

Statements by Ministers

journals are featuring articles on organ and tissue donation in their April issues. Also, a number of provincial Ministers of Health have organized activities in support of Organ Donor Awareness Week.

It is my hope that all of these efforts will help to increase organ donation. But, there is something that each of you in the House can do to help—and may I take this opportunity to thank those Members of the House who have already taken personal action in this regard—and that is to consider organ donation and to sign a donor card or the consent portion of your driver's licence to that end. Also, I encourage you to discuss your decision with your family and friends, and ask them to follow your example. And take the message further, to your constituents and professional colleagues. By doing so, you will personally be encouraging others to give the most generous gift of all, the gift of life.

To use the slogan for the Week, "Make Something Good Happen—Be an Organ Donor."

• (1110)

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, of course it gives our Party great pleasure in joining with the Minister in saluting Organ Donor Week.

It is clear from the most recent Gallup Poll which came out on March 16 that more Canadians than ever are willing to donate their organs. The problem is that they do not know exactly how to go about doing it.

Those who say that they are willing to donate their organs include 26 per cent of the population who have already signed donor cards, compared with 21 per cent in 1983 and just 12 per cent in 1978. Over the last decade we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of people who have donated organs. However, 26 per cent is just too little.

We would suggest to the Minister, as well as the very positive initiatives he has taken in trying to sensitize the Public Service and the professional community, that it might be a good idea in next month's family allowance cheque to send that message out to families across Canada.

Mr. Lewis: Did you just discover family allowance?

Ms. Copps: No, I have not got mine yet.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): It is in the mail.

Ms. Copps: We see heart-rending cases highlighted from time to time on television, for example, when young children are seeking liver transplants. Canadians want to reach out and touch someone. They want to save a life, but in many cases they do not know how to do it.

For example, the Director of the National Capital Organ Retrieval and Exchange Organization said that one of the main problems with obtaining organ donations is that many doctors and hospitals do not have a specific policy on organ donation. Naturally, when a family is in crisis—it may be

facing a death or a decision to take one of their loved ones off a respirator—possibly the last thing it wants to be faced with at that critical moment is a question about organ donor transplants.

If we want to get more people donating, we should reach out and get their approval at a time when they are in a better position to make those kinds of decisions rather than when they are in crisis.

[Translation]

I was also pleased to hear the Minister mention volunteerism in his speech, although I may point out that in the Estimates just tabled in Parliament, funding for national volunteer agencies has not increased at all over last year. It is all very well to talk about the contribution being made by volunteers, but I think it is also important to follow through with some kind of financial support.

[English]

In closing, of course we are giving our full support. We would suggest that the Minister get the message out, not only to professionals but also to many thousands of other Canadians. He suggested that in our own way, through our newsletters and our contacts, we should also encourage our fellow Canadians to sign their licences, which provide them with this opportunity, or to sign donor forms. We should encourage those provinces which may not already have donation options on their drivers licences to do so.

There is much to be done, but I think there is goodwill on the part of Parliament and on the part of all Canadians. It is in that regard that we hope this week indeed spurs many more thousands of Canadians to give the gift of life through a donor transplant.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, there could be no contest in the statements being made now of the commitment of all Parties in Parliament to making this week an important one in communicating awareness of organ transplants. It is important to many who are in need of such transplants. However, there can be no more compelling inducement to support what has been said on behalf of the Government and on the part of the Official Opposition than to have, as I have, a very dear friend who lies waiting in a hospital bed, hoping along with his family and his many friends that he will have a heart in time to survive. It is clear that the longer he waits the chances of his survival diminish, and of course the length of his wait is a reflection of the availability of hearts for transplantation.

Without elaborating in support of the statement made by the Minister, or the details by which we could enhance the awareness of organ transplants, I say that those of us who have not given it thought heretofore should consider the situation faced by me in this particular instance and by others as they await the end because there are no organs available. Then they would understand the importance to so many that everything