

social assistance recipients in their transition to the work force.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, hon. members are also aware of the government's efforts in dealing with other causes of poverty: initiatives have been launched to promote literacy, to prevent and treat drug addiction and alcoholism, to provide better pensions and tax benefits for the disabled, and to help enforce child support orders.

[*English*]

Other urgent problems face Canadian children. For example, our family violence and child sexual abuse initiatives are well under way. As you know, Rix Rogers, my special adviser on child sexual abuse, recently completed a report entitled "Reaching for Solutions". In the near future, I intend to introduce a new strategy for dealing with family violence, including child sexual abuse.

One of the recommendations of the Rogers report, and of other earlier reports, was the creation of a children's responsibility centre within the federal government. As a follow-up to the world summit, the Prime Minister assigned me the responsibility for bringing to cabinet recommendations on the declaration and plan of action agreed to at that summit.

The Prime Minister also requested that I create a new mechanism, a children's bureau, within my department to ensure co-ordination and consistency in areas which address children's issues. We are moving ahead quickly on that, Mr. Speaker, and hope to make considerable progress in the months ahead.

This year the federal government will spend about \$1 billion on child care. Additionally, as the Prime Minister has indicated, we will put in place a new child care program during the life of this Parliament. It will better help families manage work and child rearing. In particular, we will help those most in need of assistance, such as single mothers who require child care in order to enter the job market and to help break the cycle of welfare dependency.

I have talked at length about the situation with respect to child poverty and the government record to date. We have made good progress in Canada, but I believe that we can do more. This House cannot magically produce

### *Supply*

programs called for in the motion before us which would bring immediate solutions. I believe the government is on the right course and we are taking the kinds of decisions that have to be made in order to get at the roots of the problem.

If the remarks of the hon. member for Hamilton East are any indication, we will be hearing plenty of partisan rhetoric designed to do more to improve the status of the opposition than that of the poor today. But let us not forget the people who are supposed to be our primary concern here. They require and they deserve our full attention.

As I have pointed out, there are no easy solutions or quick fixes for poverty. No one knows that better than the poor themselves, because they know how complex and how varied the causes and the effects of poverty can be. Most important of all, we have to ensure that the economic foundations that support the social programs that we cherish must remain solid. But if fighting poverty will require well planned, long-term solutions, there can be no excuse for callous complacency based on the belief that because the poor have always been with us, they must always be with us in the future.

To those who say that Canada cannot afford to fight poverty, I say that we cannot afford not to fight it. For sustaining people in poverty can cost much more than giving them the tools to lift themselves out of it. Acting today to break the cycle of poverty can prevent generation after generation from being caught in a costly trap that inflicts its damage in both economic and human terms.

Let me conclude this way. At the World Summit on Children, the nations of the world committed themselves to giving children our highest possible priority. That is exactly what we must do here today at home as well, to give them our priority, to give them and their families the tools that they need to lift themselves from poverty and to ensure that they can share with the rest of us in the benefits of a rich and a compassionate society. That has to be our goal as a people. There is no challenge more worthy of us as members of this House of Commons.

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, I noted the minister made some remarks at the beginning which stated that maybe our line over here is