

Marriage and Family Life

Canadian parents who are asking for paid maternity leave and more readily available leave for looking after their children.

The other factor behind our diminishing population is the double responsibility which women must assume—family and professional responsibilities. Studies on that issue have revealed that, on average, working women spend close to four hours a day looking after their children and doing household chores, as compared with six for women who do not work and two for men.

In this day and age when all trends point to fewer working hours, women with children have a work week of 60 to 80 hours because to the working hours for which they are paid they must add the many hours doing house chores for which they are not paid.

Mr. Speaker, we must also consider the ever growing number of women who are the sole family source of income. At least one out of ten single-parent Canadian families is now headed by a woman. Those families are more likely to be struck by poverty. Indeed, a recent National Council on Welfare study has shown that five out of ten single-parent families headed by women are living under the threshold of poverty, against two out of ten such families headed by men.

This situation and other changes in the structure of families give rise to a number of concerns which Governments must consider and about which they have to take immediate remedial action.

High among such concerns is the need to make good quality and reasonably priced child care services readily available to all Canadians. As they know only too well, there is a wide gap between day care applications and the number of services available.

Consequently, many Canadian families are now forced to make inadequate arrangements which they must change regularly for the care of their children.

A task force led by Mrs. Katie Cooke has examined this issue. All the Members of this House are anxious to see the official report of this task force which should be tabled early this year. I am certain that it will contain a substantial research base which the recently created Parliamentary Task Force on Child Care will be able to use.

The Government has also taken action to alleviate the negative effects of marriage breakdown on the means and welfare of women and children.

Bill C-48 now before the House provides for access to information contained in federal data banks on spouses who default on their support payments.

In addition, this legislation would provide for the attachment of federal payments to enforce the support order.

A number of provinces have shown their interest by establishing automatic support order enforcement systems. Manitoba and Quebec already have such systems and other provinces,

such as British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, have announced their intention to implement them. To promote the creation of such systems, the federal Government has undertaken to pay \$1 million of their cost.

The Government is also considering other aspects of family law. Among the issues examined by Status of Women Canada, let me mention the integration of commitments related to private family law and the welfare system and the development of instructions for the judiciary concerning appropriate child support levels.

Another issue which is of major concern to our Government is family violence. For many years, violence against women was a hidden fact and it is only recently that this problem has been revealed. We now know that the problem of battered women exists in all communities, among people of all cultures and all income levels. According to the statistics, one out of ten women is the victim of violence from her husband or partner. This Government takes seriously its commitment announced in the Speech from the Throne to provide additional assistance to the victims of family violence.

We have examined this problem in depth in close co-operation with the provinces and territories. In addition, we support our commitment by providing continuous financing for projects designed to help battered women and support halfway homes.

Mr. Speaker, there are obviously many areas in which this Government has acted efficiently to meet the changing needs of Canadian families.

I am certain that all the Members of this House will agree that we must continue to do what is necessary to guarantee the development of such important institutions as marriage and the family.

[English]

Mr. Geoff Scott (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak for a few moments on what I consider to be a very important resolution brought to the attention of the House by the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse). I would like to congratulate him for the very thoughtful remarks he made when speaking to the motion. As well, I would like to congratulate the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade (Mrs. Landry) for putting on the record what the Government has been doing up to this point in terms of securing what the Hon. Member for Scarborough West said was the principle of Governments realizing the importance of preserving family life. I do not think that there is any question about the principle of which the Hon. Member spoke.

The motion before us today reflects something very special about our lives as Canadians. We are fortunate to have the ability and will to examine fundamental concepts and relationships that sustain us as a society and to have the energy and resources to act upon what we learn of ourselves. As is often