

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there shall be a response within the time frame and there shall be in Canada a comprehensive child care program.

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WAYS AND MEANS

REQUEST FOR DESIGNATION OF ORDER OF THE DAY

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I would ask with regard to Ways and Means Motion No. 16 that an Order of the Day be designated.

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POINT OF ORDER

REFUSAL TO ACCEPT PETITION

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order with regard to a petition I tried to present today. If I may, I would like to indicate to the Chair the contents of the petition so the Chair will be able to understand of what I am speaking.

The petition is that, whereas there is a child care crisis in Canada and whereas tax credits will not create an accessible quality child care health system and whereas an accessible child care system is an essential element for women's equality, wherefore the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon Parliament to provide the provinces and territories with the immediate short-term funding to strengthen and expand non-profit child care while a new cost-shared agreement is being negotiated, and further, to take this measure as a first step toward the public funding needed to create a system of quality non-profit child care accessible to all parents who wish to use it.

According to the rules of the House of Commons, I tried to present that petition to the Clerk of Petitions and I was refused permission to do so on the grounds of Beauséne's Citation No. 685(3) which reads as follows:

The House will refuse to receive any petition that directly asks for a grant of money out of the public revenues unless such grant has first been recommended by the Crown. But the House does not reject petitions which ask simply for legislation or for "such measures as the House may think expedient to take" with respect to public works.

I respect the Citation in Beauséne's cited by the Clerk of Petitions in refusing my petition. However, I believe that in the history of petitions presented to the Crown there has been an effort by petitioners to make it clear that they wish the Government to act. I believe it to be historically correct that many petitions received by the Crown and later by Parliament

Point of Order—Mr. Murphy

have in fact required the expenditure of public funds. I believe it goes against the principle of the public petitioning Parliament to be told that petitioners cannot do so when there is a requirement for an expenditure of funds.

I would like the Chair to review the Citation, to look at the precedents and the present necessity and to recognize that people who sign petitions of their own volition and who ask Parliament or the Government to act are making a request of Parliament. They should have a right just like any other group of citizens to have their petitions heard. I hope you would so rule, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I have heard my hon. friend's comments and I have no difficulty with them, and in fact would encourage you to review my friend's case. I am looking at the citation my colleague cited and I would hope that in 1987, we would not bear too heavily on a precedent listed in Beauséne's as being set in 1869.

As my hon. friend has said, Members of Parliament are often presented with petitions which are general in nature. I would suggest that the citation is probably specific in nature. Perhaps you might take a look at the petition and, if it is general in nature as are petitions received by all Members from time to time, perhaps you could bring down a ruling which would be of assistance to the Clerk of Petitions when considering future petitions.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any further Hon. Members rising on this point of order?

I have listened carefully to the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy). The matter is one of interest and is perhaps one of importance. I am intrigued because the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Lewis) has risen in support of the position the Hon. Member for Churchill is urging on the Chair, which is specifically that a ruling in Beauséne's should be considered very carefully as to whether it is applicable when petitions are presented to the House which may involve the expenditure of public money but which are general enough in nature that they do not specifically refer to a particular grant to a particular person, organization or group. I think that is the distinction the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary has fastened onto with appropriate cogency.

The Chair will consider the matter and will report back to the House as soon as possible. I will look very carefully at the ruling, keeping in mind what the Parliamentary Secretary has pointed out about its date, and keeping in mind what the Hon. Member for Churchill has said about the right of Canadians to present petitions to this place, a right which undoubtedly is important and should be interpreted as broadly as possible. I thank Hon. Members.