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# **Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Raymonde Folco**

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## Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Tuesday, November 23, 2004

•(1105)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.)):** Today, Tuesday, November 23, we are starting the eighth meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

On the agenda we have the Main Estimates 2004-2005: Votes 1 and 5 under Human Resources Development (Social Development).

This morning we are pleased to have the Honourable Ken Dryden, Minister of Social Development.

Welcome Mr. Minister.

We also have the Honourable Tony Ianno, Minister of State (Families and Caregivers).

If you will, Mr. Dryden, I propose you make your presentation first. You'll be followed by Mr. Ianno, who will make his. Then we'll move on to the question and comment period, during which you may perhaps introduce the officials who will join you in a few minutes.

Mr. Minister, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

**Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development):** Merci, madame la présidente.

Thank you, colleagues, for inviting me to appear before your committee and for this opportunity to begin a dialogue with you.

Historically, I'm told, this committee has worked in a very constructive way to hear witnesses, prepare reports, and make recommendations that have greatly assisted in advancing public policy in this country. Your work has been particularly valuable in highlighting issues, as well as in proposing actions and solutions related to children and to people with disabilities, two areas that I now have responsibility for. Much of this work has been striking in its non-partisanship and in its collaboration with various stakeholders. I look forward to maintaining the alliance between this parliamentary committee, the new department, and its ministers. I want you to know I look forward to your advice and support.

The creation of the Department of Social Development by the Prime Minister in December 2003 was done to help respond to the expectations Canadians have of their society and of their government. Three years earlier, your committee led the way when you recommended its establishment. Peter Adams, a current member of

this committee, was the chair when this report was prepared, so our department is part of your legacy.

Social Development Canada at its core is about an inclusive Canada. It is for those who are the most vulnerable: the very young, the old, and those with disabilities. It is grounded in what Canada and Canadians stand for: shared community, equality and justice, respect for diversity, and mutual responsibility. But while we can build on our foundation of social programs and policies, we must also find new ways of constructing new approaches to support individuals, families, and communities, and to foster their active participation in Canadian society.

We don't live our lives as stages: child, youth, senior. We live. We must respect that lives are great disrespecters of mandate and jurisdiction. At SDC we work to ensure coherence across the federal government, to develop a new approach to federal-provincial relations based on greater accountability to the Canadian public and to find a clear means of monitoring social progress.

Our new vision for addressing challenges cannot be defined by us alone. We must work together. We must establish and maintain four essential partnerships based on consultation, collaboration, and engagement with Parliament, stakeholders, and other governments, but above all with Canadians.

I should also note here that while traditionally the division of one department into two leads to significantly greater costs of administration and of one-time expenditures, the creation of SDC and HRSDC has not resulted in increased costs.

The year 2004-05 is a transition year for our new department. You will find that the main estimates we have just tabled and our report on plans and priorities have already set up the basic financial and planning framework for the new department. We are currently developing an integrated policy framework that will guide our new mandate.

As you can see from our main estimates for 2004-05, planned departmental spending is \$53.1 billion. In order to understand the Department of Social Development, you need to understand that over 97% of this \$53.1 billion is statutory, directly assisting Canadians through benefits paid under the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security legislation. The increase of \$2 billion in this amount, compared to the increase in the previous year, relates almost entirely to the forecasted average rate of payments and the forecasted average of population that is benefiting from these statutory benefits to Canadians.

Of the remaining less than 3% of our budget, \$286 million, 0.5% of it, is for grants and contributions to support individuals, communities, the private and voluntary sectors, and other levels of government in the achievement of shared social development goals. Most of this \$286 million—or \$222 million of these funds—are transferred to the provinces via federal-provincial agreements for programs for persons with disabilities—for instance, the multilateral framework for labour market agreements for persons with disabilities.

● (1110)

Examples of other grants and contributions planned spending include \$26.7 million for the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities to assist them in preparing for, obtaining, and keeping employment or self-employment; slightly over 2%, or \$1.1 billion of the total planned spending of \$53.1 billion, to cover the operating costs for supporting the delivery of programs and benefits to Canadians; and almost 70% of this \$1.1 billion being devoted to the services shared by Social Development Canada and the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development.

The creation of these two departments in December 2003 generated the shared service delivery model that uses a common, integrated infrastructure for corporate services and benefits in order to reduce overlap and duplication. It is also designed to ensure that Canadians receive high-quality and cost-effective services. Our contribution to the Budget 2003 \$1 billion reallocation exercise was made in these areas and will not affect core programming or have an adverse impact on our clients.

Again, as you can see, out of total expenditures on programs and services of more than \$53.1 billion, this department has a very small amount of discretionary spending. These are the key numbers in the main estimates, but the work we do at Social Development Canada has to do with people: children, seniors, persons with disabilities, and the voluntary sector—people in our families, people in our communities, people in our constituencies.

As members of this committee, I'm sure we share many of the same concerns. This new department was established to achieve demonstrable progress in strengthening Canada's social foundations. I believe we have already started to deliver on this ambitious mandate.

Madam Chair, Canadians have made clear their priorities. They have told us the time has come for a national system of early learning and child care. After all, when over 84% of parents with children are both in the workforce, when 70% of women with children under the age of six are in the workforce, when the great majority of kids under the age of six are in child care of some form, investing in early

childhood education and care is critically important to the people of our country.

Child care is an economic issue. It's a competitive issue. It's an anti-poverty issue. But in this regard, really, mostly it's a fact of life. A recent report by the OECD, however, notes that Canada is falling behind other OECD countries in the provision of early childhood education and care. Canadian children need real opportunities to learn.

As you know, I've met with the provinces and territories in the past month to start laying the groundwork for what will be the foundation for a national early learning and child care system to ensure that all Canadian children have a good start in life and that families have the support and tools they need for that most important of roles, parenting.

Research has demonstrated that the highest social payoffs come from investments early in life. As part of our commitment to children and families, we're also helping communities to identify children whose readiness to learn is at risk by expanding the understanding early years initiative to at least a hundred more communities.

As the lead department responsible for seniors, we want to ensure that Canada's seniors live in dignity and live with purpose. We are committed to ensuring that seniors have the opportunity to play an active role in Canadian society, to participate in their communities, and to benefit from a retirement income system that sustains a good quality of life.

On October 22, SDC launched the new horizons program for seniors. This program was created to increase social participation among seniors, reduce isolation, and enhance networking and partnership opportunities. In addition, we are addressing the needs of Canada's least well-off seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement.

We also envision a Canada where the social and economic participation of persons with disabilities is enhanced and where they are treated fairly and can participate fully. People with disabilities are looking for greater opportunities to make independent choices and to become more self-reliant. In partnership with the disability community, other stakeholders, and the provinces, we will explore options to move toward full inclusion for persons with disabilities.

● (1115)

It should also be noted that this past May, an amendment to the CPP legislation was passed to allow for the automatic reinstatement of benefits for disabled persons who return to work, if their return to work is unsuccessful because their disability or a related disability reoccurs.

As part of our commitment to working collaboratively with all levels of government, we will be working with the provinces and territories to implement the new multilateral framework for labour market agreements for persons with disabilities. This framework provides governments with an opportunity to work together to improve the employment situation of people with disabilities. We will also be looking to the upcoming recommendations of the technical advisory committee on tax measures for persons with disabilities for ideas on how best to proceed in the future to make the biggest difference for persons with disabilities.

