

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Asiniboia):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak again on the subject matter of this bill. It is now at the third reading stage, and I want to say that I am in support of Bill C-39 over all. I think it is an improvement over what we have had. It improves the child benefits, it improves the funding arrangements to maintain the solvency of the Canada Pension Plan, some pretty fundamental and important changes.

What I have to express again though is my disappointment with some things that perhaps ought to have been in this bill and are not. I guess I do so simply to flag them for the future. My pet peeve in this thing is the situation of those Canadians who have contributed over the years through their wages or employment into the Canada Pension Plan, who develop a disability and as a result of the disability have to leave their employment, and who wind up applying late because they did not know of the existence of the Canada Pension Plan disability pension.

By the time they learn of the availability and make their application, lo and behold their eligibility time has run out. At the present time they had to have contributed for two of the past three years or five of the past ten years.

I want to refer again to the really classic case of Mrs. Donna Sinclair of my community of Swift Current, Saskatchewan. This lady contributed to the Canada Pension Plan through her wages from the inception of the CPP in 1966 until 1978. She contributed for 11 of those 13 years. She did not know about the existence of the disability pension. She became disabled and had to leave her employment and it was not until 1987 that she applied. At the time of the application and looking back, it was discovered that she did not meet the required number of years in the contributor period, despite having contributed for 11 out of 13 years when she was working and up until the time of her disability. I believe it is an unfortunate injustice.

That may be partially remedied as a result of the passage earlier this week of Bill C-280, a private members' initiative that was put forward by my hon. colleague from Don Valley East. The gist of that bill would be to change the eligibility criteria to people having contributed in at least one third of the years in the contribution period.

If that bill does receive the approval of a sufficient number of the provinces with a sufficient amount of the population, then it may be that people like Mrs. Sinclair will qualify. We will have to wait and see.

I am disappointed with what I believe to have been undertakings in this place in 1988 and 1989 that this particular problem would be reviewed and it would be discussed the next time there were federal-provincial discussions about amendments to the Canada Pension Plan legislation.

Unfortunately, despite those commitments it is apparent it never did occur. I note again that those kinds of commitments have been given. However, I do believe that this time something will come of it. The hon. parliamentary secretary has indicated that the minister is sending letters to his provincial counterparts concerning this particular problem and that copies will be made available to the House and to the appropriate committee. One can only hope that the next time this comes around the subject matter will be addressed.

I want to at least congratulate the parliamentary secretary and the minister for taking hold of this initiative at this time. I think it is very regrettable and I think a number of disabled Canadians will find it regrettable that this action was not undertaken sooner.

I simply want to go on record again as being in favour of the improvements to the Canada Pension Plan regime that are contained within Bill C-39, but would certainly want to see further improvements. I do hope the provinces will see fit to approve the measures contained in Bill C-280, which was passed in this place earlier this week. I do look forward to some fine tuning of the act in the future as it relates to the plight of those disabled Canadians who apply late for their benefits and who are accordingly excluded because their qualifying period has expired.

I want to conclude my remarks at this point. I would be happy to answer questions any member may have.

**Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, as I rise today to take part in this debate, listening to all the great debaters who have spoken on this issue before me today, I wonder as we look down the road at this great Canada Pension Plan what kind of a program we are going to have at the end of the day.