

Income Tax Act

64. This increased income protection applies to about 85,000 Canadians and provides about \$300 million in additional benefits to needy Canadians. It complements legislative changes to improve the Canada Pension Plan, which includes new financing arrangements and an improved benefits package, introduction of an early retirement option, increased disability benefits and a continuation of survivor benefits upon remarriage. It complements our Government's decision to expand the definition of disability under the Income Tax Act which was broadened to cover all severely disabled persons. An additional 120,000 Canadians are expected to benefit from this proposal.

Not only are we prepaying the child tax credit, we are increasing the number of dollars which will flow to needy families. All social programs are in place for needy Canadians. The ultimate goal of any Government must be to reduce the number of Canadians who fall within that category, that is, the number of Canadian families whom we would describe as poor. That must be the ultimate goal of a Government committed to improving the economic and social circumstances of its citizenry.

Surely a well-paying job is the best response to the social and economic needs of low income Canadians. More sound economic management is part of the program. Sound, stable and worthwhile employment for Canadians cannot be achieved in a vacuum. The economic record of the Government is very much a part of the social record of the Government. It is very much an attempt to meet and address the particular social needs of Canadians. I refer to the unemployment rate which has fallen from 11.7 per cent in September of 1984 to 9.9 per cent. We cannot ignore that we have introduced a breadwinner into many Canadian families. We cannot ignore that we have taken a family which faced unemployment and brought employment to it. We have brought into these households confidence, a feeling of control over one's destiny. We have given these people tools with which to solve their own problems.

When we talk about youth unemployment which has fallen from 18.4 per cent to approximately 15 per cent, we cannot ignore the social contribution being made to the lives of these young Canadians. We cannot ignore the fact that they will be better equipped as a result of this success to move forward into society and take their rightful role and become contributors to society. When we talk about the decrease in the Bank of Canada rate in the area of 3.4 or 3.5 per cent, we cannot ignore the fact that this too is a contribution to the real spending power of many needy Canadians. These needy Canadians buy on credit, and now interest rates are lower. Nor can we ignore the fact that these low income Canadians who aspire to become homeowners, or who are perhaps homeowners, will pay lower mortgage payments because of a decrease in this rate. These are contributions to the social well-being of families. We cannot isolate these economic accomplishments as if they did not have some strong and meaningful social implications.

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When we talk about the reduction in the rate of inflation, we cannot ignore the fact that low income Canadians are particularly hard hit by escalating rates of inflation. When we talk about Canada's over-all economic performance in the world which some of these statistics reflect, we cannot ignore the implication this has for more and better social programs. When we talk about the Government's efforts to reduce the deficit and to increase revenues to the Government, we cannot ignore the fact that social programs are funded by the Government and the greater the resources of the Government, the greater the ability of the Government to expand, to enrich, and to continue these kinds of programs.

Of course, there are parts of the country where the economic benefits about which I spoke earlier are not being experienced to the same extent as they are across the country. However, in the riding I represent, we are seeing the benefits of renewed economic activity. We are beginning to achieve new jobs because of new economic policies.

The people I represent who are the chief beneficiaries of many of these social programs are very pleased that their jobs are coming to their area. They tell me that given a choice between a rich social program and employment, they are very quick to choose employment. They freely acknowledge that the best answer to many of their social problems is a full-time job.

In my area alone, agreements that will result in more than 400 jobs have been achieved in just two years. Some will say that 400 jobs is not really very much. It is probably about 400 per cent better than the job creation record of the Government that preceded us, so it is important. Any job for any person is substantial economic progress.

In my home town alone, there are two small plants with a total investment of \$13 million or \$14 million that will bring 80 or 90 jobs to the community over the next two years. The creation of these jobs was not possible under the previous Government. The previous Government had become tired and unresponsive. It believed only in passing out cheques, not fully realizing that economic progress and the creation of employment was the best answer to the social and economic needs of this part of the country.

I could provide to the House a very extensive list of the successes there have been in my constituency, an area subject to many of the regional economic initiatives of this Government and the previous Government. I will not, however, go into a detailed accounting other than to say that the Progressive Conservative Government is making progress in addressing the economic and social needs of all Canadians. It is a Government of which I am very proud. I am proud to contribute to the Government and I am proud to come to Ottawa and be a part of a philosophy that is responsive to the social needs of needy Canadians.

The record of the Government is a proud one. I fully expect that the Government will continue in this direction. With that, I would like to congratulate members of the Opposition for