

Supply

election and just drags, drags and drags after the election.

Let us also remember that children are a unique group of citizens. Unlike adults, children continue to grow. For every day of delay in attending to the needs of children, those days can be multiplied in terms of adverse effects if we fail to deliver that service.

I would challenge the government to consider establishing child development centres across the country so that we can truly address the needs of our children, our most valuable national resource.

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth), Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, before starting my brief comments on this topic, I wonder whether it would be possible to obtain the unanimous consent of the House for dividing the 30 minutes allowed the government into two periods of 15 minutes, that is, two 10-minute periods, each followed by five minutes of questions and comments.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Danis: I want to thank hon. members of the Official Opposition and of the New Democratic Party.

I rise to speak in this debate as Minister of State (Youth). As you know, my mandate consists in representing Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24 in cabinet and preparing national guidelines and designing national initiatives to promote their interests and well-being.

I realized that the motion presented by the hon. member for Hamilton East was about poverty and its impact, and that is why I was anxious to take part in this debate.

As the Minister of State (Youth), I saw with my own eyes, in the course of recent consultations, how poverty that affects children at an early age can later create

problems that are practically impossible to overcome when they have to earn a living and support a family.

However, this motion does not give any recognition to what is being done today to deal with a very important aspect of the problem. Mr. Speaker, I am referring to employment. The best way to break the vicious circle of poverty is to find a job, and the best way to find a job is to get an education.

Let me give an example. According to a recent study, the poverty rate was 14.3 per cent among families where the head of the family had less than nine years of schooling, and this compares with 8.3 per cent for families where the head of the family had at least finished high school. When the head of the household had finished post-secondary studies or had a trade, the poverty rate was lower, around 6.7 per cent. Finally, only 3.7 per cent of families where the head of the family had a university degree were living in poverty in this country.

To recapitulate, the family poverty rate ranged from 14.3 per cent when the head of the household had less than nine years' schooling to 3.7 per cent when the head of the household had finished university. The only variable was the number of years of education.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if we look at the circumstances of single parent families, we find a shocking poverty rate of 30.5 per cent. It is partly due to the fact that this group includes a very large number of either elderly or very young people with a very tenuous link with the labour market. This group also includes single parents such as teenage mothers.

In this case the difference is even more revealing. When the head of the family has not finished grade nine, the poverty rate is 53.8 per cent. In the case of single parents with a post-secondary education or some kind of trade, the poverty rate goes down to 20.4 per cent. If the head of the household has a university degree, the poverty rate goes down further, to 12 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, education can make all the difference. By continuing their education, young people can acquire the proper skills that will help them cope with future changes. I am sure we all realize that a child that grows up in poverty is more likely to drop out of school and thus contribute to the poverty of another generation.