

## Seniors in prison will lose government benefits



Canada's Human Resources Minister Diane Finley speaks during Question Period in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa December 1, 2010.

REUTERS/Chris Wattie

**Janice Tibbetts, Postmedia News** · Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2010

OTTAWA — The Harper government will soon cut off federal income supplements for imprisoned seniors after a bill, inspired by serial killer Clifford Olson, passed Tuesday in the Senate.

Olson, who turns 71 on Jan. 1, has said he would sue the government if the bill passes.

The proposed legislation is set to become law only six months after it was introduced in the Commons, prompted by news that Olson was receiving more than \$1,100 a month in federal benefits while incarcerated in Quebec for the murder of 11 children in British Columbia in the early 1980s.

Human Resource Minister Diane Finley said Canadians made it clear they were “outraged” that imprisoned seniors receive monthly cheques from the government.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation collected 46,000 signatures on a petition the group handed to Ms. Finley last spring, a month after Olson’s benefits came to light.

About 400 senior citizens, serving sentences of two years or more in federal penitentiaries, will no longer receive monthly Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement cheques.

The government is also negotiating with the provinces to cut off benefits for inmates in provincial jails, which house offenders serving less than two years. Several provinces have already said they will follow suit.

Ms. Finley has estimated savings of about \$2 million annually by ending benefits for federal prisoners, and up to \$10 million once provincial prisoners are included.

Critics say it’s bad policy for the government to hastily draft legislation based on the most extreme example of an offender, such as

Olson, and that stripping imprisoned seniors of financial security will make it harder for them to rejoin society if they are eventually released.

The Old Age Supplement is funded through general tax revenues and is designed to help seniors meet their immediate, basic needs in retirement.

Ms. Finley has said that there is no reason for Canadian taxpayers to fund income support for imprisoned seniors, since their food and shelter are already covered by public funds.

Prisoners, upon release, will be eligible to apply for benefits. Olson was denied parole late last month after a brief hearing.

---

[Get the National Post newspaper delivered to your home](#)

---

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

---

**New to the site?**

To leave a comment, you need to [Sign Up](#).

**Already a member?**

To comment, please login.

[Forgot Password?](#)

**E-mail**

**Password**

[Login](#)