We recognize that vibrant and inclusive communities are central to the social well-being and social development of Canadians. We know we work better when we capitalize on the contributions of all Canadians who are doing their part to build a better Canada; on our partners in the provinces, territories, and communities, including the private and voluntary sectors; and on the average citizen as well.

The Government of Canada is determined to help foster the social economy, the numerous not-for-profit activities, and enterprises that harness civic and entrepreneurial energies for community benefit. Government, charitable and voluntary organizations, and foundations cannot meet every social need. We need to work with, enhance, and help to generate a wide variety of community organizations—a housing co-op, a seniors support service, or a local community economic development organization—and we need to help existing structures—banks and business and industry groups—to understand these community organizations as what they also are, small businesses, and to treat them that way and give them a better chance to provide the services we need.

As a key part of Canada's social policy tool kit, SDC will be working in partnership with other federal departments to develop a broader federal policy framework to establish the foundations for the social economy across Canada.

Madam Chair, again, to understand SDC, it is essential to know that the department works in very close contact with Canadians. Every year it deals with more than 4.6 million Canadians for direct programs and services. To do this, we need to work smarter, and we are offering innovations in service delivery to ensure that our services are responsive, citizen-centred, and accessible. For example, in order to ensure continuity of service to the public and to support the concept of one-stop service, we are sharing various service delivery mechanisms with HRSDC, such as our network of human resource centres of Canada and also our telephone and Internet services. This allows us to use our respective departmental budgets more effectively and efficiently so that we can focus our resources on the programs that matter to Canadians.

In conclusion, I would like to assure you and to assure this committee that Minister Ianno and I are working to ensure that our priorities match the priorities of Canadians, and to find more effective ways to meet their changing needs and expectations.

We are here to listen and learn, and to answer your questions about how SDC plans to make progress on its goals. I hope I can draw on our mutual commitment and willingness to work together to advance our objectives. Working together, we can strengthen Canada's social foundations, the cornerstone of our quality of life.

Thank you.

I would now like to ask the Honourable Tony Ianno, Minister of State for Families and Caregivers, to provide his comments.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister Dryden.

Minister Ianno, please.

**Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers)):** Merci, Madam Folco.

It is a privilege for me to appear as a witness before this committee. As you may know, I was a member of this committee for several years, and I have been personally and directly engaged in many of the social issues this committee has dealt with. Many of my constituency members and organizations continue to lead in much of the social field. Many of you are interested in this particular field, and I know that many in your ridings also continue to work with you to ensure that we move forward in social development.

I appear before you today with Minister Dryden representing a new department with a renewed mandate. Minister Dryden has just provided a solid overview of our department, including the government's commitment to renew and strengthen social partnerships at all levels throughout the country. While much of our department's areas of responsibility have been well established for many years, the creation of Social Development Canada provides the opportunity to improve upon our services and to be more responsive to the social needs of Canadians.

For my part, in keeping with the nature of my portfolio, I would like to reflect on the government's specific commitment to families and caregivers. By creating the portfolio of Minister of State for Families and Caregivers, the government has clearly signalled its commitment to the issues and needs of seniors and caregivers. I feel very excited and very privileged to be given the task of shaping the government's response to these vitally important components of our society.

Madam Chair, when I speak of a caregiver, I refer to someone who cares for an aging parent or a family member with a disability, or both. Caregivers are Canada's unsung heroes who need and deserve our support. Many of us know people in that situation. Unless one has been a caregiver, it is difficult to comprehend the mix of emotions that can accompany this role. On the one hand, a caregiver has a strong desire to provide love and support to a family member. On the other hand, the sheer scope of the demands can lead to emotional and physical exhaustion, financial difficulties, and increased stress at work and in the family.

Given these immense challenges, I am proud that the Government of Canada has recognized the need to increase support for caregivers and their families. The support takes several forms, addressing the needs of seniors, people with disabilities, and families that care for them. The federal government currently allocates about \$7.5 billion a year for benefits and tax measures, as well as program services, for Canadians with disabilities. This allocation includes \$50 million for approximately 40,000 low- or moderate-income families taking care of a disabled child.

As noted in the Speech from the Throne, the government will build on these previous tax measures by drawing on the upcoming recommendations of the technical advisory committee on tax measures for persons with disabilities. It will also provide tax relief to Canadians who care for those with severe disabilities.

The Speech from the Throne also made a commitment that Parliament would consult across the country on possible additional initiatives to ease the burden on caregivers. I look forward to working with this committee in respect of this commitment, as our consultation with stakeholders and citizens will be a vital first step toward determining how the federal government can best act in this regard.

I also indicated at the recent federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for social services that the federal government would be pursuing a comprehensive strategy to recognize the growing role of caregivers in our society. I expressed to our provincial and territorial colleagues at the table our government's interest in working together across levels of government to achieve the best possible approach for these dedicated Canadians. Of course, I will work with you and our federal colleagues on this strategy. I welcome all of your input and look forward to working collaboratively with you in the ensuing months.

• (1125)

With respect to the needs of seniors, I'm pleased to note that Social Development Canada is taking action on several fronts that will directly and indirectly support caregivers. Last year our government created a task force on active living and dignity for seniors, which I was pleased to lead. In May we released our report creating the national seniors agenda. It examined current programming and community-based approaches and made 17 recommendations to improve the quality of life for seniors.

Madam Chair, those recommendations were driven by two imperatives: first, moving forward now to address the needs of today's most vulnerable seniors; and second, taking the steps needed to prepare for the growing number of seniors as our population ages. The Speech from the Throne outlined the government's desire to increase the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors, addressing the needs of Canada's poor seniors now. Work is also under way across all government departments as well as with our provincial and territorial partners to find ways to leverage our collective capacity as we work together to better align seniors-related policies, programs, and services.

Our department launched the new horizons program for seniors. This will support a wide range of community-based projects across Canada to encourage active living and participation among seniors. Through the new horizons program, seniors and their community

partners can create projects that fit their unique needs. These projects may range from harnessing seniors' experience through mentorship to expanding volunteer activities for seniors and other vulnerable groups to strengthening relationships across generations. The new horizons program will receive \$8 million in this fiscal year and \$10 million a year thereafter. The program will directly help seniors who are in need and will allow seniors to help put their talents and energies to work in helping others in their communities. At the same time, it will directly ease the burden of caregivers by providing more opportunities for seniors to be active in the community.

Madam Chair, there will always be more that governments can do to support caregivers and families, but I believe this is a good start. We will continue to build on our strong social foundations to make them even more responsive to the needs of Canadians, improving their quality of life and maximizing their opportunities in this great country.

Thank you.

I would be pleased, with Minister Dryden, to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

We are open for debate.

[*Translation*]

I now give the floor to Mr. Forseth first. I remind you that you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC):** Thank you very much.

Welcome, Ministers. I appreciate the new division of the ministries.

