

## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

1. Departmental administration, \$5,702,200.

**Hon. Roger Teillet (Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Chairman, as is the custom these estimates have been carefully examined by the standing committee on veterans affairs and therefore my remarks will be very brief. I want to deal with only two items because of the widespread interest shown in them by veterans across Canada and by members of the house.

The Woods committee report will apparently be in my hands within a day or two, although not translated. It will be some weeks before the translation is completed. However, I hope to make arrangements with the chairman of the committee to enable the department and the Canadian Pension Commission to begin considering the report without waiting for its translation.

The second item is the study on pension rates which is not yet completed but which I am informed will be completed before very long.

As to the interim rates that I talked about last fall, I can only refer back to the question put by the hon. member for Kootenay West which I answered this afternoon. This is the main burden of my remarks this evening on these estimates. As I say, they have been carefully considered. Of course, I am available to answer any questions that arise out of consideration of them.

**Mr. MacRae:** As the minister has said, Mr. Chairman, the estimates of this department have been considered by the standing committee. During the committee hearings the chairman of the Pension Commission, the chairman of the War Veterans Allowance Board and all the officials were most co-operative and helpful. I feel a good job was done in that committee, and I wish to commend the chairman for his fairness in all matters.

It was my intention on orders of the day today to read a telegram for the benefit of the minister, a telegram from the Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion. However, as mentioned by the minister, the hon. member for Kootenay West beat me to the punch on this question and I decided to defer reading the telegram until these estimates were being considered. It is of such importance and is so pertinent that I would like to put it on the record now. I do not know whether the minister received a copy

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of it, but it will now be on the record for his perusal. It reads as follows:

The officers and members of Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion do hereby protest the long delay by the present federal government in not giving veterans a pension commensurate with toady's cost of living. We also protest the delay in increased pensions to widows and dependents and do demand immediate action to rectify this situation at the present session of parliament. Your participation and co-operation is urgently solicited in this matter.

The telegram is signed by J. V. Brown, who is the president of the Nova Scotia Command, and by W. L. Huestis, provincial secretary. I think it speaks for itself.

I should also like to refer to the lead editorial in the last issue of the *Legionary*, which is the official organ of the Royal Canadian Legion. We members of parliament receive much material that we do not have time to read, but I feel every member of the house should read this editorial. It is well written and brings to the fore the plight of those men and women who, in time of war, offered their services to their country, so many of whom suffered grievously and so many of whom did not return.

As it has been in the past, the Royal Canadian Legion is headed by an excellent president, Ron MacBeath, of Moncton. He is giving the organization strong leadership and is not backward in pressing its just claims.

• (9:40 p.m.)

On August 21 Mr. MacBeath sent a letter to the Prime Minister. I should like to place that letter on the record of the House of Commons. I feel it is that important. The letter reads:

We of the Royal Canadian Legion were greatly disturbed to find in the reports of your press conference on Tuesday, August 15, no mention whatsoever of action by the government to place war pension rates on an equitable basic formula or to at least grant interim increases immediately.

On four occasions the Legion has set out, in presentations to the government, why we think such pension increases are urgently needed and fully justified. We feel that war pensions should be equated to certain salaries in the government services, as they were in 1920. The interim increase of last September was totally inadequate because the comparable civil servant now receives \$1,392 a year more than the disabled pensioner.

Recent Legion provincial command conventions have expressed bitter disappointment at the long delay in establishing an adequate pension rate.

On March 13, 1967, in response to a question concerning the extension of the 15% increase to dependents of disability pensioners, the Minister of Veterans Affairs said:

"First, the delay in adjusting the pensions of veterans is not because of the Woods Report; it is awaiting the report of another nature from