

Canada Child Care Act

That compares to the fact that in that same area at the present time there is a grand total of 166 spaces for children, an area which includes close to 5,000 households. A hundred and sixty-six.

Do you know what the additional increment of the new Tory program will bring about in that area if you add it up? It is about six new spaces over that time.

Mr. Boudria: Great stuff.

Mr. Axworthy: I have to tell you that the people of South Richmond, South Fort Garry, Waverley Heights are not going to be dancing in the streets because they are going to get six additional spaces because of this new program.

Mr. Boudria: Such largess.

Mr. Axworthy: If anything points to the dramatic disparity between the rhetoric and the reality, it is that figure.

Mr. Riis: Are you sure about that figure?

Mr. Axworthy: I am positive about that figure. There are 166. If you add up the increment, they are going to get maybe an additional six spaces.

How can anyone stand up in this House and say that we have now met the problem? For those families, you have not begun to meet the problem. You have not begun to scratch the surface of the problem. You have not even got close to the problem.

When I hear, "Well, it is a beginning", it is a beginning and it is also the end. Once you entrench this program and turn it into one in which the provinces have complete control with no requirement for standard, you will never retrieve it again in order to establish a national program with national standards. You will never be able to undo the bad work that is being done. You will never be able to correct the major flaw that is being built into that program.

I can testify from my experience in my own community. That question of standards is absolutely essential. I have had parents come into my office and I have talked to them on the streets and in the day care centres. They have described to me the experiences of what it is like, the panic of when you have two parents working because they have to keep up mortgage payments or whatever it may be, trying to live in this high-cost economy, and all of a sudden they realize that there is no place for their child. They put an advertisement in the newspaper. Someone walks the street and says: "I may or may not be qualified", and they find out two or three weeks later that the baby-sitter, that private entrepreneur, is spending all afternoon with the TV set on, or is in some way ignoring the kid. We are dealing with that indifference, or even worse.

Ms. Dewar: With no background in child care.

Mr. Axworthy: With no background in child care training for families. I agree that there are some good private facilities.

I have no argument about that. In fact, my mother was responsible for a day care centre for 15 years. She provided good treatment. They recognize that there had to be the essential question of standards there, because there are so many bad operators. There are so many corporate operators who simply see child care as a way of making a buck.

Mr. Riis: Shame.

Mr. Axworthy: There are too many chains being established across Canada with the idea of making a profit on children by providing the service; not providing the best service—

Ms. Dewar: With day care workers.

Mr. Axworthy: —to make sure that the day care workers get the minimum payment. How about the question of after school? Is there anything in this Bill that will provide for after-school care for the children? There is not one thing. I can tell you from a discussion that I had last weekend with some co-parents at the day care centre whose kids are about to graduate, recognizing that there is no provision for after-school programs, that they are now trying to rearrange their schedules and so on. We are not talking about people with big incomes. We are talking about secretaries working on this Hill who are making \$14,000 a year, faced with the enormous question of "What do I do when my child has to go to kindergarten and is only there for three hours a day? Do I leave work?" All of a sudden the standard of living of the members of the family collapses.

That is the reality that we are talking about, not some document drafted by some bureaucrat in the Department of National Health and Welfare that is being read out by Members opposite. I am talking about something that is real, something you touch every day, something you understand by dealing with the people who are deeply involved in the issue.

I do not buy the argument that this is just the beginning and that all along the way we will tinker here or there. If you are going to do it, do it right. Get it right the first time. Do not put into place the kind of expectations that are out there in the public. They talk about \$6 billion or \$7 billion when in fact it is \$2.3 billion, as we well know, for the actual additions of new spaces and for the support of families who need it going into child care services. How do you get that back? To go back in time and to rework it in a major way will occupy the next Government's time and energy.

I say to myself, when you have the Katie Cooke study and the House of Commons meeting for two years, how did you get it so bad, how did you get it so wrong? Why did you put together a Rube Goldberg machine? It is unquestionably the number one concern of the majority of families in Canada, and this Government missed the target by a mile.

I have heard the Member for Calgary South say: "Well, after a lot of pressure we have now increased the child tax credit". It is now \$759 for those in the lowest income level. Do you know what the average cost is of a day care space, even