

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

• (10:30 p.m.)

Mr. Stanley Haidasz (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's desire that the Department of National Health and Welfare give me the authority to say yes to a certain proposition he has made tonight. The financial difficulties of our old age pensioners are of deep concern to my minister, to the government and to all of us. The over-all situation is at present being studied and I refer here to the government study in depth of social welfare in Canada.

Many suggestions are usually made to deal with the immediate need. I shall make reference tonight to two suggestions made most frequently to provide for the immediate needs of pensioners at Christmas. The first suggestion is to advance the payment due on December 30 by some two weeks to give pensioners more financial flexibility during Christmas, but this would only postpone the problem. Of the 1.5 million pensioners in

Canada 500,000 are entirely dependent and a further 300,000 partly dependent on the pension and the income supplement. These people administer their incomes on a month to month basis. If they waited six weeks until the next cheque, it would place an intolerable strain on their resources.

The second suggestion made is that the government make an additional payment—a Christmas bonus—of perhaps \$100 to each pensioner. From the figures I have been given this would cost approximately \$150 million. Regrettably, it is not possible, I am informed, to provide this amount of money now. The problem is acute and that is why the government is taking steps to remedy it as soon as possible.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): How about answering the question that was asked?

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.35 p.m.
