

able to live in these co-op housing units with some degree of comfort.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this government should simply admit that it has failed in its budget policies, which continue to create more and more obstacles for the advancement of women in Canada. Let me tell you that I share this feeling of disappointment that Canadians have about a government that is so insensitive and immoral towards the least fortunate.

[*English*]

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to stand in this House today to talk on this important opposition motion, which in a sense can be translated as follows: to examine the negative impact of the 1992 budget on women in Canadian society.

I am particularly proud of my party for having brought forward such an important motion on opposition day, one of significant substance and of great importance to Canadians in general. When I sat down to prepare some notes for reference during this particular address, I was reminded of a response that I prepared recently to a letter that had been written to me asking whether I would consider one of the major issues affecting women in Canadian society today. I want to quote from part of that letter. It reads as follows:

The major issue must be the recognition that women in Canada, particularly poor women of all ages, are not treated fairly. They are being discriminated against. They do not get support, financial or otherwise, which they need in order to have the same opportunities that men have.

That to me is the fundamental issue that we need to discuss a great deal. It seems to me that this year's budget is but one example of such mistreatment and discrimination.

[*Translation*]

Since 1984, as the hon. member pointed out, an increasing number of women and children have joined the ranks of the economically disadvantaged. It is a fact that when poverty strikes parents, it strikes their children as well, and it is also a fact that a disproportionate number of women are among the most economically disadvantaged in our society. I think everyone will agree that an alarming number of single-parent families headed by women lack the basic necessities, which to me

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is entirely unacceptable and in fact intolerable in a society like ours.

I may remind Canadians that 5 million people in this country live at or below the poverty line. One million of these people are children. More than 1.5 million are unemployed and more than 2 million receive social assistance. The situation is very serious indeed. If we look at mothers who are either divorced, separated or single, we realize that 60 per cent are living in poverty. What kind of future do they have for themselves and their children?

I think everyone will acknowledge that the 1992 budget will do nothing to alleviate poverty in this country or to improve the lives of women. In fact, the budget contains a number of measures that will hurt women and children.

I would like to quote the president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, who said that although it was not a direct hit like the 1991 budget, it would hit women much harder on a broader scale.

I would like to mention a number of areas affected by this budget. I remind Canadians that the Conservatives refused to keep their promise to implement a national child care plan. The Conservative Government also scrapped the Court Challenges Program, a decision that affects language minorities, the disabled and, of course, women.

I may also remind Canadians that the decision to review the spouse's allowance is a disgrace.

• (1600)

I also want to mention that wage parity has deteriorated, while the government's rejection of pay equity is completely and totally unacceptable.

Finally, cutbacks in social housing will further undermine the position of the poor. As I said earlier, many of Canada's poor are women.

[*English*]

For fear of being seen as partisan as I analyse this budget, I want to quote some people who have looked at it. The first quote is by Yvonne Peters, head litigation director for the Canadian Disability Rights Council, who responded to the axing of the Court Challenges Program and said:

I am outraged. It is getting women who are at the bottom of the ladder.