

Adjournment Debate

for approximately 1,000 native communities. This is a shocking statistic even for government members.

In addition to that, the native communities were promised \$60 million by the present administration which has since been gutted by the administration across the way.

The child care initiatives fund was cut in the recent budget from \$15 million to \$13.25 million. The child care initiatives fund was set up some time ago. I wish to repeat that while it is not the panacea in terms of the difficulties of the child care movement, it is at least some attempt to provide research dollars for those organizations, and non-profit organizations in particular, to do some research regarding child care in this country.

Now, the great promise of the child care initiatives fund is being reduced by the Minister of Finance, aided and abetted by the Minister of National Health and Welfare and, of course, the Prime Minister.

The be all and end all of the Government of Canada's initiatives toward child care in this country has centred around the Canada Assistance Plan. For those of us in this Chamber who have some familiarity with the contents of the Canada Assistance Plan, we recognize first and foremost that it does not provide the poorer provinces or, indeed, the poorer regions in this country, with the same equitable opportunities as it does other regions of the country. As example would be Ontario. That economy, which is generating sufficient dollars to maintain a balanced budget for this particular fiscal year, can readily afford 50 cents on the dollar, unlike the province of Newfoundland under the Canada Assistance Plan, which cannot afford 50 cents on the dollar for the creation of new child care spaces in that province. This government chooses to do nothing to address the real crisis with regard to creating new spaces in this country.

• (1805)

Second, this government chooses to do nothing with regard to ensuring and enhancing quality child care across the country. More recently in the province of Nova Scotia we have had child care givers go on strike for a fair and equitable wage. Unfortunately, their demands have not been met as of yet. I urge them to continue on in their struggle to get a fair and equitable wage for their services.

It must be understood that the essence of a quality child care program in this country, even in the province of Nova Scotia, will centre around the qualifications and the abilities of those care givers. Therefore, they ought to receive fair and equitable compensation. I am certain that if the national government assumed its responsibilities in terms of putting in place a comprehensive program, it would be able to address this particular program.

In conclusion, I am dismayed at a government which, at one time, echoed the sentiment that it was supportive of a comprehensive child care program, only to find that it has been able to secure billions of dollars for its friends, such as the Reichmann brothers in Toronto. It has been able to write off the debt of other countries and provide untold millions of dollars to its corporate friends. Yet when it comes to child care, there has been no comprehensive legislative program put in place. There have been no substantial dollars being directed toward creating new child care spaces, establishing national standards or providing equitable and fair compensation for those people who work as care givers in the child care movement.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lise Bourgault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the concerns expressed by the hon. member for Cape-Breton—Richmond East. When we hear the hon. members opposite, we cannot help thinking that if we had not inherited this incredible fiscal burden in 1984, just imagine what we could have done if we had only 50 per cent of what we now spend on servicing the debt, which we could then spend on child care. Imagine what we could have done with all that money! There is a problem, and it is that this country has a serious budget deficit. However, I would like to remind the hon. member that some components of the national strategy on child care have been put in place, and I will repeat what they are, for his benefit.

I may recall that today, the deduction for child care expenses allows working parents to deduct up to \$4,000 from their income per pre-school child. There is also the \$200 supplement to the refundable child tax credit, per pre-school child, for low- and middle-income families. There is the Child Care Special Initiatives Fund. The hon. member referred to a problem with child care on Indian reserves. A national study is now being conducted