

*Canada Child Care Act*

● (1110)

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**CANADA CHILD CARE ACT**

## MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed from Wednesday, September 21, consideration of the motion of Mr. Epp (Provencher) that Bill C-144, an Act to authorize payments by Canada toward the provision of child care services, and to amend the Canada Assistance Plan in consequence thereof, be read the third time and passed; And on the amendment of Ms. Mitchell:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-144, an Act to authorize payments by Canada toward the provision of child care services, and to amend the Canada Assistance Plan in consequence thereof, be not now read a third time but be referred back to the legislative committee for the purpose of considering Clauses 3, 4, and 5."

**Mr. Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been negotiations and discussions. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) would like to be recognized on debate. I understand the Hon. Member for Halifax West (Mr. Crosby) had the floor when we adjourned this debate last week. I have talked with him. He has generously and very nicely agreed to step down temporarily to give his place to the Leader of the Opposition, with the proviso that he maintain his position after this speech, that is, that he be recognized for the 18 remaining minutes of the speech which he was going to make this morning. I would like to thank him and all Members of the House. I hope there would be unanimous consent to allow the Leader of the Opposition to take the floor.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier has indicated that there is an agreement in the House. I might say to all Hon. Members and to the public that this is an example of the courtesies that are extended in this place. I want to thank the Hon. Member for Halifax West.

I take it that there is consent. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, nothing is more important to us as Canadians than the future of our children. We want the very best for them. We want to give the next generation the very best we can give: good education, a good apprenticeship in life, opportunities for a meaningful job, a secure future. In terms of today's living, one of the most important priorities for the next generation for our children is affordable, accessible, high quality child care.

You and I know, Mr. Speaker, that society has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. Today only one in six Canadian families fits the traditional family pattern, the nuclear family: the wife at home with the children, the husband at work. Many families are headed by single parents, most of whom are young single mothers. More than half of all

women with pre-school children work outside the home, but only about one in five of these children is served by an adequate child care system.

Hon. Members know that there is a child care centre here on Parliament Hill because some time ago we recognized the needs of the people who work here and the needs of their children. The same need exists right across the country, but it is obvious from this legislation that the Government of Canada really does not have a deep understanding of this need. The legislation before Your Honour and before the House is nothing more than a cruel hoax on the children and parents of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I could find at least a good dozen reasons for the importance of this debate. Today's debate will shape the future. It is a debate about justice and social balance. It concerns our children and grandchildren and the place they will have in our society.

What we are talking about today is of course not just a plan or a system to look after our children. What we are really talking about is the kind of society we want to build. Our policy will have a direct impact on social peace, family harmony, equality of opportunity, criminality and even the demographics of our country.

Families have to face very different challenges, responsibilities and objectives than our ancestors or even our parents did. By changing the family structure, the evolution of society has also changed the role and responsibilities of our governments.

[English]

We ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker, how the Conservative Government has responded to that challenge. What is the Government's approach to the future of our children? First, it must be said that the Government has dragged its feet for the last four years. We have had study after study, delay after delay, and only now, on the eve of an election, has the Government suddenly discovered the importance of child care. The three-year-old who needed child care at the time the Government was sworn in is now seven years old and no longer eligible for the programs under this legislation. The single mother looking for affordable child care still does not have it under this legislation.

Worse than that, the Government has been playing politics with our children's future. After four years of delay and double talk the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) is now trying to blame the Senate. Last week he posed on the steps just outside this House and declared to reporters that the women of Canada were not going to be denied child care by a bunch of elderly Senators. That is the kind of shallow cynicism we have come to expect from our Prime Minister. It is the kind of cynicism that I do not believe Canadians will tolerate any longer.

Let us begin with the facts. The Government hesitated, delayed, and postponed for four years the bringing in of this