

Statements by Ministers

Mr. Deans: I am certainly grateful to you for that permission.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): I said "very rapidly".

Mr. Deans: Given that this is what I consider to be a vitally important task force which is to be given a very serious mandate, I would not have thought that I would have any difficulty getting my views on the record. However, I will do the best I can to wind this up as quickly as I humanly can, I can assure you. I want to make sure that the fore profit potential is kept in mind and that the scarce resources are allocated to provide the maximum child care possible.

I am getting little signals which I can hardly understand. I am having a tough day, Mr. Speaker. I hurt my back this morning and I am suffering considerably. Any further aggravation will cause me great pain.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deans: I want to quickly set out some points which I hope the committee will remember in its establishment of a national child care policy. Child care should be universal. The highest quality child care services should be mandatory. There should be licensing and regulating provisions to guarantee that. The affordability of child care must be kept in mind and it must not be unavailable simply because of lack of income on the part of families, particularly low income families. The parental role must always be paramount. Parents should have an active and significant role in determining the child care environment.

I am just about finished. I only have about 10 seconds if you will just sit back and relax.

With respect to the whole question of sponsorship, child care services should, to the extent that it is humanly possible, be non-profit operations in order to maximize the benefits and the working conditions for those who work in child care should be such as to guarantee salaries and benefits which meet their education and commitment.

With those few comments, I will conclude by saying that I would like to see the committee get on with this work and I thank the Minister for having brought the terms of reference forward.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORT

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON HANDICAPPED PERSONS

Hon. Suzanne Blais-Grenier (Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to explain to Hon. Members how this Government intends to make our transportation system more accessible to the disabled. In fact, we intend to achieve this objective by means of a range of specific and positive measures.

[English]

It is indeed a pleasure to rise in this House to describe the Government's commitment to improve accessibility to our transportation system for disabled persons.

[Translation]

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides that all persons are equal before the law. This implies that the disabled must have reasonable access to facilities and services provided by the Government of Canada.

[English]

Prior to forming the Government, the Progressive Conservative Party pledged itself to three major goals for disabled persons; to remove barriers to their participation in economic and social opportunities; to support self reliance by disabled persons and enhance their capacity to contribute to their communities and, finally, to work toward implementing the recommendation contained in the Obstacles Report of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Disabled Persons.

[Translation]

Today, I would like to describe what we intend to do about transportation to make this sector accessible to the disabled. Our Government will be taking steps in a number of areas. First of all, a comprehensive plan for training and development of all public transportation employees in federally regulated sectors; then, defining the type of measures required to respond to the needs of disabled travellers, whereby provincial governments will be urged to ensure that provincial bus companies develop plans for adapting equipment and services and submit these as soon as possible; encouraging the negotiation of reciprocal agreements on paratransit services; co-operating closely with the Canadian Human Rights Commission and agencies representing the disabled, the private sector and other levels of government, with a view to increasing accessibility; retrofitting of terminals and facilities regulated by Transport Canada so that they provide the same level of services to the disabled; co-operating closely with carriers to ensure effective communication; taking appropriate action to provide for a reasonable level of service for the disabled on all transport modes.

● (1600)

[English]

These commitments will form the basis of a new policy on transportation of disabled persons which I intend to announce in the near future. This Government is sensitive to the needs of disabled persons in the area of transportation and has reviewed the issues in detail.

[Translation]

Already aware of the needs of the disabled and the problems they face in the area of transportation, the Government has consulted with disabled persons and their representatives in order to acquire a clear understanding of the problems they have to deal with. Today, we are acting in response to recom-