

Helping First Those Who Need Help Most

The first of the goals set out at the opening of the session, enhancing the security of the individual, was designed to help first those who need help most. The Government continues to believe that this must be its first guiding principle and it has given effect to this principle through a wide array of initiatives. In doing so, it has been one of the few western governments not to cut back spending on social services during the last three years.

The elderly came first, with the passage of legislation to raise the Guaranteed Income Supplement to the Old Age Security pension by \$35 per month per household, thereby improving the standard of living of 1.3 million pensioners.

In addition, to initiate the complex process of pension reform, a National Pensions Conference was convened as part of the consultative phase of this process and a comprehensive study of the issue, published as a Green Paper, was undertaken.

The Government has addressed the needs and concerns of Canadian women, and taken steps to guarantee their right to full and equal participation in all aspects of our national life.

Within the federal public service, a pilot affirmative action program put in place in 1981 for women, natives and the handicapped is the model for a comprehensive affirmative action program now being implemented in all federal government departments. In addition, a Commission of Inquiry on Equality in Employment has been established to investigate employment practices affecting these groups in certain Crown corporations, and officials within the government have been working with private employers to help them develop their own affirmative action programs.

Female representation in the management and professional categories of the public service has expanded steadily. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value has been adopted within the public service as a guideline applicable to all collective agreements and salary settlements.

This session has been marked by the appointment of the first woman Speaker of the House of Commons and the first woman on the Supreme Court of Canada. Women have been appointed to positions as Chief Justices in Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, and a woman has been appointed Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba.

Outside the public sector, the Women's Employment and Women in Non-Traditional Occupations programs have helped break down barriers to entry in non-traditional job fields. The new National Training Act, which has directed resources towards improved job training, provides important support to women wishing to enhance or update their job skills.

The Government has moved to help many women who are working parents. It enriched the child tax credit to \$343 per child and doubled the child care expense deduc-

tion to \$2,000 per child. The Unemployment Insurance Act was amended to provide greater flexibility and equity in the determination of eligibility for maternity benefits, and to extend these benefits to adoptive parents.

For those staying at home to care for their children, pension coverage was improved with the introduction of a child rearing dropout provision to the Canada Pension Plan. It entitles mothers or fathers to remain outside the labour force while their children are under the age of seven without sacrificing future pension benefits.

The Government has addressed the problem of violence against women through major amendments to the parts of the Criminal Code dealing with sexual offences. These amendments replace the offence of rape with various offences of sexual assault, and provide additional protection to women through elimination of spousal immunity and elimination of the need for corroboration of a complainant's testimony.

Amendments to the Human Rights Act also afford increased protection to women, particularly against sexual harassment.

And the most fundamental step of all has been taken by enshrining the principle of equal rights for men and women in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Young people have also been a particular focus for Government action, which dealt with the primary concerns of youth employment and academic prospects.

The young, lacking employment experience, have been a particular casualty of the recession at the very point in their lives at which they should be acquiring job skills and developing sound work habits. To deal with this situation, the Government has launched a series of initiatives directed specifically towards jobs for younger workers.

A Youth Wage Subsidy and Internship Program has been established to help young people obtain work experience and on-the-job training. Katimavik, the Youth Job Corps Program, and the Summer Youth Employment Program have all been expanded. An Extended Youth Training and Employment Program run by the Department of National Defence has been established to provide employment and vocational training.

Young people will be major beneficiaries of the National Training Act. Under this Act, 1.2 billion dollars has been made available during the current fiscal year alone for improved job training opportunities and facilities. The Act also provides for federal assistance to people enrolled in provincial and private educational courses.

Altogether, more than 300,000 young people will have been assisted this year by these and other federal training and employment programs.

Amendments also have been made to the Canada Student Loans Act which almost double the maximum annual amount available to individual students and which broaden the eligibility criteria for loans to include those