

Adjournment Debate

problems in that area, and they were able to get on with some practical solutions.

The same thing will happen in this particular area where indeed there are different forms of abuse of the elderly. I think they fall into three categories: neglect, financial and physical. Neglect can take the form of overabuse of drugs, underabuse of drugs, patients in nursing homes being left unattended for many, many hours—people who need to be changed in bed or rolled over from one side to the other but left for hours without proper care. Loneliness is another factor that can be harsh and cruel if some measures are not taken to lessen this problem. I mentioned the financial aspect. That is a problem facing a number of seniors, and it can be the result of powers of attorney being taken from elderly people by relatives, although not really meant to be the case. It can also be the result of a loss of control of pension cheques or other funds, control that has in one way or another been taken from the elderly. We have all read of too many cases where the elderly have been victims of financial scams involving someone impersonating a police officer trying to catch some embezzler and being asked to take a certain amount of cash out of the bank. In this way some elderly citizens have lost their entire life savings.

This is such an important area I hope the federal Government will play an important role in research and analysis, but also in moving forward with practical action.

I commend the task force set up in North York for its approach. Two specific actions have been proposed by this task force. The one that we are very excited about is what they call a "brown bag approach". Seniors in North York will be asked to attend meetings at some of the community centres, beginning January 28. A number of pharmacists will be available at these locations. The seniors will be asked to literally put their pills and drugs into a brown paper bag and consult with one of these pharmacists who will in a very helpful and constructive way examine these drugs.

As we well know, some people may take a certain pill to help them sleep, and another pill for a different reason; they may be taking a number of pills. They perhaps visited different pharmacists and could be getting conflicting advice. Perhaps pharmacist did not know about all the other pills the person was taking.

I applaud this approach, I think it is most useful and that it will help many seniors in a practical way. We hope this will be done on an ongoing basis. I know Mrs. Eleanor Cooper, who is helping on this, plans to contact some of the people later; in other words, do a bit of a post-test analysis to see how the whole project might be improved still further.

As to the subject I mentioned, there are two practical approaches. One concerns tackling the problem of loneliness, and we know how difficult that can be, those of us who have known a number of seniors over the years and who have visited senior citizens homes. I have at least six or eight in my own riding that I visit from time to time.

The interesting project that is starting here is really a pen pal approach. Mrs. Cooper has matched a number of Canadi-

an seniors in the Florida area with Canadian seniors here who have similar interests, starting a pen pal program. That one project, I would submit, could go a long way towards people establishing some pals they can write to, and perhaps visit from time to time. Rather than analysing things, *ad infinitum*, here's an approach that we think will bring some cheer and sunshine into some lives. I applaud that approach as well.

Lastly, just to touch on other things that are happening—this touches on the subject of loneliness as well—there are some interesting developments in England whereby they are trying to decrease the number of seniors who are literally forced to go to nursing homes. Many can remain in their own homes and be properly looked after by a nurse or a volunteer worker dropping in on them two or three times a day. In this way they are much happier. Not many seniors want to willingly leave their homes, their roots are there and they have many beautiful memories. I know we are trying similar things in Canada. Not only is this great for the seniors, but it is also a lot less costly to the public and to the taxpayers.

In closing, we intend to again contact the Hon. Minister of Health and Welfare on this issue. He has already said he wants to keep abreast of developments. We will keep him posted and we earnestly hope for his support and indulgence as we move towards real and happy solutions to this vital problem.

[Translation]

Mrs. Gabrielle Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, it is only quite recently that Government policies have begun to take abuse of the elderly into account. In the past, it was not generally believed that such a thing could happen. Admittedly, we have difficulty in recognizing and understanding such a phenomenon. However, in such cases, we must not close our eyes because we do not want to see.

The same happened for child abuse, which came to the notice of the public in the sixties when many people denied that it could be true, and the same also happened for battered women in the seventies. During the eighties, we have learned that abuse against the elderly is another very serious dimension of the problem of family violence.

Such abuse can take various forms. Abuse may include physical assault, shoving, and serious neglect, including failure to provide food, proper hygiene and medical care.

Psychological and social abuse may include exposure to isolation and withdrawal from society, lack of attention, verbal or emotional abuse and intimidation. Abuse may also occur in the area of financial resources if there is a withdrawal of financial support.

The kind of life led by the elderly may give us some clues to the reasons for this national tragedy which is now a major problem. We do not have a clear picture of the extent of the abuse inflicted on the elderly, but a major study carried out