



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Government Gets Tough with Deadbeat Parents Who Owe Child Support

Kitchener, ON - Kids 'n' Dad Shared Support recognizes that the problem of deadbeat parents has serious financial consequences for Ontario families. As such it places a burden on all taxpayers when families require more financial support for the basic necessities. The announcement giving Family Responsibility Office (FRO) the power to post pictures on the web has a wanted dead or alive appearance to it, but it is not a new idea and has garnered mixed outcomes in other jurisdictions.

In this debate about appropriate penalties, it needs to be recognized that the Government already employs more severe sanctions on delinquent payers, ie. loss of license, jailing for up to 180 days. It should also be understood that most research reveals that when mothers are the payers they are more likely to be in arrears than fathers. The financial impact is of course more with dads because of their sheer number and higher wages.

In this effort, Kids 'n' Dad Shared Support fears that the real solution for children; namely the involvement of mom and dad in their children's daily lives, is being lost and not even considered as a solution to child poverty.

Kids 'n' Dad Shared Support works with many single dads who are non-custodial parents (30% parenting time) and it reveals that many are earning \$20,000 to \$22,000 per year (\$10-\$11 per hour) and have child support obligations of \$360 per month. They receive no child benefits because they are not the primary care parent. Their reality is that they want to provide a 'home' for their children i.e. food, bedrooms, recreation, etc. They live in poverty!

The stereotype of the millionaire dad neglecting his children is rarely the case; on the ground separated dads are struggling and their struggles are ignored and even unrecognized.

Giving FRO the clout to take these actions is somewhat frightening. This past year the Ontario Ombudsman wrote a damaging report on their operation detailing failings and abuse of power. The common complaint is that clients rarely are able to know or speak to their caseworker. The process to fix or make changes (e.g. child going from one parent to the other) is next to impossible and even our MPPs face a convoluted process. When we consider the on-going layoffs in the industrial base of our community, the workings of FRO become a significant concern.

The search for answers continues and this is a baby step effort. All parents should meet their obligations! But to be satisfied with an easy answer will never move us along the path that ensures all our children will have the financial and emotional support that comes from the involvement of both sides of their family.

Kids 'n' Dad services families in the Waterloo Region. Its goal is to ensure that children from a separated family have two parents co-operating and actively supporting them as they develop and mature into adulthood.

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