

Oral Questions

announce a national child care program today. Why does it not give such an answer, if it really cares about the interests of women in this country?

[English]

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I guess one has to expect when the hon. gentleman gets up that he will use a gimmicky sort of question like that to suggest that we should unveil a new national child care strategy because it is International Women's Day.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Beatty: The hon. members opposite ask questions and then shout down the answers.

The government remains committed to putting in place a national child care program. I would point out to the House that if it were not for the obstruction of the Liberal Party of Canada, that program would be in place today. It died on the Order Paper in the Senate because of the Liberal Party of Canada.

That program will be in place during this Parliament. In addition, we continue to fund child care through the Canada Assistance Plan and through the child care initiatives program. All of these are important measures which have been taken to provide child care for Canadians.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, on a day that celebrates women around the world, it is disheartening that in Canada women are having to fight barriers at the highest level. We recently heard a judge of the Supreme Court of Canada say that the courts are biased against females. Now we have the Secretary of State slashing the budget for women's programs. If that is not enough, we have the President of the Treasury Board refusing to recognize the value of women's work.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister in the absence of the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister support the efforts of the Human Rights Commissioner of Canada and direct

Treasury Board to correct the inequities for 70,000 public servants who are being cheated out of thousands of dollars in wages?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my hon. colleague that first of all it was this government, not any former government, that made the first moves to correct the pay inequities between males and females in this government.

After five years of a joint study with the unions, and after the unions had walked out of the study, we took action, \$317 million in retroactive payments and pay adjustments of \$76 million a year to correct those pay inequities that were determined by that study.

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I am not one to be unfair and to question or put down progress, but I have to say that there is unfinished business.

My supplementary question is for the President of the Treasury Board. As the minister knows, on January 23, as he mentioned, the Public Service Commission of Canada withdrew from the joint union-management study of equal pay for work of equal value.

Will the minister co-operate and give his commitment that Treasury Board will recognize all of the recommendations of the five-year joint study prepared by both sides and give those female employees the wage adjustments and the retroactive pay to which they are entitled?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I just mentioned that we had moved to correct the pay inequities, a five-year study with concrete results at the end.

I would like to quote Mr. Yalden of the Canadian Human Rights Commission who, when interviewed, said: "On the substance of this thing, I was pleased, very pleased to see that the government was going to, after five years of talks and studies, put its money where its mouth is: \$317 million in back pay is a lot of money and we think that's an excellent move in the right direction." That was stated by the chairman of the commission.

Ms. Blondin: I didn't say it wasn't. I said it was unfinished business.