

Private Members' Business

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Madam Speaker, I am most pleased to be able to rise and speak in favour of the motion that has been put forward by my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby.

One of the things that is quite striking in our society is that the same situation is one of the greatest causes of joy and one of the greatest causes of sorrow, that is the determination by a woman that she is pregnant.

If a woman is mature, financially well off, and wishes to have a child it is a time for great joy and celebration. If a woman is immature, poor, unemployed, and particularly if she does not wish to have a child it is a time for great anguish, trauma, and sorrow.

Since the government's failed attempt to recriminalize abortion, it has failed to come forward with any concrete positive measures to deal with the question of unwanted pregnancies. I think that this bill goes a long way toward beginning to put forward very concrete, positive steps to deal with this and other problems in Canada related to unwanted pregnancies and the spread of venereal disease.

Sexual ignorance is widespread. Before we look at programs, we have to look at some of the information about the situation in Canada. One in five 14-year-olds and one in two 16-year-olds are sexually active. One in five teenage girls will become pregnant before the age of 20. Sexually transmitted disease affects one in every eight Canadians. One in 10 couples is infertile, partly as a result of sexually transmitted disease.

Although 83 per cent of Canadians believe that sexual education should be taught in schools, only one-half of schools in Canada approve any such program. Forty-six per cent of Canadians feel that they have limited access to contraception and family planning. Nearly 70,000 women in Canada have abortions each year.

When one looks at these statistics in comparison with other countries, particularly other countries in which family planning and sexual education is the norm, it is quite striking. The rate of adolescent pregnancies in Canada is five times as high as in the Netherlands, five times. It is four times as high as in the Scandinavian countries.

We have had some experience with what can happen with even limited family planning programs aimed at adolescents and young women. In Ontario between 1976

and 1986 there was a 23 per cent reduction in the number of adolescent pregnancies. They declined from 21,000 to 14,000 a year. The rate of abortion in that period of time remained relatively the same. This was as a result of education programs undertaken within the province of Ontario.

• (1710)

In 1975 the Ontario government said that it would fund 100 per cent of education information and contraceptive services through health units. Eighty-one per cent of the units now offer these services. At the same time, it made the opportunity available for education within the school system. This has not been universally done.

The result is that there has been a dramatic drop in the rate of pregnancies and abortions in Ontario, particularly among young teens up to the age of 16. In this age group the rate of pregnancies has dropped 33 per cent, the rate of births has dropped 40 per cent, and the rate of abortions has dropped 28 per cent.

For older teens, those 17 to 19, the rate of pregnancies has dropped 20 per cent and the rate of births has dropped 38 per cent, but abortions have risen.

In the report that studied the question of whether extending access to prevention reduces abortions and births to the unmarried, the conclusions are: "It is a reasonable conclusion that declining pregnancies during the decade are largely as a result of programs reaching the most accessible adolescents: accessible geographically, living close to public and private prevention resources, accessible socially, meaning those with support within their personal network to reinforce prevention messages, and accessible personally, adolescents who did not have some special needs, disability or who were not living in deprived, crisis-ridden environments".

There are clear indications that family planning and education work.

We very much want to take a look at what is happening in Canada with regard to family planning. The federal government was supportive of family planning and the Planned Parenthood Association in Canada. Its funding peaked in 1977 at \$627,000 but has taken a dramatic nosedive since then under two governments. The former Liberal government reduced the association's funding from \$627,000 to \$237,000 by the time it left office in