

*Canada Pension Plan*

the Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaus, is proclaimed in many communities. This year it was April 13 to 19. It provides another occasion on which Canadians can focus their attention and express their appreciation for volunteer workers.

● (1840)

Assistance to the voluntary sector is an issue of great concern to the Government. We recognize the importance of voluntary action in the lives of Canadians. We also recognize that Government and the voluntary sector must complement each other in appropriate and effective ways.

The Government provides tangible support to the voluntary sector through grants, technical and material assistance directed to voluntary activities. For example, the Department of National Health and Welfare directed grants totalling \$6.1 million to 51 national voluntary health organizations and 27 national voluntary social service organizations during the 1985-86 fiscal year. These grants assisted national voluntary organizations in meeting their operating costs and carrying out national activities during that fiscal year. This is the kind of support that has significant social relevance for our society as a whole and assists the voluntary sector in achieving its goals and objectives on a broad scale.

As well, there are various programs which provide grants, technical assistance and other material support for voluntary projects and voluntary action programs across Canada on a regional or community level and/or to particular groups and activities. For example, under the Department of National Health and Welfare, the New Horizons Program funded close to 2,000 projects in 1985-86 involving senior citizens. Voluntary projects in areas dealing with the elderly, children, the poor, youth and families in crisis were also supported through this Department.

Another example of the Government's commitment to volunteer activity is the specific responsibilities that the Department of the Secretary of State has been assigned. A voluntary action program administered by that Department provided support to over 100 voluntary groups across Canada with a budget of \$708,000 in the 1985-86 fiscal year. This program encouraged the participation of disadvantaged groups, such as women, native citizens, minority groups and the disabled to participate in the mainstream of Canadian society.

Over and above the grants programs, the technical assistance and other material support provided to voluntary organizations, the Government plays an advocacy and policy role in regard to voluntarism. Through research, we seek a clearer understanding of the dynamics of voluntary action in Canada. Such understanding is necessary if the Government is to develop policy initiatives to improve its ability to offer the kind of support to voluntarism which that sector requires. Such support should be appropriate and effective. It should also be consistent, of course, with the historic qualities of independence and self-reliance of the voluntary sector and in keeping with the principles of voluntary action.

Although the sentiments which prompted the Hon. Member's motion are admirable, I do not think that the direct remuneration of volunteer workers through Canada Pension Plan benefits is appropriate. I believe that the remuneration of volunteer workers would undermine the spirit of voluntarism in the country. I believe it is much more appropriate and effective to provide tangible support to the voluntary sector through grants, technical and material assistance to support and promote voluntary activities. It is the material support to activities and good works that ultimately benefit the individuals who need them.

I have looked at only a few of the issues that concern appropriate support to the voluntary sector. I have not asked the numerous questions which could be addressed to the Hon. Member concerning the implementation of his proposal. My purpose is to show that volunteer workers are recognized and encouraged by the Government and that voluntary activities are materially supported. The Government is very aware of the importance of voluntarism in this country and its role in supporting the voluntary sector in flexible and vital ways.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in this debate on a fascinating motion proposed by my colleague from Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp), which reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of paying Canada Pension Plan benefits to persons not making contributions to the Plan, and that such payment be in proportion to the time such persons dedicate to voluntary efforts in community social services.

I find it fascinating as I have thought many times about to the difficulties of people who are short of financial resources but not of human qualities. If we could help those people we might encourage them to participate in voluntary work. You know as well as I do that voluntary work costs a lot of money and that many people who are willing to help do not have the money to buy a bus ticket or decent clothing.

[English]

I thought the motion of the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp) was fascinating. How can we recognize the role of the volunteer in today's society? Many are willing but do not have the means to participate in ways they would like. Either they do not have the money for transportation, the money for clothes or even the health that would allow them the luxury of time to get out and work. There is no question that the volunteer brings a humanizing perspective to our society. It brings a human touch to the bureaucracy that surrounds so many of our institutions. It also brings a degree of skill development and self-satisfaction which is so important in the development of one's sense of worth, ego and personality.

● (1850)

I know that many of us in this Chamber have been involved in volunteer work, whether in teaching young people in the field of sports, arts and crafts, Brownies, Scouts, Guides or