

● (1720)

This plan for a phased move to Charlottetown was developed to ensure that service provided to the veterans and their dependants would not suffer. A phased move is the most practical method. It guarantees the continuity and quality of our service to our veterans and it spreads out the effects of the move on Charlottetown over a longer period of time. The community can absorb significant numbers of new residents if given enough time to increase the supply of housing and community facilities available.

Numerous studies have been undertaken into such areas as communication facilities, housing, education, industry, labour markets and the social and economic impact of the relocation. Veterans affairs is now using these results to everyone's benefit. They can anticipate situations, they can gain insight into the possible effects of the relocation and they can assess what is needed and what is available before proceeding in any given direction.

Several programs have been established within the Department of the Veterans Affairs to monitor and facilitate the relocation. There are key positions in which it is imperative to have a fully trained person upon relocation to Charlottetown. These positions have been identified and are now being staffed in Ottawa by employees willing to move to Prince Edward Island. In fact, only recently the department appointed a new assistant deputy minister of finance, personnel and administration, a new assistant deputy minister of veterans services and a new director of financial management, all of whom will be moving to the island in 1982-83.

Another fairly recent appointment, that of director of policy, planning and evaluation, is being double-banked and the newly-appointed director will be working very closely with his Ottawa counterpart until he moves to the island to assume his duties there on August 1, 1980.

A comprehensive training package provides the necessary training to new employees before they assume the full responsibilities of their positions. To assist trainees in new positions, all systems and procedures are being documented to ensure that the most up-to-date manuals are used by these employees while training.

All these new employees and their families will all have a certain impact on Charlottetown, its economy, its educational, cultural and social facilities. These employees have diverse backgrounds, age, education, family status. They will comprise a variety of occupations—doctors, lawyers, senior administrators, accountants, secretaries, clerical workers, finance officers, personnel officers. These people will bring with them not only their work expertise but a variety of interests.

Veterans affairs is determined that the last thing that should happen is that the relocation should have a disruptive effect on the social fabric of the city or the island or that the present way of life be affected to any great degree. The relocation could potentially add another thousand residents to Charlottetown—an immigration of professional people moving with

Veterans Affairs

their jobs and families, people who will be taking their place in the new community, starting a new life.

A key element to the integration of the Department of Veterans Affairs employees into Charlottetown is communication and information. It is important that the people of Charlottetown and Prince Edward Island know something about the type of people who are considering moving to their community. Equally important, however, is the need on the part of our employees to be aware of what they can expect to find in Charlottetown—the lifestyle of the island, the type of community they will be moving into, the type of people who will be their neighbours.

In Charlottetown a tri-level co-ordinating group has been established and meets on a regular basis to deal with all matters pertaining to the relocation. This committee has representation from the provincial, municipal and federal governments. Five subcommittees have been formed to deal with such things as housing, education, economic impact, social impact, and the new veterans affairs facility. In particular, great strides have been made in the housing area as a result of the housing subcommittee's attempts to stimulate the housing industry to meet the needs of our employees, while at the same time ensuring that this does not cause a drastic upward trend in housing prices.

In Ottawa all employees have been provided with a comprehensive information package on Charlottetown telling them about the island climate, education, linguistic make-up, housing, health services, cost of living, recreational and commercial facilities, transportation and municipal services. Relocation advisers are available to assist any employees seeking advice on relocation. The portfolio has a relocation resource room where employees have access to Charlottetown newspapers, real estate listings, university and community college calendars, local magazines and other publications provided by groups from Prince Edward Island.

Assistance is also being provided to employees who do not wish to relocate. They can have counselling and information about securing alternate employment within the national capital region. A resource room has also been established specifically for these employees where they can find publications to assist them as prospective job hunters.

In the fall of 1979, DVA held nine days of activities, called "Operation Information", to inform employees of the facilities, services, life on Prince Edward Island and also to provide information on the employment situation in Ottawa and various means of seeking and finding reassignment. "Operation Information" was organized to give all employees information to assist them in their relocation decision and to prepare them for whatever course of action they might choose.

These programs and activities are all intended to make for a smooth transition into Charlottetown for the portfolio and its employees. Certainly with the magnitude of this relocation there will be eventualities which have not been anticipated and problems may develop. But with the support of people in Ottawa and Charlottetown, these problems can be resolved