



Fathers Are Capable Too: Parenting Association

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The father emperor penguin forgoes all food for up to 4 months sheltering the egg and nurturing the chick.

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When Premier McGuinty and the province of Ontario run into financial problems, they attack parents who have financial problems. In a rush to divert attention from the government's problems, the province is generating a moral panic against non-custodial parents. Starting with yellow "letters of shame" and a barrage of false and misleading information, an attack has been unleashed against parents who cannot meet the excessive financial awards made to their ex-spouses.

The Family Responsibility Office (FRO) is an integral part of the regime that reduces many fathers to involuntary servitude. There is no corresponding agency to ensure non-custodial parents' access to their children despite laws that specifically make access denial a crime.¹

What credibility does the government or the FRO have when they allege that some 70% of divorced fathers refuse to support their children?

Willful non-compliance with support orders is not common — estimates are generally less than 10% of cases.² As well, over 25% of the orders enforced by the FRO are pure spousal support issues, and children are not affected.³

If welfare is involved, government lawyers move in and forcibly pursue large support orders to pay welfare costs, generally against poor, imprisoned or low-income fathers, who cannot afford representation before the courts. Welfare-repayment cases form a substantial and undisclosed amount — estimates of 50-60% are common — of FRO arrears. Not a dollar of welfare repayment goes to benefit the children. Welfare lawyers are often the major motivators behind women seeking large support orders against unrepresented fathers.

Of cases in arrears in Ontario, over 58% involve parents making some partial payment, based on their actual earnings, towards their court-ordered payments. Most are making up for arrears caused by unemployment, sickness or disability that any intact family would have had to adapt to,⁴ but for which the government does not acknowledge or forgive.

The bulk of FRO seized payments come from mandatory payroll deduction. Fathers being paid bimonthly, instead of on the first of the month, are automatically counted as being in arrears.

¹ see Sections 282 and 283 of the Criminal Code

² see the comments of Carolina Gilliberti, then chief of the federal Department of Justice's family law research unit, in "True deadbeat dads' are few, Ottawa says" by David Vienneau in the Toronto Star dated September 6, 1995

³ Statistics Canada 85-228-XPE "Child and Spousal Support: Maintenance Enforcement Survey Statistics, 2001/2002 by Mary Bess Kelly, Figure 2

⁴ Statistics Canada 85-228-XPE, Table 14

The misguided FRO policies destroy men, are used by the courts to deny access and contribute to the homelessness and high suicide rates found amongst men in Ontario.

The FRO is neither a responsive nor responsible agency. FACT members find that serious errors to the detriment of fathers, and in favour of the FRO, occur often and are virtually irreversible.

If the Government of Ontario believes that money is the most important thing for the welfare of children, then judges must be mandated to award residency to the higher paid parent who will be the least impacted by non-payment of support by the other parent.

The federal government's "child support guidelines" are a heavily flawed, poorly designed concept that has more to do with avoiding welfare responsibilities and increasing taxes than anything to do with children. The gender bias in our Courts means that children who are awarded to mothers who use the child support to subsidise their lifestyle.

It is time that the McGuinty government came clean about the mess at the Family Responsibility Office. It is time to disclose the real statistics to the auditor-general and to be honest with the public. It is time to make the FRO accountable. It is time to make sure that access orders are enforced with the same vigor and penalties as the custody orders.

More on the illogical nature of these tremendous misrepresentations made about "child support" can be found on the FACT website at <http://www.fact.on.ca> in the financial support subsection of the site.

In the province of Ontario, fathers head 17% of single parent families, and 14% of divorce cases result in sole paternal custody. An estimated 3% of support orders involve women paying for their children.

For further information, call Brian Jenkins, at (416)315-5298.