

900,000 proud veteran Canadians who offered their lives to ensure peace, freedom, and national unity for our country.

The main point I want to make tonight is that a provision presently exists in the War Veterans Allowance Act which could overcome this present inequity for many of the 60,000 veterans receiving disability pensions under 48 per cent. One of the criteria for qualification for war veterans allowance is that the veteran is receiving a disability pension of 5 per cent or over, which at present rates entitles him to \$34.78. As long as he is now 60 years of age or over and in receipt of a disability pension, he can now qualify for war veterans allowance, if not receiving any other income, up to a maximum of \$481.17 at the married rate. A married disability pensioner at 47 per cent is entitled to only \$313.10. It is therefore to the advantage of any disability pensioner receiving between 5 per cent and 47 per cent to transfer to war veterans allowance.

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When the disability pensioner at 5 per cent to 47 per cent dies, his spouse is not entitled to a widow's pension unless his death was attributable to his pensionable disability. However, when the married recipient of war veterans allowance or civilian war allowance dies, his wife is entitled to the married rate of up to \$481.17 for one year and is then entitled to the single rate, presently \$281.07, for life. The widow in the same category is cut off when her husband dies, receiving less than 48 per cent.

This means there is an automatic protection for the widow under war veterans allowance which does not exist under a disability pension, and until the minister and the government decide to amend the Pension Act, veterans falling into the categories mentioned should apply for WVA in order to protect an assured income for their spouses. It is there in the Pension Act now, it is there in the War Veterans Allowance Act now, and it is only a matter of the minister and his staff advising those who fall into this category that they can qualify and can thus protect their wives, when they do not qualify under the disability pension legislation but do qualify and can

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qualify because of the variation between the disability pension provisions and the War Veterans Allowance Act. I hope the minister will recognize this and will portray it to veterans so that they can protect their widows in the circumstances to which I have referred.

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for again bringing to the attention of the House the matter he has raised this evening involving widows of pensioned veterans whose disability pension is assessed at less than 48 per cent.

As he knows, widows' pensions have received serious consideration by myself and by my department for some time. I replied to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) during the adjournment debate on the same subject on April 25 of this year and pointed out that the whole question of veterans benefits, including widows' pensions, is always under constant review by the department and by the Canadian Pension Commission and the other agencies of my portfolio, to determine what changes can be made to improve the lot of veterans and their dependants.

The hon. member does recognize that the WVA Act is available to widows and to married couples and those who are receiving a pension as low as 5 per cent. I should inform the hon. member that most of our clientele are in this respect aware that they are receiving WVA. They apply for it and they receive it and, as the hon. member has already said, it is income tested. Many of our veterans and widows are now in receipt of war veterans allowance; they apply for it and, unless their income stands in their way, they receive it. As the hon. member stated, they get the full rate for the first year and the single rate each year thereafter. Then if they have children or dependants, they also get something.

I am very happy that the hon. member has brought this question up. I have brought it up myself on various occasions. As far as making it more known to our widows and our pensioners is concerned, I certainly agree with his statement.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.29 p.m.