

Canada Child Care Act

infringing on the parents' right to define what they believe to be the best for their children. All Hon. Members with young children know that this is true, no matter what they may claim during this debate.

● (1630)

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Canadians have indicated that they are prepared to support the extension of child care services everywhere in Canada. Recent surveys have shown that even Canadians without children recognize the important social and economic benefits which may result from more accessible and better quality child care services.

They will not really mind if Governments, both federal and provincial, invest large amounts of taxpayers money to enhance the child care system as long as they can ascertain that these expenses will achieve realistic goals and are shared equitably.

Many Canadians feel that subsidized day care government programs meet the needs of low-income families and that higher-income Canadians can provide for their own children. Those who need assistance most are the middle-income Canadian families where both working parents can hardly keep up their standard of living. Anyone who has carefully examined every aspect of the national strategy will clearly realize that the federal Government has not overlooked middle-income Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, we can all recognize that there are many special needs which current child care services cannot fully satisfy now. After all, it is only under this Government that child care was upgraded from a social welfare service to a social service. This Government has recognized that child care is in a state of infancy as a social service and that in the future there will be a tremendous development and a great many changes similar to those provided to senior citizens.

The Government has shown leadership in these areas, just as it did in the case of the Child Care Special Initiatives Fund, the purpose of which is to support the solutions proposed by various communities to meet special needs. Canada's history is filled with examples of Canadians, working within small communities who have found solutions to many challenging social problems to various Governments.

It seems to me that the people opposite should look up Canada's history before requiring the federal Government to find solutions to meet all the various needs and values of Canadians.

As I pointed out, a feature of the national child care strategy is the good partnership that was made possible thanks to this Government. This is true both in terms of the needs and interests of Canadian families and our relations with provincial authorities, because let us not forget that the latter are responsible for child care services and programs.

Under the legislation, the Canadian Government is taking the initiative to increase and improve child care services. But

in so doing it is respecting the roles of provinces, taking into account provincial programs and services, while making it possible to reach realistic goals within a relatively short timeframe. To those who demand a unilateral stand from the Canadian Government, something that flies in the face of established usage, and also centrally imposed criteria, I say: Stand up and explain two things. How will you operate the system, since you do not even have any right to act in that area in the first place? And then, how will you convince the large majority of Canadian families that they should pay for a system they will never use?

Let me make this clear, Mr. Speaker—I am not asking them to come and air their political rhetoric or ideological stands. What I am asking for is that they come up with a workable, affordable and feasible plan Canadian taxpayers and provinces can afford. I have yet to hear something in this debate that will convince me Opposition Members have found solutions that are more logical than the strategy put forward by this administration.

It is not difficult to trumpet that this Government should do this or that. It is not difficult either to glean figures here and there and use them to support a position, even if those figures have little basis in fact. But we must be careful about something. Figures should not be interpreted in a self-serving manner.

The solutions to Canada's social and economic problems lie in a balanced approach; we must be responsive to the needs of the various regions and provinces, and we must have a good partnership I was referring to earlier. This is how this country operates, and this is why this general legislation meets the needs of Canadian families as no other could.

I urge my colleagues in this House to put aside for a moment their political restraints in order to look at our children's genuine needs. In this pre-election period, it is very easy to promise people a cure-all solution. Will that solution however improve the quality of child care services? Will it create one single extra place in our current child care system? No.

I do not even believe, Mr. Speaker, it would bring us one extra vote.

Mr. Kindy: Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Hon. Member for Louis-Hébert (Mrs. Duplessis) on her very good speech. I think she made points that were quite logical and most relevant on the proper way to raise children.

Children, as we know, need love and attention. They can get it in their homes. That is where young children belong. We are well aware of the psychological problems experienced later in life by children who are put under care as soon as they are born. That is why the main objective of a social policy aimed at children must be to keep them with their families. There are exceptional cases where parents must work outside the home. The Government has a responsibility to help them, and that is where a federal public day care policy is required.