

Canada Child Care Act

family allowance program, and asked what would happen if each Canadian province had its own family allowance program. It would be nonsense.

Madam Speaker, what I have to say may be of interest to the Liberals who want uniform national standards, like the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall). In 1974, the present Leader of the Opposition introduced a bill allowing each province to vary the amount of family allowance payments according to the number of children in the family and their age. Two provinces, Alberta and Quebec, are exercising this right now, and Prince Edward Island has done so in the past. So this “nonsense” has been a reality for nearly 14 years.

Madam Speaker, this is a case where the question of diversity and the question of meeting local needs have been taken into account in a strictly federal program, without compromising the effectiveness of the program.

To sum up, the federal Government is showing leadership in this legislation. It asks provinces to devote funds to child care according to our own criteria in order to be entitled to cost sharing. For the first time it asks that provinces devise, make public and enforce standards of establishment of programs under a plan providing for provincial jurisdiction and it has set everywhere in the legislation national objectives which are significant and realistic in the context of the service provided and its present level of development.

We have not ignored the provincial jurisdictions, the diversity of this country and the levels of service the provinces could ensure realistically during the period provided for in the legislation. If we have been criticized on that, we present no excuses, for we prefer to bring about improvements rather than guarantee impossible things.

Mr. Caccia: Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mrs. Tardif). She underlined the definition of a “child” contained in this Bill as “a person under fifteen years of age”. The question I want to ask her is this: Does this Bill recognize well enough the particular problem of the “latchkey kids”? And what will the Government’s policy be regarding the problem of latchkey kids under 15?

● (1630)

Mrs. Tardif (Charlesbourg): Madam Speaker, that is a question that was extensively debated at the legislative committee, where it was clearly determined that under this Bill, a “child” is any person under 15 years of age. We also discussed after school hours day care facilities and facilities for students under 15.

It is obvious that the Child Care Act addresses all of the provinces and, under the enabling legislation, each one of them will be responsible for signing with the federal government an agreement providing for instance for after hours day care services for school age children, where the development,

maintenance and supervision of these spaces will be subjected to the same authorities as other types of day care. We would not want, Madam Speaker, to create day care spaces not subjected to any control and where quality would be nonexistent.

Our goal through this Bill is not only to increase the number of spaces but also to ensure that these would be quality spaces. And in order to have acceptable quality, the same provincial jurisdiction that will establish standards to meet our expectations, that will decide where new spaces are required, that will decide where they are to be built or operated, also should check for quality. One agency in each province will be responsible for child care quality. Thus, there will be no problem. There could be for instance child care services in a school, but they should then be under the authority of that agency. Referring to Quebec, it would be the *Office de garde* that should be responsible for those child care spaces.

Mr. Caccia: My second question, Madam Speaker, is related to payments under the Canada Assistance Plan. I would like to ask the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary whether she can assure this House that provinces that wish to opt out of this legislation, Bill C-144, could still use the Canada Assistance Plan in the future?

Mrs. Tardif (Charlesbourg): Madam Speaker, I would like to refer to what I think is Clause 12 of the legislation. No, it is not that clause. I have difficulty finding the exact reference, but anyway it is already provided in the Bill that any province that did not sign an agreement would remain under the Canada Assistance Plan. So this is provided for, it is part of the agreement. Any province that has no agreement with the Canadian Government would continue claiming its costs under the Canada Assistance Plan. That is provided under the legislation.

Mr. Caccia: I would like to know whether they would be able to do so in the future without any time limitation?

Mrs. Tardif (Charlesbourg): The only time limit provided in the legislation is for registering. A province for instance that entered into a federal-provincial agreement before 1990 would be able to claim its capital costs under the Child Care Act. It could do so retroactively. There is no other limitation. So any difference in status between two provinces would be whether they entered into a federal-provincial agreement.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Questions, comments? Debate. The Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia).

[English]

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): In intervening at this stage of the debate, Madam Speaker, there are a number of points that I would like to make, having carefully listened to the Parliamentary Secretary, in the hope that I clearly understood her rebuttal, which was certainly a very incisive one and relevant to the matter before us today. Nevertheless,