

Public Pensions Reporting Act

Another important variable to be determined is the Canadian's future rate of saving. For instance, on the basis of information now available, we must determine how future tax incentives will affect the tendency of Canadians to save for their retirement. Also, we will have to determine how the proposal contained in the 1985 Budget (to provide a lifetime ceiling for income tax deductible registered pension plan contributions) could affect the long-term use of this retirement saving instrument by the average Canadian. Unfortunately, the data now available are mostly cross section. In other words, these are data which reflect actual situations at a given time. They are of a very limited usefulness when we try to establish lifetime savings table or carry out cumulative studies.

I know that research work is being carried out in that area. Statistics Canada is looking at various longitudinal data which will help check and compile a number of trends that will give us a better idea of the long-term savings and consumer patterns. However, a certain period of time may be needed before reliable data can be gathered.

Besides the lack of data, another difficulty must be overcome to cope with the proposals contained in the legislation concerning the Old Age Security program. Private pensions are a most important aspect of our retirement income system—the extent to which future retirees benefit will impact directly on the cost of the Guaranteed Income Supplement program.

However, the regulating of private pension funds does not come under the jurisdiction of the federal Government alone. Actually, the Provinces are responsible for the majority of such plans. It is therefore difficult to foresee what changes will be made in that respect, and what the effects will be on private-source income that will be available to pensioners.

For instance, Bill C-90, an Act to amend the Pension Benefit Standards Act, was tabled for first reading on December 17, 1985. It contains various amendments aimed at improving the protection afforded by private pensions to people working in a number of areas under federal jurisdiction. Although we hope the Provinces will pass similar measures, we cannot be sure of it at this point.

In view of those difficulties, I am sure Hon. Members will recognize it would be a very complex task for a 35- or a 40-year-old today to say on which private pension he or she will be able to rely at age 65. We cannot therefore know what amount that person will be entitled to 30 years down the road under the Guaranteed Income Supplement program.

To sum up, Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat that even though we have a rather precise idea of the sources of income of people now 65 or over, it is not easy to say whether those who will reach that age in the future will have the same sources available or whether these will account for the same percentage of income as is now the case.

From a purely mathematical standpoint, of course, we could take what we now know of present pensioner's finances and project that into the future. However, the reliability of conclusions that could be derived from such an exercise should raise serious doubts.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to adopt the principles stated in Bill C-255, let us make sure we have enough time available so that estimates now being prepared concerning the Old Age Security program can be of some use. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, they might turn out to be of no use whatsoever to the legislators, or dangerously misleading, which would be quite contrary to the intent of the Bill.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Hon. Member for having brought this question before the House. It is of the utmost importance that Members of our Parliament should have the best possible information available when they make decisions that can impact on the welfare of present and future generations.

● (1740)

[English]

Mr. Bill Attewell (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Bill C-255. I applaud the initiative of the Hon. Member for York-Scarborough (Mr. McCrossan) with regard to the Bill. I had the privilege of seconding it when it was first presented to the House on December 2, 1985.

In simple terms, the Bill requires periodic actuarial valuations of six Acts including the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, the Public Service Superannuation Act and four others, as well as the Old Age Security Act and the Canada Pension Plan. In a way this is a breakthrough for Government. It is a first. It has never been done before. It is high time that we took on this type of accountability as a Government and shared the facts with Canadians. We simply want the same standards of control and accountability applied to the federal Government of Canada as are applied in the private sector.

Some previous Governments have refused this information for decades. However, in recent years, as a matter of fact in the last five years, the Auditor General of Canada has said that he has had insufficient information concerning the employee pensions of the Government of Canada. In line with our pledge for a more fiscally responsible Government, we have a Bill, thank to the Hon. Member for York-Scarborough, to share the facts and to share the truth about the six plans as well as the two other major pension plans so that we know how viable they are. If contributions need to be increased, so be it. If pay-outs have to be modified rather than increase the premiums in order that the plans be actuarially sound, so be it. However, let us not continue to not divulge this information and thereby not be accountable for future generations to come. We would not want to burden them or to have a surprise some year hence, perhaps in a decade or two, where that generation of workers and taxpayers are burdened with some huge, unfunded liability. In other words, we have an accountability