

Government Orders

During the 1980s there was a drive to reform the support system but this has done very little to resolve the problem. The Ontario government has now taken over the collection of support payments, and 75 per cent of those support payments, of those collections, are in arrears.

The larger problem of unrealistically low court order payments remains even if we have a better system of collection.

This is presumably why the minister introduced her child support guidelines research paper. However the research paper, the data base and all of the talking is not going to help these people. These are young families, young children and former spouses, who are in need of some financial assistance and they are not getting it. The system must be speeded up. It must be more resolved to do something to help these families.

The minister outlines in her paper four approaches to estimating the costs of child rearing and includes detailed calculations based on each of them for families of different sizes, children of different ages, and so on. That is very important information. However, if they do not have the money then this is going to be of very little use to them. They need the actual support.

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A research paper by Miriam Grassby, published in the May 1991 issue of *Reports of Family Law*, shows that the average support awarded is considerably less than half of the actual costs of raising children. Even the support payments, when they are obtained, are less than half of what is actually needed to raise those children.

An already impoverished wife ends up paying a disproportionate share of child costs. She is left with no money whatsoever for leisure or savings for even a modest retirement. Any kind of retirement package is out of the question. She also ends up footing the bill for the emotional and recreational needs of her children, needs an absent and considerably wealthier ex-husband could in most cases give and can very easily ignore because of the system.

Ms. Grassby says:

It is easy to deprive children if you appear to be paying a large amount for child support. It is very difficult to deprive children if you are living with them.

While the ex-husbands and the fathers may be living in a different province and feel they are being very generous, in most cases they are not. They are not even beginning to meet the needs of the children they profess to care for and have such concern for.

While mothers are living in abject poverty trying to meet the needs of the children, and in most cases using every cent that comes forward for their children and denying themselves of anything other than the bare necessities, the system continues to roll on with studies and does not make a meaningful contribution or meaningful declaration to end these injustices.

Judges also often seem unaware of the barriers to a woman becoming self-sufficient if she is older, even in her forties. Not only may she be lacking in skills, experience and opportunity, but as the custodial parent she is not free to travel, work long hours, study at night or socialize with colleagues.

We might also bring up the terrible inequities that exist within our tax system. It is a fact that in this country today a man gets to deduct his child support payments directly from the amount of tax he must pay. The mother must pay income tax on what she receives from him as well as on her own earnings. Where is the justification for this?

First, the payments are ridiculously low. They are not receiving anywhere near the support payments they should be getting.

Second, the orders to enforce these payments are in arrears. They are not being served or enforced.

Third, the meagre amount that the single mother, the former wife, receives she must pay income tax on while the husband gets the amount he pays deducted from his tax payable. I do not see how we can continue to drag our feet while this sort of thing goes on in this country.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary and the minister to do more to correct this injustice.

I know that a lot of this is provincial jurisdiction. It will require working with the provinces. The sooner these conferences and meetings start the sooner we will get somewhere in dealing with this problem. We cannot go