

Canada Child Care Act

cost sharing program to payments not exceeding \$4 billion during the life of the program.

This Government's actual promise to Canadians, through Bill C-144, is to refuse to spend more money, even if its ineffectual target of 200,000 new spaces is not met within the next seven years. The Bill in effect runs out after seven years.

Furthermore, the legislation says that the federal Government, as I understand it, will not be responsible, necessarily, for sharing the capital expenditures or operating costs of child care after the seven-year period ends on March 31, 1995. This Bill will bring about an uneven checker board regime of child care. I say this because the legislation contains no national standards or objectives to establish criteria for quality child care providing a minimum, a basis for quality child care for children in every part of our country, in every province.

The Conservative Government has had four all-too-long years to work with the provinces on national standards and objectives, but in spite of this, Bill C-144 is silent on what should be contained in national standards and objectives; issues like the ratios between children and child care workers in child care centres, the size of child care groups, the training of care givers, the mechanisms for parental and community input, health, safety and nutritional conditions, and employee wages and working conditions.

I believe that Canadians expect child care to be a shared responsibility, one involving parents, their Governments and, yes, their employers. I believe that Canadians expect the federal Government to provide the leadership required to put in place basic national standards with the greatest emphasis on developing a licensed system to meet present and future needs, and directing its resources toward services for low and moderate income families. The emphasis should surely be on using an educational child development model rather than a commercial model of child care delivery in the developing of our Canadian system of child care.

I believe that there must be an emphasis on and a priority for non-profit and public care, recognizing the models that we have developed in our well established programs of health care and education in Canada. I also say that there should be increased parental leave provisions under our unemployment insurance system within the scope of child care legislation. Furthermore, there should be stronger incentives in our tax system for employers to establish employer subsidized child care services.

We have reached the final stage of debate on Bill C-144. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that we have been forced to conclude the debate by the heavy-handed approach of the Conservatives in shutting it off through time allocation after only a handful of days of debate in this House and in committee hearings outside this House.

We have reached the final stage of the Conservative Government's mandate. It has failed to produce the program that it promised to Canadians, who so urgently need and want

it, for the effective delivery of affordable and universally accessible quality child care. We are confronted only with this piece of legislation that may well provide fewer new spaces for child care than could be established under the existing programs. We are confronted with a piece of legislation that is devoid of national standards and objectives.

A national child care program was promised as a high priority item on its agenda by the Conservative Party during the 1984 election campaign, and yet it took nearly four years for the Government to get around to introducing this flawed and regressive Bill.

It is obvious that Canadians are not receiving the child care program promised by the Conservatives during the last election, and it is just as obvious that this Conservative Government is trying to concoct a soothing script for an election masquerade.

● (1530)

In spite of the efforts of the Government to limit debate and shut off criticism of Bill C-144, I believe that Canadians will see through the fundamental inadequacies of the Bill and reject this masquerade.

I hope that very soon the Prime Minister will summon his courage to call a general election and allow Canadians an overdue opportunity to exercise their good judgment, not only on Bill C-144, but on the overall conduct of the Government. Bill C-144 is another example of the incompetence of the Government and its lack of credibility. I believe, in this election, in exercising their judgment, the Canadian people will get rid of the Conservative Government so that a new Government, one, I believe, that will be a Liberal Government, will be able to put in place a truly effective national program for accessible, affordable, and quality child care.

Our children are this country's greatest treasure and its future. They deserve no less. They are not getting what they deserve from the Conservative Government. We want Canadians to have a chance to exercise their judgment to give Canadians, their families, and the children now and in the future what they need and deserve for our country's future.

[Translation]

Mrs. Tardif (Charlesbourg): Madam Speaker, I was astonished to hear what the Hon. Member said in his speech. Decades of Liberal Government never gave us child care. After four years of Conservative Government, we have child care.

The Hon. Member referred earlier to the regulations, expressing disappointment that the regulations had not yet been published. I may remind the Hon. Member that the Conservative Government has also introduced improvements in this respect.

Before this Government came to power, regulations were not published until they came into effect. However, the Conservative Government requested publication of the regulations six months in advance, to let interested groups and Members of