I recently had a town hall meeting where I invited some local officials from your department, HRSD, to just come and describe benefits and to answer questions from the community. It was interesting to hear. The officials were very good. They brought a lot of literature and they brought a computer presentation. They were quite surprised at the level of sophistication of the questions on service delivery, those who fell between the cracks, and different combinations of things.

The conclusion out of that meeting was certainly the great need to communicate, to engage at the local level, to really explain what benefits are on an ongoing basis, and to find a variety of ways, not just two or three, to really engage Canadians so that they know what their rights are.

As a result of that, we found there is a constituency in Canada of seniors who have missed benefits. When later on, through one way or another, they do find out, and they do apply, and they are accepted, and they become entitled to certain benefits they haven't been getting for quite a few years, they are denied any back benefits beyond 11 months. That's the technical issue, but the response from the community was that this was inherently unfair and unjust.

I am suggesting that perhaps that's an issue you could explore with your department, to find out why this is so. There is a constituency out there of a few thousand seniors who, for one reason or another, finally qualified for benefits, after being unaware for many years that they were allowed to receive them. And when they finally did get accepted, they got back benefits for only 11 months. I heard the response from the community, and just looked at the people in the room; they felt this was really unfair.

I don't know if you're aware of that issue. Perhaps you could just respond to that.

• (1130)

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Before we respond, maybe I should invite to the table our officials: Nicole Jauvin, deputy minister of Social Development Canada; David Baxter, comptroller; and Susan Scotti, assistant deputy minister of income security programs.

**The Chair:** Welcome, Madam Jauvin, Mr. Baxter, and Ms. Scotti.

Just so you don't worry, Mr. Forseth, I stopped the clock. Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** See if you can address just that specific technical issue. We are supposed to be looking at estimates, expenditures, and so on, rather than particularly mission statements.

There is a very clear technical barrier there. The response of the community in the room at my town hall meeting was that they really appreciated the cooperativeness and the professionalism of those explaining the programs, but when they heard of this, they really felt in their hearts somehow that this was inherently unfair.

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** First of all, it does go back one year on the retroactivity, which is similar to provincial governments and how all across the country they're dealing with it.

We continue reaching out, through mailings, through outreach persons, to try to get the message out. Anytime there's one person who's left out, it's something we feel bad about. All of us, including members of Parliament, have to try to reach out to our constituents to ensure that those who are eligible do receive what they're entitled to.

We continue to send out thousands, hundreds of thousands, of information pieces. We advertise in different languages. We continue doing things on that basis. It's incumbent on all of us to try to reach out to our constituents to achieve that.

In terms of beyond the one year, I don't know how you deal with that. It's certainly something we feel bad about, but it's following what all social programs have done in the past.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** I guess what we do is that cabinet decides that it's not going to be one year anymore. You're going to calculate, perhaps, the \$1 million or the \$2 million it's going to take to respond to that constituency out there. You can imagine the ripple effect of goodwill.

I'm just saying that the community response I got was that it appeared to be unreasonably arbitrary and inherently unfair. I just think the government could decide to say it's going to be six years.

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** Thank you.

**An hon. member:** I'd like to second that motion.

**The Chair:** We don't have a motion on the floor as of now.

Mr. Forseth, you still have some more time.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** You used the phrase "strengthen social foundations" as somewhat of a mission statement. I'd like you to perhaps expand on that. What does that really mean? If we use the word "strengthen", inherently that means that perhaps we are weak in some areas, that we have work to do. Then the OECD report was mentioned, as saying we're not right on the cutting edge.

Perhaps you could explain "strengthen social foundations" a little bit more. At a practical level, what are my constituents going to see as being any different when you move forward on these various agendas and you go through the next fiscal year? What difference is it going to be to them? What new things are going to help them at the practical level?

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Minister Dryden.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** By social foundations, I was trying to express that I think as Canadians we have certain expectations of ourselves, certain expectations of what it is to live in this country, certain expectations of what rights we have and what we assume for others.

I think a lot of what Social Development Canada is, as I said earlier in my remarks, is trying to work toward as inclusive a Canada as possible. For those who are less included, or who have a harder time being included, whether it's the very young or the very old or the people with disabilities, it's to work to assist them and to give them a better chance of doing better and of living the kind of full, rich, rewarding life that we all want for ourselves and for others. That's the nature of those programs. As we talk about programs for seniors, and as you're talking about your own constituents, it is to improve those programs so that your constituents who are seniors will have a better chance at living that life. The same goes for kids under the age of six, and in early learning, and in child care systems. The same goes for people with disabilities and the various programs that are offered.

I think that's what I intended by using that phrase, strengthening the social foundations.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Am I out of time?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, yes.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Okay, very well.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Gagnon, over to you.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Good morning, Messrs. Dryden and Ianno. I'm pleased to see you here today. I'll be able to inform you of our disagreement with the creation of this new department.

We think it amounts to throwing money around on virtually all business lines and social sectors for some organizations in the Quebec City region and in Quebec as a whole. We think management should be fairer within your own administration. It's not at all effective.

We've raised the problem of income security. It's not just an advertising problem; it's also a problem of forms. You have to be able to reach a clientele. You want to extend your tentacles virtually everywhere and throw around money indiscriminately. We're talking about \$5 billion over five years for day care. In Quebec, it costs \$1.7 million to support the day care program. It can therefore be said that, for Canada as a whole, that's peanuts. Some observers who analyze day care needs tell us that \$10 billion would be needed in 10 years.

Coming back to the question of fiscal imbalance, we know that the Government of Quebec, including all parties, has not signed the Framework Agreement on Social Union. We're therefore not about to see the light at the end of the tunnel. A little earlier, a Conservative colleague referred to income security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement. He suggested that retroactivity be granted to people who are entitled to it and to those who were not entitled. I know that an effort has been to achieve up to 11 months, but we've already gone backwards for some businesses with regard to corporate taxation. Why wouldn't the most vulnerable clienteles be entitled to retroactivity? You're looking for ways to better help people who have trouble making ends meet. This is one way.

There's also the non-refundable tax credit, which could be aimed at families with dependent children 18 years of age and under. There could be a non-refundable credit. These are ways to help families that would not necessarily require structures costing large amounts of money to monitor all the programs you want to put in place. Can you shed a little light on these two ideas?

• (1140)

[English]

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** Christiane, with the seniors, as you know, we continue reaching out. As I indicated earlier, the issue is not trying to ensure that anyone who is eligible doesn't receive it. We're going out of our way to try to make sure that happens.

In terms of the guaranteed income supplement, as you know, we're working toward an increase that will help 1.5 million Canadians in that process. We hope we get lucky in the budget and that it will go forward to the amount that was stated in the election platform. We're continually working toward that, because we believe...on one of the questions Mr. Forseth was asking Mr. Dryden, the way I see social development, it's the heart of the government. What we try to do is ensure that people have the tools; that people live with dignity; and that we ensure that all the people we referred to—whether it's those with a disability, the caregivers, the seniors, all the people who are vulnerable in our society—have the tools and enough money to live a quality of life that we all want for all Canadians, regardless of where they live.

