[*Translation*]

We should also ask ourselves whether there should be a minimum age for eligibility for a reduced pension, say 50 years, and whether members should be allowed to draw a pension before this minimum age in cases of disability.

Should we base our approach on the pension plans offered by other Canadian employers in order to settle on an appropriate pensionable age for members of Parliament, or should we be looking at what is done in other Canadian legislative assemblies?

There are marked differences between the pension plan provisions of the various provincial legislative assemblies. New Brunswick has no minimum pensionable age. MLAs in Saskatchewan, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories cannot draw their pensions until age 55; in Nova Scotia, the minimum age is 50.

A number of provinces use a formula to establish pensionable age. In Newfoundland, the age and the number of years of service must add up to 60. In Ontario, a member may begin to draw a pension when his age and years of service add up to 55.

[*English*]

The province of Quebec provides for a pension to begin when a member of the National Assembly reaches the service and age of 65. The member must be at least 50 years old before receiving a pension.

I am confident that I speak for the vast majority of my fellow colleagues in the House when I state that none of us were motivated to run for public office by mere financial rewards. I am sure that I can confidently say that we all knew what we were getting into despite the many hardships our families must undergo, despite the extra expenses such as clothing, lodging, transportation and others.

We are debating today pension reform. Those who feel underpaid as an MP and those who feel they should be paid what the private sector pays are correct, but that makes for an entirely separate debate. My concern is that if we undervalue the work, dedication and sacrifices made by an MP and their families, we stand to discourage Canadians from wanting to offer their services for public office.

Two questions come to mind immediately. Will people in their forties and late thirties be motivated knowing that they may face the prospects of re–employment near the end of their career? Will we not instead be encouraging only older individuals or rather wealthy individuals to run for public office? Canada would best be served in my opinion by having young and old, small and large business people, young and older lawyers, accountants and professionals. The successful as well as the less successful must all be motivated to seek public office, not just the wealthy.

● (1615)

[*Translation*]

As the hon. members can see, the government should consider the various choices it has and take into account a number of factors in reviewing the Members of Parliament Retirement Allowance Act. The government knows full well that the Canadian taxpayers are against former members of the House of Commons being allowed to receive generous unreduced pensions years before normal retirement age.

We also know that this matter of public concern can be dealt with in a number of different ways. This government remains committed to winning back public confidence and keeping its promise with respect to the reform of MPs pension.

[*English*]

In closing, I fully support the reform of MPs pensions. As well I support the removal of double dipping and I fully support increasing the minimum age to 55 at which an MP may obtain their pension.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments. I want to make a couple of comments regarding his speech and ask him a question or two.

He said he would certainly support any government legislation which would raise the age of anything with a minimum of six years service to age 55. Our party I suspect would support that in the House of Commons if and only if the member's employer–employee contributions would be changed from six to one to one to one. For every dollar we contribute out of our salary the government would match that.

As it is now, and the hon. member should know, the government is putting in about $6 for every $1 that we are putting in. That is unsaleable from sea to sea to sea in this country. I suspect that when he goes home it is not a lot different from my situation or from anyone else here when they hear how people feel.

He talked also about the re–entry to private life in the private sector. There is no one in this Chamber who would disagree that it may be difficult to get back in and work back into the clientele you had before or whatever your professional job was. My trough day will be March 13. I hope we have made substantive changes before then. It is unfortunate that we missed 52 other members. I am willing to say let us make substantive changes to the program before my trough day on March 13.

If I were to re–enter private life then I would get a pension straight through from age 42 on. There is something dreadfully wrong about that. My question to this member is, why can we not have some sort of a severance package for people who are re–entering their private lives? If we are going back into the workforce let us have some sort of severance package that the government would offer. That is fine. But why not defer pensions until a later age? Why should I and other members get a pension straight through from the day after an election? Bang, it