

Private Members' Business

I think the most important thing is to look at this commission, this independent, non-partisan agency that will review the salaries, pensions and benefits of members of Parliament, and also those of provincial and municipal representatives. Then, let us compare all that with the private sector and other Canadian institutions, to make sure it is fair. If it is too generous, let us suggest ways to change that.

[English]

All I want out of this is an independent, objective review of what is happening with appropriate adjustments if they are deemed necessary. I suspect in some cases they will be deemed necessary.

I want to be honourable in spite of the fact I am tempted to be less than that as a result of some of the comments I have heard from the left. I did say I would split my time and I shall do so, but I warn my colleagues to the left if I hear any more silly nonsense as I just heard a few minutes ago, then I shall seize the first opportunity to correct them.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I would like to thank the hon. members for Regina—Qu'Appelle and St. Boniface for their co-operation and sense of fairness.

[English]

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I do wish to speak for just a few moments before the adjournment of the House this evening to put some of my thoughts on the record.

Certainly no subject reaches this House that creates the type of emotion and response the subject of MPs' salaries and benefits does. Even though we have heard various comments this evening on the subject, in the end we all agree with the intent of this motion. Even the official spokesperson of the government basically agrees but says it is not necessary because we are going to do it anyway.

That is to have an external review by non-members of Parliament to look at our wages, benefits and our pensions and make recommendations. The only difference between the official government position and the motion by my friend and colleague for Burnaby—Kingsway is that the government member is saying: "We are doing it already".

The fact is that although this commitment was made some six months ago, the government has not acted on it.

I would suggest and I would plead with the member of the government to allow this private member's motion to go through.

The motion certainly is not contradicting what the government is intending to do or is in the process of doing. If anything, it would strengthen the government's intent. Therefore we should support the private member's motion and allow it to go through.

I have never been comfortable with the fact that I have to vote on my wages, benefits and pension. When I was first elected and was confronted with this situation, I did not like it. It is a no-win situation. Politically it is crazy for us in the House to vote on our own wages, pensions and benefits.

I have always thought we should study the various benefits people receive in professions somewhat similar to ours in terms of responsibility, hours of work, et cetera to determine an average wage and benefit package. Our benefits and wages should be tied to that. As the average goes up or down, ours will also go up and down automatically. In that way we are never called upon to vote on our own wages.

As I mentioned before I think it is crazy politically. It is a no-win situation. Even if from an outside perspective we were worth that much, if we tried to vote ourselves that amount the electors would take it out on us. That is why I do not think it is a great idea for us to vote on our own wages and benefits. Let an outside group determine that in a fair way.

I support the motion that is being presented to us. I think it is a good motion. I think it would have the support of the Canadian public and the support of all members of this House. Therefore I urge that this motion be carried and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): There being no further members rising for debate, the time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired.

Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1) the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I wonder if we could just get clarification from the Speaker. If there are no further speakers within the hour, it was my understanding that the question would then be put. I believe that is the correct procedure.