

*Government Orders*

their health problems make it necessary to have attendant care in the home. However, with the death of the veteran, the surviving spouse lost this monthly allowance at an already difficult time. The amendment will treat these individuals in the same manner as the widow or widowers of other disability pensioners who continue to receive the allowance for up to one year after the death of the veteran.

In this regard, I want to mention that the government has acted to help recently bereaved spouses of disability pensioners through the one year continuation of pension benefits. We believe this is a compassionate practice and we have extended our help to other areas as well.

This summer, I was able to announce that surviving spouses of veterans who had been receiving VIP, or Veterans Independence Program benefits, would be able to retain groundskeeping and housekeeping assistance for up to one year after the death of the veteran. The change took place, effective September 1 of this year, and it again represents further progress in our desire to help recently bereaved spouses get through a most difficult time.

Bill C-87 also includes dozens of amendments designed to provide policy consistency, to improve wording, and to streamline procedures. They are non-controversial housekeeping measures. In fact, this is a comment I wish to underline.

Following first reading, the major veterans organizations—the Royal Canadian Legion, the National Council of Veterans Association and the Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans Association—poured over every word in this bill. They discussed virtually every clause with my staff and officials and, in fact, with me personally. Then, we met to talk about the items where any questions remained.

My approach was quite simple and straightforward. If there is anything in Bill C-87 that raises any doubt or uncertainty about it being of either a benefit or housekeeping nature, let me know and I will resolve it here and now, or we will put it to one side for further discussion. I might add that we have done that in several cases.

The amendments I will be moving in Committee of the Whole reflect the consensus that all of the veterans organizations have reached. They have been studied and broached by both the Liberal Party critic and the New Democratic Party critic. It was consultation at its best. I want to thank the veterans' organizations for their invaluable comments and their insight. This bill is a better one because of their contribution and I am the first to acknowledge that.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like this opportunity to speak to a point all Canadians feel, particularly at this time of year. While we can never repay the men and women who did so much for Canada in wartime, nor can we ever stop trying to pay the debt we owe, Bill C-87 is intended to benefit further veterans and their dependents, but there is more we all want to do in the future.

The veterans organizations, through their appearances before parliamentary committees, in their meetings and their conventions, and in their day-to-day representations, bring forward dozens of good suggestions and recommendations. Parliamentarians and interested Canadians also raised positive and constructive ideas for improvements. We have been able to do quite a bit. In fact, I have announced eight new improvements this summer alone.

I would like to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House who are making possible debate on Bill C-87 today. The spirit of co-operation is appreciated. Hopefully, we will get through second reading, referral to Committee of the Whole, and clause-by-clause study of the amendments and bill today.

[*Translation*]

I again want to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House who are making possible today's debate on Bill C-87. The spirit of cooperation is appreciated by veterans and their dependants.

[*English*]

**Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to address second reading of Bill C-87.

I would like to begin by again paying tribute to the men and women whom the Department of Veterans Affairs and the associated agencies are there to serve. Over 100,000 said men and women sacrificed their lives in three wars to keep this great country of ours free. Of course, we also honour and cherish the veterans who