

Child Care

Oral Questions

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Michael Savage Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NS

Mr. Speaker, after five years of Conservative government, Canada ranks last among OECD nations in the provision of early learning. It disbanded a national system and promised new child care spaces, but failed miserably. Now, this very week, the **human resources minister** has her lawyers appearing at an EI tribunal, citing a report that could open the door to slashing by half the Liberal program that doubled parental benefits in 2000, allowing parents to spend the first year with their infant children.

Is this part of the government's tough on families agenda?

Diane Finley Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development

Mr. Speaker, when we were first elected to government five years ago, one of the very first things we did was fulfill a promise we made to Canadians to provide them with a choice on how they got their child care.

We believe that parents are the best ones to decide who will, and how to, raise their children and where. That is why we provided them with the universal child care benefit. It has helped over two million children across this country get the child care their parents want for them.

We believe in choice. It is too bad the Liberals do not.

Michael Savage Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NS

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about this. Will the minister explain what exactly is the position of the government on the matter of parental leave? Does she support the Liberal benefit period? If so, why does she say one thing here and have her lawyers do something else in court? Will she instruct her lawyers to stop attacking the concept of extended parental benefits?

The minister has already told us she thinks families should take vacation time to help sick family members. Does she also think families should raise infants only on vacation time and weekends?

Diane Finley Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development

Mr. Speaker, it is the Liberals who wanted to ensure that parents were forced to have other people raise their children. We do not believe in that.

We are the ones who support whatever kind of child care parents choose to have. If they want to stay at home and look after their children, we support that with the universal child care benefit. If they want to take advantage of formal daycare outside the home, we support that. If they want to rely on a family member or a close friend or neighbour to help raise their children, we support that. We support families 7 days a week, 365 days a year.