

Supply

Thanks to programs specifically designed for women, awareness campaigns, and research, we are now able to help many women quit smoking for good.

In the same vein, we have launched a program to reduce smoking and promote healthy lifestyles. That program is aimed at low income women, undereducated women, single mothers, young women and Native women.

Any investment in those sectors can be productive during a lifetime, sometimes right from birth.

[English]

We are convinced that health promotion and disease prevention are the best long term routes to good health. That is why we believe it is better to invest in the Canada prenatal nutrition program which assures healthier outcomes for both mothers and babies than in high tech heroics to save infants at risk.

• (1655)

We also share concerns about the efficacy of medical devices as well as the ethics and social and health implications of new reproductive technologies. We worry they have the power to fundamentally alter the lives of our children and families because they open the door to genetic technologies.

Expanding our vision of health; reducing our dependence on technology; doing what works, involving a broader array of health providers; self-responsibility; and a greater emphasis on promotion: These same topics match the key priorities identified as crucial to the renewal of Canada's health system and ultimately to our national well-being. They are particularly pertinent to women, but they are not just women's issues. They are society's concerns.

[Translation]

To solve many of those problems, positive response to change is required. I am convinced the health system reform offers the best chance of success. We should also remember in political discussions that we are here to serve the people, to serve Canadian men and women, and not only governments.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her remarkable speech. I have seldom had the opportunity to listen to such a long speech made by her and I want to congratulate her. Her speech is full of good intentions and I can tell she knows this issue thoroughly.

I am not rising to blame anyone. Unfortunately, in spite of all the policy statements and the good intentions expressed on both sides of this House, on the government side, there seems to be a distortion between what they say and what they do.

We have had many days like today where we discussed the status of women. I remember last December 6 was one of those.

The women of the Liberal Party joined the Bloc Quebecois women to denounce the sometimes tragic situation of women.

However, in our daily lives, in our bills, we seem to forget all the promises, all the good intentions and we just brush honourable thoughts under the carpet. For example, the Liberal members and ministers, and perhaps even the minister who just spoke whom I regard and respect highly, are not opposed to measures like the one implemented in last year's budget, which takes into account a husband's salary to determine if a woman will be entitled to unemployment insurance benefits.

When we proposed other legislation, what did they do? Did they fight for child care? I know they are all good human beings and I respect them, but they are just not there when time comes to keep promises, turn words into deed and principles into actions. Unfortunately, they then often slip away.

I said at the beginning of my comments that I did not want to criticize. On the contrary, I hope that, like the health minister, women in the Liberal Party will be able to put pressure on their male colleagues, who are the majority, so that they take some actions in favour of women.

Do not be surprised if it is a man who is telling you this today. I have three beautiful daughters whom I love as much as my son, and I see that the future that we are preparing for them, the environment that they will have to work in, is not always to their advantage.

I am not asking for special privileges for women. I am simply asking that they be treated the same way as men and, often, as some minorities. In Canada, our women are not treated as well as some minorities, and I feel that this is not right.

I thank the minister for her fine speech. We can tell that she knows the subject and that her intentions are good. What I am asking her is, does she intend to promote her ideas within her own party?

• (1700)

Ms. Marleau: Madam Speaker, I must say that it is absolutely necessary to keep working together, not only in this party, because here we really care about the status of women and the status of minority groups. As you know, many women are members of minority groups. My point is that we intend to do everything we can, despite an economic situation that is still pretty serious, to ensure that the dollars we have go directly to those who need them most. These are sometimes difficult decisions. We have groups that do good work, but the dollars we give them do not go directly to those who really need them.

When I consider the spirit of co-operation we see today when we talk about the status of women, especially poor women, and when I consider that for years we have had constitutional debates to decide which level of government should do what, and all kinds of commissions, and all very expensive, I start