

Canada Child Care Act

Ottawa, they could design more appropriate standards and enforce the standards better than can be done at the provincial level?

I would like to draw to the attention of members of the Opposition that some of the leading day care advocates have taken similar approaches to the federal Government on the question of national standards. On July 14, 1988, on the *CBC Morningside* program, Mr. Jack London, a member of the Katie Cooke task force, said:

Now there is no way and our report found this in 1986. There is no way that Ottawa can tell a region somewhere in a remote area what ratios of children to supervisors there ought to be in a particular space.

That's ridiculous. Ottawa can't control in that way. However, the federal Government has to ensure a number of basic standards right across the country and there are three of them. One is that money flow only into licensed, that is regulated and supervised care spaces, not into unsupervised and, therefore, inadequate spaces. Secondly, that moneys given to the provinces, and that's really what's happening here, moneys shared with the provinces, ought to be properly distributed so that the requisite number of spaces are available for infants, for preschool children, for school-aged children in the urban and rural areas. There's to be a proper distribution. And thirdly that the money be used to support public child care and not anything else.

On the CBC program, *As It Happens*, on August 11, Ms. P. Coates, Vice-President of the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association was asked:

Wouldn't the provinces object to having standards imposed on them?

Ms. Coates responded:

We hadn't asked for specific standards to be imposed. What we had asked for was some global statements about the importance of standards, the importance of staff training, the importance of enriched staff child ratios without actually attaching detailed numbers to them. But if the criteria had been in there then there would have been pressure on the provinces to look at their standards, really review them and be accountable for the money that they spent on the types of programs.

The reporter asked her: "So all you want is a statement?" She replied: "We wanted some initial statements to begin with, national objectives and some criteria". So it is clear that those who have studied the question agree that our approach to quality and standards is sound.

● (1720)

I would like to go back to the February, 1988 Budget which stated that the child tax credit would be \$559 for the 1988 tax year. Under this child care legislation the tax credit will be topped up by \$100 per child under 18 years in 1988 and by another \$100 per child in 1989. That is a \$200 increase in the child tax credit.

On the deduction side in this legislation, parents with children under the age of six and with receipts from a child care facility will be able to deduct up to \$4,000 per child. The lower income of a two-parent income family must be used.

Both of these assets, the child tax credit and the child deduction, represent \$2.3 billion in this new program. Of the \$2.3 billion about \$2 billion goes to top up the child care tax credit. Thus out of every additional dollar of tax assistance in

this program, 88 per cent is going to go to top up the child tax credit. That is good.

I want to talk about children here because topping up the child tax credit really assists children. Children have to come first. I know today that all across Canada in various regions and areas there are many parents who need child care assistance and child care facilities. I am willing to help those in need. We are a caring government. We will certainly assist those people in need, especially single parent women. But I feel that if there is a way to keep a family together, to keep children at home, especially in the very young years, then let us do it. I feel that parents have the responsibility to look after their children. I say let us try to encourage that.

I was very fortunate to be in a position to stay at home and look after my children. I recognize that. I strongly emphasize that I am willing to help those people in need. But if we can do anything, and do anything more to assist mothers or, indeed, fathers to stay at home and bring their children up in the home, I would certainly encourage it.

The Bill before us is the beginning of a new program. It is good. There are some inequities in it. I hope that we can resolve them in order to encourage moms or dads to stay at home. Child care is the responsibility of the parents. They should make the decision.

Within the Bill before us today there is flexibility. We have a great deal of flexibility that allows parents to choose between staying at home and receiving a child tax credit or sending their children to a commercial or non-profit child care facility with respect to which they will be allowed the tax deduction, as I said, with receipts up to \$4,000 per child under the age of six. We have to work this child care program through. As I said, it is a beginning.

I know people have difficulties. I recognize that there are a great many ways to improve the situation. This is a beginning. There will be 200,000 new spaces created over the course of seven years. I welcome that. I welcome the fact that the provinces will be setting the standards. I welcome the fact that we will be working with each and every province to ensure that our moneys are well spent.

I am glad that 50 per cent of the provincial and territorial operating costs of non-profit commercial services will be paid for under the new legislation. Some 75 per cent of the capital costs for non-profit day care centres and services will be paid for. This is a step in the right direction. We have a long way to go. I am pleased to speak, but I must reiterate that kids come first. I would like to see kids come first at home.

I commend the Minister on his job well done, as well as the task force, and say that I look forward to implementing this new Canada Child Care Act. Canada can have the best child care system perhaps in the world if not, indeed, in North America.