We are working toward that, and we continue working, with your help, in terms of ensuring that if, because of tax purposes... One year, one may not receive GIS, and the next year one may, due to circumstances, depending on their financial situation. So things do change. There's a flux in the system for those who may have received income, whether it's from their RRSPs or other sources, and then all of a sudden it stops. Once that stops, they may not realize they are eligible, and then they don't apply. What we are trying to do is ensure that all Canadians receiving old age security do understand

that they should apply if something changes in their circumstances. With that, we'll continue working to ensure that they have the quality of life we all want for them.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Gagnon, can you continue?

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** I'm going to hand over to Mr. Lessard.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lessard, over to you.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** I'd like to come back to the question of the Guaranteed Income Supplement of which Ms. Gagnon spoke. I'd like to go a little further. Each of you are heads of a department whose primary purpose concerns the entire human aspect, empathy for the most disadvantaged people in society, the worst off. I can see from the minister's remarks that his real wish is to increase this support for individuals. I think you have a real desire. However, we find it hard to see the actions you want to take to achieve it.

With regard to the Guaranteed Income Supplement, since that program was put in place, \$3.2 billion has not been claimed by seniors who were entitled to it. You invoke the act. I understand why the act can be invoked in certain circumstances, in regulatory terms, but, as Ms. Gagnon said earlier, it happens that the government amends the act in order to adjust programs.

In this case, have you considered the possibility of adjusting the act to give entitled seniors the same chance as is given to businesses, for example, which enjoy retroactivity back to 1995? Shouldn't the same thing be done for seniors? If not, why shouldn't the same rule be applied to seniors?

**The Chair:** There's not a lot of time left for the minister to answer. So, unfortunately, I'd ask you to give a brief answer to Mr. Lessard's question.

[English]

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** First of all, if you take into account a similar situation in Quebec, especially when the PQ were the government, of course, being socially understanding, their retroactivity was not longer than twelve months in any of their social programs. That concept unfortunately is followed across Canada by provinces and the federal government on that issue.

In terms of the amount of money that is being requested for the GIS increase, it is a substantial amount. If you take into account where you would place a dollar if you had it, I think I'd like to see the majority of seniors who are at the low-income level and living with difficulty have an increase so that they can have a better quality of life. Perhaps that would be better than putting it toward retroactivity, other than the twelve-month period we're dealing with.

So if it's a choice factor, I think I'd rather deal with the people who are suffering right now on a large scale.

• (1145)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

I will now go to Mr. Tony Martin.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Thank you very much, and good morning to both of you.



I just want to say right off the bat that I appreciated your comment about being here to listen and to learn. I want to give you kudos for having done that over the last few months.

Minister Dryden, I think you've been off the mark, particularly on child care, and we've had lots of conversations. Last weekend, when you came to Winnipeg and spoke to the 650 people who gathered there from across the country, you not only shared with them your thoughts on this subject, you stayed for the next morning and actually stayed and listened to a speech I gave, which was in some instances quite challenging, I'm sure. I just want to say how much I appreciate that, and I hope that in this milieu you will not only be a goalie but will get out and score a few goals once in a while too.

There are some issues on a number of fronts. I'm not going to go down the questioning on seniors. It has been covered by my colleagues here, Forseth and Gagnon and Lessard, so I don't need to do that. I share their concern in looking for answers on that.

On the child care front first—and I do want to ask you about child poverty as well—given what's happened on the senior front, where agreements with provinces, once cast, become very rigid, you're entering into discussions with provinces now on a very important new program for some of our most at risk and vulnerable families in some instances. You know from that conference last week that there are still issues that are debated. There are strong positions held on things on which you've still not given us a clear indication as to where you're going to end up and how you're going to play your cards in terms of your discussions with the provinces.

I'm just asking about your position on legislation, your position on the issue of the not-for-profit hospice, your position on the principle of universality, which you and the ministers chose to change somewhat in those discussions, and the whole question of sustainability. Will the provinces, at the end of the day, be left holding the bag after the first five years, or are you making a commitment to the significant money that has been identified and will be necessary if we're going to truly have a national child care program?

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Thank you.

As we've talked about a lot, and as I've talked about a lot with others, our challenge is to create a national early learning and child care system. The question for all of us is, how best can we do that? What are the best routes to take, and what are those that are most likely going to generate the result?

As we know, we haven't gotten there. About 22 years ago there was a similar conference in Winnipeg, probably with similar kinds of expectations and hopes, and 22 years later a lot has changed, but most has not changed. The biggest things have not changed.

Part of the question is, why not? With all of those 650 people who were in the room, a lot of whom have been involved in child care for a very long time, who really know their stuff, who are great believers, great advocates, who have done a lot of very interesting things in the area of child care and have advanced child care in a lot of those ways, we still haven't gotten very close to a system. Why not? Why haven't we done better? What all of us don't want to have happen is that in 2026, back in Winnipeg 22 years later, we are going to have another group of 650, a few of whom were in that room a

couple of weeks ago, with everybody hopeful, angry, frustrated, and all the rest, but not getting there, not there.

All of those things you brought up are very good, very central questions. The question is how best to answer all of those. Given where we are, given who we need to work with, given how systems get created, how can we best get from here to there, knowing that the "there" has been very elusive, and frustratingly, annoyingly, disturbingly elusive?

All I would say in terms of legislation is that these are things that are part of our own discussions and part of everybody else's discussions, and they will continue to be up to the point when we're in those meetings. Again, I want to emphasize that this isn't just us in this; this is everybody. This is the federal government, this is the provinces, this is the territories. We have to find collective agreement to get to that destination point. Again, how best do we get there?

What I would say is that for the most part I think people are looking to legislation as an insurance policy about the getting there. Legislation is not an insurance policy if that public mood isn't what it needs to be. That's the first part.

Second, we haven't not talked about legislation. The question is when, and knowing and reminding, as we've talked about before, that the education system didn't begin with legislation and that health care didn't begin with legislation. In both instances, legislation came later. Because it came later, people also had a much better idea of what the right ambitions for that system might be. If they were to have defined in legislation early on, they would have defined something a lot simpler, a lot less ambitious.

In terms of the not-for-profit, again it's the same question of knowing the reality of where we are now. Of course, in terms of the for-profit now, the great, great majority of the for-profit are hardly people who are profiting. It's individuals in home care who...well, you know the rest. So it's part of the ongoing discussion and debate, all in the context of how we can get to that system at the end, knowing we have been blocked. It hasn't gotten there for all of those years.

Universality—

• (1150)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to cut you off, Minister.

Maybe you will get a chance to come back on some of the other things.

Madame Bakopanos.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the ministers for being here.

I will actually pick up on what Mr. Martin said, but through a different lens. Because we are discussing the estimates, in the SDC's report on plans and priorities for 2004 and 2005, we talk a lot about the early childhood development agreements and the multilateral framework on early learning and child care. We talk about, as you mentioned, Minister, \$500 million per year that was transferred under the ECD agreement and \$1.5 billion over five years to support provincial and territorial governments investing already in early learning and child care.

I'd like to know what measures have been put in place for reporting back to the government by the provinces and territories on where they are exactly in terms of this multilateral framework. Has there been progress? Has there been improvement in terms of access to affordable quality care early learning? We know in Quebec there has been. But has there been in the other provinces? That's my first question.

**The Chair:** Do you have other questions, Madam Bakopanos, on this? It might be wise, perhaps, if you want to—

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** I have a question for Mr. Ianno after on disability.

