

Canada Child Care Act

growth rate falls despite the fact that we are maintaining the same level of increase. That is what is happening to the growth of licensed day care spaces in Canada. We are encountering the law of diminishing returns.

The provinces have told us that growth rates and absolute levels of growth in licensed spaces, much less in subsidized licensed spaces, would not be as sustained unless more generous cost-sharing arrangements than the Canada Assistance Plan provisions now available are provided.

Continuous growth in the number of day care spaces cannot be assumed. Between 1976 and 1978, the number of licensed care spaces available in Canada actually dropped by a total of 1,241. This occurred at a time when the female participation rate in the paid labour force increased from 56.8 per cent to 59 per cent, well above the average for the past 15 years.

Of those 160,000 licensed spaces which are subsidized either from direct operating grants or through parental subsidies, many are subsidized at very low levels, such as 38 cents a day or 50 cents a day. That is the present situation under the Canada Assistance Plan.

Under the legislation now before the House, we will not count any new subsidized space toward our goal of 200,000 unless it is subsidized by the province by at least \$2 a day. We will not count the spaces that are subsidized at 38 cents and 50 cents. In other words, even saying that there will be an increase from 160,000 licensed subsidized spaces to 360,000 understates the extent of the improvement because many of those 160,000 spaces are subsidized at less than the level that would be brought about under this Bill. Only members of the New Democratic Party can describe that improvement as bringing the growth rate down.

In describing the recent 15 per cent annual growth rate in licensed spaces as inadequate, the NDP House Leader overlooks the fact that that is all his own Leader is proposing. He recently said that he would increase the number of licensed spaces over the next four years by 200,000. It is the same annual, inadequate growth rate of 15 per cent quoted by the NDP. The New Democratic Party states out of one side of its mouth that a 15 per cent annual rate is inadequate; then out of the other side of its mouth it trumpets its commitment to increase the number of spaces over the next four years by 15 per cent.

Finally, let us look at the growth rate record in licensed day care spaces in Manitoba from 1982 to 1987. When I was on the child care committee I could not wait to get to Manitoba. Manitoba alone would have the perfect system in Canada from all I heard about the NDP commitment. I was waiting with bated breath to find out what would happen in Manitoba.

• (1250)

I can tell Hon. Members, and the statistics will bear me out on this, that it is a pretty disappointing story here. I know that members of the NDP will agree with me when I say that. If

there were a perfect system of day care, surely it would have been created in Manitoba with all those years of socialist government.

Unfortunately, the facts are these. The annual growth rate in licensed, non-profit spaces in Manitoba between 1982 and 1987 was not, as a matter of fact, among the highest in Canada. It was not even close. In fact, the growth rate was 8 per cent per year—barely half the national average for that period of time, putting socialist Manitoba number eight in growth rate in this country behind three of the four Atlantic provinces and behind the other two prairie provinces. While members of the NDP rant about increasing the growth rate, I wish they could have said something like that to the members of their own Party and done something about it when they had the opportunity.

Getting back to the speech read by the member of the New Democratic Party from Kamloops—Shuswap, he referred to the \$3.94 billion in federal money committed in this Bill over the next years. He said: "What is worse is the Government is putting a cap on it. It is saying that this is it, that it will inadequately fund child care only for the next seven years".

There are two points that should be made in response to that comment. First, while there is an over-all cap and an annual cap on federal spending over the first seven years, that cap is set at such a level that it will permit a much larger financial commitment from the federal Government than would have been spent under the Canada Assistance Plan. Members of the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party know that that is the case.

As well, I would like to make this analogy before I leave this cap of the federal Government. We have heard it a number of times. I will put it in terms I think Members opposite can understand. Let us consider a union which had been negotiating 5 per cent increases each year under a collective agreement and the employers came to members of the union and said this: "Instead of that 5 per cent agreement that you have been getting and negotiating each year we will give you 10 per cent and guarantee it every year". Would any union turn that down? Would the NDP turn that down? No. That is why the provinces will be co-operating with us in the implementation of Bill C-144.

Second, since the purpose of this Bill is to improve the availability and affordability of quality licensed child care in Canada, it proposes a seven-year boost period in which the number of licensed spaces will more than double. After that, our Government, again under the leadership of the Prime Minister, will see to it that we continue with our commitment. We will all be here to do that. Members of the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party will not be. They will have an even narrower corridor in this House. But I know the Prime Minister will continue beyond that to assess the situation and take care of the needs of all Canadian children.

I see that my time is just about up. I am very pleased to have been able to make some comments. This is a great step