time of doctors, nurses and administrators. They deter patients from seeking medical care, often delaying diagnosis until the illness is much more complicated to treat. I must emphasize that this has been proven over the past two decades by study after study after study that has been done both in and outside Canada.

I know the member for Surrey North will ride his old hobby-horse that it was the Liberals who first changed the method of cash transfers to the provinces followed by

the Conservatives five times in eight years. But let me point out to the member that the Liberal Party is indeed a very dynamic party. We listen to the times and we propose initiatives. We commit ourselves and re-commit ourselves to the Liberal principle of universal medicare for all.

It is a party that has done the right thing at the right time for the right reasons, but would never have wreaked havoc upon the system with the same Tory pattern. I tell the member for Surrey North that one cannot get away with making that comparison.

Yale University political policy professor, Ted Marmor, was recently interviewed by journalist Frances Russell. He explained his surprise by the way the business community believes and our government is fighting the deficit, declining productivity and stagnation by cutting and privatizing the health care system.

He says: "The truth is opposite. Canada has managed to arrange broad health insurance coverage to its entire population, to deliver in general quite decent care, and to pay about 25 per cent less of its gross national product".

As well he pointed out that Canada holds down over-all costs without the gaps, ills, and despair prevalent in the American medical system.

Now I ask the hon. member for Surrey North whether it is not time to realize the Liberals are not the threat to medicare. We are not the enemy; we are the defenders. We want the federal government to reconfirm financial support. That should be our common goal, not wasting our time on facetious motions such as this one.

Everyone in this chamber knows the federal Conservatives are not prepared to back down from their stand on transfer payments. No amount of pressure from us or the provinces can make them see the damage they are inflicting on the provinces.

So our path is clear. We must bring down this government. Let us turn our attention and energy to this task, a task which may end in the resurrection and preservation of our medicare system.