

# HEALTH

It's not that my mother didn't like Doctors; she in fact had a great deal of respect for them. It was more that we couldn't afford to go to one often that resulted in my sisters and me being able to count on one hand the number of visits we had as children.

This did not mean that we were sickly, under privileged children, far from it. Good solid meals of meat, potatoes and vegetables, porridge (oat meal) every morning for breakfast and lots of milk all day. Every spring a pot appeared on the back of the stove of sulphur and molasses with which we were dosed for a few days to "clean out our systems". We went through the range of childhood diseases and related quarantine periods with only a visit from the Health Department to say "yes, he's got it". Mumps, whooping cough, scarlet fever, measles and in the case of one of my cousin's polio or as it was then called infantile paralysis, you name it, our house with 3 Jackson children and 6 Vaughan's participated actively in every thing that was going.

I did once or twice, suffer from the stomach ache that starts relatively early in the morning and seems to magically disappear when school has begun or in modern times when the school bus has passed. My mother would give me a dose of castor oil, sometimes flavoured with orange juice, which almost destroyed my love of oranges. This certainly kept me busy during the day and caused much prayer that school time would quickly come again. Certainly this is an early example of a miracle cure. As far as I know my grandchildren have never had this cure although they suffer from "can't go to school" stomach aches which still seem to magically disappear.

I never had to "stay" in a hospital until several years after I retired and was living here. The treatment and care I received was quite professional and although I wouldn't recommend it as a Holiday Resort, we are blessed with excellent care in Picton and Kingston. I've never stayed in Belleville although Valerie has and had her problems dealt with effectively.

I'm not unaware of the Ministry of Health and its numerous activities having worked with health units in Peel County and Ontario County and then with the Provincial Department for a number of years. There I, along with hundreds of other, was delivering services of various sorts rather than receiving them.

In those days there was no National Health Care System such as we have today. I paid my own health insurance through my various employers including the Province and indeed today still pay insurance for coverage of things not

covered by Govt. Health Insurance such as drugs and dental and other services that have been "de-listed" so to speak.

It is almost impossible today to read a newspaper, magazine or listen to news and commentaries without hearing someone criticizing our health care system. Wait times, lack of staff, lack of equipment and certainly lack of money are constant complaints.

A recent article in the Economist dealt with our concern of the Two Tier health system which is a hot topic in this Country. It pointed out that in world rankings the Canadian system ranked 30<sup>th</sup> and the American system 36<sup>th</sup> and mused as to why we would want to emulate such a low rated system. I was surprised that, at least on the scale used by them, we rated so low in the world. Another recent programme on the CBC morning show mentioned that a family of 4 in the U.S. would be required to pay \$11,000 per year for insurance. This is much more difficult when the average income of that group is below \$50,000 per year. This is one of the reasons the U.S. has many millions of people with no coverage whatsoever.

Are we headed that way? I don't know but with the annual health budget for Ontario at over \$ 40 Billion, the single highest expenditure item in the Provincial Budget, it causes one to be concerned. In addition a comment in the weekend paper pointed out that the Province now pays over \$3 Billion per year for subsidized drugs for Seniors a rapidly growing group.

Is the answer only pouring in more dollars, I certainly hope not. It is reasonable to assume that stream lining operations can effect efficiency and thus enable more to be done with the same expenditures. Our Provincial Government is proposing to re-organize the health services and their delivery mechanisms. A most difficult task and I wish them every success.

*Continued on page 8*

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