**The Chair:** I'm asking Mr. Dryden to give a fairly short answer.

Go ahead, please.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Do we not have seven minutes, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, you do, but I just want to make sure you have a chance to get your second question in.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** As you know, under the multilateral framework, all the signatory governments—that's all the provinces and territories—are committed to report annually on their early learning and child care programs. We, as the federal government, work with them to help them resolve issues so that they can meet their commitments. All the governments under the framework have also committed to improve this reporting over time. With the investments we've proposed in early learning and child care, we expect that this will become more and more important over time.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** I don't know if anyone wants to elaborate. It was mentioned in plans and priorities that the type of information has to be strengthened. There has to be more information available. Are we taking steps in the department to assure that more information on where we are is provided, not necessarily to the federal government but to the citizens of each of those provinces?

The reason I bring this up is if we are going to negotiations also on the child care, is there discussion around the table on how we will in fact be strengthening the type of reporting mechanisms that will be available in order to assure that there is some standard, even though we know that a national program is your goal, to assure that the minimum amount of standards are met by the different provinces? We know that certain ones are ahead, such as my province, Quebec, while others perhaps will take more time. But I think it goes along the lines of what you have said as your plans and priorities for the negotiations around the table.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** As we are planning for our next conversations and our next meetings, that's very much in mind. And it's very much in mind for present reasons and for future reasons. For present reasons, we—every citizen—wants to know how the money is spent and how well it is spent. That's the present reason. The future reason is that if this is going to become a system, it is going to get there over time. Over time requires ongoing commitments. Part of ongoing commitments is in part a public expectation and a public ambition for greater commitments, and in part it's also that the public feels confident that the money that is being spent is being spent well. So the type of reporting we are looking for now is for that current reason, but it is also something that everybody needs to keep in mind if in fact we're going to get to where we want to go.

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** If I can just say something on that, from the \$500 million-plus a year that's being spent on that for early childhood learning, we did speak with the provincial ministers at the time indicating that sometimes, unfortunately, many of our constituents, where these centres exist, don't know that it's federal government money. Unfortunately, even people who consider themselves knowledgeable in the field of child care often are so out of it that they haven't a clue that the federal government spends already, aside from the billion dollars a year for five years or \$5 billion, all of this amount that's actually doing appreciably good work in our communities. I think the provincial ministers we spoke with indicated that they also understand they have a responsibility, aside from reporting, to communicate the message that they are in effect in partnership with the federal government, since it is our money, and to ensure that Canadians understand the quality that's being delivered.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** I want to talk about the Canada Pension Plan disability program because it was mentioned by the two ministers. I want to know after Bill C-30, which was after the recommendation of this committee, in fact, whether there have been measures taken in terms of assuring that all the participating provinces have approved the changes and whether steps are being taken by the provinces to see fit that everyone who is entitled to this does have it. I think it's a question that was mentioned by my colleague, Mr. Forseth, but I'd like to give more opportunity to the ministers to say more.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** At this stage the five provinces have signed orders in council approving the change. We are working with the remaining provinces to get their approval, and our hope is to get this in place as soon as possible.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Devolin, we're now into the second phase, and I'm giving you five minutes for the question and the answer.

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Thank you, and also thank you to the ministers for being here today. We had an opportunity to discuss some of these issues last week. I can think of all these great hockey analogies I've been thinking of as I was sitting here. It almost looks like a nice surface with Minister Dryden in his usual station at the end of the ice.

I want to ask a question about the national child care early learning program. I know this is looking in the future rather than at estimates. You said a couple of times today that we're at a launch point, and when asked specific questions, you're saying we don't have the answers to that; we're working through it. I think there's also recognition of the importance of the launch in terms of which direction this thing gets launched in.

The question I have really has to do with the role that parents are going to play in this system and what options are going to be available to parents for looking after small children. You've recognized the reality that many families are two-income families where both parents work. While for some professionals that may be by choice, for many other Canadians that's by necessity. They simply need the dollars to make the household run. I also know many young families who would like very much, if they could afford it, to actually have one of the two parents stay home with their children. There's a concern that if a new public sector program is launched around looking after small children, it will inevitably discriminate against stay-at-home parents because as taxpayers they'll be paying for a program they can send their children to, but if they stay at home with children they won't receive any benefit for doing that. I want to ask you—I'm sure this has been brought up before—what ideas or provisions you would like to see in this program that would ensure that parents of young children who choose to stay home with their kids are able to do that and either directly receive some benefit or they are not financially discriminated against.

• (1200)

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** First of all, as we talked about the last time, an early learning and child care system is an additional instrument, an additional way of helping parents and kids grow up together and develop. That's what it is there for. Clearly, the parents have the central responsibility for their children. They're making the decisions about what they believe is best for their kids. The question is, what choices do they make in all dimensions in terms of their child's life?

One of those dimensions is a child care system, and we hope it will be better and bigger and in an improved way. It is there as that instrument and for parents to make their decision. Really, I think the question you're asking is how it will be used. As we talked about, probably the great majority of parents will avail themselves of child care, as they do now, and we hope they will avail themselves of better child care.

What will probably also happen, as is happening now to some extent, is that parents will do it in different ways—say, for a day a week, or sometimes it will be five days a week or one afternoon a week. There will be different ways in which they will be making their choice as to what they think is best for their kid. It's not an all-or-nothing kind of exercise in that way. I think a lot of parents who are stay-at-home parents also would find some significant benefit in the possibility and opportunity of it not being an all-or-nothing kind

of exercise, where their children can be involved in early learning and child care for a portion of the week.

The way in which it is conceived is the way in which the education system is conceived, where the parent in fact has a chance to home-school their child who is eight years old or twelve years old, just as they would if they were two years old or three years old, and in the same sort of way.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** But it confirms my concern, and that is that the model is public education. As you said, if you have an eight- or ten-year-old child, they can send them to public education, which is paid for through the tax system that they contribute to, or they can choose to do something else, in which case they pay for that out of their own pocket.

My concern is that I believe many parents with very small children.... I think there is a difference between kids under five years old and kids over five years old. Not only are they learning facts and figures, they are also observing values and beliefs. A lot of parents, while they're comfortable sending their eight- or ten-year-old kid off to school five days a week, are not as comfortable sending their two- or three-year-old off to some public institution, because either they are concerned that they don't share the values that are going to be presented in that place or they'd like the opportunity to stay home with them.

I'm saying that from personal experience. I was a small business person before I entered politics. My wife and I made a decision that she wanted to stay home with the kids when they were young, and that was a financial sacrifice for our family.

My point is that if you use the public school model, you'll invariably financially discriminate against those people, because there will be no incentive for them to make that sacrifice and that decision to stay home.

So I have a question in terms of whether or not there will be any incentives or recognition that this is the reality that parents face. Would you actually make it easier for some of those parents to actually make that decision to stay home with their own children?

• (1205)

**The Chair:** A very short answer.

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** I think you're dealing with several issues. As you know, the maternity one-year leave addresses part of that equation. A progressive tax system also deals with some of those issues where there's a double income with more in and less that they get to keep because of the tax system. I think those are issues that address that somewhat.

