

*Private Members' Business*

elect to have one parent stay at home to provide personal care for their child.

No move has been made by this government to address this serious inequality which currently exists. Therefore, the bill introduced by my hon. colleague is a very positive step in the right direction.

Until such a time as a system of flat tax can be implemented the Reform Party supports the concept of income splitting between legally married couples. No other measure of tax relief would affect the family so greatly under our current system as the ability to split income and lower the resultant tax burden. The tax savings would be particularly meaningful when one spouse is working as a full time care giver to their children.

Regardless of the employment situation of the husband and wife, the marriage union will be recognized in tax law as an equal economic partnership. Should the flat rate income tax proposal presently being considered by the Reform Party be implemented, income splitting would become largely irrelevant because individually or collectively a couple would pay the same tax.

It is also important to counter some of the criticism launched against reformers by those who claim that supporting such policies is simply a means of trying to turn back the clock and keep women at home. Quite the contrary. We are simply responding to the desires of a large number of Canadian families that would like to stay at home to care for their children if they so chose without being unfairly disadvantaged financially by federal tax laws.

We believe that if implemented correctly, measures such as income splitting will allow those parents who are forced to work because of finances the option to stay at home and care for their children.

In a recent survey conducted by Angus Reid 57 per cent of respondents thought it would be good news if the government would provide some type of financial assistance to help one parent in a two parent family stay home to care for their children.

Income splitting would have several strong advantages to those involved and some spinoff benefits for others. First, it would help alleviate the excess tax burden experienced by those single income families with one spouse at home to care for their children. Even with a maximum of \$25,000 of split income it would allow the spouse at home to receive proper benefit in terms of income and participate in simple pension benefits such as RRSPs. The tax burden on the family would be lessened, allowing for more disposable income to be spent on the very real needs of raising a family today.

Second, it would also have spinoff benefits in the area of employment and day care space availability. There is a very real need among single parents for both day care spaces and potential employment. If the spouse of a two income family leaves their job to care for their child at home this opens up a job for someone else and also creates a day care space. A single parent who wants to get off any sort of social assistance needs both of these possibilities to do so. These are very real needs for the single parent and simply creating day care spaces is only half the solution. Income splitting could provide for all components necessary in the equation.

The bill does have one apparent weakness in that it limits the deduction to those with preschool children at home. I would advocate that the bill be considered for amendment in that the eligibility criteria be extended to include those spouses who stay home to manage the affairs of the home with children who are in school. This is also an important area of parental care.

As critic of family issues I have heard from numerous Canadians across Canada regarding the issue of recognition of those who stay at home to provide care for their own children. It is also an issue in my own riding.

• (1815)

Let me read from two letters I received from two of my constituents. Mrs. Andrea Jones in Coquitlam wrote to me after I was first elected, sharing her concerns on the present status of the Canadian family.

She is a stay at home mother with a toddler to care for. Her husband is employed but they are finding it very tough to make ends meet. Andrea asked for equality to be implemented within the present tax system that does not discriminate against single income families. I quote from her letter:

I understand the terrible financial mess this country is in, but I strongly feel that the subsidies enjoyed by two-income families discredits the hard work homemakers do in support of their children, husbands and community.

Andrea Jones and her husband are not asking for special treatment, just fair and equal treatment.

Sandra Boleak from Port Coquitlam also wrote to me this past spring about the need for the government to recognize the important work of those who stay at home in support of the family.

Sandra and Len have four children at home under the age of six. Sandra left her full time, good paying job in 1989 to look after her family. Since then, it has been difficult financially and the sacrifice they are making to keep one parent at home is real. She states in her letter:

When will stay at home parents' jobs be recognized and respected? Why can my husband not write me off as a caregiver as well as claim the spousal amount?

The dilemma facing parents who have exercised this choice is that they are disadvantaged taxwise for doing so. They have