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and indeed even professional women who simply cannot find any space for their children. These children are literally at risk as a result.

• (1220)

First, I would like to ask the Minister why the Government cut this program out, especially since he is talking about equity for those in greatest need. He is talking about the children of the future, but the Government surely cannot ignore the million and a half children at present who need child care desperately. Many of them, one in six, are poor and their mothers are locked in the welfare system, which is also the Minister's responsibility. They have no opportunity to get into training or to get out of the welfare system and into work if they do not have good child care.

Why did the Minister not at least use the \$2.4 billion which is going to regressive child care tax breaks to those wealthier Canadians, not necessarily rich, breaks which ignore the ones with the greatest need? That measure, of course, creates no new spaces for child care.

The Minister was good at fighting for nuclear subs. Why did he not fight hard for children and to protect that money which was for child care spaces? I say that even though I did not agree with the way the Bill was being implemented? However, the money should be there and we should work out a sensible plan and build for the future. By not doing that, he is indeed putting those in greatest need at great risk.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is quite correct in saying that she simply missed what I said in my speech with regard to child care, because I did indeed answer that question in the context of my remarks. Let me review first for the Hon. Member what is being done. She criticizes the child tax credit. Some 90 per cent of the assistance delivered—

Ms. Mitchell: No, child care expenses.

Mr. Beatty: Yes, that is exactly what she was saying. She referred to a figure of \$2.4 billion—

Ms. Mitchell: I am talking about child care expenses.

Mr. Beatty: The Hon. Member may deny it now, but she referred, and she can check the "blues", to a figure of \$2.4 billion for tax assistance. This goes through in two ways. The first is through the child care tax deduction, but the other 90 per cent is delivered through the child tax credit. If the Hon. Member proposes that we cut that \$2.4 billion worth of assistance, she would be taking it

away from the child tax credit which provides the majority of assistance to people on the low end of the income scale. I hope she will reconsider that.

Second, the \$100 million child care initiatives fund remains in place. Third, the Canada Assistance Plan, which is aimed to provide assistance for child care to those people most in need, remains in place. We have paid in the past year some \$200 million under CAP and we expect a 20 per cent increase this coming year.

Finally the Hon. Member asked about the children of the present. Indeed, every child in Canada today has a debt in his or her name in Ottawa of \$12,300, a debt that increased \$3 in the last 24 hours and will increase by \$3 in the next 24 hours and in each subsequent 24 hours. That is precisely the issue.

If Hon. Members opposite claim to be concerned about young Canadians and about the future, then they have an obligation to stop stealing from those children, to stop running up a mountain of debt which cripples their ability in the future to build something for themselves. It is the height of irresponsibility for those of us who serve in Parliament to steal from the children by refusing to accept our responsibility to manage the affairs of Canada responsibly.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, it is not a pleasure to rise today to speak on what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has termed the clawing back of old age pensions and the clawing back of family allowance payments. I want to begin my remarks today by saying that being a Canadian means something to Canadian citizens. The fact that a person is a Canadian citizen means some very important things.

We are recognizing not only that people who live in Canada are proud to be Canadian but that there are thousands and tens of thousands and, I suspect, millions of people in the world who would love to be Canadian citizens. The reason for that is that being a Canadian citizen means certain things. It means we have a set of responsibilities as Canadian citizens, but it also means that we receive certain rights and certain benefits. There are certain aspects of being a Canadian citizen that we perceive as being good.

Being Canadian citizens means that our children will have access to elementary and high school education. It does not matter if we are rich or poor, if we live in eastern or western Canada. It does not matter about our ethnic or religious backgrounds. Our children will be