When you're dealing with the choice factor on values, whether it's the three-year-old or eight-year-old, you have the same issue to deal with. We're trying to address people who don't have that particular concern but want to find ways in which they can continue supplying for their families. With the provinces and other stakeholders, how do we find a way to make spaces available so that they are not without choice? That's the issue. When we really try to address some of your concerns, it becomes a little bit more difficult to deal with from that perspective.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur D'Amours.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the two ministers for being here today. It's greatly appreciated. As you mentioned, the role you play in the department is really the basis for advancing our society.

I'm going to come back to early childhood development and the day care system for young children. I don't yet have any children, but I will in the relatively near future.

**The Chair:** We hope you will soon.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** It's planned for March, Madam Chair. We did our duty before entering the House.

As you mentioned, and as has been emphasized on other occasions, both parents work these days for various social and economic reasons. There are also a lot of single-parent families. So people constantly have to adapt and look to the future. What might have happened in the past is one thing, but the future is very important. The vision of the future that you present with regard to early childhood development and day care service for young children is extremely important.

In the more urban areas, there are often more instruments for early childhood development. In the rural areas, however, those instruments are sometimes more limited, and it's a little more difficult to make progress at the same rate. I'd like to know your opinions on the importance of the early childhood and day care development program for the regions of the country.

[*English*]

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** It's a very good question. Again it goes back to when I was speaking with Mr. Martin. What is the system? What is a national system? A national system is something that is there and works in big cities and small towns.

As you said, what might be available today in that smaller town may be less than what is available in the bigger city. So the question is, how do you deal with that? How do you work with that? Because in fact you do need to work with that. It's not good enough to say, well, these quad principles need to be of such a level that in fact if some people can't deliver on it, tough, it doesn't work. That's not right. That's not the way a system is or should be.

It's very much something that anybody would bring up, and certainly part of the discussions with the provinces is flexibility. How do you allow for the kind of flexibility that works, knowing

that the word "flexibility" can often end up sounding like a euphemism for anything goes? We're not interested in anything goes, but we are interested in flexibility.

I think, one, you agree to the principles, and two, it has to be all within the understanding that we need to provide for those kids in those places too, because there are kids in those places too. Challenge those in those places to do the best they can while knowing that, as we talked about before, where systems grow, when expectations rise, ambitions start to rise, and what seemed impossible starts to be something you want, and you're looking to push for yourself and the rest. Just as with the one-room schoolhouse in the smaller place many years ago, that one-room schoolhouse in the smaller town isn't a one-room schoolhouse any longer. So what is provided tomorrow will be that much better the day after tomorrow, but we have to have that constructive flexibility to allow for the rural areas to deliver the best they can.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Lessard, go ahead.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have five minutes, I believe.

**The Chair:** Yes, take five minutes. I believe we can afford that.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** I'll try to be brief, in order to allow more time for the answer, since I think it will be a developmental answer. My question concerns the relevance of a second department compared to what there was. You know our position on this point.

I'm nevertheless open to trying to understand the relevance of this new department so that I can ensure that my position is correct. Our concern, of course, is to defend the people we represent as best we can.

It seems to me the department retains the same physical as regards its body because it maintains a single window for services as such. It retains the same funding envelope for services since there are no additional costs, as the minister said. As to intentions, as opposed to policies as such, there is virtually no change in the intention to be compassionate, since we understood the answer of the Minister of State earlier. I would like to understand how this will improve services and be more relevant to people's needs. The Department of Social Development represents a whole social purpose. How will it be more effective? I've tried from the outset to understand how that will be put into practice, but I still don't understand.

[English]

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** What it will achieve...what it does is it offers its own focus. It offers its own priorities. One of the challenges of the old HRDC was its very size and also the variety of programs and emphases that were part of that department. The problem when you get a department of that size and with a number of different focuses is the next kind of program or focus that comes along can seem as if it can fit as well and you end up with.... The question is one of coherence. Departments work best when they have a real coherence to them, when they have a real set of understandings that are clear internally and clear externally and both end up supporting the other. The clearer you are internally, the more clear you can be externally, and the more clear you are externally, the more the message comes back internally.

When you have that focus on social development, on all of those measures and standards of the quality of life that we are looking for as Canadians, to have them under one mandate is a useful thing to do. It focuses the thinking and it makes more effective what it is that we do.

•(1215)

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** If I can just add to that, Madam Chair, if I can just take on what Mr. Dryden was addressing, if you take into account even within social development me dealing with seniors and caregivers, it allows a minister to work with a department to give more focus to the issues for which he or she is responsible. So when you have HRDC, the old one that had so many perspectives within, taking the social development side on one side and the skills development on the other side allows us now to get more focus from within, and it also allows each of us to spend a little bit more time on certain aspects of the department, which allows more focus. Hopefully we act as catalysts to move the agenda forward to ensure that in the end, with social development, which is extremely important to Canadians, we try to find creative ways to ensure that Canadians are better served.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

You still have some time if you wish.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** I'd just like to clarify one point, Madam Chair.

I understand your intention, and I believe you're sincere, but we're trying to make the service as such more efficient and effective. Correct me if I'm wrong, but, based on your explanation, it's as though we were preserving the same entity as a whole with the same funding envelope, the same hands to provide services at the same window and the same policies, but we're adding a head to the body. So we're not adding to the body of the service, we're adding a head to its management. It seems to me that could become dysfunctional and complicate things instead of simplifying them. I don't know whether I'm being clear.

[English]

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** I understand the analogy you're making, but I think it works the other way. I think when you have that much larger of a body, it can be that much harder to focus, orient, and the rest of it. The big challenge here has been whether the substance drives the practical question or the practical question drives the other. What we've been able to do is have the practical question not turn out

poorly. Usually when you have a split, you're going to have much higher costs. The costs haven't increased, so the practical problem hasn't been there. The substantive problem, I think, has been enhanced by the ability of both departments to focus more properly really where they are.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Silva, please.

[English]

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I have two questions for the ministers. If they could answer within the time allocated that would be great; if not, then we'll have—

•(1220)

**The Chair:** I know we have some time left.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Okay, great.

One of them is on the CPP and the sustainability of CPP. Given the fact that we know that the aging population is going to double in the next 20 years, what assurances are there that it will be there in fact for years to come?

The second one has to do with the whole issue of child care. I know the minister has been meeting with his counterparts in the provinces, and I know some of them have signed on and others are reluctant. I guess we want certainly assurances that the meetings are going well, but also that the provinces are going to put the moneys in those child care spaces. We've gotten into too many programs with the provinces where in fact the moneys did not go in the right place. We know what happened just with the GST rebate to some of the cities. In fact, some of the cities used it to cut their taxes. So we want to make sure there are going to be some agreements from the provinces that in fact the money is going to be used where it's needed.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Minister Dryden.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** In terms of the sustainability of the pension, as you know, the changes that were made in 1997 were designed to directly address the long-term sustainability through fuller funding, increased contribution rates, new investment strategy, and the adoption of benefit changes. By law, the CPP is reviewed by the chief actuary every three years. These reviews and the last review attest to the ability of the plan to meet its obligations through to 2075.

