

Bill C-201**An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act
May 3, 2010****Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-201 and support the reintroduction of its clauses. As with other speakers, I want to commend the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. His riding is very close to mine, both in proximity and in terms of the people who make it up. We both have largely military ridings. He has certainly honoured the tradition of the military for both veterans and serving members, and he has been tireless in his support of this bill.

In simple terms, this bill seeks to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act. The essence of this problem is that, at age 65, veterans of the Canadian Forces and RCMP see their pensions decreased. This goes back to the 1966 introduction of the Canada pension plan and the integration of the Canada pension plan with existing pension plans.

I want to be clear that it is my view that all members of the House want to do their very best to support our veterans. This is not an issue that should be divided along partisan lines. I do not believe it is a political issue. The question is, how do we best serve former serving members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP? This is not a bill that is as easy to deal with as some might say, but I also do not think it is as complicated as others might have it either.

In my opinion, the heart of the matter is the question of what is fair. We are at a point in time when Canadians are quite common in their belief that we need more work on pensions. Many Canadians do not have adequate pensions. Others have seen their pensions disappear all of a sudden before their eyes. I have had the chance to talk to Nortel employees, both pensioners and also people who are on long-term disability, and their stories are quite frightening.

People thought they had secured their pension, secured their future, and secured the time that they would have after working, which in many cases is more and more years. People are living longer, but are they living better or living as well? I think that goes to the heart of this matter as well. I think it is appropriate for the House as well as the government to consider this idea of fairness, and to put it in the context of service offered to country and how country responds to service.

As I mentioned, I come from a military community and I am very proud to do so. From the time I was elected in 2004, I have felt both the responsibility and the privilege of coming from a military community. Shearwater borders my riding and the riding of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. We have other bases in Halifax, Dartmouth and others in Nova Scotia. There is a strong military presence.

One of the privileges of being a Member of Parliament is to march with veterans and to be with veterans all year, but particularly on those days that are very special. In Dartmouth at the cenotaph and also in Cole Harbour at the cenotaph, we have very serious commemorations of events like Remembrance Day. Every year now, I have the opportunity to go into schools and talk to kids. Like other members in the House, I take great pleasure and pride in the fact that our children understand Remembrance Day in a much more significant way than my generation did.

When I went to school, I can recall the veterans coming in to talk to us, but there was always a bit of a sense back then that war and peace were different things. Everybody wanted to have peace without sometimes recognizing that war was an avenue to peace

and that the people who had given up their lives and those who have had their lives altered by the experience of war are the profound heroes of our country.

Remembrance Day, the Battle of Britain, and the Battle of the Atlantic are very significant commemorations on the east coast, the home of Canada's east coast navy. On D-Day, we all gather at the Somme Branch Legion and walk down to the waterfront. It is a very sombre occasion, but it is an occasion that brings people together and allows them to remember the good, the bad, and particularly the sacrifice of people who have gone before.

Great veterans like Allan Moore still occasionally walk with us. He served in World War II. His brother was killed in World War II and he found out about it by reading a military journal. Allan Moore has gone into classes for many years and explained to children about the horrors of war in a way that they can understand it and by seeing pictures of it. They learn about the horrors of war and the sometimes necessity of war. Doug Shanks is a very special individual. He is one of the many who was involved in the liberation of Holland, which the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore will be commemorating tomorrow.

These are the great heroes living among us, people who have made a huge difference, people who have given us the opportunity to bring bills forward in this very august chamber where things like this should be discussed, debated, and ultimately decided on by the people's representatives.

We have great heroes in this country. Whenever we go to a citizenship swearing-in ceremony, which is another great privilege of being a member of Parliament, we always see a veteran there to welcome people to Canada, in some cases new Canadians and in some cases people who have been here for a while but have decided to become citizens. It never fails to impress when somebody who has served Canada is there, sometimes with a cane, sometimes with a walker, sometimes with an assistant, but there to let people know that one of the rights and privileges of being Canadian is to honour the sacrifice of those who have gone before.

One cannot help but have a very specific understanding of the nature of war if one lives in an east coast community such as the one in which I live.

This year more than ever we have reason to look at Bill C-201 and to ask if we are being fair, are we providing fairness for the service that was provided by both the living and the dead?

A couple of months ago John Babcock, Canada's last World War I veteran, passed away at the age of 109. This is the 100th anniversary of Canada's navy, and Halifax is the east coast home of the navy.

Before I was elected, I was privileged to be a trustee of HMCS *Sackville*, the last of the corvettes. During World War II there were over 260 corvettes, 120 of which were built in Canada. The *Sackville* was built in Saint John. After the war the corvettes served different purposes, whether it was fishing or other purposes. They have all gone except for HMCS *Sackville*.

I recall a few years ago I had the opportunity when we were doing some finance committee travel to bring the members of the committee on to HMCS *Sackville*. Judy Wasylycia-Leis was there. She fit very comfortably inside the corvette. Brian Palliser, who was then the chair of the Conservative finance committee, had a little more trouble on the corvette. One can only image how these little ships, these rugged, heroic little vessels went out to patrol the water and open the channels during World War II in the icy north Atlantic and the men who served them in many ways. This is a microcosm of Canada.

During World War II people from the Prairies used to serve on these vessels. They would come to Halifax, never having really seen an ocean. On some occasions they would

look across from Halifax to Dartmouth and think that was Europe because they had not seen that kind of expanse of water before.

They came and they served and they were heroes. We have to do everything we can to ensure that HMCS *Sackville* is preserved, brought ashore, and given the honour and the respect that it deserves. There are over 1,100 trustees of HMCS *Sackville*.

I can only encourage anybody who wants to really get connected to Canada's navy in this the 100th anniversary to google HMCS *Sackville*, and when in Halifax come and visit it.

We have to look at Bill C-201 and ask, is there a specific purpose here? I believe that there is. I want to quote from G.K. Chesterton who said:

Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die.

Those who served us in the armed forces and the RCMP have gone above and beyond. I acknowledge the work of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore and my colleague from Avalon, who has supported this bill all the way through. This is the right thing to do. I encourage members of this House to support Bill C-201.