

*Canada Child Care Act*

What a great day it will be, Mr. Speaker, when every school in Canada will be able to help children and their parents who face these special problems.

As well, our Government recognizes that child care is the key to women's economic equality and represents a need and an essential welfare program. Nevertheless, we are once again committing substantial amounts in order to offer and contribute to the creation of new and good quality spaces. I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that a unique child care centre will soon be opened in Saint-Janvier de Mirabel, since a few businesses have already confirmed their readiness to make the move and partly fund it for the enjoyment of their employees. I met the previous Bell Helicopter human resources manager who told me a number of times about this serious problem. As you know, more and more businesses have these work shifts where men unfortunately come to realize that their fellow women workers have to leave work at a quarter to five because they must pick up their children at the day care centre before it closes at six o'clock.

There is thus a growing need to establish child care services at the workplace and I think that it is towards that objective that we should direct our initiatives and energies.

Mr. Speaker, day care services are no longer the exclusive concern of women. More and more men are responsible for looking after their children and since they have this added responsibility it seems that all of a sudden the issue has become more urgent. For years now women have been asking for better day care services but now the issue seems to have a higher priority, and I am very pleased to acknowledge this new development.

Of course I am glad for women and I think that in the future, when families take part in the collective effort concerning the equality of women, why would the father not drive his two children to the day care centre and take them out to lunch and promote better family understanding, better family unity! I think day care services at work are the answer to the problem.

Mr. Speaker, need I remind you that over the last 20 years the Canadian traditional family—the wage-earning father, the mother at home with one or more children—has become the exception rather than the rule. It has become obvious. Nowadays 54 per cent of all Canadian women are on the labour market, and the figure is higher still in the case of women in the 24-to-64 age bracket. Sixty-five per cent of them work outside the home. Sixty-two per cent of Canadian mothers with children under 16 belong to the labour force.

Mr. Speaker, speaking personally as Member for Argenteuil—Papineau, I think there is another measure which the Government is interested in looking into, and I am referring the need to extend maternity leave in a significant manner. Women want to keep their children longer, Mr. Speaker, and I really think that three months is not enough for a very young baby.

Again I suggest that if we want to promote the family status and urge families and women to have more children, one way to achieve this is to give them more assistance and extend maternity leave.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we must say there is an increasing number of Canadian mothers who are raising their children alone. At the present time, 83 per cent of single-parent families are headed by women. In the riding of Argenteuil—Papineau, that is mostly rural, I can tell you that has become a problem. First, there is the distance from urban centres. Transportation services are almost non-existent. Those women at the poverty level who are bringing up their children alone need to go out from time to time, even only for shopping, they need some leisure time, to belong to some social organization, except they have a problem. In remote rural communities no day care services are available to them and, of course, we have to face facts. It would be financially impossible to open day care centres everywhere, for instance, in all 53 municipalities in my riding.

Here again, I think we must reflect on that particular problem of women, of families, I should say, who live in remote rural communities, to be able to give them the more satisfactory day care service to which they are entitled as first-class citizens and which we have an obligation to make available to them.

Mr. Speaker, we have often talked about the famous problem of women who hire babysitters but do not get receipts for income tax purposes. Listen, we must see things as they are. Some have no other income but welfare. Those women help each other out. You know, there is no better social network than that of women. They help each other. They take turns staying with one another's children in the evening. But they sometimes need sitters who unfortunately are below the poverty line and cannot afford to report the money they earn this way. It is almost that ridiculous. Do you think that a woman... It seems as if the income tax services are preying on those poor women who make a little extra money every week by baby-sitting a few hours at one or several neighbours' houses, and I think we should stop harassing those people.

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With the increased tax deduction and the possibility for families taking their children to child care services to deduct day care costs without necessarily having official receipts, this will still be a measure that will be of assistance to these women.

Mr. Speaker, 200,000 new subsidized spaces in child care services may not be enough, there might still be other things to be done, but between 200,000 new spaces and nothing, I think a major progress has been made. Why always criticize? Women have always shown moderation, they told me several times they were aware of the fact that the Government had nevertheless limited resources, but they generally welcome this effort, they have hope, and in the future they will see to it that