

The Budget

injury will pay a penny; not now, not on April 1, 1991, and not at any time.

Charges for those veterans who are in institutions because they require long-term care were first introduced in 1949, at a rate at that time of \$120 a month. Today's equivalent of that \$120, 41 years ago, would be \$750 a month.

More than 70 per cent of all non-pensioned veterans are presently paying the \$8 a day charge, but because of inconsistent regulations the other 30 per cent are paying nothing. Many veterans have objected to this unequal treatment. Why should 70 per cent of the veterans pay, and 30 per cent not pay? The changes were made after consultations with veterans groups who, incidentally, agreed to correct these inequities and this unfairness. On April 1, 1990, everyone will pay the \$240 a month, \$8 a day, for their board, for their lodging, for their recreation, for their laundry, and for nursing services. We think that that is a pretty good buy. Everyone will pay except veterans who are in institutions because of war related disabilities. I repeat, they are paying nothing now and they are not going to have to pay in the future.

We have also given notice that the rate will rise to \$420 a month on April 1, 1991. That will be the lowest rate charged by any jurisdiction, any province in Canada, and that will work out to \$14 a day. On the face of it, it may seem a lot to pay \$14 a day for board, lodging, accommodation, nursing care, recreational care, laundry and all the other good things you get, but not if you realize that it has never been raised for six years. In fact, this \$14 per day charge is only a small fraction of the \$130 a day it really costs on average in Canada to operate a chronic care bed. That is right, that is what the cost is: \$130 a day and our veterans are being charged now \$8 a day. That is about \$4,000 a month or almost \$50,000 a year for us to keep a veteran in long-term care or a chronic care bed in Canada.

In addition, the Dominion President of the Royal Canadian Legion and the Chairman of the National Council of Veterans Associations of Canada have said that they find these levels of board and lodging charges fair and reasonable, reflecting as they do the lowest rate available anywhere in Canada.

Doug Fisher who is a veteran and also a veteran of this place—incidentally, he was a New Democratic Party member of Parliament in this place—wrote about the rates that my department charges, in a recent column in *The Toronto Sun*. He talked about the money he was left by a veteran who had spent some years in one of our contract beds. Doug Fisher, who writes for the Canadian Legion magazine and many veterans publications stated:

The value of this veteran's estate, including liquid cash, had burgeoned in the institutionalized years because DVA levied such low charges. This resulted in a bonus for the deceased's heirs but it was certainly unfair to taxpaying citizens.

I want to underline that members can be certain that every veteran in our institutions now receives and always will receive adequate financial protection.

We want institutions to be a last resort and so do the veterans. They are much happier living in their own homes. But when there is no other alternative, we make certain that no veteran is financially worse off as a result of moving from his or her own home into an institution.

We have income protection features built into the regulations, and we will monitor these features to ensure that they provide adequate protection to the needy veteran who might be on war veterans' allowance.

This government has increased spending on health care for veterans by 136 per cent since 1984. This is something the veterans greatly appreciate and that the government is very proud of.

I want to talk about the Veterans Independence Program. When I hear our critics talk about cuts to VIP, I have to ask myself if they really know what they are talking about. VIP expenditures have increased by over 60 per cent in this year alone. They will more than double in another four years. It has been a soaring success under this government and will continue to do so. The Veterans Independence Program is working and it is keeping the veterans in their own homes for a longer time.

All that is happening is that heavy housekeeping, or what is otherwise known as spring cleaning, is being removed from the lengthy list of services still available to the veteran. However, where there is a legitimate health or safety requirement on the part of a particular client for the provision of a service presently found under heavy housekeeping, I want to assure this House, and indeed the veterans community, that Veterans Affairs