

Adjournment Debate

This change would allow for employees who are removed from their position and could not be placed in another position in the Public Service to be entitled to retraining for a period of up to two years.

The staff of the Correctional Service of Canada have had early retirement provisions foremost in their minds since 1971. They have seen their fellow Public Service employees who work as air traffic controllers successfully acquire the same provisions that they are seeking. All they ask is that their occupation be declared a unique one, therefore requiring unique retirement provisions.

Implementation of these proposals will require amendment to the regulations of the Public Service Superannuation Act. It is urgent that the question of an early retirement and retraining program be addressed for these employees and it is imperative that the suggested proposals be implemented.

Correctional Service employees play an integral role in the safeguarding of Canadian citizens. The federal riding of Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington which hosts institutions such as Joyceville and Millhaven, as well as Kingston institutions, have a high number of people with serious conviction. Thus I am hopeful that the government will facilitate this request for such a package and repay the CSC staff's vital role to society.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by acknowledging on behalf of the President of the Treasury Board the important contribution made by the member for Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington on behalf of correctional service workers, not only in his own constituency but across Canada.

The government recognizes and appreciates the stressful work performed by operational employees of the Correctional Service of Canada. This stressful work carried out under very difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances can result in serious burn-out as a result of the stress and burn-out factor. This results in the conclusion that it is essential to disregard the normal age of retirement for public servants.

This issue was studied by a parliamentary subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs which recommended that special early retirement arrangements would be appropriate as one means of dealing with the job related stress engendered by corrections work.

The government agrees in principle that an early retirement program would be an important tool in the prudent management of its valuable human resources engaged in correction work.

Similar conditions of job related stress and burn-out led to the introduction in 1981 of early retirement provisions for air traffic controllers. The primary thrust of the amendments that were made to the Public Service Superannuation Act at that time was to permit air traffic controllers engaged in operational service to retire with full earned pensions at reduced age and service thresholds without incurring the reductions which normally are applied under the Superannuation Act.

An air traffic controller who has 25 years of operational service and is at least 50 years of age may retire voluntarily with his or her full earned pension, a 50 per cent pension based on 2 per cent per year service, and will not be subject to the normal retirement reductions which would be applied to other public servants retiring under similar circumstances.

In addition, with as little as 20 years of operational service, an air traffic controller who is at least 45 years of age may retire with an immediate annuity but in such case would suffer reduction in his or her earned pension of up to 25 per cent. This is a major difference in comparison to other public servants.

• (1810)

In further recognition of the stress factor, the rules are even less restrictive for voluntary retirements requiring only 20 years of operational service with no minimum age requirement. I should add that in return for all of these more generous retirement arrangements, controllers engaged in operational services are required to contribute an additional 2 per cent of salary to the pension plan.

I have gone into some detail regarding the early retirement benefits presently available to air traffic controllers because it has been proposed by the representatives of correctional employees that an identical program be made available to those correctional workers who are engaged in operational services. It may well be that early retirement arrangements for correctional employees will be similar, although there may be variations to reflect the particular characteristics of this group.