

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**CHILD POVERTY**

**Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Today the subcommittee on poverty intended to release its long awaited report on child poverty. Instead, the Prime Minister has pre-empted the report so that he can have a photo opportunity, surrounded by children during the signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister when he intends to stop the rhetoric, stop manipulating children and start acting on the real problems of child poverty.

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I believe it is sad on the day that the Prime Minister will sign the convention on the rights of children to have that kind of question.

I would appreciate if the member would recognize the role the Prime Minister played last year at the summit and will play this afternoon signing the convention. I would hope that the member from Manitoba would recognize that the Prime Minister committed himself last year to signing the convention and he will do that this afternoon.

**Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East):** Mr. Speaker, in October of last year the then minister of health and welfare was declared minister responsible for children. He took the occasion to make firm commitments to a national child care program that he said would enable families to work their way out of poverty.

That minister was set aside, his promises were forgotten and poor children in Canada were once again forsaken by this government.

I ask the new Minister of National Health and Welfare to offer Canadians a reason why his soon to be announced strategy on children should be viewed as anything but yet another heartless political ploy by this government.

Is there any more room on the Tory shelf of broken promises?

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, it is always impressive to see the opposition playing politics with children.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Bouchard (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, as long as we have poverty for children in this country, I will do my best to correct the situation.

This member and her colleagues have asked me many times when the government will finally sign the convention on the rights of children. It will be done this afternoon, and I hope that all members of the House, without any partisanship, will recognize that what is important today for all the children of Canada is that we will sign the convention.

The convention recognizes that all Canadian children have rights. This is a great step forward for the future of this country. I would hope that members will applaud all those children who are in the House today.

There are 36 children representing all the children of Canada. I would hope that the member would admit that something today is good and positive for the children of Canada.

**Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister or the minister of health.

This Christmas 284,000 children will go hungry. In Montreal alone, it will be 50,000; in Toronto, it will be 60,000; and in my own small city of Winnipeg, it will be 10,000.

Today the Prime Minister will ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. What measures will the Prime Minister take to also ensure the right of Canada's poor children not to go hungry this Christmas is guaranteed?

[Translation]

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I think all members of this House will agree that as long as there are children in Canada who are living in poverty, we must do everything we can so that the government and society in general can take care of these children.