

groups to discuss the proposed changes to the divorce legislation and specifically to reconsider the proposed change of the waiting period when there is a marriage breakdown from three years to one year.

Perhaps the length of time which has passed since the divorce legislation was last changed warrants an argument for review and change. The 17-year old Act is due for a change so that it properly reflects and represents the 1980s, and recognizes that attitudes to marriage are much different today than they were in 1968. Indeed, it is very distressing to know that today 40 per cent of all marriages end in divorce. Some may say that it is a national epidemic. This obviously represents a large number of Canadians and ultimately the divorce legislation will have a great impact on many lives.

On May 25, I escorted my older daughter down the aisle in a marriage ceremony. They started that marriage with great hopes and dreams, and both sets of parents share that dream. It would be an outright tragedy if that marriage which has so much hope was in any way eroded as a result of legislation that we might pass in this Chamber. That is why I encourage my Government to proceed with caution on this very important legislation.

Even more distressing and disturbing is the fact that almost 70 per cent of divorced spouses either refuse or fail to comply with their court ordered alimony and child support payments. I feel that this is a total disgrace and an abuse of the present system.

The proposed legislation is an excellent attempt at humanizing the process of divorce. This legislation and its elements can ease the pain of ending an unworkable marriage.

The legislation recognizes some of the unpleasant social realities of divorce, and also strives to recognize the consequences of divorce rather than concentrating on the grounds of divorce, as does the current law. It is indeed time that "no fault" divorce legislation was introduced so that Canadians are no longer forced to lie or create often scandalous, unreal situations for the sake of a divorce. It is refreshing and sensible to know that the new legislation will permit couples to divorce without having to go through a charade of events in order to qualify for divorce on such grounds as adultery.

I fully support and commend the intention of the Hon. Minister of Justice to clamp down on divorced spouses who do not meet their financial obligations. I hope the provinces will mutually agree to the establishment of a tracing system for defaulting spouses, much like the current system that exists in Manitoba. It is outrageous that this negligence is currently costing Canadian taxpayers approximately \$1 billion a year. This proposal will go a long way in attempting to correct this alarming situation.

While divorce may be the dissolution of a marriage, it is not necessarily the absolute end of all relations between family members. Indeed, we must consider seriously the quality of life and, more important, the quality of family life in Canada. I believe that family life is the cornerstone of Canadian society,

and divorce legislation must continue to protect the victims of divorce, usually the children.

I am concerned about the proposed change to the length of separation from the current three years to one year. Perhaps a move to a one-year no fault divorce clause may indeed speed the legal process of a divorce, but I also strongly believe that this will weaken the institution of marriage and hamper the prospects for reconciliation. I believe that quicker access to divorce will add to the hardship by encouraging people to seek divorce rather than try to improve their marriage. Perhaps we could compromise and institute a two-year test trial separation period rather than one year, because it is always more difficult to raise the limit of a law once it has been lowered.

In summary, I hope the Minister of Justice will take my suggestion of compromise seriously and implement a two-year separation period for an uncontested no fault divorce. I remind the House, that on the whole I believe this legislation is an excellent representation of what Canadians are looking for in new contemporary divorce law.

**Mr. Chris Speyer (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, I am fully aware of the deep seated concerns that have been expressed by the Hon. Member, not only publicly but also privately to me and other Members of Parliament.

I point out to the Hon. Member that not too many years ago all grounds for divorce were based on fault. Other sections of the Divorce Act were introduced which allowed for marital breakdowns, those in which there was consent in terms of marital breakdowns, and the element of abandonment, which took five years. Right now it is perceived by the Government that three years is too long a time; that people resort to the more traditional grounds of adultery and cruelty rather than waiting three years.

● (1800)

I invite the Hon. Member to attend the committee which is about to study the Divorce Act in detail, commencing tomorrow morning at 9.30 a.m. We have an abundance of witnesses and this will be one of the areas we will explore. Because of the deep-seated feeling the Hon. Member has with respect to this matter, I cordially invite him to hear the evidence and maybe suggest further witnesses on this point if he is not satisfied with those who appear before the committee. Certainly he will be heard.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS—IMPACT OF TOXIC CHEMICALS ON SEA-GULLS. (B) REQUEST THAT MINISTER MEET SCIENTISTS

**Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport):** Mr. Speaker, on May 22, 1985, at page 4957 of *Hansard*, the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Blais-Grenier) is recorded as saying in reply to my question that the program on the impact of toxic chemicals on sea-gulls has been reinstated at the Burlington Centre, and monitoring continues. The purpose of tonight's intervention is to get as a minimum an understanding as to what the word "reinstated" means. Does reinstating mean as