

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT SALARIES, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

#### ESTABLISHING INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR REVIEW

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of establishing a non-partisan, independent Commission to review all salaries, pensions and benefits of Members of Parliament and particularly, to identify inequities in the pension plan by holding public hearings and examining other jurisdictions within and outside Canada and such Commission to report within six months of its establishment.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to once again rise in this House and speak to an issue which is of deep concern not only to many of my constituents in Burnaby—Kingsway, but I know to the constituents of my colleagues from the New Democratic Party and indeed the constituents of members from coast to coast to coast.

I want to underline the fact that I am speaking today on behalf of a number of my colleagues who are not able to be here in the House at this time because of other important business. The following members have asked me in particular to underline their support for this motion: the member for Kamloops who has been working very hard on this issue; the member for Vancouver East who is in the House at this time; and a number of other colleagues want their support for this motion clearly on the record.

The motion is straightforward. It calls upon the government to establish a non-partisan, independent commission to review all salaries, pensions and benefits of members of Parliament and particularly to identify inequities in the pension plan by holding public hearings and examining other jurisdictions within and outside Canada and such commission to report within six months of its establishment.

I tabled this motion in the House over one year ago. It was a couple of months later, in February of this year, that a debate took place, really a historic debate took place on legislation that was before this House on pensions. I say that was an historic debate because for the first time in the history of this House, a national

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party leader entered that debate to say on behalf of Canadians that it is time to review the members of Parliament pension plan.

I am speaking, of course, of the courageous leadership that the member for Yukon, the federal Leader of the New Democratic Party, has shown on this important issue. As the member for Yukon said at that time: "We are accountable for the public trust, we are accountable to those who elected us to make sure that what we support is fair, not less but fair, and that each and every one of us can stand before the electorate of Canada and say that we have put in place a fair system".

At that time the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party called for an independent review, a review of particularly a couple of key aspects of the members of Parliament pension plan; the element of double-dipping or triple-dipping as well as the element of eligibility age for members of Parliament to receive this pension.

At that time the Leader of the New Democratic Party was vigorously and bitterly attacked not only by Conservative members of Parliament but by Liberal members of Parliament as well. The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the member for Broadview—Greenwood and many other members of the Liberal and Conservative caucuses attacked her at that time just as they are attacking me in the House now for speaking out on this issue of the public trust and public accountability.

When I came to the House a few minutes ago I had the opportunity to speak with a messenger from the House of Commons and she said to me: "Mr. Robinson, I have worked on the Hill for 14 years and when I retire I will have a pension of \$212 a month".

I am proud of the historic role of the New Democratic Party in promoting strong and progressive pension plans for public sector workers. In particular I want to underline the historic contribution of Stanley Knowles, the former member for Winnipeg North Centre who did so much, who devoted so much of his life and career to the cause of public pensions and a dignified retirement for all Canadians.

I think it is time that we as parliamentarians recognized that in fact we have to clean up our own House. We have an obligation to ensure that the public trust that we hold as elected representatives is in fact one that is respected in all aspects.