

Family Allowances Act, 1973

Members

James	McLean	Schellenberger
Jelinek	McMillan	(Wetaskiwin)
Jepson	Merrithew	Scott
Johnson	Minaker	(Hamilton-Wentworth)
(Bonavista-Trinity- Conception)	Mitges	Scowen
Joncas	Moore	Sparrow
Kilgour	Mulroney	Stackhouse
Lawrence	Nicholson	Stewart
Layton	(Niagara Falls)	Taylor
Lesick	Nickerson	Thacker
Lewis	Nielsen	Towers
Lopez	Oberle	Tremblay
MacDonald	Oostrom	(Québec-Est)
(Kingston and the Islands)	Paproski	Tupper
MacDougall	Pennock	Valcourt
(Timiskaming)	Pietz	Vankoughnet
Mantha	Plamondon	Vézina
Marin	Plourde	Warner
Martin	Price	Wenman
Mazankowski	Ravis	White
McCain	Redway	Wilson
McDermid	Reid	(Swift Current- Maple Creek)
McGrath	Reimer	Wilson
McInnes	Ricard	(Etobicoke Centre)
McKenzie	St. Germain	Wise
McKinnon	Schellenberg	Witer—130.
	(Nanaimo-Alberni)	

Mr. Speaker: Before the vote is recorded I must advise the Table that the vote by the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) may not be counted. He entered the Chamber late.

Mr. McDermid: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I noted that while the vote was being taken a number of Members left their seat and were wandering through the House. I noticed that all of them were new Members of the House. It may be apropos that the Chair explain our procedures.

Mr. Speaker: I think all Members know that if they leave their seats during a vote they nullify their vote. The Hon. Member is asking that all Members be reminded that they should remain in their seats throughout the calling of a vote.

I declare the motion lost.

Prior to resumption of debate may I advise the House that I intend to hear arguments, if there are any, or discussions with regard to procedural admissibility at the earliest possible moment, presumably at eleven o'clock tomorrow if the matter is called again tomorrow.

Resuming debate.

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to Motions Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 which you grouped for debate earlier today.

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the Minister but may I also advise him and others that I have received a representation with regard to that grouping. I propose that matters continue as they are but I gather that one or more Members wish to make a representation tomorrow concerning the grouping itself. I think it would be appropriate, when we are hearing procedural arguments, to hear what Members wish to say. So I will hear that tomorrow but at the moment we will resume debate on the group as I indicated.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): That is helpful, Mr. Speaker. I hope my comments will be equally helpful to the debate tomorrow.

With the Chair's permission, to facilitate the work of the House, I intend to advise the Chair which clauses in that grouping the Government would be willing to accept.

The subject matter of these amendments has been a matter of intense discussion. Not only that, committee members tried to address an issue of growing concern, namely, how do parents best respond to a case of missing children. I want to emphasize to Members that the Bill and our amendments relate only to any action concerning the payment of family allowances. With all due respect, the Hon. Member speaking for the NDP broadened the issue to one of provincial jurisdiction which is not at all at issue here. Let me give Members an explanation of the present legislation and then explain what the amendments we are willing to accept will do in future.

I want to set the framework very clearly on this basis. First, in no way are the changes in Clause 5 intended to reduce the amount of payment. That is the first point that has to be made. As well, we did not in any way look at those clauses as a cost-cutting exercise. That is the second point which has to be made. Finally, when we are dealing with a certificate of presumed death, it does not relate to provincial jurisdiction or any work which might be done by provincial coroners in any way. It deals only with the payment of family allowances. That is the third point that has to be made.

Let me explain the present situation. Under the present legislation a parent or guardian is eligible for family allowance payments if that parent or guardian is responsible for a dependent child below a certain age. When a child is missing the Minister of National Health and Welfare has one month before family allowances are no longer paid if it can be shown that those parents or guardians do not have expenses for and do not have direct care of that dependent child. What is happening, Mr. Speaker—Could we have some order?

• (1750)

Mr. Speaker: I think that is a fair request. Could the meetings that are going on be held somewhere else, please?

Mr. Dingwall: We are talking about the amendment.

Mr. Speaker: Well, only one person in the Chamber is supposed to be talking about the amendment at one time.

Mr. Dingwall: Oh, he was talking? I am sorry.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): With all respect, Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue. Members have approached this issue in a very serious way and I want to help the House.

The second point that must be made in terms of the present legislation is that the Minister, the Department, and the Government have no authority to extend payments to a family beyond the month. That is obviously not acceptable. Payments have been made for up to six months but not, in the true sense of the words, by legislative authority. I think most Members would understand that it was a humanitarian response. As we looked at the amendments to the family allowance legislation