

include health, sexuality, legal rights and helping kids who are suicidal.

Initial funding came from corporate sponsorship. However, the kids' help line has applied to the Department of Health and Welfare for aid and discussions have been held directly with the minister. Still, there is no announcement. Organizers have expressed their concern that without federal dollars the project is in jeopardy.

We can spend \$2.7 million to advertise the budget, but the government will not come up with the funds for kids' help line. What are our priorities in this country?

Canada will soon have the opportunity to join other member nations in ratifying the proposed convention on the rights of the child. This document is currently being reviewed by Canada and its provinces. By signing the convention, a state signifies its intention to comply with the provisions and obligations contained therein.

The proposed convention recognizes the special vulnerability of children, their needs for special safeguards, protection and care. In reality, the children do not have political rights or influence.

The proposed convention also recognizes that the family is the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members, particularly children, and should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.

Canadians can be justly proud of the role we have played in the development of the UN code. But if it is adopted, there will have to be some changes made to some of our own laws so that we too can sign the convention.

The convention sets very high standards. The articles in the convention cover three areas: survival, protection and development. This document emphasizes children but is directed at adults and makes the statement about adult responsibilities.

One might wonder why it has taken so long to legalize the rights of children. The answer is very simple: Children, regardless of where they live, have no political power. They cannot vote; they cannot organize resources in their own defence; they are extremely vulnerable to

exploitation, and almost entirely dependent on the good will of adults for their well being.

The bottom line is that there is no effective, international court of law. There is only the court of public opinion and I appeal to my colleagues to vote in favour of this motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Bourgeault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech by the Hon. Member for Mission—Coquitlam (Ms. Langan), who moved a Private Member's Motion and made disturbing statements that the Progressive Conservative Government does not give children priority. Let me say that this accusation is rather simplistic, moving a Private Member's Motion and using a trick like that to say that the Government has done nothing. I can say that the Government is very interested in children. I can also tell you that the Members on this side, the Government Members, and the Minister responsible are very active on children's issues.

Obviously, do we think there is a group in society that is more vulnerable and needs more protection than children, Mr. Speaker? Of course not. I too have nephews and nieces and my friends have children whom I like a lot and I do not know, Mr. Speaker, how I would react if someone hurt these children. I can understand the great sorrow and suffering of parents whose children are mistreated by neighbors, relatives or friends and I think that if I were in their place, I would surely feel terrible. Ensuring that every child grows and develops in a healthy way is our commitment to the future and also a very challenging and complex responsibility.

Concern for children and their well-being is an issue that cuts across many jurisdictions and disciplines. All levels of government, educators, service providers, professionals and volunteers have a role and responsibility in providing for the needs and well-being of children.

In 1979, The International Year of the Child, helped Canadians to focus on opportunities for action on behalf of our children. National Health and Welfare, Mr. Speaker, coordinated the federal response to the report