

provincially, over the next few years. We have to come to grips with that.

We have to ask ourselves a number of questions. How do we control that cost so that we can maintain a quality health care system? How do we ensure that we are getting the best value from our expenditures with respect to health care? Do we have to have all the procedures that are there? When new technology comes out, do we necessarily have to go out and acquire it and put it in all facilities? Do people always have to go to hospitals when in fact what they may need is a visit to a doctor? Do people have to attend at the doctor's office as often as they do?

The provinces are going to have to face these types of questions in terms of access to the health care system. The important thing is that we have to have a system that can respond to every need, every health care need of every Canadian. But at the same time, we have to ensure that those valuable resources are used for the benefit of those who need them, and not to provide entertainment for people on sunny days.

We have to also go on and ask other questions. Do we have adequate emphasis on prevention? What is the quality of health education in Canada? Certainly there have been improvements in health education in the schools in recent years, but what is the attitude that students have toward health education?

I have a son in junior high school. I know the attitude that he and many of his friends have with respect to health education. They do not recognize it as the priority that they should recognize it in terms of the school curriculum. It is something that is every bit as important if not more important to them personally than math, reading, social studies and some of the other things.

We have to look at the quality of health education and we have to look at preventive measures. The most cost efficient health care system is one in which we prevent people from becoming ill who, with some appropriate education, in fact would avoid the illnesses that have got them there.

We have to ask questions about institutionalizing people. It is a simple solution to a problem to say that we will institutionalize them, but that may not be the best

Supply

solution. Not only may it not be the best solution from a cost point of view, but it may not be the best solution from the point of view of the individual.

This takes us a little beyond simple health care to the question of geriatric care. Are we adequately responding as a nation to the implications of the fact that we live in an aging society, that the percentage of our population who are senior citizens is growing all the time? How are we going to cope with the financial implications of that?

Should we be just simply pushing people toward institutionalization, or should we be making greater efforts to make it possible for people to stay and have independence within their own homes? It seems to me that these are questions we should be asking.

Our system in Canada is unquestionably a good one if we compare it to some others. For example, the cost of health care in Canada is equivalent to 8.9 per cent of the GNP, whereas in the United States it is 11.6 per cent of the GNP and at that there are 30 million people without access to proper health care in the United States.

An hon. member: It is 40 million.

Mr. McCreath: One of my hon. friends says 40 million. Let it be 40 million. The bottom line is that we have a significantly better system. We all know it and we want to maintain the quality of it.

The provinces must take the lead in pursuing reform. For many of these questions, the answers must come from them because they are the delivery agents. It is all well and good for them simply to say to the federal government: "Give us more money". Let us be frank, the federal government has no assurance that the money is even going to be used for health care.

Let us face it that provinces can raise revenues as well. They can raise taxes too. I do not know what my hon. friends opposite think about that, but the fact of the matter is it is there.

The federal government does have a role to play obviously in providing financial support. The federal government also can and does play a significant role in encouraging co-operation among the provinces. Indeed every six months there is a federal-provincial meeting of ministers, officials and so on. There is a variety of