

The Canadian Human Rights Commission has developed draft guidelines to assist employers in implementing the equal pay for work of equal value section of the Canadian Human Rights Act. The Human Rights Commission has also pledged to take action against employers dragging their feet in complying with the guidelines.

● (1530)

As was recognized in the Speech from the Throne, the Government recognizes that measures to improve and expand skills training and retraining are essential elements in a sound approach to providing job opportunities and coping with rapid technological change. Trends in labour market supply and demand indicate that training will need to be more varied and better targeted in order to help prepare the unemployed and those displaced by technological change for future work and to create the skills base needed for a competitive economy.

Of course, training is of major importance to the expansion of women's occupational options. It is also a priority instrument in achieving women's equality in the economic sector. The federal Government and the provinces have agreed to a new medium term strategy designed to increase the work capabilities of the current and potential labour force. New orientation will better address the scope and needs of women in relation to the labour market. These needs are diverse, reflecting the diversity of the situations experienced by women in Canadian society today. Persistent high unemployment and rapid technological developments are major challenges facing our Government over the coming years. They are also factors which affect women in particular. We are firmly committed to meeting these challenges through the development of a skilled and highly competitive labour force where women occupy their rightful place. To that end we have taken steps to ensure that women constitute a special target group in all federal job-creation and training programs. We have placed major emphasis on training for women entering the workforce for the first time and for those re-entering the workforce after a lengthy absence.

We have already implemented measures to make it easier for women with young children to take training courses. We have pledged to investigate means by which we can ensure that women who wish to improve opportunities for themselves and for their families through training and retraining are not penalized through our income support systems.

[Translation]

At the provincial level, we have urged the provinces to review some of their policies, for instance, in cases where medical or dental care coverage is reduced or cancelled when mothers on welfare also receive additional training allowances.

[English]

I am firmly convinced that the new labour market strategy will address the scope and nature of the needs of women in relation to the workforce, but economic policies and economic strategies are not enough. They must be supplemented by effective social policies.

Supply

The influx of married women into the labour market in recent years has been nothing less than dramatic. In fact, between 1975 and 1983 the labour force participation rate of married women rose by almost 11 per cent, more than twice the rate at which single women entered the labour force. At present, one of every two women with children works outside the home. In view of this, I cannot over-emphasize the importance of providing adequate support systems for families where both partners work.

We know for a fact that many more families would be living below the poverty line if both partners were not working. Unfortunately, changes to our social structures have not kept pace with this fact. For too long women have borne the double burden of family and their work responsibilities. Studies have shown that women in the labour force average almost four hours each day on domestic and child care duties, compared with six hours for women not in the labour force and only two hours for men. The federal Government cannot pass legislation to force men to do the vacuuming or to wash the dishes. Many men may heave a sigh of relief that we cannot. However, it is high time that we recognized the role that we as legislators can play in providing the necessary support systems for working parents.

We intend to address this issue through the establishment of a parliamentary task force on the future of child care in Canada. The terms of reference of this task force are currently being drafted and will be announced in the near future by my colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp). The parliamentary task force will undertake public consultations on child care. My Government feels strongly that such consultations by parliamentarians will help raise the level of public awareness of the important issue of child care in Canada. We hope that many groups and individuals will become involved in this public discussion of a most serious issue. Of course, the parliamentary task force will benefit from the research already conducted by the task force on child care headed by Dr. Katie Cooke. I expect to receive Dr. Cooke's task force report this fall. It will contain recommendations on the role of the federal Government in the development of quality, affordable, accessible child care.

We are also working closely with the provinces on the issue of child care. A working group of officials was set up following last year's meeting of federal-provincial-Territorial Ministers responsible for the status of women. The mandate of this group is to develop initiatives and proposals to address the concerns of availability and affordability of child care, with special attention to the question of the financing arrangements which support child care.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to deal with one of the most serious of all family problems in this day and age.

[English]

Violence is a part of life for thousands of women and children. It is estimated that one in ten women who is married or living with a man is battered by her husband or partner.