

Winter 2011

WHAT'S NEW

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes at the Family Responsibility Office? Visit www.ontario.ca/fro to watch the first three in a series of new videos that will take you inside FRO and show you all the work that goes into enforcing and collecting family support.

FRO CLIENT TIPS

- Let us know about any changes to your name, address or telephone number. Keeping your contact information up to date is important so we can reach you to discuss your case.
- Contact the Family Responsibility Office as soon as possible if you believe that the support obligation has ended. FRO will confirm that a "termination date" (end date for the support obligation) is included in the support order. If it is not, we will request confirmation from the other party that support has ended.
- When you receive a letter from us, please read it carefully and respond promptly if necessary. It could impact your payments or be about enforcement action that we are taking on your case.

STATS AND FACTS

Between September 1 and December 31, 2010, the Family Responsibility Office:

Collected **\$216,190,000**

Answered **159,689** client calls

Answered **686,340** calls through the automated information line

Suspended **1,217** driver's licences

Garnished **\$112,004** in lottery winnings

Registered **5,701** new cases

MYTHS AND FACTS

myth: The Family Responsibility Office will impound your vehicle if you miss a support payment.

fact: The Family Responsibility Office always tries to work with parents to help them make their support payments.

If a payor continues to default on payments and will not take steps to work out a payment plan, there are a number of enforcement actions FRO can take. This could include suspending a payor's driver's licence. It would not happen if a payor only missed one payment.

In all cases, the payor would be notified in writing in advance and given options to avoid the suspension.

Effective December 1, 2010, if you are caught driving with a licence that is suspended for certain reasons under the Highway Traffic Act (including for continuing to default on support payments), police will impound the vehicle you are driving for seven days. This is part of the Road Safety Act, 2009 introduced by the government to help keep drivers safe on Ontario roads. You can find more information on seven-day vehicle impoundments under "Road Safety" online at www.ontario.ca/transportation.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Family Responsibility Office can enforce support orders issued outside of Ontario. In fact, we have agreements with all of the Canadian provinces and territories, and 25 other countries.

This means that we work with an international network of enforcement authorities to get families their support, even if a parent moves out of Ontario. We also help those other countries enforce their support orders when the payor has moved to Ontario.

GETTING RESULTS: FRO Seizes \$73k Owed to Family

In June 2006 a case was registered with the Family Responsibility Office, but shortly after, both parents agreed to withdraw and handle payments on their own.

Two years later, the recipient re-filed her order with FRO because she needed help to get the money the payor owed, as well as ongoing support.

With the arrears at more than \$44,000, FRO initiated a series of enforcement activities, including filing a Writ of Seizure and Sale to prevent the payor from selling or re-financing any property without paying the arrears.

In 2009, at the request of the support recipient's lawyer, the writ was removed to allow for the sale of their matrimonial home. But while the house was up for sale, FRO closely monitored the case to ensure the writ was re-filed as soon as the sale was complete.

This second writ paid off. In 2010, the payor paid just over \$73,500 – the full amount of arrears – to have the writ removed.

THANKS TO FRO...

On June 23, 2010, a client wrote to the Family Responsibility Office:

"I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you do daily. I'm sure your job is not an easy one but without your assistance, I would never have been able to raise my daughter as I have and she certainly would not have an opportunity to attend university as she will be in the fall. Your service has made a huge difference in her life. We thank you for making a difference."

Q&A: How does the Family Responsibility Office enforce support payments?

Our first step is always to work cooperatively with payors to help them meet their support obligations. The easiest way to avoid enforcement action is by paying support in full and on time each month. However, if necessary, we can take enforcement actions, including:

- garnishing your bank accounts (taking the money you owe directly from your bank account)
- reporting you to the credit bureau
- suspending your driver's licence, Canadian passport and federal licences (such as a pilot's licence)
- placing a lien on your personal property by registering the amount you owe with the Ontario government. If you try to sell your property (e.g., your car, your camper, tools of the trade), a property search will show the registration against it and you may have to pay any arrears owing before you can sell the property or transfer its ownership
- issuing a writ of seizure and sale for property you own. This means if you try to sell or refinance an asset (e.g., your house, cottage or property that you own), you will be required to use any profit to pay the support arrears
- reporting you to your professional or occupational organization(s)
- seizing your lottery winnings, and
- starting a "Default Hearing" where you explain to the court why you are behind on support payments. This could result in up to 180 days of jail time.

We will always send you a written notice before any enforcement action is taken. The notice will include a deadline. To avoid enforcement action, you should contact FRO before the deadline to discuss your options:

1. immediately paying all the arrears owing, or
2. entering into a voluntary re-payment plan to help you pay down the amount you owe while also paying ongoing support.

Learn more by reading our fact sheets online at www.ontario.ca/fro.

How to Contact Us

24-Hour Automated

Information Line

Tel: 416-326-1818

Toll-free: 1-800-267-7263

Client Services Call Centre

Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm

Tel: 416-326-1817

Toll-free: 1-800-267-4330

TTY: 1-866-545-0083

www.ontario.ca/fro