

Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act

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Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

Statement to the Legislature



November 27, 2003

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak about the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

Our government made a clear commitment to make universal, public medicare the law in Ontario.

We're introducing this legislation to keep that commitment.

If passed, it will make two-tier, pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care illegal in Ontario.

This legislation enshrines into law what Ontarians believe deeply in their hearts — every member of our society has an equal right to quality health care, based on need, not income.

Mr. Speaker, in preparing his historic report, Roy Romanow challenged those who advocated user fees for medically necessary services, medical savings accounts, and a parallel private system, to prove that their ideas would improve access or deliver better care.

They could not provide that evidence, Mr. Speaker, because that evidence doesn't exist.

But their failure to make their case does not mean that they will give up on having their way.

This legislation is needed to make it clear to them that their way is not the Canadian way, it's not Ontario's way, and it's not the way of the future.

Our answer to those who advocate pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care is: no way.

Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, I attended an Atkinson Foundation luncheon, honouring Mr. Romanow on the first anniversary of his report.

His thorough review came to an irrefutable conclusion.

The pursuit of corporate profits weakens, not strengthens, health care by taking dollars and resources out of medicare.

I told Mr. Romanow today, and I tell Ontarians now, that his report was a giant step forward.

It's a giant step forward because it builds on our values, yes, but also because it's based on evidence, not ideology.

It's based on facts, not myths.

But even a giant step forward will not move Ontario forward unless we in this Legislature take the next steps.

This legislation represents several significant steps forward.

The Canada Health Act does not include the principle of accountability.

Our legislation would entrench it.

There is no sure way now to know whether health care dollars are consistently being spent wisely, whether specific performance targets are being met, whether we are doing a better job of taking care of patients.

Our legislation would create an innovative way of doing just that: a new Ontario Health Quality Council.

The new provincial Council would keep track of factors such as waiting times, and issue an annual report on how the system is doing and, frankly, how the government is doing.

Our new government has been working hard to champion a National Health Council, something Mr. Romanow recommended, and the previous government did not support.

I am pleased to report that this idea has gained momentum once again.

We believe our Ontario Council can make a tremendous contribution to the national body and, more importantly, it can make a tremendous contribution to the people we are all privileged to serve.

It's not enough to tell Ontarians we have the best health care system in the world.

We need to ensure we have the best health care system in the world.

Like Mr. Romanow, Ontario patients want to see evidence, they want to see progress, and they want to see real, positive change in health care, not more creeping privatization of health care.

That is why our new government has acted to ensure that new hospitals in Ottawa and Brampton are publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable.

And that is why we will continue to take real, positive steps in the weeks, months and years ahead, so Mr. Romanow's giant step forward turns into a march towards the health care we need.

We will, as Mr. Romanow's report put it, build on our values.

We will build a health care system that is public, universal, and accountable.

Health care that's second to none.

Health care that serves generations to come.

Health care that's the envy of the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.