

Private Members' Business

The programs that illustrate the idea of *Brighter Futures* are coming on line. A guide to *Brighter Futures* will be available in several weeks. It will describe over 20 separate initiatives within the child development initiative, all based on early investment in children and the prevention of conditions of risk.

I am proud of the progress begun by this government on behalf of children, beginning with the world summit just over two and a half years ago. I am conscious that this progress reflects the Prime Minister's interest in children.

I am delighted to express my support for the bill currently before the House. Children are important to all of us. Contributions to their well-being must be made by all of us. This bill adds to our society's recognition of the important place we must establish for children and is welcome.

I would like to add that as chair of the subcommittee on poverty we are preparing a system so that perhaps next November 20 we will be able to have some measures to help us assess our progress in combating child poverty.

I know the member for Ottawa Centre has been tabling petitions, as have many other members of this House and I. Indeed I was at the ceremony beginning the spreading of that petition. Members of this House have also passed a resolution to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000.

Our subcommittee is hard at work developing standards so we can assess the state that children are living in across the country and perhaps work to have national standards in welfare or a guaranteed annual income. That is also being discussed at the current moment, and a paper by the minister will be presented on it.

All Canadians want to see that children in this country have a standard of living that is acceptable and reasonable and that they all have the opportunity to thrive.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill because of children, not because of the hypocrisy that has come to this House with the presentation of the bill.

It is hypocritical to have a national child day without accompanying policy that sees an end to hungry children in this country. We have just heard the litany of things

the government has done and will do for children, a government that has reneged twice on a national child care program to make sure children are safe and secure while their parents work.

Forty per cent of those using food banks in this country are children under 16 years. We just debated today a policy that will create more families having to resort to food banks because they cannot get unemployment insurance and we have double-digit unemployment.

One million children live in poverty and yet the government member who just spoke from Don Valley North, the chair of the subcommittee for poverty, has recently said the poverty line should be lowered. Will this help children?

Seventy-four per cent of women in their child-bearing years are in the work force. Yet, as I said, there is a dramatic shortage of child care spaces.

Are our children not worth government attention when it comes to their safety and care while their parents are working? The government withdrew funding for the Kids Help Line, a national line designed to help children in crisis.

Now we have a proposed national child day. As I said we support anything that will improve the conditions of children but will a day, November 20, improve the conditions of children without policy?

Where is the Liberal policy on child care? It is the NDP government in Ontario and the federal NDP policy that has taken real positive steps to address the crisis in child care in Canada.

Marion Dewar, the national director of the Canadian Council on Children and Youth is a former member of this House. We hope with the support of the people from Ottawa Centre she will be a member of this House again. She has advocated for an end to child poverty for years. She said: "Spending money on child poverty is not an addition to deficit but an investment in the future".

It may interest those in this House and Canadians who are watching that the sponsor of this bill joined with the then mayor of Ottawa, Jim Durrell, in abolishing the Youth Advisory Council. That council provided a way for the needs of young people to be recognized in those programs delivered by the city of Ottawa.