

*Adjournment Debate*

In other words, 89 per cent of Nova Scotia's children under the age of 13 cannot expect the benefit of quality care if and when their primary caregiver must work outside the home. What this points to is a gaping child care crisis which will not be cured by vague promises and half-hearted commitments.

[*Translation*]

Our day-care centers are in a state of crisis. Last Friday, in Montreal, a great many of the 2 000 CNTU-affiliated workers of various day-care centers went on strike for a day to show how impatient and concerned they were about the present situation. Mr. Speaker, an action plan or a bill is needed to meet the needs of day-care center operators and those of all Canadian families.

[*English*]

It is clear that we have a crisis on our hands and that we need immediate action to deal with it. In the few minutes that remain I would like to briefly describe how we find ourselves in this situation and, second, to offer some remedies and suggestions about how we might end the crisis if the political will exists. Sadly the Government's commitment to child care has been, to say the least, intermittent.

In March 1987, the Special Committee on Child Care tabled its final report. The Conservative majority within that committee called for more grants to parents through the tax system in what they called giving parents a greater choice. They simply did not realize, nor does it appear as if they realize now, that this was an inadequate and meaningless solution.

What is needed is more child care spaces. Nine months after the special parliamentary committee tabled its final report, the Government responded by announcing its national child care strategy, three components of which were the following: a \$100 million child care special initiatives fund to promote research and development activities in child care, federal-provincial cost sharing arrangements which would increase the number of child care spaces over seven year, and a set of tax measures to increase the annual child care deduction from \$2,000 to \$4,000 annually.

Since the election the Government has had nearly five months to develop a national child care plan that would incorporate the suggestions and proposals put forward by

many interest groups across Canada. After the Throne Speech the Minister of National Health and Welfare, when pressured to state his Government's commitment to a national child care program, responded by saying: "We are continuing to study the issue, but we have nothing to announce at the present time".

I know there are tens of thousands of families out there today who are wondering how long the Minister has to continue studying this matter which has been studied and analysed for years. When is the Government going to commit itself through legislation to a real national child care program that responds to the real needs of all Canadians. The solutions are there. What is left is for the decisions—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The Hon. Member's time has expired.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Lise Bourgault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Today, Mr. Speaker, the first time I am called upon to reply as Parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare, I want first of all to congratulate the Hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Clancy) on her being elected to this House on November 21, as well as her appointment as a Party critic on women issues. I am sure she must have been flabbergasted by the approach Liberal had taken to the day-care bill before the House adjourned.

I am sure that in her own riding, before the election, she must have found it absolutely horrible, because she is referring now to a crisis situation, and she might be right to do so; however, I should like to remind our audience that this crisis has been brought to a head by the attitude of a Liberal non-elected Senate who deliberately stopped this Bill before the election. She may say "Ah!" but that is the sad truth, Mr. Speaker.

Also, I urge the Hon. Member to be twice as vigilant, because the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mrs. McDougall) has just announced a reform of the Unemployment Insurance scheme which will greatly help women, especially in the areas of maternity leave and training programs; and she knows as well as I do that Canadian women, those in my riding, in the province of Quebec and the city of Halifax, need training and re-training. If there are people in our society who need that, women do.