

confusing and complex new government regulations and available programs, and of course the old problem of cutting through government red tape. With the seniors' population increasing at approximately 3 per cent a year, the need for a direct line to the federal Government has never been greater.

Bill C-224, an Act to constitute a senior citizens' advisory assembly, could, with the support of all Members of this House, become this open and direct line of communication. It would be made up, naturally, of senior citizens who could collectively make representations to the federal Government on a regular basis, sharing with us their experience and judgment, which would no doubt enable us to deal more effectively with the issues affecting them. The following goals reflect the intent of my Bill to form a seniors assembly:

- (a) to provide an educational opportunity for the elderly to learn through participation in legislative activities;
- (b) to increase the level of participation and involvement of retired professionals that may have no prior or continuing contact with older adult programs;
- (c) to develop a collective awareness among older persons with regard to needs, issues and policies that are of concern to themselves and their cohorts;
- (d) to stimulate community organization involvement with groups of older adults; and
- (e) to provide a stronger base for influencing policy which reflects the self perceived needs of the older population.

Should this Bill be implemented, the Minister would establish a board for the purpose of constituting the assembly. This board would be responsible for recognizing senior citizens' organizations and allocating membership in the assembly. Procedures would be prepared to call and conduct national meetings. No remuneration will be received from the Crown for either the services of the members of the assembly or the board as they relate to the seniors advisory assembly.

Similar to the workings of the Youth Parliament, the seniors assembly would meet annually in Ottawa during the recess, in the House of Commons or Senate Chamber. Here debate could take place and recommendations made. Unfortunately it appears that there is a definite lack of interest and concern for the thoughts and feelings of senior citizens, particularly by the federal Government. Their views are all too often ignored and their recommendations are disregarded. We have before us a great wealth of wisdom being overlooked. However, I believe that if tapped, all Canadians, as well as the federal Government, can benefit from this opulence of experience.

I can accurately state that many of the residents of personal care homes in Winnipeg-Assiniboine are ready, willing and able to offer their services. The Heritage Nursing Home, Holiday Haven, Oakview Place, Manitoba Odd Fellow's Home, Tuxedo Villa and West Park Manor, to name a few, are occupied by people who know what the problems are, and can offer expert advice and solutions if only given the opportunity. Bill C-224 is that opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Senior Citizens Advisory Assembly Act

• (1750)

In the spring of 1983 Harold Brown circulated a questionnaire through the Manitoba Seniors' Journal in an effort to determine the view of seniors regarding different aspects of the seniors' Parliament. For example, one question asked whether the basis for a seniors' Parliament should be provincial or federal. The results were very close to a tie, indicating 46 per cent provincial and 54 per cent federal. Two answers suggested both. Another question had answers showing that seniors are overwhelmingly against seniors' nominees having political affiliation. Eighty-four per cent were against, feeling that seniors would fare better as seniors rather than as Party representatives. Regarding election procedures for the seniors assembly, 66 per cent were for using federal or provincial election procedures.

The most controversial question showed 60 per cent suggested an elected member should receive a nominal sum plus expenses, while a very positive 40 per cent suggested that members should receive out of pocket expenses only. A major fear is that the pay would reach large figures resulting in appointments to the body, thereby lessening the strength of the entire assembly. In addition to this, 84 per cent felt that Government grants should cover the cost of the seniors' Parliament, as is the case with youth and women's Parliament. It is believed that an assembly of this nature would gradually evolve into being the authentic voice of seniors, fully representative of all of them from all of Canada. It would be of benefit to all Canadians, Mr. Speaker.

As every Member here is aware, there are a number of organizations representing seniors citizens across Canada and all are attempting to do one thing. That is to improve the condition for seniors. I have heard from organizations such as the United Elders Association of B.C., the Senior Citizens Action Now Association of Saskatchewan, the many seniors' organizations of Manitoba including the Manitoba Society of Seniors, the St. Andrews over 60 Group and the 1600 Recreation Club. As well I have heard from the Quebec Provincial Executive Council for the Rights of the Retired and the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation. Each organization has the common objective of assisting senior citizens in Canada.

We hear of far too many instances where senior citizens are treated as second class citizens and are barely able to make ends meet. These people have made great contributions to this country over the years and are now entitled to much more than we are giving. However, to be able to meet their needs, it is essential that we know their needs. Because of the tremendous support I have received from the Members of this House, Liberals, NDP and of course, Conservatives alike, I am very hopeful that this will receive the endorsement of every Member in this House who is genuinely concerned about the plight of senior citizens. Many Members have already supported this proposal in writing. I would like to express my thanks for that. However, it is my desire that on behalf of the senior citizens of this country every Member will confirm their endorsement of