

cent of the allocation and in others it is less than 25 per cent. There is no rhyme or reason to this. The money should be available to the groups which have applied for it and need it.

It is a sensible program. It has worked very well. I submit there is no need for review. I would like to know from the parliamentary secretary, since this is an opportunity for more detailed answers on his part, who is undertaking the review and, if it is done by a private consortium or company, at what cost to the taxpayer. How much of the \$4 million is actually going to be expended in reviewing the program?

In addition, would the parliamentary secretary let us know when the review will be completed, when the report will be made public, if it is to be made public, and when the freeze will be lifted on the funds that are currently being held by the government in order to facilitate this review.

I again urge the minister, through the parliamentary secretary, of course, Madam Speaker, to move with despatch on this matter, provide us with answers and get this money out because it is such a worth-while program. The money is very well spent and it will be of considerable benefit and advantage to the groups which have applied for the funding.

• (1825)

**Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. The only point in his remarks that disappointed me was when he stated that there was no need for a review.

Putting his fine legal mind to it, I am sure he can understand that after a program has been in existence for about 18 years and has never had a review, under normal circumstances a review would be in order, even though we might think everything is going well. I hate to disappoint the hon. member because I think he wants me to announce some kind of iniquitous and inequitable disparity in the programs, but I am not going to do that.

I would hope that what he wants are at least two criteria fulfilled: one, that these programs give us value for money; and two, that there be an equitable distribution. I think that is the point of the question that he

### *Adjournment Debate*

raised. As I said, the program has not been reviewed for 18 years and it is time that that took place.

I want to assure him, as he has already indicated, that the \$15 million allocated to the program is intact for the 1991 year. It is intact. It is the same as last year. We can quibble about the cost-of-living increase and so forth but that is there. The important thing is that thousands of senior citizens across Canada are benefiting from this program and we applaud it.

The fact is also that the applications for the program are filled out unevenly. They do not draw on the programs evenly across Canada. Let me give an example. There are two seniors programs, one is the New Horizons program and the other one is the Seniors Independence Program that was brought into effect in 1988 by this government.

In Quebec, the people under-utilize the Seniors Independence program but they subscribe and could easily over-subscribe to the New Horizons Program. Both of these programs are a benefit to the seniors in the province and I think the member would accept that. However, the fact is that the New Horizons Program has some attraction to their community needs and they like it.

The Quebec population is about 24.4 per cent of the population of Canada and of the two programs they will receive between 20 and 25 per cent of the total funds available. I think that the member might at least admit that this is equitable distribution of funds, and I see he nods his head that that is true. At the same time, if we can tailor the programs to meet their needs, that is fair, and I think he would accept that.

British Columbia, my province, has 11 to 12 per cent of the total population of Canada and 13 per cent of the seniors population. British Columbia will receive 13 per cent of the total funds available. It so happens that in my own community, the city of White Rock, the population is 35 per cent over age 65. I can tell the member that as popular as the New Horizons Program is, and as good as it is, and as many needs as it meets across Canada, there are a number of seniors in that community who disagree with the program and who feel that the tax dollars could be better spent in some other way.