

Canada Pension Plan

beneficiary. The bill provides for the establishment of a 16-member Canada pension plan advisory committee. The committee, which will provide for representation of employees and employers and the self-employed, will meet at least once a year. In giving advice to the Minister of National Health and Welfare, it will be the responsibility of this committee to review and report on the operation of the legislation, the state of the Canada pension plan investment fund and the adequacy of coverage and benefits. Each year a report of the activities of the advisory committee will be included in the annual report of the minister to parliament.

The legislation provides within this nationwide pension plan for a province to legislate and operate comparable pension provisions. This situation applies if a provincial government, within 30 days after this act receives the royal assent, signifies its intention to enact provincial legislation providing a comparable provincial plan beginning at the same time. The province of Quebec has indicated that it proposes to do this.

This choice remains open to the provinces for the years ahead. However, once the federal legislation becomes operative a transfer to a provincial plan is involved, and therefore a notice period is required. The province would have to signify its intention to implement its plan commencing with the third year after the year in which notice was given. The benefits would have to be comparable to those under the federal legislation or any other provincial pension plan. The province would have to assume all obligations and liabilities with respect to benefits accrued under the federal legislation.

It must again be emphasized that in this bill we are dealing with a subject which has a very special status in our constitution. Under section 94A of the British North America Act, which parliament approved in 1951 and this house again approved earlier this year, there is federal jurisdiction for pensions and supplementary benefits but the federal legislation must not interfere with the operation of any present or future provincial legislation.

This unique constitutional position means that we can achieve a comprehensive Canada-wide system of pensions only by means of legislative provisions which ensure continuing consultation and co-operation with the provinces. For this reason, the bill provides that amendments of substance will require the consent of two thirds of the provinces having two thirds of the population. Amendments

[Miss LaMarsh.]

altering the general level of benefits and contribution rates require a notice period of at least two years.

While future parliaments cannot be committed—they can amend the legislation as they see fit—it is difficult to imagine any future parliament disregarding the requirements of this legislation, because these requirements give meaning to the special nature of the federal and provincial jurisdiction provided for pensions under section 94A.

I should like to thank hon. members for the attention they have shown in listening without interruption to this statement. As I indicated earlier, it is really not possible to anticipate all the questions which may arise in the minds of members regarding the provisions of the bill, but I have tried to deal in the course of my remarks with the salient points. My colleagues the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gordon) and the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Benson) will, during the course of the debate go into further detail on some of the other provisions and on the financial and economic implications in general. I propose to place before the house at this time the report of the government actuaries. I regret it is in English only, and I apologize for this to the house; the French copy is not yet ready. I regret too, that the six appendices are not yet attached to it; they are not quite completed but they will be completed in time to be made available to the special committee when it is set up.

Mr. Churchill: Will they be handed to the house?

Miss LaMarsh: Yes, I will be happy to hand them round to everybody.

Mr. Monteith: But not before second reading is complete.

Miss LaMarsh: I do not expect they will be ready before second reading is completed. However, I have the actuarial report, which is complete, and it deals with some of these appendices. Perhaps it might be of assistance to the house if I were to read the titles of the appendices. Hon. members will know what it is I am not at this time producing. They are as follows: (1) The development of population projections; (2) the development of rates of participation in covered employment; (3) the development of average earnings; (4) the development of contributions and age retirement benefits; (5) the development of death and survivor benefits and (6) the development of disability benefits. This information will be available to the members of the committee and to members of the house at the same time.