

*Canada Pension Plan*

this part of the First Session of the Thirty-third Parliament. I am grateful to my good friend, the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan (Mr. Angus), for seconding the motion to put it on the floor for debate this afternoon.

The question I am considering is recognition of the services provided by volunteers to Canadian society in a great diversity of ways. I want to consider what sort of recognition we Canadians might extend to these volunteers, and in particular the possibility that many of them who do not have the opportunity to earn Canada Pension Plan credits toward their retirement might be able to receive such credits and be the recipients of these benefits after retirement age. Through the Canada Pension Plan and under the direction and care of the Canadian Government, they might receive this recognition and, as a result, feel, in more ways than simply the recognition of their neighbours, the sense of their own personal fulfilment in carrying out these activities.

I might say that this matter of recognition of volunteers is a topic honoured more fully when they step into the breach than in the recognition on various occasions when volunteers' activities do receive that recognition in their communities and, to some extent, nationally. We are good at providing words of various sorts to tell people that what they have done for the community is of value. However, when we look at such documents as the report of the Parliamentary Committee on Pension Reform in the previous Parliament, we see no recognition of the role of volunteers in the way of opening up the possibilities of pension reform. When we look at the voluminous studies, the main documents and supporting volumes of the Macdonald Commission on Canadian union and its economic situation, we find as well no substantial recognition of the role of volunteers. There is a certain sense, then, in which opening up this topic for consideration in this particular way is an innovation and represents a novelty in Canadian public policy. It is for that reason also that I appreciate the opportunity to support this motion this evening in this debate.

I want to consider several aspects of the motion. I want to consider the significant role played by volunteers in our communities. I want to give some consideration to the value of this service to our society. I think particularly of women, who are the larger group of those who do not find gainful employment in various circumstances, and who are active as volunteers, those persons for whom this particular proposal could be of value.

I want to give consideration as well to the point I have already made, that is the obligation society should feel toward volunteers and consequently why we should look to the Government to take up this proposal for recognition of volunteers by means of establishing the entitlement under the Canada Pension Plan. Let me say at the outset that I had the opportunity in March of 1985 to attend sessions in Saskatoon with my friend, the Hon. Member for Humboldt—Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse). The session was held in conjunction with International Women's Week and involved a series of

presentations from organizations in the City of Saskatoon and in the Province of Saskatchewan. These people were active in volunteer activities of many sorts. I remember particularly a presentation from those persons who were active in the YWCA in that city. These were excellent presentations. They demonstrated the intellectual capacity, the social insight and the community responsibility of women in these various organizations.

My reaction to the presentations at one point was that here was a remarkable demonstration of the value of volunteer services and that this was something which surely must be recognized in our society. How might we do that? Since there was some discussion in these presentations as well about the needs of elderly women who did not have adequate income, thanks to the fact they were restricted to Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement alone, it was obvious that if their income was supplemented by means of Canada Pension Plan benefits, that would be of very great assistance to them. It was in that kind of context that the germ of this proposal came to me and we gave it some limited consideration at that time.

I want to say in expanding on the matter of the role of volunteers that I have thought about a variety of persons who are active in the community of Thunder Bay. These are persons who, in some cases, have had recognition on the national level. Others have been recognized on the community level by words and presentations of one sort or another. Some of these persons have had opportunities for gainful employment and the opportunity to earn Canada Pension Plan credits in the past. In other cases that is not true. I think of two persons immediately who were recognized since I was elected to Parliament in September of 1984.

Miss Gert Beadle received the Person's Award during the first month of my service here and Mr. Ed Lauzon was the recipient of the Lifestyle Award presented by the Department of National Health and Welfare in 1985. Miss Beadle is someone who became active rather late in life. She assisted women with the need for shelter, those who had to escape from their homes because of abuse. As we all recognize, the problem of wife battering is a difficult and tragic problem in our time.

Miss Beadle's role in establishing the Faye Peterson Home in Thunder Bay was a service not only to the City of Thunder Bay itself but to the surrounding communities. That was only part of the reason she was nominated, and in fact recognized with the Person's Award by the Province of Ontario.

Mr. Lauzon has been active over many years in such activities as the Civic Recreation Hockey League for the old City of Port Arthur. He became active in establishing the Thunder Bay Senior Men's Social and Fix It Club which plays an important part in supporting senior citizens who want to remain in their homes and do not have the means to call upon professional services such as plumbing, repair work around their homes, and so on. Through this club it is possible for them to call on volunteers who will provide those services. That is just more evidence with respect to the importance of volunteer service in the community.