

is a natural successor to Bill C-280, which was declared irregular by the Speaker because it did not have a Royal Recommendation. Therefore, the government immediately introduced Bill C-57 into the House. It passed first, second and third reading within two days, I believe. The House went into Committee of the Whole, and the whole exercise took but a very short time.

On the assumption that this house is also anxious to have this bill pass, I move that, with leave, the second reading take place now.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, again we have had a discussion on this subject. As honourable senators will recall, we were very much in favour of this bill when it was introduced. There was a general feeling throughout the house that the bill was favourable. However, there was a procedural problem and, on the Speaker's ruling, the bill could not be proceeded with. The procedural problem arose, quite naturally, out of a previous decision here on another bill.

Be that as it may, we indicated then that we supported the bill. We still support the bill, and we will be prepared on these conditions to give leave.

Motion agreed to and bill read second time.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thérèse Lavoie-Roux: Honourable senators, I welcome this opportunity to introduce Bill C-57, whose purpose is to improve protection for contributors to the Canada Pension Plan who are late in applying for disability benefits.

This bill replaces the Private Members' bill sponsored by the hon. member for Don Valley East. As you will recall, the Senate found the bill inadmissible because it was not accompanied by a royal recommendation, as required in the case of legislation involving taxes or public spending.

Bill C-57, which is based on Private Members' Bill C-280, as I mentioned earlier, pursues the same goals and basically targets the same group, and I am referring to late applicants for disability benefits.

Under the new legislation, if the contributor can prove that the benefit would have been payable if the application had been made earlier, the contributor will be considered to have observed the current contributory requirements of the plan for disabled contributors' child benefits.

At the present time, to receive disability benefits under the Canada Pension Plan, a contributor must have made contributions for five of the last ten years or for at least two of the last three years before the disability occurred. These rules will remain but will only apply as of the date on which the disability began, irrespective of the date on which the person made his application.

This bill will provide assistance for several thousand disabled persons during the first year after coming into force and for hundreds more thereafter.

[Senator Lynch-Staunton.]

Honourable senators, I am also delighted to see that the federal and provincial finance and social services ministers reached a consensus on the measure contained in this bill. I may remind this House that the Canada Pension Plan was established in the middle of the sixties as a result of a federal-provincial agreement involving amendments to the Constitution. Section 114 of the Plan gave the provinces the right to receive prior notice of, and to approve or reject, a broad range of amendments to the Canada Pension Plan.

Because Private Members' Bill C-280 would have involved spending Canada Pension Plan funds, the proposed changes were subject to prior notice and to approval by the provinces. You will recall, however, that since the proposal came from a private member, we did not have the usual round of consultations with the provinces.

By suspending Bill C-280 until the Senate resumed its proceedings, the Minister of National Health and Welfare was able to embark on the requisite round of intensive consultations with his provincial counterparts.

[*English*]

I would also like to take advantage of your support today and call attention to the exceptional efforts of the member for Don Valley East in this undertaking. His spirit of initiative, his tenacity and his desire to see that the interests of his constituents are well-served have earned him the admiration and respect of his colleagues and of all of his fellow citizens. His efforts and those of others in both Houses have contributed to bettering the situation of one of the most vulnerable groups in Canadian society, the disabled.

These are the latest in a long line of initiatives taken by this government in the past 10 years to improve the Canadian Pension Plan as far as disability benefits are concerned.

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, I would just like to go briefly over the two most recent changes.

First, since January 1992, as we all remember, benefits paid to the children of disabled or deceased contributors increased by \$35 a month, plus the annual cost-of-living adjustments, and are now about \$155 a month. Some 170,000 children, including nearly 68,000 children of disabled contributors, benefited from this measure.

Honourable senators, at this time I would recall the generous participation and cooperation of Senator Bosa in facilitating the passage of this bill.

Furthermore, as of January 1, 1992, eligibility for benefits is protected for those contributors to the Canada Pension Plan who cannot apply on time, owing to disability.

It is important to note that many Canadians now benefit from the disability provisions of the Canadian Pension Plan. Last January, about 221,000 disabled contributors and 68,000 children of disabled contributors received Canada Pension Plan benefits. These benefits are expected to total some \$2.1 billion in 1992.