Canada Child Care Act

those that are subsidized? It ranges from $450 to $900 a month. It may get your child one month's care. You have to compare that against the provision of the service and the space itself, geared to income. That is the real question. How much are you misallocating the resources by doing it that way as opposed to making sure that the space is there? It is not a 4 per cent increment a year. It is also to ensure that it is geared to income so that it can be properly monitored and managed. That is what the families are asking for, those with the lowest income; the single-parent families in my riding. That is what they want.

The middle class families also need the space. If there is a proper day care system with proper standards, set by a program that recognizes the importance of teaching and quality facilities, they are prepared to pay what it costs for their children if they can find the space. Yet, both those criteria have been missed in this program. They are not there.

No one here is arguing against the objective of a new child care program. The problem is that this is not the right program. It does not come in any way, shape or form close to meeting the real issue that is out there, street by street.

I have talked about the South Winnipeg family study, and the close to 10,000 people who responded to it. It was not just a statistical study. It was done house by house, with household interviews, being with groups in neighbourhoods. We had close to 300 or 400 volunteers, working over a year, giving up their time to undertake this kind of a program. I had the opportunity to join them in many of the discussions, to meet with the parents and with the organizations being called.

I only wish that Members of the House had gone through a similar kind of experience to realize that it is not an abstraction, it is not something that is for partisan dispute. It is something that is close to the real, basic concern. There can be nothing deeper and sweeter than the feeling of a parent for their child, and the yearning, the demand, the appetite for some support out there to meet that need.

● (1750)

The disappointment that comes with this program, Mr. Speaker, is crushing. It goes beyond just the sheer provision of child care. I suppose if I had my way—I am not the critic for my Party—I would revamp our entire family program structure. As you go through the other studies, you find that there is a desperate need for support for the latchkey kids and the roofless teenagers.

In my riding, the South Winnipeg Family Services said there were 1,200 teenage kids who are what they call foot loose kids who for all kinds of reasons have left home at 14 or 15 years of age and are living with friends or kicking around the streets. We have close to 800 or 900 homeless children in downtown Winnipeg. I do not want to be dramatic, Mr. Speaker, but there is a crisis out there when it comes to these family concerns, whether in housing, proper support, or counselling. The third highest priority is psychological and mental counselling. Many families want someone to talk to in order to deal with problems with their children or aging parents. People go through a terrific emotional upheaval trying to cope with these sorts of things. There have been breakdowns in church support. I regret that, but it has happened. In modern urban and rural society that support is no longer there.

We find the kind of family support which governments provide is sometimes wrongly targeted. I spoke to a family in my riding a couple of weeks back who had found that one of their children had a learning disability. This was an average family, but no place was prepared to help them deal with this child's learning disability. The parents will have to wait until the child gets to the public school system where there might be some help, but it could be too late. They told me the family allowance was not enough to cope with it, and they were unable to go on social welfare. There was no one to help them deal with their child who every day they could see was falling backward. The family will sacrifice, maybe sell the family car or even the family home to get that kid into a proper rehabilitation program. It seems to me we should have a better concept of the family and reorganize the way in which we deliver our income programs so that families as they meet crises can apply resources where they are most needed at the appropriate time. We have to get rid of the rigidities in the system.

The problem with this program before us is it will compound the problem. It will not help. It adds one more series of tortuous networks to go through rather than providing a greater facility and ability for families to meet their needs. I am not saying the state is the sole responsibility. Of course it is not. In our child care policy we said that it has to be a partnership between the parents, primarily supported by their governments, and the private sector. That is the basis of our policy, that sharing partnership principle, whereby we can employ the full resources.

People took leadership here several years ago to put a day care centre on the Hill, not just for Members of Parliament but for secretaries' and clerks' families and for the 5,000 people who work on the Hill. Those things should be done in work places around the country.

Ms. Dewar: There is a two-year waiting list.

Mr. Axworthy: Yes, there is a two-year waiting list. My wife and I got down on our knees and lit a candle when we got Stevie into that day care program because we were really up against it and we did not know what we were going to do.

From a personal point of view, I think I can say something in the House. I do not like to argue from a singular experience because as Members of Parliament we are supposed to represent the broad view. I think I can represent that because I have this study, but from the point of view of someone who is living the problem and able to share it with some other parents, I can tell Tory Members that they have this wrong. This program is not a good one. It will not work the way they