

*Canada Child Care Act*

I wish to move to the motion before us which indicates that we want to "encourage the development of childcare spaces in the workplace". I get a little frustrated with the word "encourage". I think it is time that we become a little tougher, and say that we are beyond the encourage, urging, and talking into type of approach. As a federal Parliament of Canada we should be saying that it is time that we start providing child care spaces in the workplace. The place to start is right here in the jurisdiction of the federal Government. When facilities are built across the country, the first thing that the architect should be encouraged to do is build in the appropriate child care facility in the new building.

A case in point would be the federal building in Edmonton. As you well know, Mr. Speaker, since it is your home town, this huge federal building in downtown Edmonton has hundreds of rooms, seminar rooms, office rooms, and bureaucrats by the dozens, but they forgot to build a child care space.

I feel quite honoured and proud to be speaking on behalf of the New Democratic Party. Our spokesperson on this issue, the Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell), stood up in the House in 1979, days after she was elected, and stated that we should be leading the way on Parliament Hill for all employees. There should be a first-class day care facility. Led by the initiative of the Hon. Member for Vancouver East and others, there is now a first-class child care facility on Parliament Hill. I congratulate not only the Hon. Member for Vancouver East but others who encouraged it and saw it through to fruition.

Much more should be done than this symbolic gesture. There should be child care facilities in all federal public buildings, as an example, and then we can go to the private sector and say: "When you build a new plant or a huge office complex, for goodness' sake have appropriate child care facilities constructed as part of the building plan". This will encourage the provinces to develop child care spaces in the workplace.

I suppose we have to say that this is a minute step in the right direction to encourage the provincial Governments. As a Member of Parliament from British Columbia, thinking that we have to talk Premier Vander Zalm into creating child care spaces, I do not hold out much hope, I am afraid. I hate to say it, but it is almost a hopeless case. Hopefully in other provinces where there are more progressive premiers and more progressive provincial Governments—although there are not many—we will be able to move in the right direction.

I wish to focus my comments on Motion No. 22. The Hon. Member for Outremont (Mrs. Pépin) is indicating that we again want to "encourage the development of childcare spaces in after school setting to meet the needs of children between the ages of 6 and 13". Again, the word "encourage" I believe is a little light, but at least we are encouraging. My concern here focuses on two or three items. We recognize the very acute need for providing child care services for latchkey children. Some children leave school at 2.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

and unfortunately, because their parents are working and do not come home until 5.30 p.m. or 6 p.m., there is a period of time when they must go home and be on their own. We want to take immediate steps to ensure that proper facilities are available for those children who have to go to empty homes with no parents during those critical hours. What is left out of this is infant care for young people under the age of three, the toddlers. In many instances there is a very acute need in terms of appropriate child care, to say nothing of summer child care.

We will support those three amendments, because they do move us in areas that we want to move. However, they do fall short and there is still an awful lot more to do. We are pleased with the gains that we see here, but again it is time that we get beyond encouraging the development of child care spaces, or encouraging the development of child care spaces in the workplace, and got on with actually doing it, providing the funds, and creating those spaces. The first place to start, and I urge the Minister of National Health and Welfare, would be in federal buildings across the country so that every major federal building would have child care facilities put in place to show the leadership that this legislation ought to have shown.

● (1230)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I would like to comment on the Hon. Member's speech. I appreciate him commenting on the fact that we do have a very nice federal building in our area, but I wish that he would not get the Chair into an argument about whether I would want to have child care spaces in that particular area. He knows my feeling about something like that. I do not want to get into an argument.

The Chair cannot get into an argument or debate with regard to whether we should or should not have child care spaces in that wonderful building in Edmonton. The Hon. Member knows that I would want it if I had an opportunity to debate. The Hon. Member for Outremont.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support motions Nos. 21 and 22. The first one deals with the development of child care spaces in the workplace. We know that a much more comprehensive plan should have been presented along with Bill C-144 which we have before us, that the bill should have been linked to an employment equity program, to parental leave and child care services in the workplace. The Minister has been saying ever since he introduced the bill that it would give parents a choice. Parents cannot opt for child care in the workplace, because no such option exists in the legislation.

Forty five per cent of couples with children would be under the poverty level if both parents did not work. Therefore they need child care. If there were child care services in the workplace, I think, first of all, that—as several studies have shown—absenteeism would be considerably reduced and also that both parents would have equal opportunity in terms of taking the children to a centre.