

*Senior Citizens*

the Bill was filed, and the establishment of a National Advisory Council was one of them. Its 18-member Board of Directors, all appointed from outside Government, serves as an advisory body to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Its other main role is to serve as an advocate for the aged. Within the Department of National Health and Welfare itself, the Office on Ageing was established in November, 1980. Designated in the Department as the focal point on aging, it serves both the health and welfare sides of the Department and carries a major responsibility in co-ordinating the Department's work on aging.

At the international level, the World Assembly on Aging was convened by the United Nations in Vienna last summer. All Hon. Members of the House received a copy of the Canadian Governmental Report on Aging, which was prepared by a federal-provincial territorial committee and endorsed by all Governments involved in its preparation. Each member country of the United Nations was invited to prepare such a report describing the current situation and outlining the issues respecting the aged to be faced over the next ten to 15 years in the country concerned. The Canadian report has received international recognition for its detailed analysis of the situation. The issues raised and the needs to be met are in accord with those identified in the International Plan of Action prepared by the World Assembly and later endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Canadian Conference on Aging is to be held in October of this year as a follow up to the initiatives started by the World Assembly and will further extend Canadian efforts at that time.

• (1550)

Such developments are not surprising when the needs areas of older persons are considered—and the Hon. Member speaking previously has referred to many of them—economic, physical and mental health, nutrition, living arrangements, transportation, leisure activities, education, employment and retirement, and spiritual well-being.

The federal Government's responsibility in the economic sphere is fully recognized. The presentation made earlier in this House when the Green Paper entitled "Better Pensions for Canadians" was tabled need not be repeated, nor any prediction attempted about those that will be made to the Special Committee of this House embarking upon its own investigation into pension reform. As mentioned before, I am pleased to be on that task force. Income security in old age is our concern. Further, federal financial participation with the Provinces in the development of health and social services, as well as the construction of housing and institutional care facilities, has been in effect for many years.

The fact is that health and social services, housing, institutional care facilities, including the nursing homes that the previous speaker spoke so long about, education and so on, are all under provincial jurisdiction. Thus facilities, programs and services to meet the needs of the aged must be planned, organized and developed at the provincial and local levels.

There are those who argue that if older people were provided with enough money, they could look after their own needs.

This is a fallacious argument. It assumes that the services needed are available, that they are accessible, and that, whatever their cost, old people could afford to pay for them regardless of the quantity required or the length of time the services were needed. Recognizing the lack of supportive services to help elderly persons live independently in their own community, despite socio-economic and physical problems, was the motive behind the federal Government's initiative in establishing the Canada Assistance Plan which, although not specific to the aged, is important to thousands of them who benefit from services cost-shared by the federal, provincial and territorial Governments.

The problems of the aged and the aging are as diverse as those which afflict all of society. We know, however, that the aged of the 1980s are very different from those of the 1960s and 1970s, and that those of the 1990s will show even greater differences. It is estimated that about two-thirds of those aged 65 and over have no single identifying characteristic except age. They mingle largely unnoticed in the community. Indeed the majority of older people can function in the community if society permits and encourages them through the provision of special services. Thus, an integral part of the planning process should be the provision of services and resources which will provide opportunities for senior citizens to participate in the community.

The New Horizons Program of the Department of National Health and Welfare, with which we are all very familiar, was established ten years ago to help and encourage retired people to engage in activities of benefit to themselves, each other and their communities. The result has been a dramatic increase in the number of community groups established by, and for, retired and elderly persons. In my own area of Scarborough West, we have between 20 and 30 of these groups, and the seed moneys that are used for their facilities represent some of the wiser expenditures that have ever been made by this Government, and are very wisely spent by the seniors involved.

Many of these groups have joined provincial and national senior citizens' organizations and these organizations have become extremely effective in speaking on behalf of their members. In Scarborough we have the Scarborough Senior Citizens' Council which co-ordinates the seniors' activities in this borough of more than 400,000 people in Metropolitan Toronto. They are a first rate group of people and no one could be more thoroughly familiar than they are with the needs and aspirations of retired and elderly people. On many occasions these organizations meet with the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the Hon. Monique Bégin, to discuss their concerns and to present their recommendations for improving the quality of life for retired Canadians. Many of their proposals have been incorporated into Government programs for pensioners, and there is a continuing dialogue between the Department and the spokesmen for senior citizens' organizations. Ways of making this dialogue even more effective are being considered.

It is worth noting that it was as a result of the groundwork laid by a group of very knowledgeable seniors from across Canada, funded by New Horizons money through an