

Government Orders

We were not only moved emotionally, we were all moved to action. In four and a half hours we had reached agreement that existing disability provisions within the CPP were not adequate.

I guess we could ask ourselves: what does this bill really do?

What it does is provide a \$35 per month increase in benefits paid to children of CPP contributors who die or who are disabled. All recipients would receive the increase on January 1992, after the regular cost of living adjustments is made to current payments of \$113 per month.

Thus, on January 1992 the benefit would be \$154.54. We are talking about an increase to these children of disabled people of \$35 a month. Does it really provide \$35 a month?

I guess I will put these questions to the House. Can we expect the provinces, private insurance or other players to decrease benefits by \$35 a month as of January 1992? If this is the case, where is the real benefit for Canadians with disabilities? What can be done to ensure that Bill C-39 benefits disabled Canadians and is not merely a subsidy for private insurance companies or the provinces?

I was correct. I was told by the actuary and by the officials from the department that if the provinces decided to counteract, they could decrease it by that amount. Regarding the private insurance company that has this person insured, if the clause is in there, it could.

Here we are with a bill that may be subsidizing other sources. Really, it is a bit deceiving. The department estimates 170,000 children will be eligible to receive this higher benefit. Every one of them will receive the benefits. We know that, if the provinces agree to it.

It may be offset, and the people should be aware that it may be offset. I know I will be watching my province of British Columbia to ensure that it does not. I am sure it will not.

I want to go a little bit deeper into the bill if I may. I would like to refer to *The Regency and Retroactive Rules Affecting Disability Benefits*, a report to the Minister of National Health and Welfare by the Canada Pension Plan Advisory, May 1990.

As we sat in that committee, we had the people from the disabled group there. One of the gentlemen was a man in a wheelchair. He had two children. He receives

\$785 a month to pay his rent or run his home and for his children. He told me at that committee his children cannot go to hockey games. He cannot afford to supply them with the equipment to play hockey.

He cannot go out and retrain himself to be able to carry on an active life. He cannot go out and take a part-time job because if he did Canada Pension would disqualify him from disability. What kind of legislation have we got in Canada that would allow someone to be designated as disabled for the rest of his life and not give him the incentive to go back out to try to train himself or re-educate himself?

I am told in committee that there is provision in some provinces where there are some pilot projects going on, one in British Columbia and one in Ontario, which allows for experimenting in these areas.

I want to refer to a case that I was first initiated into, the Canada pension disabilities. There was a young boy who played hockey with my son. I knew the boy. He got married and had two children. At the age of 28 he found himself in an accident in which logs fell from a truck and crushed him to the extent that he was literally immobilized.

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When they shipped him off to Vancouver, they had to ship him on a passenger train, take the window out and put him on in a stretcher. His wife and children had nowhere else to go and so they came to me. They were looking for a disability pension. He was denied. He was allowed to go to the appeal board. I went to the appeal board and sat in on the appeal procedures. During that procedure the government appoints someone, in this case someone from a federal department. The claimant has someone appointed to represent him on his behalf and then an independent judge sits to chair it and then they make their report.

He won his case and has improved immeasurably since that time. If he were to try to retrain or find some mechanism of trying to find some part-time work to be able to put himself back into the work force, he would lose his disability pension.

Surely to goodness, in this day and age, with the new technologies we should not and we must now allow legislation to give that kind of a disincentive to people who could find themselves retrained and try to put them back into the workplace.