

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

GRAND PARENTS' DAY ACT

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North, Lib.) moved that Bill C-274, an act respecting a national grandparents day, be now read the second time and referred to committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I recognize there are many grandparents in the gallery. I appreciate their presence and I thank them for taking the time to join us in the debate.

It is an honour for me to stand today in the House to speak on Bill C-274, a private member's bill that I introduced on September 27, 1994. Bill C-274 is an act respecting a national grandparents day in Canada. It would set aside the second Sunday in September every year as a national day to honour grandparents in Canada from coast to coast.

It is a pleasure for me to address a generation of individuals who may be older but surely are wiser. They should not be forgotten or left behind.

As I said earlier in the House, we have the honour of having 20 grandparents and members of the growth society, an organization whose purpose is to safeguard the vital grandchildren and grandparents relationship.

I have received numerous letters in support of Bill C-274. I will read part of one letter I received: "On behalf of our grandparents group and all other grandparent groups in Canada, I commend you for introducing Bill C-274, an act respecting a national grandparents day. Many of us will be here in the members' gallery for a debate on your bill. We sincerely hope that you will have the full support of the House and that it will be voted on favourably".

• (1735)

Another letter, sent by the vice-president of focus on the family association of Canada, states: "Thank you for your request for the designation of grandparents day. Our calendar printed by focus on the family U.S. has the second Sunday in September marked as grandparents day. We applaud the effort you have put in to recognize this day in Canada".

I have received numerous letters of support from my riding from seniors groups and organizations in favour of this day to be celebrated in Canada. Ironically tomorrow, June 1, 1995, will also mark the beginning of senior citizens month in Canada.

At this time Bill C-274, has been deemed not votable by the subcommittee on private members' business. I ask for unani-

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mous consent so that the order be discharged and the subject matter of the bill be referred to the health committee for further consideration.

I did not have the pleasure or the honour of having grandparents. My grandmother passed away when I was very young. I missed that link between a grandson and grandmother or grandfather. I hope that no one will have to miss that link between grandparents and grandchildren anywhere in the country.

Grandparents day would give national recognition to the growing number of grandparents in Canada. I will attempt to raise the emotional conflict of interest drama that grandchildren face when one parent assumes custody and they no longer have the opportunity to see their grandparents. Many provinces and municipalities have already recognized that grandparents do contribute greatly to the family and they are a basic and fundamental element of our society. It is time the federal government recognized this fact as well.

The focus of Bill C-274 on grandparents day will serve a child's best interest and show Canadians that grandparents are a significant part of our family structure. Most important, without grandparents a child will lose a valuable role model and nurturing.

In the United States in many homes of the aged grandparents day was celebrated as a national holiday as far back as 1961 and was officially declared as grandparents day in the U.S. in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter. It is the second Sunday in September every year.

Last year in the province of Quebec the Quebec senior citizens federation urged Quebec families to mark the occasion of grandparents day by getting the different generations together. Obviously this is not possible in all cases, especially for those grandchildren who do not live nearby. I am sure they could get the long distance feeling by calling them on grandparents day.

The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren has taken on even greater importance as the result of the number of broken marriages. As we approach the 21st century we see more and more single parent families. Single parent families would be helped a great deal if we have grandparents' recognition and grandparents' connection tied to the younger generations so we can build for a stronger future and face it with more confidence.

Grandparents day was officially proclaimed in 1978. Since then every year the United States observes the second Sunday in September as grandparents day.

I call on my colleagues to accept the bill and refer it to the House committee on health in order to adopt it as soon as we can for the coming September. We have tremendous support. There is no harm in doing it. There is no one who opposes it as far as I