

*Income Tax Act*

I said at the outset of my remarks that I was happy to have this chance to speak about this most welcome Bill. In the recent Speech from the Throne the Government reaffirmed its concerns for those most in need. This measure is aimed pre-eminently at people most in need. It will get funds to them quickly when they need them the most.

In the Throne Speech, the Government also pointed out that our changing society means that existing programs are always needing to be reviewed to ensure that they continue to be appropriate. This legislation is designed to improve the delivery of benefits to those entitled to them without increasing expenditures. In these times of difficult fiscal challenges for the Government of Canada, it is important that we find ways to deliver benefits to those entitled without increasing expenditures, and this Bill makes clear that this is a principle on which we intend to act. It is a creative principle, a principle long overdue, and I am very proud it is part of Bill C-11.

I want to commend this measure to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all Members of this House. By bringing this measure forward early in the session, what the Government is doing is demonstrating in the clearest possible way its urgent concern for those in need.

This measure is like previous measures presented by the Government which have also been aimed to meet the needs of those in our society who are the most in need. I think, for example, of the assistance to pensioners and to veterans which we provided very early in our mandate; and I think of the enrichment of this very tax credit, the child tax credit itself, which we carried out last year.

● (1540)

All this is by way of introduction to the discussion on this Bill. I trust all Members will respond to our initiative and grant this legislation speedy passage. It aims to do what must be done to get funds to those needy families with children when they most need it, and to do so as quickly as possible.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Garneau (Laval-des-Rapides):** Mr. Speaker, it should not take the House too long to adopt the Bill under consideration today, since it is strictly an administrative measure.

After hearing the Minister's speech, however, I wonder if the Opposition, instead of co-operating and expediting the adoption of this Bill, does not have a duty to make all the speeches it can to cut this Bill down to its true size.

Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat surprised that the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Hockin), who today is presenting and defending a Bill in the House for the very first time, made use of the few minutes at his disposal to make certain claims that are not factual.

When the Minister of State for Finance says this is a Bill aimed at helping the needy, the impression is given that this is an entirely new measure and that for the first time in Canada's history, low-income families will be receiving a child tax credit. He added, however—fortunately he had the wisdom to do so—that this measure involved no additional expenditures for the Government. If there is no annual expense for the

Government, why the long speech and the attempts to make people think this was a new measure? Basically, the facts are quite simple: Bill C-11 is an administrative measure enabling payments that would otherwise have been made in March to be made in November. However, when the month of March comes around for these needy families, they will not receive the payments they would have received without this Bill, since they will have received them now.

So practically nothing has changed, except that people who are entitled to the child tax credit may be able to spend the money on their Christmas presents. Considering the date on which the payments will be made and the financial situation of these families—the cheque will be made at the end of November—I wonder to what extent this will prevent the situation we had with tax discounters, since income tax returns are filed around the end of January or February, and I get the impression that by that time, the \$300 will have been long gone.

Mr. Speaker, this is nothing more than a housekeeping measure which does not entail additional public expenditures, and as such it does not improve the child tax credit legislation enacted by the previous Liberal Government.

However what must be emphasized is that this Bill faithfully mirrors the Conservative approach—half-baked measures, ambiguous situations, unexplainable differences in the various levels. As we know—indeed the Minister of Finance himself made it quite clear when he opted for partial family allowances de-indexation, when he decided to lower the maximum income level at which a family becomes eligible for the child tax credit, in other words measures which fly in the face of the legislation endorsed by the House a number of years ago under a Liberal administration—the maximum amount is \$23,500, the level at which the child tax credit begins to decrease.

Assuming that the Government wants to help low-income families, I wonder why the amount was set at \$15,000. Why did they not lay their cards on the table and, in keeping with the provisions of the existing statute, use this administrative measure to give the child tax credit to any family eligible for the full amount? No, Sir, they would rather split hairs and set it at \$15,000. Considering the number of children it may have, I wonder if a family with a \$16,000 annual income might not need more than another one whose annual earnings total \$15,000.

This is therefore a half measure. It seems to me that the Government should have gone all the way if it truly wanted to help needy families by sending them a few months earlier the amount that they would have received anyway. Why was it not possible to go as high as the cutoff point of \$23,500? Mr. Speaker, I want to warn the Minister immediately that we shall be proposing an amendment in Committee of the Whole to provide for that possibility because a family with four children and an income of \$23,500 is certainly as needy as a family with one child and an income of \$15,000. I do not see why, if we are changing the Act, we could not provide the full benefit for all families entitled to the full amount of the child tax credit which means families with an income of \$23,500, not \$15,000.