

S. O. 21

Ottawa has recently experienced Public Service cuts, project cuts, language training cuts, discretionary spending cuts, total spending freezes, procurement decentralization, National Research Council reallocations, and over the last 10 years part of Employment and Immigration has been moved to Bathurst, DVA has been moved to Charlottetown, parts of DSS have been moved to Shediac and Matane, and the list goes on.

The Child Poverty Action Group on the Hill this morning stressed that the increase in child poverty in the region is alarming. Ottawa is not immune to tough times. We have bread lines and soup kitchens like many other Canadian cities. I therefore ask the Government to reconsider this potential move in the best interests of maintaining the total integrity of the LCDC.

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SOCIAL AFFAIRS

CALL FOR ELIMINATION OF CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, why are people not enraged that one-fifth of Canada's children are poor? Why can we alleviate poverty for the elderly but not for children? Why is child poverty not a political priority?

"Although we say we love children, the only children we love are our own, and I do not mean Canadian children, I mean our very own, the ones in our individual families. Those children we are prepared to do a lot for, but not the children of the poor." Those are the words of Dorothy O'Connell speaking today at the Child Poverty Action Group.

● (1405)

Conservative MPs presently place the blame on parents, moral breakdown, divorce and alcoholism. These are not the causes of poverty. It is the lack of money and other resources to deal with the same problems that middle and upper-income families have. Poor children will not have the same opportunities in life. We must develop the political will to end the senseless waste of all these children who are condemned to repeat the poverty cycle.

If we love our children we must put child poverty on the top of the political agenda now. I call on the Government to make solutions to child poverty the topic of a First Ministers' meeting and the subject of an all-Party committee.

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SOCIAL AFFAIRS

EFFECTS OF POVERTY ON CHILDREN

Mr. David Daubney (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, child poverty remains a concern in Canada. This is so despite the fact that the economy continues to grow at a rate of over 3 per

cent a year, unemployment has dropped to 8.8 per cent, and 260,000 Canadians have risen above the poverty line in the last three years. Our Government has worked hard to raise the standard of living for all Canadians. However, our task remains far from complete.

Poverty is debilitating, especially so when it hits our children. They are the citizens, workers and parents of tomorrow. Poverty robs them of hope for the future and deprives them of the opportunity to develop fully and express themselves as Canadians. In practical terms, child poverty means a higher incidence of mental illness and a higher rate of law-breaking in adolescence. We must pay particular attention to the problem of child poverty in single-parent families.

The Government has begun to act in these areas, helping to drop youth unemployment from 18.3 per cent to 13.8 per cent, decreasing the rate of unemployed women from 12 per cent to 9.4 per cent, and increasing the child tax credit. We must build upon these efforts and those of groups such as the Child Poverty Action Group and the Ottawa Council for Low-Income Support Services. Together we can give all young Canadians a real stake in the future.

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[*Translation*]

ROAD SAFETY

MANDATORY USE OF CAR SEATBELTS AND OTHER APPROPRIATE MEASURES

Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel—Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the police forces of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa—Carleton which have launched their annual safety belt promotion campaign. Their objective is to encourage 90 per cent of car passengers to buckle up.

You have noted, Mr. Speaker, that during the past year I have been presenting petitions and making statements on car safety, because present regulations do not meet the needs of car passengers.

To that effect, a doctor from the Lower St. Lawrence region, Dr. Robert Maguire, has helped me by distributing his own petition asking the Government among other things to pass preventive measures providing for such things as inflatable bags, three point safety belts and the around-the-clock use of headlights. The purpose of such a drive is to reduce by 50 per 100 the number of casualties caused by car accidents.

I have here, Mr. Speaker, petitions signed by over 30,000 people from the Lower St. Lawrence area and the Gaspé Peninsula who are asking for greater road security. I wish to congratulate Dr. Maguire for his initiative and to thank the people from the Lower St. Lawrence area and the Gaspé Peninsula for having helped me in this campaign to promote road security.