

Adjournment Debate

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 6 p.m.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

HEALS RIFLE RANGE

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak this evening on an issue which has been of concern to me since before I was elected to the House of Commons. That issue is the worsening situation at the Heals Rifle Range in my constituency.

Heals Range is the responsibility of the Department of National Defence. I am sorry to say that in my dealings with the military on this issue, there is growing frustration. The increased use of the range by civilian users on weekends is making an already difficult situation much worse for scores of my constituents.

I have been in repeated contact over the past number of years with the office of the commander, maritime forces, to apprise him of the complaints of neighbours. I have also written to the Minister of National Defence.

These complaints regard the noise, particularly on weekends and also the lack of military supervision of the facility when it is being used by civilians.

The residents have yet to have these concerns satisfactorily addressed. Unbelievably, an additional issue is that the military, through a special Order in Council, funds the ammunition supplies for the B.C. Rifle Association to use at Heals Range.

There have been numerous meetings on this issue. The Hon. Andrew Petter, MLA for Saanich South and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for British Columbia has also intervened on this issue, as has the mayor and council for the municipality of Saanich. All of this and still no satisfaction.

The situation is getting worse, not better. When one of my constituents phoned to complain of shooting after the permissible time on a Sunday afternoon, the response was a request from the base for personal informa-

tion from the complainant including a request for the social insurance number. This is not a response appropriate for the military who give repeated assurances of wanting to be good neighbours.

Sound readings taken in the area have been registered at 84 decibels. The municipality of Saanich by-law sets a limit of 45 decibels. Because the range is the property of the Department of National Defence, the municipality of Saanich has no jurisdiction.

Of additional concern to many residents is the prospect of a legacy following the 1994 Commonwealth Games. I am pleased to say that my dealings with the Commonwealth Games Society have been much more congenial.

Officials have assured me that the games facilities will be entirely portable and will be moved at the finish of the games. It is clear that the Commonwealth Games Society know what being a good neighbour is all about. The residents and their political representatives at all levels appreciate that.

In conclusion, it is increasingly clear that the only solution is for the Department of National Defence to phase out the Heals Range and relocate it to an area where the peace and serenity of a neighbourhood will not be violated.

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I have listened very carefully to the B.C. member with regard to the military range and the problems they are having in the Saanich area.

Unfortunately, my colleague is not available to respond, but I have noted her concerns with regard to the rifle association and indeed, the shooting after the time and the hours of limitations on that particular military site.

I also have to say I did hear her message loud and clear. Not only have the people come to her, the people of her riding, but also she has been in correspondence with the mayor and the local authorities and all the people of the Saanich area with regard to the problem dealing with this military range.

I do apologize once more that I do not have a direct answer. I will take her concern under advisement and be in touch with the Minister of National Defence within the next 24 hours.