

Oral Questions

cally the contribution of this government to children; it is not because we have cut back.

We have increased funding, although as a nation obviously we have to do much more, and we will.

* * *

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Doug Fee (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is for either the Minister of National Revenue or the Minister of Finance.

It concerns the GST credit for 18 year olds. In the province of Alberta, and I assume all of Canada, an 18 year old is considered an adult. They can drive a car, they can go into debt, they can vote and they can pay taxes. However, they cannot collect the GST credit unless they are a parent or married.

Many young people are very independent by 18. They live on their own and try to make ends meet. The refusal to pay them the GST credit is a slap in the face, saying that they really aren't independent at all.

The quirk in this new goods and services tax is discriminatory based on age. Is the minister going to correct this quirk and allow all eligible 18 year olds to collect the GST credit?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the GST refund for people under the age of 19 is handled in exactly the same way as the federal sales tax refund was handled. To do what the hon. member suggests would be administratively very difficult if not impossible. As he knows, if they are claimed as a dependent living with their parents, they do qualify. If they are married and under the age of 19 they qualify for the GST rebate and if they have any children they qualify for that as well.

But I repeat, it would administratively difficult to alter the way in which it is being administered as it was under the FST.

* * *

HENRIETTE HADDAD

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs and it concerns the Canadian woman who has been held hostage in Lebanon for the last six years.

The minister said in a letter to me earlier this week that there is no proof that Mrs. Haddad was taken hostage. What about Lebanese press reports of her kidnapping on September 26, 1985? What about the four people who heard Nabih Berri, head of the Shi'ite militia, say his group was holding Mrs. Haddad? What about the three Lebanese hostages who said they saw Mrs. Haddad during their own captivity? And what about the medical doctor who was told she was held hostage?

How much proof does the Canadian government need before we will act on behalf of a Canadian citizen who has been held hostage for six years?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government has been very, very concerned about Mrs. Haddad and has undertaken exhaustive inquiries as to her safety and whereabouts both through sending diplomatic notes to the government and through direct inquiries with a number of organizations within Lebanon.

There is simply some question as to how and where. There is no question about her disappearance at all and there is no question that this is a tragedy for the family. When this first happened the department worked very hard to establish her whereabouts and to establish if and how she was actually taken hostage by a particular group. We have made exhaustive inquiries. We have worked through every possible diplomatic level to try and aid both Mrs. Haddad and her family here.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the minister has not even put her on the international list of hostages.

Professor Humphrey, one of the world's leading scholars and for 20 years the director of the United Nations division of human rights, has called upon the Canadian government specifically to acknowledge that Mrs. Haddad is a hostage in Lebanon. I ask the minister to at least request the United Nations hostage negotiator to include her in the list of western hostages.

Will the minister ask that Mrs. Haddad be included in the list of western hostages?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there are certain ways of dealing with this. The Canadian government has made inquiries and it has pursued this matter aggressively in every forum available to it. Immediately following the incident six years ago and recently, it is has been a continuing file, a file that is continually open for us in a