

Private Members' Business

Following her consultations with legal experts, my Reform colleague admitted in this House on November 25, 1994 that this provision of the bill, and I quote: “—may also contravene privacy acts or rights of the child—”

She went on to say: “Therefore while procedurally it cannot be removed at this time, I trust when the bill gets to committee this clause can be deleted”.

I must congratulate my colleague on her honesty. She admits she was wrong about the impact of her bill and tries to compensate by hoping that the Standing Committee on Justice can improve it. Unfortunately, it is not Bill C-232's only shortcoming. I cannot support a flawed bill.

In closing, I wish to reiterate my position on the fate of children whose parents are divorcing. I find it appalling to see some parents relentlessly prolonging the suffering of the young victims of such circumstances.

The governments of common law provinces should make laws facilitating relations between grandchildren and their grandparents, as was done in Quebec, which is a pioneer in family rights.

[English]

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address this bill today. I would first like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of many grandparents. I welcome them here. These are people interested in this issue and I encourage them to listen and to work with us as we look to this legislation.

I also recognize their contribution, especially as seniors or grandparents in our society, to the past, the present and hopefully the future of this country.

Bill C-232 addresses the issue of granting access and custody to grandparents. This is a very real issue in our society. There are a growing number of grandparents and a growing complexity of marriage breakdowns and blended families within society.

As chair of the family task force of our party, we have done a fair amount of work looking at families and the importance of families in society. In that process we have determined a definition of family that we are using as a benchmark, those individuals related by ties of blood, marriage or adoption, where marriage is the union of a man and a woman as recognised by the state. It very much includes relations of blood, which means that grandparents are an important part of family and should remain so.

I will illustrate something that happened this week within my riding. We have a unique French community, one of the original French communities in British Columbia. It was established

with the logging industry on the banks of the Fraser River at the turn of the century.

It was a thriving community, a mill town, called Maillardville. Every year we have the festival du bois which recognizes the importance of that in our community. This year there was a rededication of the original Millside school. It has been renovated and changed with the changing neighbourhood.

I talked with seniors, many of them watching with pride as being part of this community. In that crowd there were also second and third generation people, seniors who had attended that school in the 1920s. It was a French community of people who had shared in that community throughout their lives and watched their children and grandchildren raised there.

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Through them and through their activity within their families, they have managed to maintain the language, the culture, the knowledge and the pride of their heritage, the sense of belonging in and around their community, the sense of history, the values they share and a sense of permanence within their families in this changing world.

There was an understanding between those generations. It was not an externally imposed understanding but an internally shared understanding between the members of families.

Is that typical in our society? Unfortunately it probably is not. We have had changes because of the tremendous new pressures in this society. Seventy-five per cent of mothers of school aged children now have full or part time work which keeps them out of the home. The average number of working hours in the 1950s was 48 in order to earn an average family income.

Today an average family income requires two people on average working 65 to 75 hours every week. The stress on families is tremendous. Therefore, as we have heard today, there is a high incidence of divorce and separation within families. With that comes the stress, the uncertainty, the conflicting loyalties, et cetera, that we have heard.

It is interesting that we have the same number of husband-wife households now as we had in the 1940s. Eighty-seven per cent of households are husband, wife and children. However, many of those households are second and third marriages or blended family units.

We do have single parent families in our communities which are very much a reality. The term single parent family denies that a family had two parents at one point and four parents at some point related by blood. Single parents should not be deemed as alone and isolated in our society. There are relations and support within society for them.

There are the factors of immigration and the mobility of families across the country. These put further stresses on ties of