

*Government Orders*

I want to start out if I could with the prepared points that I wanted to make on some quotations from a previous speaker of the opposition. They were very strong quotations and very powerful positions which were put.

Let me quote from one previous occasion in which there were cutbacks of the sort that were made in this piece of legislation. A Leader of the Opposition at that point said:

The problem with the medicare system resulting from those cuts arose because the federal government reneged on the commitments it made to the provinces and cut back very drastically on the dollars it sent to the provinces who are charged with administering and paying for medicare.

This same Leader of the Opposition went on to say that his party was: "in favour of quality medicare, universal medicare delivered to our citizens". "The problem," he said, "has arisen because of a unilateral and arbitrary cutback by the federal government to the provinces who are charged with footing the bill". That is the problem. That same Leader of the Opposition went on to say that his government, if it was elected, would restore the original 50/50 split in medicare costs between the federal and provincial governments if elected to office.

Members here in the House may wonder who this opposition leader was. Was it the member for Vancouver Quadra attacking previous Conservative budgets? Was it perhaps the Leader of the Opposition who presently sits in the House as Leader of the Liberal Party? Was it perhaps my colleague from the city of Windsor at the time that he was Leader of the Opposition for the Liberal Party?

No, those commitments and those criticisms came from the Leader of the Opposition who is now Prime Minister of this country. The Prime Minister before he was elected said the problem was: "the unilateral and arbitrary attacks by the federal government on the provinces". He promised to restore the 50/50 split in medicare costs. That particular quote comes from *The Ottawa Citizen* of August 24, 1983. The previous quote was from the *Vancouver Sun* of August 8, 1983. This was during the course of a campaign across the country on the medicare issue.

Yet what do we see from this government? We have seen four straight attacks of exactly the same kind that this Prime Minister criticized in opposition. These were

attacks which arbitrarily and unilaterally cut back the transfers to the provinces and laid that deficit load on the backs of those provinces.

The judgment has come in to the finance committee from dozens of groups across this country as to the effects of this approach. Some of the presentations have been quoted by the previous speaker for the Liberal Party. Let me quote a few more.

We can quote from the Canadian Federation of Students that stresses:

The effects of Bill C-20 and its predecessors must be considered in the context of a long list of government initiatives which are affecting students. Two years ago the government began privatization of Canada's student loans program. This year there is a 3 per cent tax on student loans, an application of the goods and services tax to students' books and closure of the Canada Employment Centres on campuses across the country.

Students in post-secondary education have been hit extremely hard.

The Public Health Association has indicated and provided its judgment to the committee. It is one of the most respected groups across this country. It said:

The position of the Canadian Public Health Association is that unilateral funding cutbacks to medicare are not the only, nor even the most effective way for the federal government to address financial restraint issues.

Let me quote what the the Hospital Employees Union said to the committee:

For many Canadians medicare has become much more than a social program. It is a good part of what defines Canada. The erosion of medicare will not only have serious health and financial implications for many Canadians it will further damage our national identity".

Let me quote from the Canadian Medical Association which is perhaps the most critical of all. Here is a group that you would have thought the federal government would have at least consulted before going at the gutting of our medicare program. It did not even consult them. No discussions took place whatsoever with that group of people charged with perhaps the highest responsibility in the medical care system. What is the judgment of the doctors of this country of this government and what it is doing to medicare? What is clear to the CMA and the health community at large is the changes in EPF transfers including this proposed extension of the freeze have destabilized the system and its capacity to continue to provide high quality health care services to all Canadians.