

them for personal support. Another program offered by the Red Cross across Canada and appreciated in my community is the house fire relief service extending financial support and assistance to families that have lost their homes and personal belongings due to fire.

The Canadian Red Cross Society influences the lives of people daily in communities right across this country, including financial assistance in providing supplies to help victims of war, famine and natural disasters abroad. In Canada the Red Cross organizes many home programs including support for veterans and seniors, and more than a quarter of a million people have benefited from its services.

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#### COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM

**Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, human rights groups in Canada want to know the real reasons for the scrapping of the Court Challenges Program.

The government says there is enough federal jurisprudence but legal experts say that simply is not true. The government says it is part of the deficit reduction, but all evidence contradicts the suggestion that the justice department could perform this function more cheaply. This would also be a conflict of interest for the department which must defend any court challenges.

Could it just be a coincidence that Preston Manning has called for this program to be scrapped? Considering the support that the Prime Minister has given the program in the past, surely there is no one in this government who is not committed to protecting the human rights of every Canadian.

We all hope this program will be reinstated.

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#### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of a constituent from Calgary Southeast who contacted me expressing concern about a statement made yesterday with regard to veterans affairs.

I have spoken to the minister and I am pleased to report that there are absolutely no plans, as the hon.

member for Hillsborough yesterday suggested, "to shuffle veterans affairs positions around the country".

I was advised that the department may relocate some jobs to streamline operations, but it would do so only to improve efficiency while maintaining service to our veterans, with every possible consideration of employees who may be affected.

The member also mentioned the winding down of the veterans lands administration. The government is looking at ways of improving the efficiency of the agency. We are looking at investigating privatization of the administration of VLA's activities and at other ways of ensuring continued cost effectiveness.

We will wind it up, but in an orderly way and with every consideration for employees who may be affected and at the same time ensuring that service to our veterans is maintained.

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#### PORT OF CHURCHILL

**Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill):** Mr. Speaker, at a general meeting of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities on March 6, 1992, the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds was asked about the use of the port of Churchill.

The minister said that the port of Churchill had many problems that are not incurred at other ports. He included the example of a Brazilian ship last September or October running into an iceberg and puncturing its hull. The minister then stated that welders had to be flown to Churchill. The minister also stated that the Brazilians were not going to be going to Churchill any more.

• (1410)

I have a document from the Canadian Coast Guard. It has reviewed its casualty records for 1989, 1990 and 1991 and has stated that there was no recorded incident of the form of damage described.

It also checked the records of the Transportation Safety Board. It had some incidents recorded where Brazilian ships had ice damage. However, these were on ships that were in transit to or from the Gulf of St. Lawrence. They say: "None were to ships"—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** I apologize for interrupting the hon. member.