

Government Orders

families. Even presently according to the children's bureau federal spending on children exceeds \$15 billion a year.

Again much of the government's social policy focus is not on families but on children and more specifically to our discussion today the issue of the best care for our children. Like all Canadians, I would like to see the most effective means available to create opportunity for the families of these children.

This solution, however, may not be—I do not believe it is in government programs—only addressed to children. Children are a part of families.

Specifically as relates to child poverty, the backgrounder to the discussion paper reads: "The very best way to fight child poverty is for parents of poor families to have a job". Given the present levels of government debt and spending, potentially made even worse as I have mentioned by increased government programs, let us take a closer look at this statement.

What happens when a family gets a job, particularly when a single parent family gets a job? May I suggest that single parent families or one earner families have a very difficult time in making ends meet even now. Let me explain.

Recent statistics out of Port Moody—Coquitlam, my home riding, tell us that over 80 per cent of families are composed of a husband and wife and 12 per cent to 16 per cent, depending on the community, are single parents. Surprising to some, this actually is quite consistent with out national statistics.

Nationally approximately 80 per cent of families are dual parents. Twenty per cent are single parents and that is up from approximately 17 per cent in 1981. Of concern are the low income families, that is those that fall below the StatsCan low income cut off point.

What I found interesting was that over one-half of single female parent families, precisely 51.6 per cent, are low income when they work. They have a job but they are still low income. Almost one-quarter of one earner dual parent families are low income. These tell me that a job alone is not enough. One earner is not enough.

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What is there in this make-up that encourages the single parent to actually get a job? There is not much. Over half of them will still be in a low income category.

Given our present unacceptable high taxation directly resulting from continued government debt, spending and continued government program creation this poverty trap cannot be solved by a job alone.

Recently during consultations in my riding I had a long discussion with a single mom. She already was having to do dishes at two o'clock in the morning after juggling work, child care and unfortunately right now time with a sick elderly parent. She was asking me what more can she do. When I said to her that

the family should be the primary care giver she asked me if we were asking her to do more. She just could not comprehend her ability to do more than she is already doing.

However, it is ever increasing government spending that will end up asking her to do more in the long run. Less and less of what she earns when she is working will be put toward her family. It is decreased government spending, decreased government programs at all levels that will actually free her to make more decisions and to apply her time the way she should.

We are simply asking that the government do less and allow her greater choices with her consequently saved tax dollars. Such savings would allow individuals such as this single mom to be more self-reliant. Families would be able to choose their child care. Communities would benefit from the increased local resources and businesses would thrive and share in programs to support their local needs. This is a real long term and far reaching solution.

Government economic and fiscal policies not only affect the income levels of Canadians, StatsCan figures reveal the average middle class after tax income was \$39,500 in 1980 and by 1991 that figure had dropped to \$37,200. Government economic policies have actually been instrumental in forcing dual parent families into dual earner families simply to make ends meet. Presently most Canadian parents are in the workforce including those with preschool children because of the demands of taxes in their lives.

The federal government presently spends more than \$400 million every year on institutionalized day care. Its red ink book promises \$720 million more tax dollars over three years on subsidization or the creation of up to 150,000 new child care spaces. The 1994 budget promised \$360 million tax dollars toward a national day care program over two years if economic growth hit 3 per cent this year.

Reformers totally reject such a program regardless of our economic growth. Child care should be a personal choice. I along with many Canadians believe that the very best care is in the home. Canadians reflect that in their present decisions. According to a 1994 Statistics Canada report less than 40 per cent of child care presently takes place in day care centres.

In my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam the clear choice of child care for most parents is to have their children in the care of a sitter, a neighbour or a relative. Private child care is a natural part of many neighbourhoods. Moms with young children can opt to care for their own children and the children of working neighbours. Communities can work together. Child care needs are met in the communities.

The government's proposal would create unnecessary spaces at a high cost to the taxpayer. Subsidization exclusively for their programs would coerce participation in government facilities over more casual arrangements as well as create yet another