

The Budget

[English]

We plan to discuss this proposal with the provinces however. We plan to discuss implementation and not introduction. In fact we will be introducing legislation before the summer and I hope we will receive support from all members of the House.

We want the kind of support that Mackenzie King received in 1944. Adjusting the way we support children and families is a hallmark of Canada's social policy tradition.

Since 1945 successive federal governments have made additions and adjustments to our child benefit programs. These programs have been modified on more than 20 separate occasions. Each of these changes were made with good reason. Each was appropriate to its time, but the result of all these additions and adjustments is a patchwork of benefits.

It is complicated. It makes little sense. It tries to be fair, but it falls short in that regard, too.

[Translation]

The new child benefit follows up the recommendations of two parliamentary reports, one from a Senate committee entitled *Child Poverty: Towards a Better Future*, and another from a House subcommittee entitled *Canada's Children: Our Future*. The recommendations were very good. We have accepted and implemented them.

[English]

The new child benefit has three characteristics. First, it is simpler. There is no additional paperwork to fill out. It is tax free for parents to keep and benefit their children. An all in one payment is made every month. It is fairer.

The new child benefit will be based on the over-all income of the family and not on individual incomes. It will go to families who need it. To help working families better provide for their children, there is an earned income supplement of \$500 per family.

Finally it is more generous. Virtually all single parents and one earner families will receive more. Annual benefits for low to moderate income families with

incomes below \$50,000 will increase by an average of almost \$250 a year.

I believe it is a fiscally responsive decision and that fiscal responsibility is itself a social benefit. Our children must not inherit a Canada that is crippled by debt.

Of course some will say this is the end of universal social programs. I believe it is a reaffirmation of Canadians' belief in fairness. I cannot justify sending a family allowance cheque or giving a child tax credit to families that earn hundreds of thousands of dollars. It is just not fair.

[Translation]

On the contrary, I think that as a society, whether we are politicians or ordinary citizens, we cannot remain indifferent when children go to school hungry or do not have boots to wear in winter.

If we want to help children, we must help families. Of course the government does not have unlimited resources so it must make the best use of them.

[English]

Every generation leaves the next a legacy. We all struggle to do our best for our children. As we make these efforts, we also recognize that our children will one day have to make their own way in the world. We must give them every opportunity.

Prosperity is not a commodity that can be bought or sold. It is not something that can be handed down from one generation to the next. Prosperity is the result of a healthy, happy, educated and motivated collection of people. Certainly prosperity has something to do with money, but it has a lot more to do with people. Tomorrow's prosperity is in the hands of today's children. The legacy we must leave them is one of unrestricted opportunity. They must inherit from us a future that is wide open, free for them to make the paths they will.

[Translation]

All the measures described, together with the initiatives that the government has taken in the past, strengthen the foundation for growth and job creation. As the Minister of Finance reminded us yesterday, and it is worth repeating, the Canadian economy is fundamentally well placed for a sustained recovery.