

provincial governments changes to their pension benefit legislation and to the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans to ensure that pensioners receive comparable benefits wherever they live in Canada.

In this part of the Speech from the Throne, it was also mentioned that the parliamentary task force report on pension reform will soon be published. It was published eight days later. Since I was a member of this task force and feel very strongly about the urgent need for substantial pension reform, I would like to discuss certain aspects of it today.

Our nine-member task force, under the chairmanship of the Hon. Member for Sudbury (Mr. Frith), included five Liberals, three Progressive Conservatives and one New Democrat. We held extensive hearings in Ottawa with all the main national interest groups including business, labour, women, pension organizations and pension consultants. We then held individual hearings in every province and territory of Canada except Prince Edward Island to obtain additional input from provincial and local organizations interested in pension reform.

Our mandate from the House of Commons was to examine the proposals of the Government of Canada's green paper *Better Pensions for Canadians*, with particular reference to income protection, survivor benefits under the C/QPP, the issue of expanding mandatory pension arrangements, the financing of the CPP and proposals to overcome the special pension problems facing women, including homemakers.

There was full agreement among witnesses before our committee that the group with the greatest need is the single elderly, most of whom are women, and most stated that the GIS is the appropriate remedy. However, the cost to raise all senior singles and couples who receive some GIS to the highest of the Statistics Canada poverty lines, those in large urban areas, would be more than \$3 billion annually. Of the nearly two and a half million seniors who receive Old Age Security, slightly more than one-half receive some GIS. However, 216,000 single seniors, mostly women, receive full GIS and they are now far below any of the StatsCan poverty lines.

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The present Old Age Security is \$263.78 a month and at the present time full GIS for a single senior is slightly more, at \$265.60 a month. Since seniors lose just \$1 of GIS for every \$2 of additional income, not counting the OAS they receive, single seniors can receive more than \$530 a month, or \$6,383 per year, additional private income from bank or security interest, private pension plans, et cetera, and still receive some guaranteed income supplement from the Government of Canada.

I am very proud that it was Liberal Governments in the past which brought in the OAS and then the GIS; that both are fully indexed, and in addition, that both have been substantially enriched over the years. While very few seniors are really wealthy, some are still considerably better off financially than others. However, the across-the-board increases to the GIS in recent years, most recently the \$35 per GIS household in 1980 as promised by the Liberal Party in the February, 1980,

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election, has meant that seniors who really have no additional private income, or almost none, are still left behind and below any of the Statistics Canada poverty lines.

Accordingly, our task force was determined to target an increase in the GIS to the about 500,000 single seniors who have absolutely no other private income, or small private incomes of less than \$2,500 a year. The majority of our task force recommended, therefore, that the GIS be immediately increased by \$102 a month to the over 200,000 single senior Canadians who have no other private income at all, and by somewhat lesser amounts to the about 300,000 single seniors who have less than \$2,000 additional annual private income. This would mean every single senior would have income of at least \$632 a month, plus hopefully provincial government top-up, like GAINS in Ontario, and that single seniors would be receiving at least 67 per cent of the OAS-GIS which senior couples are guaranteed. This majority task force recommendation would be an additional cost of about \$350 million to the federal treasury.

However, I did not agree completely with this majority recommendation because I believe that the more than 200,000 senior Canadians, mostly women, who have no other private income at all should have their GIS increased by \$130 a month and not \$102. This would guarantee single seniors an income of at least \$660 a month, plus hopefully provincial government top-ups like GAINS, which would equal 70 per cent of the guaranteed income to senior couples. The cost to the federal treasury of my recommendation of up to \$130 a month targeted increase to senior singles would be about \$550 million a year. But I strongly believe that in our about \$90 billion national annual budget an extra one-half billion must and can be found to support more adequately the one-half million senior Canadians, mostly women, who have no or almost no income other than the OAS and GIS.

A targeted GIS would be similar to existing provincial top-ups like GAINS, and consultation with provincial governments will be essential. However, the task force expected that the provincial Governments will keep faith with their own elderly citizens and will maintain the level of support in the GAINS and other existing programs.

We noted from hearing witnesses in all parts of Canada the very difficult circumstances of many people between the ages of 60 and 64, particularly unattached women. Although the recent recession is ending, there are still far too many unemployed, and it is extremely difficult for those over 60 to find new employment. In addition, many over 60 are physically not able to handle full-time employment but they may not qualify for a CPP disability pension, and, of course, they cannot get CPP pension benefits or the OAS-GIS until age 65. Accordingly, our task force recommended that the spousal allowance program be extended to include all eligible widows and widowers between the ages of 60 and 64 whose spouses died before reaching 65. The additional cost to the federal Government of this recommendation would be about \$150 million a year but it would be of great benefit to a large number of Canadians, mostly women who have not quite reached age 65.