

transferred to the province on July 1, 1970, "or such other date as the parties may agree." The agreement referred to also provides for the construction by the province of New Brunswick of a 300-bed wing to the Saint John General Hospital, for which my department is ready to contribute the sum of \$4½ million.

● (10:20 p.m.)

Both the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. MacRae) and myself are aware that the province of New Brunswick has announced that it will not commence hospital construction this year. Under the circumstances we are reviewing the situation with the province. Officials of my department were in New Brunswick last week meeting with officials from provincial hospitals, the provincial department of health and the Legion. I myself expect to meet with the provincial minister of health later this month.

We must remember, however, that the paramount consideration is the welfare of the veterans. My duty as Minister of Veterans

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Affairs is to ensure that our veterans continue in the future to receive the highest standard of hospital care. This cannot be accomplished by keeping our hospitals in isolation when there is such a heavy load of chronic cases. We must ensure that they participate fully in the most modern techniques and medical services that can be obtained only in hospitals with an adequate load of active patients. This is the only way to ensure that a sufficient number of professional and technical staff will continue to be attracted.

Under the rules I have only three minutes at my disposal; therefore I must conclude my remarks. I wish to assure the hon. member for York-Sunbury and all New Brunswick veterans that our sole purpose is to improve the lot of veterans. We will stampede no one into a forced transfer, but we are duty-bound to ensure that the best possible care for our veterans is secured for the future.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.