

Dear mothers and grandmothers,
dear women of Estonia.

Mother's Day is traditionally a time to express lovely sentiments. Today much will be said about bright-eyed children, and songs will be sung about maternal love. We are used to hearing that every man owes a debt of gratitude chiefly to his mother, his wife and his children.

All of this is very true. Our words of gratitude come from the heart, because we, your daughters and sons, fathers and men, believe in them ourselves. The only regrettable part is that the words spoken yesterday and, it is to be feared, already tomorrow will shake our confidence. How could it be any different, if we look at our ugly political sparring over nursery schools?

I would therefore like to publicly ask all officials in charge of state and local affairs: Who gave you the right to frighten mothers, sow uncertainty, even upset their plans? Who?

I ask you: does Estonia really have too many children? Do mothers really have to be grateful to state and city officials for devoting attention to preschools when they have so many more important things to deal with? I ask you: who gave you the authority to pressure nursery school employees and place them in an untenable situation? Who?

I am sorry over the fact a source of concern for mothers has become a means for political one-upmanship. I am sorry, because it seems to me that those who are settling political scores do not see themselves as even remotely at fault.

That is a shame, and I am ashamed.

I know today is supposed to be a happy day; a day of praise, not disgruntlement. Let us think that that today's gratitude and joy are any less sincere; let us not lose hope that they are indeed enduring. We have good reason to take pride and rejoice in our mothers and grandmothers, and to spare them from this disgusting war of words.

It is you – our daughters, women, mothers and grandmothers – who are our constants, embody unchanging values. You ask simple questions when men make things too complex. One question you ask, with increasing urgency, is why men tend to define the hours devoted to family, studies, culture and themselves by negation – as time not spent at work.

Yet the moments we devote to ourselves and others are the most priceless. Only at these times do we sense the true worth and the point of our work.

The moments we spend with our family will lead to a better, healthier Estonia, because mothers have always taught us to learn, care and see better. Their role model has taught us how to make choices. These abilities do not disappear when children are old enough to walk on their own. They pass the wisdom of their mothers and grandmothers on.

Dear women of Estonia, dear mothers and grandmothers,

There has been much public discussion about roles, and more recently, of combining multiple roles in one life. We talk about sharing and redistributing responsibility between family, community and society.

Today's mother is likely see all of her children grow up and leave the nest, even if her youngest and oldest were born a full generation apart. This joy and responsibility was not the lot of our foremothers a hundred and more years ago.

Women's increasing life expectancy has introduced a whole new theme when it comes to combining roles. unifying the roles of mother, grandmother and – why not – great-grandmother.

The idea of motherhood also resides in the capacity to share in the fruits of giving birth and raising a child as long as one is of sound mind and body. We will always be our mothers' children. Over time the relationship may change, but it never breaks, not in a strong family.

The joy of maternal nurture is primal and elemental: It does not need to be regulated by the government. But the state would do well to recognize and support everyone who wants to grandmother children, to share their love and caring with their own and other people's grandchildren.

If we have women who find their greatest self-fulfilment in the role of grandmother, why not support it? They are still in their prime years, have wisdom and willingness, and often, free time. There are more of them than ever before.

Let us appreciate this readiness, if for no other reason, only to offset the chronic inability of the state and some local governments to provide a nursery school slot for everyone or ensure a just wage for nursery school teachers.

We value motherhood, especially on Mother's Day. It is high time to take the next step and try to find a fuller, more worthy role for grandmotherhood. We would have to travel long and far to find a more compelling role model and bulwark of support for our children and grandchildren. They are all around us, in this hall as well.

Thank you for everything. I wish you a wonderful Mother's Day