

Government Orders

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North): It is a privilege and a great honour to stand and address the House. Again I would like to thank the citizens of Surrey North for providing me with this opportunity.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I offer my congratulations to you on your successful appointment to the position of Deputy Speaker in the House of Commons. It is a challenging role at the best of times but even more so now, with over 200 brand-new members of Parliament here. I am confident that we will receive the guidance and direction needed to participate successfully in the ways of the House. I wish you every success in that role.

Today I will address health care. Specifically I will direct my remarks to the national forum on health and to women regarding health. My remarks on both topics will be brief and general in nature in order to comment on both today.

First I would like to congratulate the hon. member on her appointment to the position of Minister of Health. I wish her success in her new and challenging role.

Since health care is a major interest of mine, I shall be following closely the activities of the government in this field. I can assure the minister I will assist her to meet the health care challenges ahead by providing constructive criticism and alternate options whenever it seems necessary.

I commend the government on its decision to recognize health care as a high-priority social program. I think very few, if anyone, could find fault with that decision. Its agreement to continue to support and fund this program is encouraging news, and its objective to seek more efficient ways to spend our tax dollars in this field is even better news.

The question before us is the nature and effects of these more efficient ways. The establishment of a forum on health as a vehicle to gather data from as many sources as possible, to identify these more efficient ways, has been mentioned by the government in its red book, in the speech from the throne and in the minister's speech here last Friday, to name but a few occasions.

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I think we can safely say that this will come to pass in the near future. It seems a main objective of this forum is not to change from the five main principles of our health care system, but to identify alternate methods or to streamline the existing ones so as to allow us to continue with and even enhance our health care programs while maintaining these five main principles.

In her speech the Minister of Health offered some suggestions as to how this may be achieved, and many of her suggestions are echoed by other groups such as the Canadian Nurses Association. In a brief prepared by this association entitled *Nurses Make a Difference*, reference is made to such things as better use of

health resources, greater public involvement, more equitable access and so forth.

I understand there is a project presently under way at the University of Ottawa that is being funded by both federal and provincial funding sources as well as from some professional associations and private enterprise sources. This group is examining specifically cost effectiveness in our health care system and is also offering suggestions or recommendations, some of which are very similar to those made in the speech by the Minister of Health.

Opinions and options about health care have been expressed by health care professionals, other professional groups, the general public and our colleagues in this and other Houses across the nation. Potential solutions range from managing our resources better, changing the structure of transfer payments, increasing the provincial jurisdiction over health, and increasing public awareness, to name a few.

I welcome the decision to establish a national forum on health care so that these and other possible options can be identified and debated to produce a solution to our economic difficulties in maintaining a high standard of health care for all Canadians.

I return to the Canadian Nurses Association brief once more. It also mentions the need for national health goals, and that nurses and nursing associations across our country support this. It seems that in September 1991 an agreement was obtained from the federal, provincial and territorial ministers of health to establish a process to develop national health goals. To date little action, if any at all, has been taken to this end. I recommend to the Minister of Health that the development of national health goals become another objective for the national forum on health.

I shall now turn to my second topic. Reference has been made to women as having special conditions or requiring special attention in the health care field. The Minister of Health said: "Women do have special conditions, from osteoporosis to menopause, and they merit equal attention from research to treatment, to care and prevention." One could say the same thing about men, by changing two words, women to men, and menopause to prostate.

I caution our use of the word special in this context. Special tends to imply a situation or circumstance that differs from the norm or status quo. The normal composition of the human race is female and male or women and men. The biological nature of the body structure and, to some extent, the physiological aspects are the reasons for the two categories or components.

I advocate that neither one of these components, the male or the female, should be seen as special unto itself, but both should be seen as equal parts of the whole of the human race, and that our health care system should be addressing the needs of the