

*Adjournment Debate*

dollar, can be not only injurious to health, but could even be fatal. The threat of food poisoning through the consumption of meat and meat byproducts requires a constant inspection monitoring system, as is carried out by the Veterinary Meat Inspection Department of the Health of Animals Branch. To do the job right would require adequately trained veterinary personnel. There can be no disputing the grave consequences of a breakdown or reduction of services by members of the veterinary science group.

In view of this, I find it extremely alarming that the government has chosen to ignore the vacancy rate which has not only existed for several years but has increased over the past three. However, to give the President of the Treasury Board his due, I was encouraged by his reply to my question on February 26 when he said:

I can assure the hon. member that if there are major inequities they will certainly be adjusted during the current negotiation.

I believe the minister is a sincere man. I hope he will recognize the work of this dedicated group of veterinarians in the public service and correct a long overdue inequity. This group of veterinarians is not only dedicated but, on the whole, a very patient group. But patience, no matter how persevering, does eventually have its breaking point. A very low morale results from being constantly ignored in fruitless attempts for a better deal.

I appeal to the President of the Treasury Board to thoroughly consider all the injustices and inequities to which federal veterinarians have been subjected for so long and to come up with a favourable solution so that we can recruit desperately needed veterinarians into the federal service where they could have a very enjoyable and fulfilling career, which is certainly not the case at the present time.

● (2205)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Serge Joyal (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate to answer the hon. member for Grey-Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) and to set straight some facts he referred to in his intervention of February 26 last. He pointed out, and here I am quoting one of the figures he mentioned in his remarks, that the starting salary for a veterinarian hired by Agriculture Canada was \$17,660. With all due respect for the hon. member, that figure is not correct. The current starting salary for a veterinarian who goes to work for Agriculture Canada is \$22,863 and that amount is now being negotiated, so it may be adjusted along with the full salary scale applicable to veterinarians.

In his comments on February 26, 1981, the hon. member also said that the veterinary vacancy rate in the department was in excess of 30 per cent in the section which includes meat inspectors. After checking with the Department of Agriculture it would appear that the vacancy rate for meat inspectors is 17 out of 287, which works out to about 6 per cent. Those are the

correct figures. I see that the hon. member is shaking his head in disbelief. Those are the figures provided by the Department of Agriculture. If the Professional Institute of the Public Service which is negotiating for veterinarians has different figures to set forth I am certainly prepared to receive and review those figures on behalf of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston).

The hon. member also stated that the negotiations are dragging on. In that respect perhaps we might recall a number of facts. First, the negotiations got under way in November 1980, and continued through January, 1981. They reached an impasse on salary and other related issues in mid-February, particularly on February 6, 1981, and as a result a conciliation officer was appointed; he got the parties together and was able to work in close co-operation with them between February 23 and 26. On February 26, 117 of the 156 veterinarians in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario did not report for work because of illness. Of course, nobody is fooled by this diplomatic illness, if I may call it that. It was a form of strike action that the 117 veterinarians from Ontario and Quebec took that day. Therefore, Treasury Board will certainly not pay sick leaves benefits unless proof of illness is duly submitted. Otherwise, the Department of Agriculture has no choice but to apply the disciplinary action which is warranted in such case.

Therefore, since the twenty-sixth, the conciliator has been waiting for a go-ahead from the parties involved. Considering the progress made with the help of the conciliator, there is a good chance that negotiations will resume within a week and that all parties will come to a satisfactory settlement.

*[English]*HOUSING—SHORTAGE OF DWELLING UNITS IN VANCOUVER—  
GOVERNMENT ACTION

**Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver-Burnaby):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak tonight because of a question put to the minister responsible for CMHC on March 5, 1981. His answer—at least to me—was somewhat misleading. I do not blame the minister because I feel he was trying to give a very straightforward and honest answer to the question, but the manner in which it was phrased may create in many minds—certainly in many minds in Vancouver—a conception which simply is not true.

The minister also suggested that I check my facts. I have checked the facts thoroughly, and I bring to the attention of the minister and the House that on Thursday when I spoke about 800 housing units being allowed for a population of 30,000 people moving into Vancouver this year, was accurate. Actually, in rough figures—and as well as we can determine—888 units have been allowed in 1981.

● (2210)

The minister speaks of 3,000 units, but in terms of the housing crisis, there were actually 2,200 units allocated last