

October 29, 2010

Question

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the human resources committee has completed its study on poverty in Canada and will soon release its report after hearing from hundreds of witnesses across the country and experts around the world.

As poverty increased during the Conservative recession, the government has been missing in action on this file. Most provinces and territories now have anti-poverty strategies and they want the feds at the table. The United Nations even told Canada the same thing last year in the periodic review.

The government does not seem to care. The government chooses planes and prisons over people in poverty. Why is the government turning its back on people in need?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do appreciate the work that was done by the committee on the poverty study.

Unfortunately, it did not take the time to recognize many successful initiatives that our government has taken over the last few years to help relieve the poverty situation in Canada.

In fact, the poverty rate for seniors is a small fraction of what it was under the previous Liberal government. We made that happen by increasing the exemption for GIS from \$500 to \$3,500. We have introduced pension-splitting. We have done a number of things to help Canadians be better off.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that poverty rates in Canada are rising.

Last December, the Senate issued a report entitled, "In From the Margins", a big study led by Liberal Senator Eggleton and Conservative Senator Segal. The government's response to that was to post an inadequate list of programs that the minister has just recited again that have not made a difference.

Fighting poverty is good economics. It is good for Canada. It involves working with provinces, municipal leaders, schools, churches and community groups.

Why will the government not show some leadership or at least show up in the fight against poverty?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has done a lot to help those in need in Canada.

For example, the average family in Canada now has over \$3,000 more in their pockets thanks to our move against poverty. We have also cut taxes right across the board for all Canadians, whether it is the GST going from 7% to 6% to 5%. We have lowered corporate taxes, so job creation is there.

The best way to fight poverty is to give people the skills they need for the jobs that we create, and we have created over 400,000 of those lately.