

Private Members' Business

through a means test. The Reform Party has long advocated the targeting of social program spending to need.

Reform also believes that the role of the federal government should be to offer parents the choice of day care that they believe is most suitable for their particular economic and personal circumstances.

Reform believes that government assistance for child care should subsidize financial need and not the method of child care chosen. Government subsidies should be directed to parents and children and not to institutions, professionals or bureaucrats.

My colleague from Mississauga South has carefully outlined the importance of early childhood care. Conventional wisdom is now being challenged by recent research. There are some very real and valuable reasons for parents to be in the home if possible.

Our responsibility in this place as law makers is awesome. The decisions made here not only create laws but those laws then go on to mould and direct society. We have already seen repercussions of well meaning but ill advised legislation on our welfare system, our unemployment insurance system and our immigration system. Well meaning universal day care is politically correct but is it right?

Recently a human resources committee report suggested that middle class parents should lose child care benefits to free up money to support poorer Canadians. To do so, it suggested phasing out the child care tax deduction in contrast to my colleague's suggestion and diverting that \$310 million into an equally universal national day care system.

Here is a clear example of government agenda. As in so many debates in this place, the question is not whether money should be spent but on who should spend it. In this case, do we leave money as in this motion in the hands of Canadians, or do we snatch it back to bureaucrats and commissions with only a fraction returned to the families and communities in the form of national day care? Do we encourage parents to care for their own children, or do we penalize them for making that choice?

The Liberals are saying: "Trust government with your money. Trust us with your children, their education, their assimilation of culture—we will define it for them—and values in our nanny state national day care program".

● (1815)

In this proposal and in our alternate budget Reformers are saying that we should trust Canadians with their own money, trust Canadians to choose wisely what is best for their own families and maximize the dollars available for our most important resource, our children.

The motion today is a small but important step in the direction of recognizing the importance of families and early childhood care in the home. My colleague has put forward a positive proposal that would strengthen families by allowing full choice of child care options. The dedicated mom or dad who chooses to stay home will finally be recognized as a valued and valid caregiver. In contrast, the intention of the government is to ignore such a notion. Its intention is to increase federal involvement in child care and deny families the trust they deserve.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, as I ask all Canadians who do you trust with your money, your children and your future? Should more of your hard earned money be sent to new bureaucracies in Ottawa, or should it be left in your hands and in your community? Should you or a civil servant instil the sense of place, history or identity in your children?

With my colleagues I call upon government to trust Canadians. I call upon government to rethink its role in society and in our families. I call upon government to empower families to be allowed and encouraged to choose their child care options and then to thrive as a nation with their choices.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before resuming debate I want to thank the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam in agreeing to the change in the order of speakers to facilitate another member's request. I am most grateful for the co-operation.

Ms. Roseanne Skoke (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before the House is private member's Motion No. 339 which states that the government should amend the Income Tax Act to extend, subject to a means test, the child care expense deduction to all families.

It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to support the motion and to congratulate the hon. member for Mississauga South for advancing the motion.

The intent of the motion is clear. It is to convert the child care expense deduction to a tax credit so that the value is the same for all taxpayers rather than favouring high income earners. It is to make the benefit subject to a means test based on family income, thereby directing it to those who are legitimately in need of assistance. The change would be consistent with the treatment of most other social benefits.

It is also to extend the benefit to families with one parent providing child care in the home, thereby recognizing the social, economic and moral importance of direct parental care in the family home.

The conventional terms of debate in matters of political, economic and legal issues tend to focus on individual rights and the rights of the state, not the rights of the family. This is unfortunate and must change, for the family is the most important reality in our lives. The family unit is the basic institution of