Editorial: No more paying Olson

Sharon Rosenfeldt speaks to media after serial killer Clifford Olson was denied parole at the Regional Reception Centre in St. Anne des Plaines. Rosenfeldt's son Dayrn, was one of Olson's victims.

Photograph by: Bryanna Bradley, Montreal Gazette

Extreme cases make bad laws but they can sometimes accentuate bad ones already on the books.

News that serial killer Clifford Olson receives $1,100 a month in federal seniors benefits, exposed the folly of paying $2 million a year in retirement benefits to 400 seniors, serving two or more years in federal prison. These seniors are no ordinary pensioners. They already have their basic needs paid for by the state.

It sparked an uproar that has lead to the loophole finally being closed. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation collected 46,000 signatures on a petition opposing the rules, resulting in a new bill passed by the Senate this week that will terminate the benefits to those in federal prison.

Olson has been in super-maximum security for most of his adult life, which is the same as living outside the country, a condition that would have automatically caused him to lose his eligibility for the

benefits.

Prisoners have no need for income supplements such as Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement because their food, shelter and other immediate expenses are paid on their behalf, at a burden to the taxpayer. Once out of prison, they are eligible to apply for the income support.

Moreover, Olson's crimes (he admitted to killing 11 children and youth) and those of the other senior citizens serving sentences in federal penitentiaries, forfeit basic rights afforded to law-abiding Canadians.

The federal government acted swiftly, and passed legislation that will become law six months after it was introduced in the Commons. We applaud them for fixing the error in law that allowed this ludicrous misuse of public funds to occur unnoticed for so long.