

Private Members' Business

Parliament for St. Boniface. It was not just the Auditor General for Canada or Parliament.

Public Service 2000 recognized the deficiencies in the current structure of wages and salaries. As the report of the task force on compensation and benefits put it, and I quote:

The current Public Service approach to compensation and benefits is highly uniform, centralized and rigidly controlled. Such an approach tends to treat all employees, exceptional and mediocre, alike. Therefore, it cannot be utilized in any strategic manner as a management tool to influence the effectiveness of the Public Service.

It makes little attempt to recognize and reward exceptional efforts, initiatives or accomplishments nor does it provide disincentives for poor performance.

That is taken from the executive summary, pages 1 and 2.

The future, according to this task force, would have to be different. The task force believes that the modern Public Service should have a flexible and comprehensive approach to basic compensation benefits and performance based rewards. This approach should be managed strategically.

This comes very close to recognizing that the bonuses should try to match their ideal attributes. Therein lies the flaw. In as huge an organization as this government, can it really be said with any degree of certainty that 1 per cent of the people who are getting these bonuses are the only people who are entitled to them?

Can it be said that those people who are receiving those increases are receiving fair increases? Can it be said that those people who are receiving those bonuses are in fact influencing the productivity of the civil service?

[*Translation*]

I would contend that any improvement in performance would be due to the efforts of all those men and women who work in the Public Service. The number of employees receiving this additional compensation is relatively small at 4,500. That very fact, I am sure this is true, has a negative impact on the Public Service culture. Those who do not belong to the groups I mentioned earlier cannot earn the bonus and that, I think, is deplorable.

• (1150)

I suggest two alternatives. First, let us have a system that would cover the entire Public Service. Let receptionists, secretaries, assistants and all those people who contribute to the efficiency of the Public Service receive the same consideration, fairly and squarely. I do not want to exclude a particular group, if that group or that individual helps improve performance.

But how do we do that? And if it cannot be done, is it worth it? Do not forget what I said, and I will say it again for the benefit of my colleagues. The argument in favour of these bonuses is that there is a very close link between improved performance and additional compensation. The additional compensation is needed to keep our best employees in the senior ranks. As I said earlier, I do not think that is true. I think these very competent men and women are there because of their interest and commitment. Public Service bonuses have been frozen without causing an exodus of employees who prefer to go elsewhere. I maintain that if the bonuses remained frozen and this particular compensation package were dropped, it would not have a negative impact on this group of managers. I think they would stay in the Public Service because of their commitment.

In concluding, I just want to stress that the purpose of this bill is to get rid of the bonuses. As I said in my press release, this bill proposes to treat all public servants the same by abolishing performance pay for senior management.

I suggest we get rid of these bonuses and give some consideration to performance across the board. If we cannot do that in a manner that is fair and equitable, I think we should get rid of bonuses all together.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate to be only able to have one speaker because of the business of the House preceding the introduction of Bill C-339.

Bill C-339, which proposes to eliminate the payment of bonuses in the public sector of Canada, demonstrates a lack of understanding of the performance bonus system in place for senior public servants.