

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion
**VETERANS AFFAIRS—TRANSFER OF
 LANCASTER HOSPITAL**

Mr. J. Chester MacRae (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, the question I would like to discuss in the seven minutes that I have under the rules this evening is that of the proposed transfer of Lancaster Military Hospital to the board of commissioners of the Saint John General Hospital and the New Brunswick department of health. There are a number of questions involved in this whole matter.

First of all, an integral part of the agreement in the transfer was that there was to be a 300-bed wing provided for veterans at the Saint John General Hospital, and second that the takeover date was to be the 1st day of July, 1970, or such other date as the parties might agree—I repeat, “or such other date as the parties might agree.”

This particular question was debated very fully at the New Brunswick provincial convention of the Royal Canadian Legion held on September 1 and 2. As the minister perhaps knows, it was also debated a week ago when the very able and eloquent member of the New Brunswick Legislature for Saint John West, Mr. Logan, aired this matter on the television station there. A response was made to Mr. Logan's charges by the New Brunswick minister of health, Mr. Theriault.

I wish to quote from a press release which appeared in the Saint John *Evening Times Globe* on November 3, in which Mr. Theriault is reported to have said that there are two points with which he is dissatisfied; first, the amount of the federal grant in connection with this takeover, and second, the takeover date. As to the grant, he felt it should be \$10 million instead of the $4\frac{1}{2}$ million that the federal government is transferring to the province. Second, he objected to the takeover date because he did not expect that all the details could be worked out by that date. I would call the particular attention of the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé) to these statements by the New Brunswick minister of health. They indicate that the province of New Brunswick is not prepared to take over the hospitalization of New Brunswick's veterans on July 1 next.

There is something more important than just having all the details worked out, Mr. Speaker. I feel, and the New Brunswick veterans feel, that before any transfer is made the proposed new 300-bed wing at the Saint John General Hospital must be ready for the

[Mr. Walker.]

receiving and proper care of those veterans who need treatment. In answering my question I would ask the minister to advise whether or not he is aware of the freeze on new hospital construction that has been imposed by the New Brunswick provincial government. I am sure that the minister has received many letters on this subject, as have all of us who represent New Brunswick constituencies. I am deeply concerned. I know the Royal Canadian Legion is deeply concerned. I know the veterans are concerned.

In order to help the minister out with his answer—I want to be helpful because we are working toward the same objective on this matter—I would like to place on the record the resolution passed at its convention by the Royal Canadian Legion. If the minister has not received a copy I would be glad to supply him with one. It reads:

Whereas the present agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs, Province of New Brunswick and the Commissioners of the Saint John General Hospital provides inter alia for the transfer of Lancaster D.V.A. facilities to the province of New Brunswick by July 1st, 1970,

And whereas the integral part of the aforementioned agreement is the construction of a 300-bed wing to the Saint John General Hospital and the agreement provided for a takeover date for Lancaster D.V.A. as “the first day of July, 1970 or such other date as the parties may agree,”

And whereas the New Brunswick Command, Royal Canadian Legion strenuously and vigorously objects to any takeover prior to the construction of the new wing, and paragraph 11 of the agreement clearly contemplates no move of veterans until the said wing is completed,

And whereas the New Brunswick Command Royal Canadian Legions considers the pith and substance of the agreement to be the proper care of veterans in conjunction with the construction of the new wing, and whereas the Department of Health for the province of New Brunswick has announced a halt in hospital construction in the province.

Therefore be it resolved that the proposed takeover of the Lancaster D.V.A. facility by the Province of New Brunswick be postponed until such time as the new wing proposed for the Saint John General Hospital is constructed and ready for occupancy.

I am sure that the New Brunswick veterans, especially those who are sick and who need hospitalization, will be deeply interested in what the minister has to say on this question.

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. MacRae) has said, there is indeed an agreement between the Government of Canada and the province of New Brunswick whereby Lancaster will be