

Statements by Ministers

ensure women have equal access to employment opportunities, training and retraining.

The NDP endorsed the program of the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, which is consistent with long-standing NDP policy, at a meeting with the Association's executive in Ottawa in May. We would appoint a Parliamentary Task Force to develop a comprehensive plan for implementing universal day care and introduce a Child Care Financing Program as a transitional measure. The Financing Program would include:

- a) a direct grant of \$5.00 per day to each licensed day care space; and
- b) a child care resources fund based on a formula of \$25.00 per day for every child under 13. It is to be expended by the provinces and the territories for the creation of new public child care facilities and programs.

The Child Care Financing Program would cost \$300 million. It is estimated that the program would create 50,000 new jobs and at the same time improve accessibility to quality care for our children.

That was the position in 1984 and, of course, it remains the position of my Party. Therefore, we are pleased that the Government has moved now to establish the task force, albeit somewhat later than we had anticipated and hoped. I might add that is in keeping with the commitment made by the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in response to the same question when he said:

I will establish a Parliamentary Task Force with a short but clear mandate to examine the provision of quality child care throughout Canada.

I might add it is consistent with the position taken by the then Prime Minister, the present Leader of the Official Opposition, when he said:

—I would push for an indepth study into the inadequacies of child care services—

What we have before us is something with which the overwhelming majority of Members of Parliament in 1984 and, I think, in 1985 agree. As I said, I add the caveat that there has been a time lag which I regret. I am sure the Minister would agree that he too regrets the time which has been taken in establishing this task force. Nevertheless, it is now here and the work which it has to do is vitally important work. It must be done quickly and with care. However, it is necessary to ensure that the end result brings about a policy from the Government which will in fact provide quality day care—and I stress the term quality because without that word what might well emerge could be totally unsatisfactory.

We are pleased that the task force is getting under way because the situation as it now exists is a serious one. In 1983 there were 956,000 children under the age of six and 1.3 million children between the ages of six and 12 with mothers in the labour force. Yet, in 1983 there were only 139,070 licensed group and family home care spaces in the entire country. One need not be a genius to see that the number of day care spaces available when measured against the number of children was woefully inadequate. The vast majority of Canadian women of child-bearing age participate in the paid workforce. In 1983 fully 69 per cent of all women between the ages of 20 and 44 worked outside the home. It is projected that by 1990 over 75 per cent of women aged 24 to 54 will be in the official workforce. The situation we will have in Canada, and I

do not think that anyone will dispute this, will be one in which both parents of children will be out in the workforce. There will be an absolute necessity for the provision of care for those children who, out of necessity, will be left otherwise to fend for themselves or will be put into inadequate facilities. By the end of this century women's labour force participation is expected to equal that of men's. Of all of the women who are now working, 60 per cent are married. I think it is fair to say, therefore, that if they were to lose their jobs—and one can never predict such things—one half of those families would fall below the poverty line. I want to suggest that we are pleased that the reference was made by the Minister that consideration must be given—I hope the word "must" is the appropriate operative word—to the report and studies of the Government task force which was so ably chaired by Dr. Katie Cooke. The recommendations of that task force could well form the basis for much of what could and should be done by Government.

● (1550)

I think the terms of reference, at least those from which I have been working, are broad enough to allow for the kind of comprehensive review we believe is necessary. I want to suggest to the committee that it not be restricted in its mandate by the exclusion of any reference to certain matters which are of importance in this vital area. For example, as I mentioned earlier, there is no mention of quality day care. I think the Minister would agree with me that that is what we are talking about. We are not talking about some inferior day care facility which does not begin to meet the need. There is no explicit recommendation or reference in the draft terms of reference which sets out the principle of federal Government leadership, but we hope the committee will in fact see the vital role of the federal Government in developing a child care policy which flows out of necessity from any review of the need of quality child care. In addition to that, we suggest the committee look at the whole question of direct federal funding.

We do not deny that it is desirable that the provinces participate and I expect they will. I think we all expect that. Nevertheless, that should not be an inhibitive in the review undertaken by the committee and the recommendations it makes with regard to adequate expenditures to meet the existing and long-term needs. Although this might be somewhat at odds with the view of the Government with respect to the development of child care, we must be cautious that we recognize that tax dollars are scarce and, therefore, should not be used to subsidize the fore profit sector, if you will, which does, from time to time, grow up—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): I am sorry to interrupt the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) but I would like to remind him that the Minister spoke for a period of 10 minutes. The Hon. Member for Outremont (Mrs. Pépin) spoke for eight minutes. Convention dictates that the Hon. Member also limit his remarks to the same time frame. I will permit the Hon. Member to wind up very rapidly.