

the workforce and into more highly skilled jobs. In the other, recent female immigrants have been trained as fibreglass mill operators.

These are examples in one province. There are many more in that province and there are many more all across the country. Our new programs for youth share this commitment to the needs of women. Youth Service Canada has been a real success story. In the lead site projects, the ones that tested the concepts beyond Youth Service Canada, 54 per cent of the participants are female.

Some projects were focused on issues of particular interest to women. For example, the Regina family service bureau ran a project that helped 10 young single mothers.

Employment programs and services are only one element of our work for women. Unemployment insurance is a program that continues to play an important role as we move toward a more active labour market policy. There are some elements of UI such as maternity and parental benefits that respond to the labour market reality faced by female workers.

To my friend from Yorkton—Melville and my friend from Edmonton Southwest, despite their professed beliefs it is important we have programs that help women respond to the labour market reality, programs such as maternity and parental benefits.

We do not have to go far back in time to find how this program has been adapted to the needs of women. We need only go back one year to 1994. The government decided to scale back UI benefits. However, in doing so it took into account the situation of people on low incomes. Almost 60 per cent of single parent families with children under 18 live on low incomes. Far too many are single mothers struggling to make ends meet.

It is that situation that caused the government to create the special 60 per cent dependency benefit rate for people who are supporting dependents on the basis of low income. This year people who earn an average \$408 a week or less and who's spouses get the child tax benefit or who support a dependent are eligible for this additional UI support. That provision makes a real difference for a single mother. Since the implementation of the dependency benefit rate over 192,000 claimants have qualified. The great majority, 148,000, were women.

The government recognizes the labour market needs of women extend well beyond the traditional programs and services, no matter how sensitive these services and programs. The National Association of Women and the Law stated in its appearance before the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development a year ago: "We recognize the growing importance of women in the labour force, but fail to recognize that women have children and women are primarily responsible for their care".

Supply

Child care is important. It was a concern of ours during the 1993 campaign. It is a need that we are addressing on three separate fronts.

• (1335)

The government is moving ahead on its First Nations and Inuit child care initiative. The goal is to increase the level of services in those communities. There is so much more. A second front is a research and development component to give us more information in this critical area of child care.

I have pages of programs the government is working on. We are not there yet. We are working at it and I believe when we get there the women of this country and therefore this country as a whole will be the better and the richer for it.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chretien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my distinguished colleague from Burin—St. George's is an outstanding parliamentarian, and he regularly demonstrates his skills when he takes the floor.

The thing I disapprove of is that his party and, to a certain extent, the hon. member for Burin—St. George's himself, talk out of both sides of their mouth. I would like to give an example, that of the Canada Labour Code reform and precautionary withdrawal from work.

I do not need to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the family unit is the most valuable asset of any country. In May 1994, the Bloc Quebecois tabled a motion supported by the governing party, the Liberal Party of Canada, in order to raise the compensation for pregnant women to the 95 per cent level provided by the Quebec CSST. Right now, it stands at 60 per cent.

A discussion paper on the Canada Labour Code reform is being circulated at this time, and the Liberal Party of Canada did not include that motion, which it supported in May 1994, to give substantial assistance to pregnant women who must ask for precautionary withdrawal from work in order to carry their pregnancy to term and protect their unborn baby.

Like the rest of us, the hon. member for Burin—St. George's is certainly aware of the importance of the family unit, that is a wife, husband and children—the complete unit. The children will be the work force of tomorrow and will pay for our pensions. That natural asset of our country is now declining.

We moved a motion that the hon. member's party supported, but what we see and hear in the House today is just a lack of courage, and double talk, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the hon. member for Burin—St. George's is the one who will have to clarify his party's position. I hope he will set the record straight, because this is an important motion on the equality of women.