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Français	Contact Us	Help	Search	
Home	What's New	Site Map	Links	Laws

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA PROVIDES PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES WITH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FOLLOWING DIVORCE OR SEPARATION

OTTAWA, March 3, 2000 – The Government of Canada took an important step forward to enhance the family law system with the allocation of \$29 million in assistance to the provinces and territories over two years. The funding, announced in the February 28th federal budget, will provide continued support for child-centred, family law-related initiatives.

"The needs of Canadian children and families are a priority for the Government of Canada," said the Honourable Anne McLellan, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. "Our goal is to ensure that the family law system always addresses the needs and best interest of children in circumstances of separation and divorce, particularly with regard to child support and custody and access."

Specifically, the new funding will help the provinces and territories in delivering programs such as:

- parenting information and skills development;
- mediation;
- innovative, court-based support; and
- improved enforcement programs.

This funding will also facilitate the Government of Canada's plans to work with provinces and territories to improve the family law system, a jurisdiction that is shared between both levels of government. The funding builds on recent, successful collaborative federal-provincial-territorial efforts in the area of family law, most notably unified family courts and the Child Support Initiative. The Child Support Initiative, announced in the 1996 federal budget, includes the introduction of child support guidelines, changes to the tax rules, and added enforcement measures to assist the provinces and territories in enforcing child support orders.

The extension of funding represents an important step in the development of a broad, integrated approach to reforming the family law system with respect to child support and custody and access. The Government of Canada is committed to the ongoing development of a co-operative, holistic and flexible approach to family law that seeks to be less adversarial and more effective in responding to the needs of children and their families.

The Government of Canada is working in partnership with the provinces and territories to develop options for child-focused amendments to the *Divorce Act* and to consult Canadians. The results of the comprehensive review of the child support guidelines and proposals on custody and access will be tabled in Parliament on or before May 1, 2002.

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