

Private Members' Business

disability is and what prolonged incapacity is because therein lie a lot of problems too. If one looks at the appeals that are undertaken in these two domains one can see the tremendous waste of money and time because there are no precise definitions in those particular areas.

Those are but a few examples. Previously I indicated that the whole notion of deadline, the whole idea of retroactivity, should be examined for other government programs to which Canadians qualify.

I want to tell you about a widow of a veteran who raised by herself five children without two pensions, two programs to which she was entitled. She did not know that they existed. There were extenuating circumstances, but she did not know. In that process she had to sell her home and she had to sacrifice a great deal to raise those children.

Today she is asking for some allowance so that one of her children can go on and get further training. To date she has not been successful but I am still hopeful that the Minister of Veterans Affairs will see it as a possibility to assist financially this woman and her son so that he can get the type of training that will permit him to earn the kind of living to which he is entitled, that which he might have received if he had been informed in time.

Let me give one final example. There is a senior who is 81 years old whom I have met. I have mentioned his case in this House before. He had just found out that he was entitled to a particular government assistance program because of his level of income. He had been eking out a bare living, not living appropriately at all. When he went back the retroactivity was 14 months. It was very, very little. I find it unconscionable that it should be so short. I have a question on the Order Paper that asks government to indicate to Canadians just how much money it has saved as a result of not paying all of these funds that would normally be paid if people applied on time if they were familiar with the programs that are available to them.

There is an indication from one of my colleagues from government that we need a certain number of provinces to approve this particular initiative if it were to go through. I would hope that no one would question the necessity of this initiative and that they would not find

excuses and hide behind financial barriers. If this were the case we could do it for every single initiative that's ever been undertaken.

I would like to complete my remarks by saying if we truly believe that this is a wrong which is being corrected, let us not hesitate. In order to correct this situation let us do what is necessary without jumping through unnecessary hoops and hurdles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me a chance to say a few words on this subject. This is a very welcome initiative. It is an incredible opportunity to correct a situation that is most unfair. I hope that we will be able to proceed with this legislation and that we will also be able to explore ways of correcting the situation in other programs, to make them fairer.

Mr. Marcel R. Tremblay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Minister of State (Youth) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate on Bill C-280, a private member's bill which was introduced by the hon. member for Don Valley East. The bill, which was given first reading in the House of Commons on September 20, 1991, proposes some amendments to the Canada Pension Plan.

Under Bill C-280, a CPP disability benefit would be payable to disabled persons who had contributed in at least one third of their contributory years, with a minimum of five years of contributions. At the moment, in order to receive a disability benefit under the CPP, a contributor must, at the time of disablement, have contributed to the Plan in five of the last ten years or, alternatively, in at least two of the last three years. The hon. member's proposal, in effect, provides a third option. The purpose of the bill, then, is to extend the time that one is eligible for benefits.

• (1750)

There is no doubt that one of the major problems facing the disabled is inadequate income support. Despite the many programs to assist disabled persons, this group remains among the poorest in Canada. I think that it is obvious—and commendable—that the bill before us today is seeking one more way to alleviate this situation.