

Stephen Harper wants you to get married: Mallick ^[1]

Author: Mallick, Heather

Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 4 Nov 2014

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS:

The Conservatives' income-splitting plan is being derided from almost all directions and rightly so. It replaces the vision of national child care with a hasty pre-election vote-buying cheque and a laughably small amount of extra monthly money for daycare.

There is little about this boutique tax break for a small group of families - consisting of two married adults with children and unequal incomes - that offers realistic help. If your spouse earns \$75,000 and you earn \$50,000, you'll get nothing, but if your salary drops to \$25,000, you'll get \$1,239. If you get a raise, you'll be punished. Why does it apply to parents of children under 18 rather than only to parents of preschoolers in the years when parents truly need financial help for daycare? Why does it encourage marriage?

Oh we both know why. I'm being coy here, which is unconscionable in a small space. The bashfulness is leaking out from the print like cream in a layer cake. Income-splitting is intended to encourage women to do a Betty Draper, to stay home and raise children while a business-suited husband hauls home major money. If this is your life and it has worked out for both of you, I send you congratulations and champagne. If you think children need a mother at home for a lifetime, great. This column was not written for you.

I hear a lot from men and women for whom this traditionalist dream has evaporated. They send me howls of despair hidden in stories of expensive divorce lawyering and brutal judging, men alienated from SAHM (stay-at-home mother) wives who have no idea how hard it is to compete in a savage workplace, lonely wives unable to explain to husbands what non-stop child care entails, couples stunned when the single income vanished, divorced women trying to get back into the workplace after years away.

They are not happy people. I send them sympathy, but to you, I give advice.

1. Income-splitting is just like divorce. It is candy for the rich. If you fall for the cheap lure of Harper's quick money, just remember that the trail of Snickers will always end, sometimes in a very dark wood.
2. There is no job as unreliable as marriage. Your workplace is bad enough. Now think of yourself as member of the sexual precariat too.
3. Never depend on anyone else for your keep.

An accountant has told me he has male clients so rigid that they won't even accept the current pension-splitting tax break because it would mean a cheque going to their entirely dependent wives. Don't assume that split income is always shared income.

I'm indebted to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives for a study titled *Inequality by Design*, as well as to the C.D. Howe Institute, for interpreting the consequences of the split. Money is a language and economists are translators. So what is Harper is trying to achieve?

Our prime minister is not an ideologue in the sense that he doesn't start fires - like anti-abortion legislation - that he knows could burn out of control. But Harper really does have social aims he hasn't had time to work on, and encouraging women to stay home is one of them. It was highly amusing to watch him announce the plan at a school in Vaughan, Ont., looking deeply uncomfortable and pointing at one unimpressed little girl. "Look, a human child," he seemed to be saying. "Look, a human finger," she's thinking.

I am not an ideologue either, just a practical-minded feminist who values equal relationships between men and women, of which money is just one measure. It's not that I can't be bought with income tax breaks - I like Harper's folding money as much as anyone - but seriously, don't quit your job for two grand. A decade down the road, you'll be kicking yourself for taking more than maternity leave. Permanent SAHM-ing was a bad idea when it was rampant and worse when it is retro-current.

Children are small infinitely lovable people but I always found them pretty hard-headed about what they required from parents, which was hard work outside and inside the home. Beware of income-splitting and note that as Harper does this, he is capping the number of foreign nannies coming to Canada. The man has a plan.

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: federal programs ^[4]
taxation ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/11/stephen-harper-wants-you-get-married-mallick>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/11/stephen-harper-wants-you-get-married-mallick> [2]
https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2014/11/04/stephen_harper_wants_you_to_get_married_mallick.html [3]
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-programs> [5]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/taxation>