

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 11, 1970

The House met at 11 a.m.

CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

PETITION RESPECTING PENSION PLAN OR IMPROVED
EARLY RETIREMENT BENEFITS FOR
FORMER COAL MINERS

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the table the first report of the Clerk of Petitions stating that he has examined the petition of Mr. Angus MacDougall and 12 other persons, signed at Glace Bay, on the Island of Cape Breton, in the province of Nova Scotia, and pertaining to the Cape Breton Development Corporation Act, presented on December 10, 1970, and finds that it meets the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I should like at this time to express my appreciation for the fact that this petition has been received and found to be in order. I would like some guidance from the Chair in order to enlighten the House as to the proper procedure, and I say that advisedly, Sir, because this is a new Crown corporation set up to deal exclusively with a local problem. The information I have received in reply to a letter I wrote would indicate that the situation is very much misunderstood. For this reason I ask the Chair and the House for guidance on whether it is proper under Standing Order 67 for me to ask that this matter be immediately debated in view of the urgency of the situation.

Mr. Speaker: I think the proper procedure at this stage is for the hon. member to seek leave of the House to have the petition read. To my knowledge there is no strict or clear provision in the Standing Orders for the reading of a petition, but Citation 343 of Beauchesne's Fourth Edition indicates that an hon. member has the right to request that a petition be read by the Clerk of the House and in that way given that measure of publicity. This would require the consent of the House. I ask whether the hon. member, by leave of the House, may have the petition read?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Clerk:

To The Honourable The Commons Of Canada
In Parliament Assembled

The Humble petition of the undersigned Canadians, resident in the Island of Cape Breton and Province of Nova Scotia, who are persons for whose benefit and the benefit of their dependants your Honourable House intended to provide pension arrangements.

Sheweth:

That Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and your Honourable House, did enact the statute en-

titled the "Cape Breton Development Corporation Act", chapter 6 of the Statutes of Canada 1967, which said statute came into force, upon proclamation of the Governor in Council, on the 1st day of October 1967;

That section 18 of the said statute provides that the Cape Breton Development Corporation shall, by by-law approved by the Honourable the Treasury Board, establish, manage and administer pension arrangements for the benefit of persons, among whom are your Petitioners, employed or formerly employed in certain coal mining and related works and undertakings on the Island of Cape Breton, and for the benefit of the dependants of such persons;

• (11:10 a.m.)

That the said Corporation, purporting to comply with the said section 18, has put into force and effect a "Pre-Retirement Leave Plan", so-called;

That the Pre-Retirement Leave Plan is an income supplement scheme and is not a pension arrangement; and the benefits paid thereunder are designed and intended to supplement other forms of assistance received or to be received so as to raise the total assistance received to—but not above—certain dollar amounts fixed under the said Plan, with the result that the assistance paid by the Corporation decreases or ceases as other assistance is increased;

That the said Plan specifies that assistance received by way of unemployment insurance benefits is assistance within the meaning of the Plan; and the Plan requires that persons who are on pre-retirement leave under the Plan must use up their full benefit entitlement based upon their unemployment insurance contributions;

That the Government announced on the 3rd December 1970 that, effective the 3rd January 1971, unemployment insurance benefits will be increased by ten per cent;

That your Petitioners and their dependants will not benefit by the said increase in unemployment insurance benefits inasmuch as the Cape Breton Development Corporation will deduct, to its own use and benefit, the amount of such increase from the amount of the supplementary assistance paid by the Corporation within the income ceiling fixed by the Plan;

That this loss to your Petitioners and their dependants will commence on the 3rd January 1971;

That except by petition to your Honourable House no remedy is available to your Petitioners whereby they may obtain relief of this grievance before the 3rd January 1971 or at all;

Wherefore your Petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable House will find means of prevailing upon Her Majesty's Government and the Cape Breton Development Corporation:

1. To revoke the Pre-Retirement Leave Plan and to substitute therefor pension arrangements based upon pension principles; or alternatively, to provide for improved early retirement benefits for your Petitioners and their dependants based upon the principle already approved by Her Majesty's Government and referred to in the recommendation of His Excellency the Governor General which is printed in the Notice Paper of your Honourable House at page 3, for the 9th December 1970, and which recommends legislation to improve early retirement benefits for certain categories of persons employed in the Public Service; and

2. To provide an immediate remedy for the present personal grievances of your Petitioners that, commencing the 3rd January 1971, they and their dependants will suffer financial losses not intended by your Honourable House when providing, under section 18 of the Cape Breton Development Corporation Act that pension arrangements must be made by the Cape Breton Devel-