

[Translation]

**Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel-Ahuntsic):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great interest that I read Bill C-224, presented today in the House by the Member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie), since in my riding, I represent a large population of senior citizens. There are at least ten senior citizens homes in Saint-Michel-Ahuntsic, and since I often have an opportunity to meet the elderly, I am well aware of their needs.

Bill C-224 is aimed at improving communications between senior citizens and the federal Government. I would like to point out to the Members of this House that we already have two mechanisms within the federal Government through which we keep informed of the needs of our senior citizens. I am referring to the National Advisory Council on the Aged and the New Horizons Program. The latter, as Hon. Members will recall, was established in July 1972, to help Canadian pensioners set up their own organizations to provide for planned activities in their own environment. The primary objective of the program is to reduce the loneliness of many senior citizens and the problems that are so often a consequence of that loneliness.

Since no other country had ever attempted to set up a program of this kind, Canada has been a world leader in research in this field and in creating mechanisms aimed at helping senior citizens to deal with their own problems.

Although no one could anticipate to what extent senior citizens would take part in this kind of undertaking, their reaction has been more than positive. During the twelve years that New Horizons has been in existence, nearly 10,000 groups of senior citizens, representing about one-third of Canadian pensioners, have set up more than 23,000 projects. For thousands of these people, taking part in these projects has been an opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills and to develop new interests. Participation has been a source of enrichment for many of our elderly fellow citizens, and it has enhanced their relationships with one another and with Canadians as a whole. Because of its success, the New Horizons Program is now being used as a model throughout the world. It has been studied by delegations from a number of foreign countries. Furthermore, it has given Canadians a new perspective on their retirement years. The projects set up by senior citizens within the framework of the New Horizons Program are as varied as they are numerous. However, most of these projects fall into one of the following general categories: service-oriented projects, educational projects, recreational projects, and finally, general development projects.

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I would like to give Hon. Members a summary of the kind of activities existing in each of these areas. Across Canada, senior citizens have tried to define certain needs they found were not being met satisfactorily, and it was to meet these needs that

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New Horizons grants were used to launch their various activities. That is how some projects came to be, including day care centres for adults, home visits, home delivery of meals and renovations of housing for the elderly or the handicapped.

A good many of our senior citizens were unable to attend school during the years when they raised their family, and yet, given an opportunity, they become quite eager to learn. The New Horizons Program acknowledges these facts by funding many courses, symposiums and more or less structured workshops on a wide-ranging series of subjects. In addition, the New Horizons Program is the perfect vehicle to make the elderly increasingly aware of the importance of physical fitness. They are encouraged to get together and attend gymnastic sessions and engage in every kind of sporting activities such as swimming and dancing.

Thanks to funds provided under the New Horizons Program, our senior citizens have published over 400 books on the history of Canada. They have founded museums and restored machinery, tools, antiques, buildings, cemeteries, manufactured objects, paths and historic sites. They have retraced documents and historic etchings, turned out replicas of costumes worn at the beginning of the colony and, through such activities, they have given renewed significance to legends, languages, traditions and various forms of craftsmanship.

Mr. Speaker, the other organization which plays a key role in promoting consultation between the elderly and the federal Government is the National Advisory Council on Aging. We now have two programs which keep the various Departments up to date on the needs of senior citizens. The National Advisory Council on Aging is an independent organization funded by the Department of National Health and Welfare which is relatively new as compared to the New Horizons Program, since it was created by order in council only four years ago, on May 1, 1980. Still, the 18-member council—mostly retired people from every region of Canada—already has a great number of achievements to its credit. The National Advisory Council on Aging has very broad terms of reference, as expected in such an organization, to the extent that it is responsible for helping and advising the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) with respect to all topics related to elderly Canadians. That includes such activities as examining the needs and problems of older people, recommending ways to meet and solve them, consulting national, provincial and local associations concerned with aging, publishing reports and maintaining public debate on aging.

In her speech to inaugurate the Council, the Hon. Monique Bégin, Minister of National Health and Welfare, emphasized the importance of extensive publicity to bring about a change in public attitude towards senior citizens and to enhance government policy on aging. The Minister also urged the Council to make every effort to identify and popularize the