

should declare his income, or what he has to declare, and he is not sure, he can look to them for help and it will be provided. In addition, if there is a Canada Pension Plan office nearby, he can go there. Certainly, he can come to us and explain his problem. If it is something which can be explained by correspondence, we will do that; if not, we will arrange to have one of our people go out to see him.

Senator Croll: When I speak of Williams Lake, I assume you know where that is.

Miss O'Brien: Yes.

Senator Croll: He sends in his application form. It may need some correction. Do you accept that, and do you deal with it at that time and say he is entitled either to the full or partial supplement?

Miss O'Brien: Yes, indeed.

Senator Croll: Do you ever check back?

Miss O'Brien: The income that anyone declares is subject to a check with National Revenue taxation. That is done, of course, after the fact. It is done because the National Revenue taxation records are not available for the previous year at the time the person may be applying; but subsequently a check can be made of the taxation records. Pensioners are informed of this, that they are subject to a check by National Revenue taxation.

Senator Croll: And National Revenue will give you the information for that purpose?

Miss O'Brien: We will provide them with what has been told to us by pensioners. They will tell us if there are discrepancies between their information and ours, and we will approach the pensioner.

Senator Croll: Will you give him his cheque immediately and check his case afterwards?

Miss O'Brien: That is right.

Senator Croll: Do you sometimes find an overpayment?

Miss O'Brien: Yes, sometimes. These have to be recovered from future payments. We try to assess the individual's circumstances and income, and we gear the amount of recovery, of what will be deducted from his future entitlement, to a level that will not cause hardship. We will spread it over quite a period.

Senator Croll: Compared with the man in Toronto or Ottawa, who can walk into an office and be attended to, it may take two months before a man living in an outlying district can get it. Will you pay him as of the date of application or as of the date that you reached your conclusion? When?

Miss O'Brien: Even before the date of application, if there is entitlement. There is provision in the law for going back 12 months; so, even if he was late, we would pay him retroactively. He applies each year for benefits for one fiscal year. Subsequently, each year

that same man would receive an application and he would apply for the new year. His entitlement would be based on his income for the previous year. He would give a statement of his income each year.

Senator Croll: What is the percentage of error over the year?

Miss O'Brien: I do not think we can give you an exact figure.

Senator Croll: I am not interested in an exact figure—an approximate one.

Miss O'Brien: It is not yet possible to check 100 per cent of the accounts with National Revenue. We will be computerizing the OAS program, but it has not been done yet.

Senator Croll: A man in an outlying district receives the same kind of treatment as one who lives in a large metropolitan area?

Miss O'Brien: Certainly.

Senator Croll: The same treatment?

Miss O'Brien: Certainly. If he cannot come to us, we will go to him.

Senator Argue: My question is perhaps outside the scope of the bill. A couple of months ago I was speaking to a lady who has been entitled to receive old age security for five years, but for reasons that I cannot understand she has never applied for it and does not receive it. She does not speak English very well, and she is terrified of becoming involved with the government. I didn't know there were any people like that! If she applied now, could she get her cheque backdated to when she became eligible, or does it apply for only one year?

Miss O'Brien: There is a limit of one year.

Senator Argue: We had an interesting discussion in the Senate yesterday. The suggestion was made that the old age security pension should be increased to \$200 a month. What would that increase cost the country?

Senator Martin: That would come under public assistance.

Senator Argue: It would reduce the guaranteed income supplement, but what would it cost the country if the pension of \$100 was increased to \$200?

Senator Denis: I have the figure for an increase to \$150. It is \$1.1 billion.

Senator Croll: \$1.1 billion more than it is now?

Senator Denis: Yes. For persons aged 65 and over, if the pension is increased to \$150 the increase would amount to \$1.1 billion.

Mr. Cafik: I have some tables in front of me. We have not multiplied them out, but at the moment, in 1972-73, the number of people receiving OAS benefits is 1,803,378. Your proposal, senator,