

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 2, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

NEW MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Jack Murta, Esquire, for the electoral district of Lisgar.

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NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Jack Murta, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Lisgar, introduced by the Hon. Robert L. Stanfield and the Hon. W. G. Dinsdale.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

First report of Standing Committee on Regional Development—Mr. Morison.

[*Editor's Note: For text of above report, see today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

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[*Translation*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

STATEMENT ON INCREASES IN PENSIONS AND ALLOWANCES

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in a few seconds I will have the pleasure of presenting a motion for first reading of a bill to amend the Pension Act.

As this bill is so closely related to the general question of rates of pension and war veterans allowances, I am taking advantage of the occasion to make clear the government's intentions on that subject. May I add that I am delighted to announce, in concrete terms, the plans to improve the benefits which are the right of those who served our country when democracy was being threatened in the world.

I am confident that the statement I make today will be welcomed by every member of this House, as it will warm the hearts of a large number of veterans.

The government plans to increase all pensions which are paid for death, or disability, related to military service by 10 per cent as of April 1 next.

Because these pensions are paid as a matter of right they are not subject to a means test and are free of income tax.

Under the revised schedules, the 100 per cent disability pension for a married man will rise by \$408 to \$4,464 per year. His single counterpart will find his pension increased by \$324 to \$3,504 per annum and the widow's pension will go up by \$240 to \$2,640 annually. Pensions for children and dependent parents, brothers and sisters will be proportionately increased.

These increases mean that an additional \$22,000,000 will be paid to our pensioners next year, over and above the \$214,000,000 they will receive this year.

We also propose to align the rates for pensions, paid under Parts I to X of the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act, with those of the Pension Act. It is under this act that pensions are awarded to merchant seamen, ferry pilots, auxiliary services supervisors, and other quasi-military personnel who suffered disability, or died, as a result of their war service.

• (2:10 p.m.)

[*English*]

Also, Mr. Speaker, next April 1 we propose to raise the maximum allowances payable under the War Veterans Allowances Act and under Part XI of the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act, by 15 per cent.

The new rate for single recipients will go up by \$16 a month to \$121, and the married rate will increase by \$26 to \$201 monthly. The rates for orphans and blind persons will be similarly increased. The present rates have been in effect since 1966 which explains why the WVA increase is 5 per cent higher than the pension increase.

War veterans allowances are subject to a means test, as before, which is based on income ceilings for single and married recipients. When the rates are raised these ceilings will be increased from \$145 to \$161 and from \$245 to \$271 respectively. We estimate that these revisions will mean that WVA and CWA recipients will receive an additional \$21 million in the 1971-1972 fiscal year.

At the same time as the new WVA rates and ceilings go into effect, the regulations will be changed to provide that recipients who are also eligible for old age security and guaranteed income supplements, which are also being increased, will be deemed to be receiving the full amounts to which they are entitled under those programs. Their war veterans allowances will then be adjusted to supplement their OAS and GIS payments to bring their incomes to the level of their relevant income ceilings.

Mr. Speaker, it has given me the greatest personal satisfaction to be able to announce, on the same day, the