

Diane Lebouthillier Minister of National Revenue: House of Commons 2017-Dec-12

“Mr. Speaker, I have a few more remarks I would like to make regarding the question of privilege raised by my colleague, the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

The member referred to recent articles and believes that they contradict the statement I made to the effect that the eligibility criteria for the disability tax credit have not changed. Accordingly, he is accusing me of knowingly misleading this House.

I stand by my previous statement. The eligibility criteria for this tax credit, as defined in paragraph 118.3(1)(a.1) of the Income Tax Act, have not changed.

My colleague's question of privilege has more to do with the letter of clarification that the Canada Revenue Agency started sending out in May to communicate with health care professionals in cases where agents require more information to complete a file.

It is very important to me that this issue be resolved today, not only to clarify the matter here in the House, but also to ensure that Canadians have accurate information on the disability tax credit for the benefit of those who apply for it.

The letter of clarification sent by the agency sought to clarify the interpretation of the information relative to the 14-hour rule set out in the legislation. The purpose of the letter was never to change an eligibility criterion. However, it became obvious that the clarification letter had an unintended consequence with respect to the assessment of the claims. That is why I announced on Friday that the agency would immediately stop using the content of the May clarification letter and would resume using the previous letter. The agency will also reassess the claims that were denied during that period.

In order to ensure that the agency's administrative changes help improve our service, I also announced the return of the disability advisory committee. From now on, the views of Canadians with disabilities will be an integral part of the agency's decision-making process.

Although I stand by my previous comments that no changes were made to the eligibility criteria, I will admit that the agency's efforts to clarify the criteria had unintended consequences. For that, I offer my most sincere apologies.

I am convinced that, thanks to the announcement we made last week, the agency's decisions will be better informed. The committee will play a key role in the administration of tax credits for persons with disabilities and its recommendations will be made public.”