

Adjournment Debate

We know that those child care payments do not reflect actual child care costs either. We know that parents who pay out can deduct those payments from their income and those who receive the payment must declare it as income and pay income tax on an already very small payment. If you look at them all, they are in fact very small.

We know that the awards do not reflect actual costs, that they are not indexed to inflation and so the poor get poorer. Those are the poor moms and the poor children.

Studies indicate very clearly that children who are brought up in single parent families have more difficulties. They have more difficulties at school, sometimes in learning and in cases of discipline and more difficulties in getting student loans later on because of the delicate situation in which they find themselves.

Child poverty is most likely in Canada and in eight industrial countries, with the exception of the United States. I have been told that in this country today at this moment and as we speak there may be \$1 billion—not \$1 million—owed to parents because child care support payments have not been made.

[*Translation*]

For the love of children and their mothers, let us do something. We must react.

[*English*]

I will terminate with this. For the sake of the children and most often their poor moms, let us do something and let us do something now.

Mr. Ken James (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I would like to respond to my colleague from St. Boniface. I know he has a very sincere interest in children and their rightful financial position in our country.

However, I would like to raise a couple of points about the use of the numbers in the report that he refers to which comes from the National Council on Welfare. It compares provincial assistance benefits and I bring this to his attention. First, he knows welfare falls under provincial jurisdiction, not federal, and the federal government therefore does not set the social assistance

benefits. The province does that. The government, as he should know, contributes significantly to the provinces to help them meet these financial obligations.

These figures are pretty substantial. The federal contribution to the provinces in 1991-92 was estimated to be in the area of \$6.4 billion. That is a lot of money under the Canada Assistance Plan.

Second, we think it is a bit misleading to compare welfare benefits with the statistics of Canada's low income cutoff points that were used because Statistics Canada itself denies that its low income cutoffs are poverty line. So we must be a little careful with that. These cutoffs are best used for making comparisons across time and across sections of the Canadian population, but not as a measurement of poverty.

Further, since 1984 the federal government has taken on a number of initiatives. The member opposite mentioned that we would talk about that. The maximum child tax credit payable in respect of a child has increased from \$367 in 1984 to \$585. He talks about inflation, but that is a 16 per cent increase after inflation is taken into account.

Further, a child tax credit supplement of \$200 per child under the age of seven was introduced by this government in 1988 and low income families now receive about \$1,000 of child benefits for every child.

A number of initiatives, new measures and federal-provincial shared programs have been introduced.

I would like to reiterate that this government has a commitment to children and families with children and that is why the Speech from the Throne announced that the government was reviewing its policies in relation to the family. To that end we will be making some new announcements, in which the hon. member will be interested, in the near future.

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to be adopted. The House therefore stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

The House adjourned at 6.36 p.m.