

Government Orders

In fact, most of the data we have available telling us just how many thousands of fathers are skipping out on their obligations to support their children comes to us from provincial levels.

In Ontario alone, for example, over 75 per cent of support payments are in arrears. That is \$400 million that mothers and children have done without because fathers do not want to make their payments. I say fathers because evidence shows that over 97 per cent of payers are men.

There is no need to rely upon terms like payer and recipient when we know that we are talking about women and children who are doing without because men do not want to make payments and have skipped out on the responsibility to their children and their former spouses.

In Ontario, the government has responded to this chronic situation with a new family support plan that is a radical and positive departure from the wage garnishment procedure. In order to apply for wage garnishment, women have had to wait until there has been a default or non-payment. Often they end up waiting over a period of months until there is clear evidence of this. They then have to apply for tracing and location services from the appropriate provincial offices which will turn to the federal services if necessary.

In Ontario, wage garnishment lasted six years. So bringing the federal equivalent closer into line by raising it to five years from one year as this bill will do is a welcome change.

The Ontario government has gone one step further. It implemented a support deduction order which will come into effect at the same time a court makes the support order. The program will serve notice to the employer who must begin deducting support payments from the father's net wages. The support deduction order is portable. It will move from employer to employer and the father must inform the program office of a new employer.

But just as important, this support deduction order lasts as long as the support order so it is really a positive step and a bit of a radical step. It is a step that we should be looking at when this bill gets into committee.

But as I have said, this is new in Canada. It may, in fact, make garnishee summonses a thing of the past for many cases in Ontario, as it has in most of the United States. I hope that other provincial governments are watching this development. There may already be others planning such an initiative. We need to take all of the steps we can to improve the enforcement of support orders.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, we welcome the opportunity to examine this proposed legislation in more detail in committee. We do not want to subject this bill to lengthy debate at this stage. I do want to raise one more matter before I conclude.

At the same time as the minister introduced this bill, she also released to this House and to the public a report entitled *The Financial Implications of Child Support Guidelines*. That report is the second report of the federal-provincial-territory family law committee and is part of the minister's family law reform initiative announced in June 1991.

There can be no question of the need to establish guidelines on child support payments. Support payments established by the courts are often far too low to meet the basic needs of children and vary widely in rulings of an otherwise similar nature. Those of us who have been in court on occasion, in family court, from court to court and from region to region, have seen some of these disparities.

That report may provide some valuable insight into the process of determining those guidelines. It may have a significant impact on the well-being of 40 per cent of Canadian children who are affected by family breakdown, the three-quarters of a million children in Canada living with their mothers in poverty.

We need to arrive at adequate guidelines for support payments through an accurate evaluation of the needs children have. As the government-released background to this report states, the report has been released to ensure informed public discussion on the child support guidelines option.

It is based on the work of three economists contracted separately by the department to examine the economic models used to estimate expenditures on children, identify the strengths and weaknesses of each model, suggest appropriate approaches and provide data using those