

*Canada Child Care Act*

When I hear my colleagues from the Government side say that the previous Government never did anything... They cannot be serious, because for many years, there have been both tax programs and direct assistance programs to help Canadian families meet their needs to raise children.

Third are the training allowances for parents taking courses sponsored by Employment and Immigration Canada.

It is well known today that training programs are available to Canadian men and women and that if they need child care services, the federal Government provides financial contributions to that end.

Fourth, there are contributions by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for child care services and Day care services in Indian reserves. Those four measures have cost about 224 millions dollars in 1984, according to the last figures available.

Those amounts seem high at first, but one must not forget that the deduction for child care expenses benefits primarily high revenue families and only if they can provide receipts. That as is very important!

As we have seen earlier, those who can afford to pay more than 1,000 \$ a month in child care expenses are entitled to a tax break, but not those who have inadequate or almost non-existent revenues.

Assistance is provided to low revenue families through the Cost Sharing Program of the Public Assistance Program of Canada, but less than 20 per cent of eligible children six years old or less have benefited from this program up to now.

Furthermore, some measures allow families to raise their children. There are the family allowances which have been in existence for many years, as well as the child tax credit, the tax deduction for children. Unfortunately, all those have been reduced, Mr. Speaker. They have been reduced by the Mulroney Government through desindexation.

This has had a serious impact on poor and low income families. According to figures available to us, every family will lose ground in 1990 with the deindexation of those tax measures.

The situation is therefore urgent. It has to be dealt with. We, in the Liberal party, believe in the major principles which must underlie this reform of assistance to child care services. So, before dealing with the Government Bill, that is C-144, I want to recall the principles stated in several reports, but more recently in the minority report presented to the committee by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Outremont (Mrs. P  pin), entitled *Choices for Child Care: Now and in the Future*, dated March 1987. Mr. Speaker, this document has to be read, for it represents a serious approach and gives an alternative which could in my opinion provide us with a good solution.

First of all, we believe in the value of the parents' role. In order for them to be able to care for their children, we have to create programs of parental leave, flexible working hours, work sharing, etc. It is difficult, I grant you that, but it is not impossible. We will have to use our imagination, innovate a little, but that is the challenge we are facing in the workplace today. As we know, more and more businesses and industries provide and must continue to provide day care services, because that may be the solution to some of the problems.

Second, we need quality services which will guarantee the full development of the children. Child care is not a mere physical surveillance. These children are the next generation of citizens and the services we provide must prepare them to achieve their full development. In that respect, the school system is the most elaborate and valued child care system we have. The youngest should not, because of their age, be neglected. Young children are young human beings and they have the right to be treated as such. To that end, we will have to set and enforce basic standards dealing with accommodation, programs and staff training to ensure a good emotional, intellectual and social development of our children.

The third main principle is the development of institutions to implement over the years a comprehensive child care system of good quality, everywhere in Canada.

Fourth, there is the important principle of justice and equity. What does it mean? It means that assistance must go to the families most in need and that all families in the same situation must share the same opportunities.

The fifth objective is social justice, which means that the cost of child care must be shared equally among beneficiaries, namely governments, parents and employers.

The sixth objective is the harmonization of programs between provinces. I touched on a similar aspect a few minutes ago when I talked about the principle of equity between families. We think that all Canadians must have access to the same or a comparable level of service throughout the country, regardless of their province of residence. We will always object to a double or triple standard within Canada. There must be national standards for child care services as there are for health services. It is absolutely essential.

Lastly, there is the question of fiscal accountability. We saw that the amounts involved are very substantial. We are talking several billion dollars. Therefore, it is essential that there be some kind of accountability to ensure that the funds provided to provinces are used according to the objectives set by the federal government. I believe in the sharing of powers between the various jurisdictions. However, since child care services is a federal initiative funded by the federal Government, it seems to me that it is just common sense that there be some kind of accountability for those programs.