

Daycare

now term daycare centres. Fortunately, our family was in a position to be able to pay the cost, but nevertheless we were very pleased that such kindergartens or daycare centres were available. I sincerely hope such facilities eventually will be available to all children from coast to coast in this country.

I would like to set the tone for my remarks and state the reason I first put this motion on the Order Paper. Last spring I had the opportunity, as a member of the fiscal transfer payments committee, to cross this country and discuss with representatives of the governments of the provinces—some of the prime ministers, many ministers including ministers of education and health and ministers responsible for social services—problems in the three areas of health, post-secondary education and social services. While in the various provinces we also listened to representations from groups from those three sectors. We spoke with many groups in the health sector. We heard from groups of doctors and nurses and groups representing hospital administrations. We spoke to university teachers and university administration groups, and we also spoke to a large number of groups responsible for social services in this country.

It occurred to me and became clear through questioning that many of our social service groups were working somewhat in the dark. When we asked them questions about their operations, they knew what they were doing, but they had no certainty that the provincial administrations were necessarily aware either of their operations or of the useful part they were playing and, of course, they were never aware for how long they would be able to continue to receive funding.

I discussed with several of these social service groups the Canada Assistance Plan, the cost of which, as hon. members are aware, the federal government shares with provincial governments on a fifty-fifty basis in relation to certain social services. In fact, the federal government transfers some \$2 billion to the provincial governments for that purpose. The groups were most interested in the agreements signed between the federal government and the provincial governments. However, those agreements were not available to the public and therefore were not available to the social service groups.

When I returned from that trip across Canada, I asked if these documents could be produced. I was told by officials in the Ministry of National Health and Welfare that these documents were not to be released, at the specific request of certain of the provincial governments, so I took the only initiative I could at that time and put a motion on the Order Paper. My first motion was to obtain a copy of the agreement signed between the federal government and the province of Ontario. I rose in the House a couple of times to ask what was happening to this motion, and eventually the document was produced. It is a voluminous document. Of course, once this agreement has been tabled, it is available to the public at large, so I decided at that time to put some further motions on the Order Paper, and hon. members will note that even at the present time there remain several motions calling for the agreements signed between the federal government and the other nine provinces. These documents have still to be pro-

duced, although I was assured as late as this week that they will be forthcoming. I want to see them because I want the various groups in the social service field to know that they are available and that they can be perused by them.

It is not difficult to understand why the provincial governments were not anxious to make these documents public. In fact, a reading of certain minutes indicates that it has been stated on more than one occasion that making these documents public might lead to some comparisons between provinces. It might lead to some bargaining between social service groups. It might not necessarily be good for the provincial governments because there might be pressure brought to bear on provincial governments to provide services provided in other provinces or to provide services on an equal basis throughout certain provinces. I do not like this approach to social services, Mr. Speaker. I am absolutely convinced that in the field of social service there should be equal opportunity and equal accessibility to all persons in all provinces.

• (1710)

You will note from a reading of the minutes of the meetings of the committee that examined fiscal transfer payments, that in one province there is only one daycare centre. You will also note that the federal government, on a per capita basis, puts 2.5 times as much money into one province as into another. Let me hasten to say that this is not the choice of the federal government. Of course, the Department of National Health and Welfare receives a bill from the provincial government and, in effect, all the federal government does is to see that the general standards of the programs are conformed to, and then it signs the cheque.

Last week the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) was proud to announce that the federal government had increased the spending on social services this year by 19 per cent. That pleases me, but it also indicates to me that, first of all, it was not our choice to spend 19 per cent more as we are just paying the bill. Also, there is apparently greater need in the country, otherwise the provinces would not have increased their spending by a similar amount.

In June last year the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) issued a news release in which it was stated that he approved a program to facilitate the operation of pilot daycare centres in federally owned or leased buildings. I should like to quote from that news release as follows:

These projects are designed to permit employees with young children to fulfil their combined roles of employees and parents.

It goes on to say:

The management of these centres will be the responsibility of parent-users, who will form a legal corporation and assume complete administrative and financial responsibility for their operation. In order to facilitate this undertaking, the departments will provide the required space and maintenance.

So far so good, but that led me to recall that during the nine years or so that I have been a member of this House, three of the secretaries employed in my office have been single parents inasmuch as they have been responsible for bringing up young children, and, of course, as they live alone, they have been