

Supply

The government says it only affects three provinces, but 50 per cent of the children in Canada live there. It reduced programs that involved protection services to children as part of a family structure by \$2.7 billion over two years in order to make some PR announcement of a little money spread over a number of years.

Probably the most ludicrous program is the Canada Assistance Plan. It is used to fund child care for those on low incomes or fixed incomes or those working but not earning enough to afford to pay for child care.

The government talks a lot about how it is going to help women in a variety of ways. It is going to have this nice program and look at the causes of violence against women and how it can provide solutions. At the same time it has cut back dramatically on the availability of services such as child care, child protection, sexual abuse programs, counselling for trauma caused by violence, income support programs and transition houses or safe homes, which would assist women in violent situations.

This motion is very much in order because it clearly points out that the government has not only failed to protect, but has failed to promote the fundamental rights of Canadian women. The biggest right a woman should have in this country is a right to personal safety; to not fear for her own personal well-being either within her own family or on the streets.

We also should take a look at some of the other budgetary measures this government introduced that directly impact on the ability of women to protect themselves and their families. There are many, but two are particularly troublesome to me.

One is the cancelling of the Court Challenges Program. Under this program we were going fund people who were disadvantaged, disabled, from minority groups, aboriginals or women, in order to ensure they could go to court to protect their rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This government has said it is going to cancel that program. It is simply going to make their rights as they exist in law meaningless because they will have no capability of going to court to pursue them. That is the impact on women.

There is another major cut within the co-operative housing program. Co-op housing has not only been a valuable and economical way to provide affordable housing for families, it has also been a way of providing supportive communities, especially to women who have

had to flee from family violence or violence of another kind. When they are just getting their lives back together, they need a variety of support services and experiences that can help them regain their equilibrium. Co-op housing has provided an amalgamation of these services. It has provided them with affordable housing so they can afford to live with some dignity. It has also provided them with an environment of supportive people where they are able to develop their self-esteem, get themselves back into the labour market and start making a contribution to the total community as well as to themselves.

• (1530)

I guess I have grown accustomed to this government playing the game of PR with a number of vital issues, but I am deeply troubled when the government takes a PR approach to such fundamental things as the rights of women to safety and protection from violence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret the hon. member's time has expired. There are four minutes left in his questions or comments. The hon. member from North Island—Powell River on a question or comment.

Mr. Ray Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the equality of women and the government's record on this issue. I would like to raise the record of Canada Post as it relates to the equality of women for the consideration of the hon. member.

Canada Post is one of the most regressive and repressive employers in Canada and follows that in partnership with the government. I would point to its privatization of post offices and postal services and termination of employees.

In most cases it is eliminating women who have union jobs that run \$13 plus an hour, benefits, and the protection of a union contract. When the privatization of services and postal outlets goes ahead, those women are hired on by the private outlet at minimum wage with no contract, no benefits and no protection.

I wonder how the government justifies its position that it is concerned about the equality of women when it destroys the opportunity of many women to earn a dignified wage and enjoy the protection of a union contract. It places them in jobs with no contract, no protection and no benefits, at \$4 to \$5 an hour.