

The main purpose of the commission, and its most important trust, was the administration of the system of allowances granted to the widows of those who were killed and to those suffering from disabilities caused by the explosion. While some 3,000 of the original 10,000 injuries were classified as serious, most were not of a permanent nature. This is evidenced by the fact that in 1920 there were 1,028 survivor and disability pensions being paid by the commission. That total has gradually decreased over the years to the point where only 65 were in pay for the month of December 1975.

The normal procedure over the years has been for the commission to make its various reports and submissions to the Governor in Council through the Minister of Finance, from whom it also receives such ministerial guidance as has been given. Over the last 25 years this guidance has been directed towards the winding up of the affairs of the commission, as the passage of time reduced the extent of its responsibilities to the point where the federal and provincial governments have agreed that the continuation of a separate establishment is not warranted, and that the transfer of the responsibility for the payment of the pensions to another, and more permanent governmental body should be made.

I should like to emphasize that this is a transfer of the responsibility. The commission is not being abolished. Its responsibility is being transferred to another governmental body.

As a result of consultation between the federal government and the Government of Nova Scotia, complementary federal and provincial legislation has been prepared towards this end. The two governments have agreed that the Canadian Pension Commission, which has the responsibility for administering the Pension Act under which, among other things or matters, war disability pensions are paid, would be the appropriate body to which the responsibilities of the Halifax Relief Commission should be transferred.

It should be noted at this point that the pensions paid by the Halifax Relief Commission since January 1918 have been increased from time to time in accordance with the consumer price index, in exactly the same manner as war disability pensions have been increased. On January 1, 1976, as a result of this indexing, the pensions were increased by 11.3 per cent, which is comparable to the increments given public servants.

The intent of the bill before us is to establish a special interest bearing account in the Consolidated Revenue Fund into which will be paid the proceeds of the assets of the commission, which amount to \$1.44 million, apart from the reserve set aside for its staff superannuation plan in the amount of \$160,000, which has been approved by the Governor in Council. That reserve will be transferred to the federal superannuation account, from which the pensions under the superannuation plan will be paid. The explosion survivor and disability pensions will be paid from the special account, which stood at \$1,130,000 on January 1, 1976. Its final balance of \$150,000, which is not required for the benefit of pensioners, is to be used for the continued rehabilitation of that area of Halifax which was damaged in the 1917 explosion.

[Senator Norrie]

● (2040)

The bill provides for the coming into force of this legislation on a day to be proclaimed by the Governor in Council. The various transfers which I have mentioned will take place at a time that is mutually acceptable to the various parties concerned after legislation has been passed by the provincial legislature.

If honourable senators have any questions, I shall be happy to try to answer them.

Senator Smith (Colchester): Honourable senators, I would like an opportunity to say a few words about this bill, the second reading of which has been so eloquently moved by the honourable senator from Colchester-Cumberland (Senator Norrie). I hope it meets the wishes of the house if that is done at the next sitting.

On motion of Senator Smith (Colchester), debate adjourned.

PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF SENATORS

MOTION TO APPOINT SPECIAL COMMITTEE—ORDER STANDS

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Perrault, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Langlois:

That a special committee of the Senate be appointed to examine and report upon the privileges and immunities that apply to members of the Senate within the precincts of the Senate, and the powers of the Speaker in respect thereof.—(*Honourable Senator Croll*).

Senator Petten: This order stands until Tuesday, March 2.

Senator Flynn: Why?

Senator Petten: Senator Croll has asked me to do this.

Senator Flynn: If Senator Croll is not here to explain why he wants to delay the debate for a month, I think it should stand until the next sitting.

Senator Petten: I am agreeable to its standing until the next sitting.

Order stands.

SCIENCE POLICY

SPECIAL SENATE COMMITTEE—NOTICE OF MEETING

Senator Langlois: Honourable senators, Senator Lamontagne has asked me to announce tonight that the Special Committee of the Senate on Science Policy will meet tomorrow, Wednesday, February 4, when the Senate rises, to discuss industrial research and development. The witness will be the Honourable C. M. Drury, Minister of State for Science and Technology. The notices for this meeting have, of course, already been sent to honourable senators.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, earlier this evening the Leader of the Opposition asked about the