

Government Orders

How can this government possibly exonerate itself from taking back money from people who have paid into a program in order that they will receive some kind of benefits when they retire? I do not suppose the government thought of that. I will not just have made government members aware of that. It has been referred to before. Perhaps there will be one or two more amendments they would like to withdraw from the legislation, and I would suspect that the only one they have left to withdraw is the legislation itself. I would suggest that that is precisely the motion which this government ought to withdraw and it ought to withdraw it now.

This is one of the most horrendous things that has happened to the Canadian public, and to do it on the backs of people who have contributed as much as they have to this society and our children who will be contributing is unconscionable.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here in the House today to address this question that is particularly important to Canadian seniors and Canadian families. I want us to remember that we are not talking just about the clawback. We need to look at it in the economic and social context within which we are currently living.

[*Translation*]

You know very well that there is much less money for education, now. Transfers of funds have been cut not only for education, but also for health. Education is taxed, no matter what the government says, as are some health services. Therefore, when we speak of the famous "clawback" and of its impact on families, we must not consider it as a single occurrence. It is there, and it is all the worse because there are other tax measures which impact in a negative way on families.

For instance, there is the goods and services tax. Now, hockey, ball games and other sports will be taxed. Parents pay much more tax than they did five years ago. There have been, I believe, 31 tax increases, and there will be 32, with the goods and services tax. And yet, we know that there is not enough room in day care centres for children, nowadays.

[*English*]

There is simply insufficient daycare space for children whose parents need to go out and work in order to earn a decent living and to provide them with the basic necessities of life. There is, as well, no tax fairness for those parents who choose to stay at home or are able to do so. That is an unfortunate reality.

The basic question that we have to ask ourselves is not only the one that I have raised already, that is, the clawback in itself being a repressive, regressive measure. I will not go through the numbers but it is also quite clear as to what will happen to well over one million Canadian families within the next decade. They will be caught within that net.

We have to ask that other question. If you look at the massive tax increases, the reduction of transfer payments and all of that within the total context of Canadian society, what message is this government sending to Canadian families? What message is it sending out about children, about our children's future?

It seems to me that we need to invest in families and in children. Clearly this clawback, in addition to many of the other regressive measures taken by government, is not going to contribute to that in any way, shape or form.

[*Translation*]

Let us now talk about seniors and the impact of the famous clawback on them.

[*English*]

I think that most of us would recognize that seniors have built this country and we owe them because of what they contributed to the nation. Seniors have invested in this country and they, rightfully so, expect a return on that investment. They have invested not only their talents and their labour, but they have also invested dollars because hon. members are not without knowing that there was, at one time in the not too distant past, a particular provision whereby people who were paying taxes at the time were paying for their senior years so that they could collect a reasonable return upon retirement. They expect a return on that dollar investment.

It is rather interesting, as some of my colleagues have mentioned, that if they had taken those dollars and invested them in a private company and 20, 30 or 40 years