I realize the sensitivity in that way. I think it's almost counter-intuitive, and it's something we have been hearing a lot about in terms of pensions in other countries and here, and private pensions and all the rest. But in fact the work that has been done has met that, and that's even after taking into account unforeseen economic and demographic changes. Really, where the pension system is now in this country is that it's recognized as one of the best in the world.

In terms of accountabilities, as I was saying earlier, we have to keep working on that and pushing on that. In terms of getting agreements, one of the things we talked about before is the multilateral framework on early learning and child care and how the governments report annually on their expenditures and activities, what improvements have been made in the areas of affordability, availability, and cost. All of the jurisdictions released their reports in 2001 and 2002 and all but one for 2002-03.

It will be an area of real priority for us as we formulate our plans going into our next set of conversations and negotiations, and again pursuing it on the basis that the greater the accountabilities we have in place, the greater the public confidence there will be in the system and in the way in which the moneys are being spent, and the greater possibilities of future investments down the line in order for the system to grow to what it needs to be. That will be very much part of the messages that are delivered.

**The Chair:** Do you wish to ask another question, Mr. Silva?

**Mr. Mario Silva:** No, that's fine, thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Tony Martin.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Briefly in response to your answer on child care, yes, it was 20 years ago that the first conference was held. A lot of the same people are back. I'm very excited and energetic in anticipation of now finally getting a program.

There's been a lot of water under the bridge. They've learned a lot. A lot of research has been done to reinforce their demand that the principles be recognized and honoured, and that legislation on not-for-profit should be the way we go. We've heard the questions from Mr. Silva and Ms. Bakopanos about how to guarantee the provinces are actually going to spend the money where they're supposed to. When I was on my national tour, we heard that some provinces are spending it, some provinces are spending it on other things, and some provinces are replacing the money they were spending with the money they're getting from the federal government. We need to guarantee that any money that flows, new money particularly, is spent on child care. I think that's important.

I was a little concerned with your comment about the system evolving over time. Folks at that conference were saying we're into overtime. Somebody said that without these principles and positions on legislation and not-for-profit, this program becomes all hat and no underwear.

Anyway, just to set the context for the question I want to ask you, we have a situation now in the country where we have a \$9.1 billion surplus. We also have an EI surplus of \$44 billion, on its way to \$47 billion, of which you have some control. We had a report yesterday suggesting that for the first time in six years, child poverty has actually increased in the country. The National Council of Welfare reported last week that among the working poor, there were 240,000 Canadian families with two working parents living below the poverty line, 60% of them poor single moms and 128,000 reporting earnings that couldn't lift them above the poverty line.

The strategy to move poor people on assistance over into work situations isn't working in terms of relieving poverty; it's just moving people from one type of poverty into another type of poverty, which

brings me to my question. One of the strategies under the national child tax benefit and the supplement was in fact to do that. It's not working, and you've left literally thousands of our most vulnerable and marginalized families without the average of \$100 per month per child to spend on food and clothing and the things those people desperately need.

Is there any thought or are you looking at this whole question of the clawback of that supplement by the provinces? If you want to do something quickly and immediately to relieve some of the poverty out there for some of our most at risk and vulnerable families, this is one way you could do it.

• (1225)

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Part of what I would argue with you about, as I do about child care, is the context. It's not the end result and it's not the goals; it's putting the approaches into a context.

Again, going back to the comments on the child care conference, there were 650 people there and there were lots of comments made. Individual comments by you or by others are individual comments by you or by others. Again, the context is 22 years of not much happening. How do we do better? That's the key. It's one thing to deliver the same kind of message but louder or more insistently or more frequently, but it's another to get to the end result, so the context is important.

It's the same in terms of child poverty. You know as well as anyone here how challenging and how important the efforts need to be in it all. The only little bit of context that I would add to it is that to some extent the national child benefit has had some benefit, because child poverty numbers have gone down in the last number of years, as you've said. The question is, are we stalled with that? Is the kind of impact we can have with it something that reaches certain numbers but doesn't reach others? Given the report that will be released tomorrow—and you seem to know what the numbers are and we don't—if the message is that we haven't improved as we had in the previous six years, then that's a very good question.

As you know, part of the intended answer for it does have to do with the child care system. In doing better in that direction, that will have some impact. But we clearly have to keep asking that question, because the answer we are getting, even as it is better than it was, is that it's not good enough.

•(1230)

**Mr. Tony Martin:** I just want to clarify that. I didn't say that government stats in child poverty or poverty.... There are people out there—and I agree with them—who are quite concerned that we separate child poverty from family poverty, because it's family poverty that we're talking about here.

On the statistics, I was under the impression that the report came out yesterday indicating some of the figures I was sharing with you. We'll see. But the statistics are indicating that for the first time in six years we've had an increase in child poverty in the country.

If you wanted to score a big goal for the most marginalized and at risk of our families, you could do it with this one simple act of talking to your colleagues. You're developing a good relationship with them. You had a good meeting a couple of weeks ago on child care. Ask them to stop plowing back the supplement from those families that are most at risk and most marginalized, because that would give them a hundred dollars per child per month on average to spend on food and clothing and the other things they need.

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** As you know, Mr. Martin, we work in cooperation with the provinces in our circumstance, and your neighbour next door would not like us to tell them anything. We try to work cooperatively by supplying the \$8 billion on child tax benefit numbers and \$2.4 billion in national child benefit. That allows the provinces to perhaps use some of that money—not that money specifically, but money they were putting in—taking into account the social assistance issues, and deal with that money in other programs that help their citizens have better delivery of comprehensive approaches.

So we continue working with them to alleviate poverty. With that, we're also working with the provinces on affordable housing; the homeless; and those with disabilities, in terms of additional moneys for the disabilities I mentioned earlier. Of course, as you know, in the last 10 or 11 years this government has been in office, over three million more Canadians today are working compared to 10 years ago. So that supplies families with the opportunities. And many of the jobs are well-paying jobs.

We take into account another factor. We have a great immigration policy, with 250,000, or thereabouts, new immigrants every year, with children. So on a continual basis we're replenishing sometimes those who are either conventional refugees or others who come into this country as we open up our arms. We try to give them as much as possible to get out of those circumstances, but they're also better off here than where they may have come from.

We certainly have a long way to go in working cooperatively with all provinces and municipalities to ensure that all Canadians get all the tools they need to have better lives, so we can eradicate poverty to the best of our ability.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

I also have a question.

[*Translation*]

As you know, we're studying Bill C-5, which concerns the Canada Learning Bond. We've heard a number of witnesses on the subject. According to what one of them told us, the children of families

which, although eligible for the Canada child tax benefit, do not receive it will not be eligible for the Canada Learning Bond.

My first question, which is related to that, is this: have you conducted a study and do you have any figures on the subject? Do you know how many people there are who, although eligible for the benefit, have not received it and, consequently, will not be entitled to the learning bond?

My second question concerns the Income Security Program, more particularly the Guaranteed Income Supplement. In the case of the learning bond, reference was made earlier to 11-month retroactivity. I was wondering whether the fact that the learning bond was virtually retroactive, in the sense that a student who does not request the money at the age of 18 can obtain it later, could have an impact on the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

•(1235)

[*English*]

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** This is a question that really should be asked of the Ministers of Revenue or of HRSDC, because SDC doesn't administer the CTB or the learning bond.

