

Supply

We are doing a lot better than that. We have said that based on what the judgment would be, we will indeed provide retroactivity. Not everyone is going to be happy with it, I understand, but I think that is fair because with almost anything you do in life, there is no unlimited retroactivity.

For me, the important thing is to move ahead, to ensure that there is a fair and balanced approach in dealing with pay equity and that we can move ahead at this time.

My hon. colleague asked me as well about child care. I am sure she is aware that the federal government now does contribute about \$1 billion toward child care throughout this country. That is through a variety of initiatives, both through the provinces and through those women who are into training under the various training programs that we have. Of course, we also have the tax reductions which help another group of women, a very important group of women. We have, through things like Treasury Board, programs for establishing employer child care.

We have been working closely with my colleague, the Minister of Labour, on the whole issue of work and family and focusing on how we need to encourage employers to be more sensitive to this issue. One way is through the provision of employer-supported child care which, for many women, they see as the appropriate response. Certainly we are working in that area as well.

I hope we will be able to do more because I believe that child care is an important component for many women in this country. I think it is not, as my hon. colleague would agree, only a federal responsibility. It is primarily within the provincial area with our focus being, as we have seen in this budget, on trying to help make it more affordable. That has been the focus, affordability, putting more money into the hands of women through the new family benefits package. By putting more money into the hands of women through the Income Tax Act

and the child care tax deductions, we are indeed making significant progress toward that end.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. minister, I was reminded in her comments of two things. One, she talked about pay equity and the provinces. I agree. She is certainly correct in the question that retroactivity is not exactly thick on the ground, particularly in the have not provinces, many of which she mentioned, for obvious reasons.

I was also reminded, to a degree, of what my mother used to say to me when I would say: "The kid up the street is allowed to do this and the kid next door is allowed to do this". My mother would say to me: "That is fine in those houses, but in this house, the child is not allowed to do this". I would ask the minister, understanding the difficulties inherent in this question of pay equity, does she not agree that what we have here is a long-term series of inequalities that the government has an opportunity to right? The women in the Public Service in particular are not subject to the employment equity law yet, and the pay equity provisions have been, in a sense, twisted out of their grasp. They originally thought they were going to get one package and later found out they were going to get another. Would the minister not agree there is an inherent fairness there that we should all be trying to achieve as soon as possible?

Mrs. Collins: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I would agree with my colleague that there is unfairness. The fact that we have pay equity legislation and are proceeding with its implementation seems eminently fair to me.

There will be different points of view on the technical criteria of how we relate one job to another. Obviously there are going to be different perspectives between employers and employees' representatives. That is why we have a mechanism for resolving those differences, which in this case happens to be the Human Rights Commission. In other jurisdictions they have other mechanisms for resolving differences. I think that indeed is fair.

The provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia do not have pay equity legislation yet but will soon introduce it. Governments introducing pay equity legislation now should recognize that it probably should be done from this day forward. We cannot go back and redress all the inequities of the past, whether it is in this issue or many other issues. It is important now to find mechanisms to ensure that women are paid equitably and, as my colleague has said, also have the kinds of