

*Royal Assent*

That is a disgrace, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the member for Abitibi will address this point when he is ready to discuss his so-called reasons for supporting this motion for closure.

[English]

I would like to talk about one other element. I realize that I have a very short period of time left, so I will try to be as brief and as concise as possible. The Prime Minister and the government have stated on dozens of occasions that they would like to do everything they can to encourage more women to come to Parliament and, in particular, more women with responsibilities.

This particular motion is not only an abrogation of the rights of Parliament, it is also despicably anti-family and anti-women. I will tell you why. One of the reasons that the government is bulldozing ahead with this particular motion is so it can not only have a month that is cut by one-quarter in terms of the workload, but it is also planning on having evening sittings.

**Mr. Belsher:** My family lives in British Columbia.

**Ms. Copps:** I hear the member say his family is in British Columbia. I certainly have every sympathy for him spending time with his family. I also know that if he were the primary care giver for his family, he would find it extremely difficult to spend three weeks in one city and one week a month in another city.

In about a year my daughter is supposed to start school. Should I enrol her for three weeks in Ottawa and one week in Hamilton? Should I tell her that when we have night sittings: "Gee; I would love to spend time with you".

I want to bring women to Parliament, but in fact because of this crazy system that we are adopting, we have to sit later nights. We start at eight o'clock in the morning. We already sit until 6, 6.30 or 7 p.m., depending upon the evening. I can tell you as one who is trying to raise a child, it is not easy.

This particular measure will make it more difficult because parents of school-age children and parents who are the primary care givers of their children cannot live three weeks in one part of the country and one week in another part of the country.

The member says: "Who is the primary care giver". You are talking about bringing more women to Parliament. The fact is, whether we like it or not, women still tend to be the primary care givers for the children. I

suggest that a new schedule which calls for later night sittings and which splits the parliamentary calendar into three weeks in Ottawa and one week allegedly in the riding, although we hear from the member for Abitibi that it is one week's vacation—

**Mr. Langlois:** You are talking for yourself.

**Ms. Copps:** Yes, I am talking for myself, and I am talking for other women who would like to be able to take an equal place in participating in Parliament. I hope you have a chance to speak for yourself. I can only speak for myself, and I can tell you that as a direct result of this measure, it will be more difficult for me to recruit good women candidates with dependent children to come to Parliament. The very simple logical question is: What do I do when she goes to school? Do I put her in school three weeks in Ottawa and one week in Hamilton?

The parliamentary calendar that we have has only been in existence for the last number of years. The Speaker will know this because he lived under the old days of the night sittings. In the old days with the night sittings the longer the evening went, the more the quality of the debate deteriorated as the quality of the libation increased. That is a fact of life. I am sure the Speaker and others who went through the experience of late night sittings in the past will know that later night sittings do not necessarily improve the quality of the debate. They usually improve the quantity of the verbiage.

I am suggesting that when we adopted the calendar that had a five-day week here in Ottawa and a weekend in the riding, it gave the chance for people like myself who have small children to spend some time with their children. This particular measure is going to take that away from us.

Not only that, but what about the employees of Parliament? What about those employees who are called upon every night to sit late, two or three extra hours late, because this government is changing the rules of Parliament? Have those employees been taken into consideration, and the fact that it will wreak havoc on their family life?

If this government is truly sincere about bringing more minorities into Parliament, and in particular allowing women of childbearing age to take their rightful place in Parliament, then surely the calendar of Parliament should reflect the capacity for an ordinary family life. Heaven knows, it is hard enough to carry on that life as it