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** On retroactivity, Madam Folco, it's more future because they are delaying using it, compared to going backwards because they didn't receive it. So it's more using it for the future.

**The Chair:** So you don't see it having any consequences at all on the 11-month retroactivity period.

Thank you.

Mr. Van Loan.

**Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC):** I will be calling on Mr. Devolin to keep asking questions.

**The Chair:** Mr. Devolin.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** Thank you. I get double-shifted.

I have a question on a different subject. Sorry, I can't resist.

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** You used to play hockey, right?

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** I was a Habs fan in rural Ontario and was much hated in my school because of that. Peter grew up as a Leafs fan. I had a picture of the Habs on my wall as a kid.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Sometimes it's worth being hated.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** Yes. I get to celebrate every year.

My question—

**The Chair:** Mr. Devolin, if I may cut you off for just a second, this is going to be a three-minute round. Go ahead.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** As a new MP, I'm learning about many different cases in my riding, including one family who has an autistic child. I'm trying to learn more about this and where they can go for help. Just this week, of course, it was in the news in terms of a court ruling.

For families who are dealing with autism, some say it's a health issue, others say it's an education issue. I think you could easily argue that it's a social development or social issue. Are there any discussions taking place? Is the government going to harness this ping-pong ball, give it a home, and help these families?

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** I think it does have a home and it is in health. The only part of its home that resides with us is in terms of the voluntary organizations. I think we at least partially fund the Autism Society Canada. Other than that, its home is in health.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Devolin.

Madam Bakopanos.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to make sure there are Canadians who are listening to us who know that social development also administers the SIN program, the social insurance number. The reason I raise this issue is because often, as a member of Parliament, citizens come to me and raise the issue of how somebody could have two or three SINs and be working under three different numbers. I'm not sure if you'll be able to answer that question in under three minutes.

The other issue raised was there was a recent theft about a year and a half ago of computers in Laval—where Madam Chair is from—and certain measures were put in place to ensure that the integrity of the SIN was protected.

Would the minister like to tell us a little bit more about measures we've taken to ensure that the theft of information doesn't happen again and that there are no people in Canada who have two, three, four, or sometimes ten different SINs? I know the numbers are very low, and I think it's important to say that publicly. But I think there were measures taken by the department to ensure the integrity of the system.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** There was the original action plan to ensure the integrity of the social insurance registry and the issuance of SIN cards. We're going beyond that. We believe progress has been made in strengthening that process.

For example, the proof of identity policies have been updated. A new policy to administer the 900-series SIN for temporary residents has been implemented. Cards are being deactivated when they're not renewed. There's also been some progress in improving the integrity of the social insurance registry itself.

Agreements are being discussed with the provinces and territories to provide client updates to the registry, making it the common link to accurately identify people for government services. In 2004-05, efforts will focus on concurrent registration of the SIN at birth, validating information to issue SIN cards, and accessing death information. But it's an ongoing challenge.

• (1240)

**The Chair:** Minister Ianno.

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** I was sitting on this committee last year when we were dealing with the SIN, which has to do with more...as Minister Dryden indicated. But I'll just continue emphasizing, as we did when I was asking questions there, that people don't have to give up their SIN unless it is for government-related issues, or if it's a bank in particular—and I don't even know that's a rule for sure. It's

important that Canadians don't give out their SIN, even when they're asked for it, because it is private. We don't want it to be utilized for applications for frivolous things.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Do I still have time, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, you do, Madam Bakopanos.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** I also want to ask a question about some pilot projects that the ministry has undertaken in the understanding the early years initiative. I understand they are very successful pilot projects. They deal with the development of children. They allow communities to bring forth programs that are community-led and driven. I think it is very important that citizens have active responsibility. We're planning, I understand, to expand this initiative to 100 other communities and provide over \$68 million over seven years.

So just to reiterate my first point, the federal government has been investing in early childhood development and child care, even though we haven't had a national program.

We've been looking at vulnerable communities, for example, the aboriginal communities. Is that what we are going to be stressing in terms of the 100 new communities? For instance, my colleague raised the issue of rural Canada. Are we targeting specifically those communities at risk through these pilot projects?

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** There will be 100 more communities, and the way in which they'll be established is really through a competitive call for proposals. You mentioned aboriginal programs. That will be a separate component of the national early learning and child care system, irrespective of what you're speaking of here.

As you mentioned, there are 12 pilot projects now, and the first five are being evaluated. The final evaluations will come out at the end of March. Preliminary results suggest they are working well enough that we want to expand it to the other 100 communities.

**Hon. Tony Ianno:** If I can just comment on that, I'll give you a little public relations for my riding. On the one that's working in our riding, they have 90 children who drop in with the parents. There's an active board, and it's the Montrose community group. It's on Shaw Street. They do wonderful work, and it takes into account several of the not-for-profit organizations in the constituency. They all participate in it and continue feeding into it. It's such a great model that I'm sure people at large, once they learn about it, will want it in their constituencies. It is great work with great skilled educators, and people feel they're part of the community with that service.



I just want people to know it's working extremely well and the money is well spent. That's just from an MP's perspective.

**The Chair:** Thank you, and thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lessard, you'll be the last person to ask a question. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Mr. Minister, in the summary of the votes of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, there was a budget heading entitled "Communities and community organizations" under the heading "Communities". But that doesn't appear in your ministry summary for Social Development Canada. Are we to understand that it's the same portfolio and that we should refer to the Department of Human Resources regarding those votes?

• (1245)

**Ms. Nicole Jauvin (Deputy Minister, Social Development Canada, Department of Social Development):** No. Our department is responsible for the communities. I don't know to what the Human Resources Department document you're referring to corresponds. I imagine it concerns one program in particular. Our own resources are limited to what's entered in our expenditure plan.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** With your permission, I'd like to clarify my question. Today, at the start of his remarks, the minister forcefully emphasized his ties and partnerships with the communities. I expected to find a budget showing the support that would be provided for those partnerships. It appears that may be found in the Human Resources Department portfolio, not in this one. So I would like to know, if there are any resources for that purpose, where they appear.

**Ms. Nicole Jauvin:** On page 22 of the English version—and if you want, I'll quickly check the French page number—we talk about the department's efforts with regard to the communities. We're talking about expenditures in the order of \$42 million for next year.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** If I understand correctly, the fact that that doesn't appear in the summary implies that it's included in a large budget item. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Allow me to thank Ministers Dryden and Ianno on your behalf. Thank you very much for coming. We greatly appreciated your presentations and the answers from the department's officials. This part of the meeting is now over.

I would simply like to remind colleagues that we will begin clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-5 on Thursday, in two days.

[*English*]

I did ask last time for texts from the different parties on the amendments you would like to put forward. It would benefit all members of the committee if the clerk of the committee could receive your amendments at least 48 hours prior to the start of our clause-by-clause, which means today.

We'll be starting the study on Thursday. Marie Beauchemin, the House legislative drafter, is going to prepare the amendments, but she needs to have them a little in advance so she can do the work. I would ask for your collaboration on this. Please let the clerk have your amendments today, if at all possible.

Thank you very much. Once again, thank you to the ministers.

This meeting is adjourned.

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