

Supply

quarter ago I was pointing out to the House that the fundamental responsibility for raising their children will always remain with Canadian parents themselves.

Within the Department of National Health and Welfare we have taken some important steps to help families with problems. Our family violence initiative is in its second year. This \$65 million program which works in co-operation with the provinces will create many more shelter spaces for battered women and their children.

In the past family violence and child sexual abuse were seen as strictly private matters. We are only now beginning to understand the depths of these problems and the number of child abuse and wife battering cases being reported to authorities is growing dramatically.

[Translation]

The Badgley Report shows that 42 per cent of our population has at some point been a victim of unwanted sexual acts and many of these victims are children. This is a most disturbing statistic. Canada can no longer tolerate exploitation of the most vulnerable by brutal individuals.

We must pool all our resources to fight family violence. Special attention must be paid to the needs of native Canadians who, because of their isolation and poverty, suffer the tragedy of family violence.

Early in the new year, my special adviser on the sexual exploitation of children, Rix Rogers, will present me with his report, the result of two years of consultations across the country.

[English]

In the meantime, I announced recently that the federal government would support an important new national service for children in distress with \$1.3 million in funding. The Kids Help Phone received more than 45,000 calls in its first six months. Three thousand of them reported that they had been abused. With an outlet like this we can start to identify those children who really need our help and concentrate more of our future efforts on them.

We will be working over the next few months to further develop programs which will be helpful. I think there is much more that we can do.

Let us focus for a minute on the future. The motion before us today sets an important goal. It calls for the elimination of poverty among Canadian children by the

year 2000. What can we expect in the year 2000? What will Canada be like? We have just completed the most comprehensive demographic survey in Canadian history and it gives us a pretty good idea what is happening to families and where the population is going.

By the year 2000, roughly 12 per cent of our population will be 65 or older. Today Sweden and West Germany have more than 15 per cent. Both of these are dynamic and vibrant economies which have no difficulty supporting their social network, nor if we act prudently should Canada have difficulty, but what will change significantly over the next 10 years is the nature of the family itself. The more that I learn about families the more I realize that even today there is no such thing as an average Canadian family.

We see examples of the nuclear family, single parent families, extended families and families who choose not to have children. In our attempts to be supportive of families, we have tended to concentrate on the disfunctioning family. It is critical that we assist those who are in difficulty.

I want us to look as well at what we can do to help families which are functioning well but which may need help in some of the routine affairs of life. This means reaching children in school and teaching them that drugs or smoking will damage their mental and physical health. It means reaching parents in the workplace and teaching them how to cope with stress. It means developing a child care program which will be supportive of families. When all that fails and families break down, it means intervening and giving them the tools that they need to help themselves.

We need to develop a seamless approach to what we are doing, stitching together the disparate programs available today to build a comprehensive policy for the future.

We know that by the year 2000 there will be more women in the workforce, a trend we must expect to continue for some time. As a result we must make sure that women have full access to the labour market. This means that we have to ease the transition back and forth from child raising to the workplace.

A major challenge to the lives of children in the developing world today and possibly in the year 2000 is disease. Children in the Third World die from diseases which are easily preventable. Until recently that has not been a serious problem in Canada. We have a universal