

*Government Orders*

who have no opportunity at all. We are talking about half the people on social assistance, people who are employable if they are given a chance, if they are given some support.

• (1110)

That is why one of the key proposals in our paper is to provide new flexible rules so provinces can begin to establish their programs to enable people to go back to work. Over the summer we have been signing a series of strategic initiatives with six or seven provinces in a spirit of co-operation to provide them the ability and the resources to innovate.

In my province of Manitoba we have a new program for single parents where they will run the program, not the bureaucrats or social workers. They will have their own centre where they will develop their own child care programs, their own training programs, their own employment programs. Once again it is based on the principle of decentralizing, putting resources in people's hands, working in partnerships.

In Rimouski a couple of weeks ago we, as the federal government, became a partner with a women's group, Fielles, the local CEGEP, and the local regional development authority, to provide a new centre of resource for women on social assistance to create their own jobs, to create their own employment, to start their own businesses.

Once again we have presented a new principle. It is not the federal government, not provincial government landing on top of them. We are partners with them in the small town of Rimouski where we have said to these women that they will be responsible for their own development and we will give them resource and help.

[Translation]

We will make job creation easier. We will make it easier to develop new approaches to job creation. This is the way the government should work in the future.

[English]

That is why we proposed changes in the way we deliver our social security system and in particular to look at the way the rules apply to those with disabilities. Why should they have to declare themselves as unemployable. Just think of the enormous number of job opportunities there are out there for people who have incredible skills but have to sign a piece of paper saying they cannot put any of that to use.

Disabled organizations across the country are saying that benefits should be split from social services and something different should be done. We are putting that on the table for discussion with the provinces.

Our own vocational rehabilitation program is one way of getting away from the sheltered workshop and into giving resources to individuals to make that change.

Similarly, we say this is an opportunity, and maybe the most important opportunity, to come together as a country to take care of children. Let us begin to mobilize all resources; federal government, provincial governments, business, labour, community organizations, people that say they are no longer prepared to accept a million children living in poverty.

Let us give ourselves a goal to bring the provinces together in co-operation to bring that level down 30, 40, 50 per cent in the next 10 years. Let us really go to work.

Through the proposals in this paper there is a way, partly by giving their parents a chance to work. The best way of dealing with child poverty is a job for the parents. Give them the resources to find that job. Break down the rules that prevent them from getting jobs. Create work out there that they can find.

Another way we present in the green paper is the new program of child support. We can work again federally and provincially to make sure that those parents who have been separated and no longer receive support from non-custodial parents have a much tougher enforcement system. If that does not work let us take a look at the program now being introduced in other countries for a minimum basis of child support and let government help people to get those payments back. We could reduce our social welfare costs by 10 or 15 per cent if we had a decent, effective support system.

My colleague, the Minister of Justice, within a matter of weeks will be presenting the results of federal-provincial discussions to initiate a new child support system and I hope all members here will support that initiative.

Finally, we must also look at how we can begin to put together a program or a system that will enable us to provide an income base for children partly because they do not receive enough. The combination of federal-provincial benefits does not give children enough support.

There is an interesting conference this weekend, Prime Minister, that I know you are interested in, where we have groups of child specialists from across the country who have clearly established the connection between early child development in the first couple of years, and what happens to an adult later on.

• (1115)

We can directly relate nutrition to bad health when we are adults. We can directly relate nurturing and support to problems in the court. When we have great arguments in this House about getting tough with young offenders, we should start with children who are two or three years old because many of them are not getting it due to lack of income.