

*Canada Child Care Act*

spaces are allocated, because the Bill as drafted did not set any priorities or do anything special for these children.

We know that many children in Canada come from low and middle-income families, and we also know that many if not most of these children are from low-income families with little education, and so if the children have access to day-care, they will be motivated, they won't grow up to be school dropouts and they will become outstanding citizens.

We also know there is a very high proportion of single-parent families headed by women and that most of these families are living under the poverty line and that it was important to have a special place for these children.

We also know that many people, many women look for part-time work because they need that second salary, so they also need subsidies if they are to be able to afford day-care.

I think it is also very important to oblige the provinces to make these families a priority. We also had a number of groups testifying before the Committee that expressed their concern about the fact that the CAP program which focused on children from low-income families had been withdrawn. Since the program will no longer exist, the legislation must indicate that we are to provide spaces for these children.

Mr. Speaker, the trouble with a bill as important as this one is that we run the risk of creating two classes of citizens, which is what happened, quite by accident to senior citizens.

For instance, senior citizens who have an income can afford senior citizens' homes that are quite comfortable, unlike senior citizens on meager incomes who often find themselves in situations that are intolerable for someone of their age and in their condition.

I support this recommendation which was initially proposed by Liberal Members.

[*English*]

**Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, we will not oppose this amendment. However, let me state very clearly that it is not nearly strong enough. We heard from witnesses in the committee over and over again that there was not enough funding in this Bill to meet all the needs for child care in Canada. There is not nearly enough now or in the future.

When this program is grandfathered in seven years there will not be any flexibility to continue to increase the number of spaces. The provision of 200,000 spaces over seven years is fewer than would have been created if we retained the Canada Assistance Plan.

The Canada Assistance Plan deals primarily with children with special needs, low income children, and those families likely to be in need. It is much more comprehensive than this legislation as far as low income families are concerned. Furthermore, it is not capped at the end of seven years. The amount of money that can be spent is not capped.

Let me point out to the House and particularly to the Minister that when this program goes to the provinces it is quite possible that there will not be enough money to meet all the demands. For example, one province has been giving grants for commercial child care centres. It will want a refund of 50 per cent of the money it has been putting into those kinds of subsidies. It will be difficult for the province to target low income groups, and it has not been doing enough for low income groups now because it has mostly commercial child care. The number of poor children that would be eligible for a child care program in this particular province would be very limited.

A number of groups almost pleaded with us to retain the Canada Assistance Plan until such time as the fees in regular day care are reduced. According to the Government's program it will be a long time before enough money is injected into child care to reduce the fees and make it affordable.

Ideally, we would like to see comprehensive child care that is available regardless of income. It is very important that we remove the welfare stigma from child care and that it be made available to any family that needs and wants to use it. We hope it will be good quality, non-profit child care because studies show that that is the best kind of child care.

If the Canada Assistance Plan which now protects low income families is removed, regardless of whether the provincial Governments have good intentions, there will simply not be enough money in this program to guarantee that low income families will be protected.

We believe the Canada Assistance Plan should be retained and the new program phased in. It should cost more because there should be more money to meet greater needs, but it could be budgeted under the same amount of money.

We wanted to propose amendments that would have allowed greater flexibility in meeting the needs of low income families. We will not object to this motion, but we do not believe it is strong enough or that it protects low income families, families in need, as well as disabled children.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Monique Tardif (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my disagreement with Motions 21 and 22 now under consideration.

Motion 21 seeks to add a qualification:

"(h) indicate the means by which the province will encourage the development of childcare spaces in the workplace;"

Motion 22 would also add a qualification:

"(h) indicate the means by which the province will encourage the development of childcare spaces in after school setting to meet the needs of children between the ages of 6 and 13;"

Mr. Speaker, both of these motions are contrary to the principle that the provinces set their own priorities. We all know that child care is under provincial jurisdiction. We also