

Supply

Mr. Beatty: All Canadians, regardless of political affiliation, care deeply about the future of our children and about the future of our country. All Canadians can work together to try to deal with this issue.

There is no question that poverty affects many Canadians. Poverty oppresses more than 3.5 million people in Canada. Despite a generous system of elderly benefits, approximately 450,000 seniors, most of them single, continue in poverty. The problem which is most troubling to us all is that almost one child in six—close to 1 million children—will find it difficult to break out of this vicious cycle.

These numbers are bad enough on a national basis but when we look at the pattern region by region we see even more disturbing trends. In Newfoundland, for instance, we see that more than 25 per cent of the children are poor. In Manitoba, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick the rates are 20 per cent or higher. This is far too high.

[*Translation*]

Canada is not the only country to have reached this conclusion. Every night, two-thirds of the world's children go to bed hungry, and every day more than 38,000 children die of hunger, or because they have no shelter or are not getting proper health care.

One of the objectives of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is to reduce that number. There is only one way to ensure that children enjoy those rights and have a chance to develop: We must deal with the underlying problem, which is poverty.

Now that the convention has been adopted, we intend to support the agreement, in close co-operation with the provinces, so that Canada's name can be added to the list of signatory countries.

[*English*]

But in Canada the problems facing children are much simpler to define than in many of the other countries of the world. For instance, the Convention calls for basic rights for children, including the right to a name. Most of the rights that are listed are fundamental in our society and are already being met in Canada.

We know that the lot of children in Canada has been improving step by step. In 1984, more than 1.1 million

children lived in poverty. By 1987, that number had dropped to under 1 million. This is a significant improvement but the number is still too high.

As we look at the goal of eradicating poverty by the year 2000 we have to ask ourselves this. How was this progress achieved and what can we do as the federal Parliament to continue this trend?

There are two ways to put more money into the hands of our children. The first, which was largely the emphasis of the speech by the hon. gentleman from Oshawa, was by redistributing the wealth that we have. The second is by increasing the total amount of wealth available.

Let us talk first about the programs we have to target support to the most needy. The foundation of Canada's support to the needy is the Canada Assistance Plan. This year we expect to transfer \$5.1 billion to the provinces for a range of social assistance expenditures. In addition to basic income support payments to families, the Canada Assistance Plan supports social services such as counselling and emergency shelters.

When we began our first mandate in 1984 we were determined that families with children should receive more support. The segment of the population most in need was obviously lower income families. The first thing that we did was to increase the child tax credit by more than 50 per cent. The child tax credit was increased to \$565 per child and a new \$200 supplement was brought in for children six years old and younger. We wanted to help families break out of poverty. Because 70 per cent of Canadian families have children at home, we knew that we needed a program for small children.

The growing numbers of two-income families and single-parent families showed us that an effective child care program is needed. We have already brought in a \$100 million child care initiatives fund and developed child care programs which really work for different communities. This year we expect to spend another \$240 million under CAP for subsidized child care spaces. That is a 20 per cent increase in CAP in just one year. All of our spending on child care this year at the federal level will amount to a figure just under \$1 billion. We will implement a new national child care program by the end