

ation and other local veterans groups, these people have been feeding patients, helping to shave them, generally caring for their personal needs and keeping up their morale. I wish to thank them publicly for their help to our veterans.

[*Translation*]

Our doctors, our nurses and our other professional staff have been working 12-hour shifts. The nurses, in addition to their own work, have been doing the work normally undertaken by the higher levels of orderlies. The work of other members of the Hospital Services group has been covered in two ways. First of all, by the normal group of volunteers who assist this hospital, like many others across Canada. The number of volunteers has been augmented in the community and with the special efforts of members of the Royal Canadian Legion, the Korea Veterans Association of Canada and others. These people have been feeding patients, helping to shave them and generally caring for their personal needs and keeping up their morale.

[*English*]

In addition, we at Veterans Affairs have moved considerable numbers of people from both our Charlottetown and our Ottawa head offices and from offices across Canada. Some of these managerial employees have worked as managers. Many more, along with colleagues from Ste. Anne's have found themselves doing unaccustomed work in preparing and serving food and keeping the hospital clean. All have been working very long hours. As one might expect, all are now getting very tired.

I should like to pay particular tribute—and I am sure the House would wish to join me in so doing—to those people who volunteer to do work that they are really unaccustomed to doing. I should like to pay special tribute to our staff at our institutions, to those who have come to join them from other parts of Veterans Affairs Canada, and to those wonderful people, the volunteers who have helped out in so many ways.

My heart is filled with pride at their dedication in serving our veteran patients. Indications that despite our best efforts the health and safety of our patients was coming into jeopardy were first detected a couple of days

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ago. Our concern became even greater on Tuesday as the drawn faces of our nurses, many of whom have family responsibilities to face after a 12-hour shift, were indicating fatigue and the potential breakdown of the system.

On Tuesday my deputy minister went to Ste. Anne's to form at first hand an impression of how much we could continue without endangering the lives of our patients. In the deputy minister's report to me after returning from Ste. Anne's where he had spoken with virtually all the staff on both ships, he informed me that in his judgment the situation at Ste. Anne's, despite the superb efforts of all those involved, was approaching crisis proportions.

He told me, based on the advice he had received, and the evidence of his own eyes, that were we not to act now the health, the safety and the security of our patients would be in danger.

I believe that I have shown why we cannot allow the situation at Ste. Anne de Bellevue to continue any longer. The members of the hospital services group in Veterans Affairs are still very valued members of our department. We need them back at work and will welcome them as members of the team.

[*Translation*]

As I said earlier, in my department, second only to the veterans we serve, we place the highest importance on our own people being treated fairly. I am quite sure that the arrangements proposed in this legislation, will allow an independent third party to help settle the dispute. Our staff can count on receiving fair treatment.

[*English*]

I would ask, Madam Speaker, that the House respond rapidly to pass this legislation so we may properly care for our veteran patients who did so much for us and who are now not able to look after themselves.

It is for this reason that I fully support the government's back to work legislation which is absolutely justified under the circumstances.

Mrs. Catterall: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to see the minister finally addressing this issue. I wonder if he is aware that for two years we have been getting to