

*Canada Child Care Act*

covered all these bases, and it is for those reasons that I would reject this amendment.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with this resolution. The reasons are quite simple. Most people who appeared before us are very concerned about service quality and about standards. It seems that this law will set a precedent whereby the provinces are given the right to determine their own quality standards. In the Bill, the federal Government still has a say in the number of places and the quality of staff. But nevertheless, given that these services are as important as health care services in Canada, I think the changes should be published. Obviously, the Minister brings in the cost argument. But I do not think that it would cost a fortune and that that argument alone justifies not publishing changes to the new Act. So I support this amendment because I feel it is important and in the public interest for everyone to know what is happening in child care services in Canada.

[English]

**Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the amendment standing in the name of the Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell). After hearing the Minister's remarks, I think it is important for us to look at what the amendment actually says. It says that upon execution of these agreements, amendments to the agreements or renewal of the agreements, notices shall be published in relation thereto in *The Canada Gazette* and that these agreements will be available upon request from the Department of National Health and Welfare.

I do not understand why the Government is so afraid of letting people know what agreements it has signed with the provinces. We are talking about child care here, a program which exists for the public. Since the agreements will be gazetted in any event, as the Minister has said, why then is he reluctant to have in legislation a clause indicating that the agreements will be available to the public upon request?

We are not dealing with a massive mail-out. We are saying that those interested Canadians who would like information about the agreements affecting child care in their provinces or territories would be able to phone or write the Department of National Health and Welfare to ask for copies of the agreements. We are talking about the rights of concerned citizens to have access to information.

As I said in my earlier intervention, the Government seems to want to do a big public relations job on child care, but when it came down to letting the people speak before the parliamentary committee, they were denied that opportunity, even though there were requests from people from the Minister's own province in western Canada. Now, after the Government will negotiate agreements with the various provinces, it will not be willing to make copies of the agreements available to the public.

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** Not true.

**Mr. Murphy:** If it is not true, why did the Minister say that he would not put this amendment into legislation? Why would he not say that the public has a right to obtain those agreements from the Department?

• (1140)

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** That is not true.

**Mr. Murphy:** The Minister says it is not true. Perhaps he or someone on his behalf could explain why he opposes this amendment. All it does is guarantee the right of access. However, in his intervention he seemed to indicate that there is a massive problem with it when obviously there is not.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Monique Tardif (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I too wish to express my disagreement with the motion now before us. I believe that this amendment should be defeated, and I will tell you why. Information on the signed agreements on the amendments will already be in the official *Gazette*—it will be on record. However, it is uncertain whether responsibility for distributing these documents will belong to the Department of National Health and Welfare. So it is already possible to do so. Who will distribute them? It is not certain that it will be the Department of National Health and Welfare. So I think that since the Bill is now before us and notice for obtaining copies has already been in the *Gazette*, there is no need for further changes.

[English]

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to say a few words in response to both the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) and his Parliamentary Secretary. We have heard on a number of occasions that the Government is concerned about the distribution of these documents.

**Mrs. Tardif (Charlesbourg):** No.

**Mr. Riis:** If that is the concern, we ought to submit an amendment to this motion. All we are saying is that since the taxpayers of Canada at either the provincial or federal level are providing the funds for this service, they ought to have access to the documents. I become very suspicious of a Government which says that it does not want to tell the people what it is doing. It does not want to let the people in on the agreement it is signing with the provinces.

What we are saying is that upon execution of agreements between the federal and provincial Governments, or the amendment or renewal of an existing agreement, a notice shall be published in *The Canada Gazette*. Surely there is no problem with that. I cannot imagine that people would be concerned about that, so let us assume we all agree that is either being done or will be done and therefore there should be no hesitation to include it.