

Supply

I would like to ask the minister to react to a quotation from the leader of her party, the Prime Minister, who said on July 28, 1988: "We will implement and build on our national child care program, the most innovative social advance in Canada since the Canada Pension Plan a quarter of a century ago". That is what the Prime Minister said in 1988.

I would like to ask the minister to respond to that quotation by her Prime Minister in view of what her colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, said when he indicated he had the privilege to kill the child care program that they had talked about since 1984.

I would also ask the minister for her feelings on the Court Challenges Program that has been dropped in this budget, and how she can relate that action of her government in terms of the things she was talking about in her speech today on advancing women's equality in this country; and also the action of her government in reneging on its commitment to pay equity for women in the Public Service of Canada in setting an arbitrary date of 1990 as being the time when women in the Public Service were deserving of pay equity, and that those years in which they were underpaid and undervalued have no kind of validity or honour to those years when women were also underpaid.

Mrs. Collins: Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to respond to that as I did not get to some of those issues in my speech.

I will start with pay equity because I think it is important. As my colleagues know, that legislation was originally passed by a previous government. It was only when this government came into office that we started to work toward the actual implementation of pay equity within the Public Service. There were discussions and there were studies that went on over a period of years. There were legitimate differences of points of view between Treasury Board, the employer, and the unions on this.

Finally, rather than just going on forever, the Treasury Board announced that it would make a settlement of \$317 million. That is of course primarily to women in a number of occupations. It felt that was a fair assessment and settlement. There would be ongoing payments of some \$81 million a year. That has meant, in fact, that

there were lump sum payments made in the category, for example, of secretaries and clerks of between \$3,500 and \$5,900 a piece of sort of lump sum payments. It is now actually providing on average about \$1,289 additional a year for secretaries and about \$994 for clerks.

Following that settlement, the union, and it has every right to do so, said that it did not agree, and there was a dispute.

• (1110)

The method in the legislation for resolving that dispute is under the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the tribunal that has been set up to deal with that. That process is ongoing. It is not expected that they will reach a decision until probably some time next year at which time, obviously, we will see whether they agree with one party or the other or come out with something in the middle. One does not know.

In the meantime, though, I think from the government's point of view, to have had unlimited retroactivity, the costs would have been horrendous. One of the options would have said there would have been no retroactivity. That in fact is the case in many of the provincial acts that deal with pay equity. They are only forward-looking. They have no retroactivity clause in them. I think because governments have recognized that there is such uncertainty there that the potential costs that they cannot calculate makes it very difficult.

What we agreed to was a bit of a saw-off and said as of the date the case was filed with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, November 1990, that would be the date the government would then agree to pay retroactive settlements based on the decision of the Human Rights Commission.

I would just like to draw to colleagues' attention that not all provinces yet have pay equity legislation. The federal government was indeed the leader. For example, Ontario has no retroactivity and in fact adjustments are paid on a percentage-forward. They are not necessarily all paid at once. Nova Scotia has no retroactivity. Adjustments are divided equally over four successive years. Manitoba, in a similar vein, New Brunswick, P.E.I., Yukon and Newfoundland, all phase in. If a decision is made, they phase in.