

Supply

incidentally, is the first Governor General from New Brunswick, Atlantic Canada.

I thought it was very aptly put by the Prime Minister when in addition to announcing that appointment he concurrently announced that the new Governor General would be accepting his compensation as Governor General but that the Governor General nominated will forego or return his pension as a member of Parliament back to the government. That speaks a great deal for the leadership that the Prime Minister is showing on the aspect of MP pension reform.

Throughout the debate this morning a number of members raised interesting points and interesting issues. I receive with interest the comments of the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra who, through all of the rhetoric going on today, actually sat back and recalled, remembered and reflected upon members of Parliament who served in this Chamber prior to pension plans being formalized and being made for members of Parliament.

I think it behoves all members of Parliament not to forget those members of Parliament who served back in the 1940s and the 1950s, many of whom are still active and around, who do not have those same kind of benefits. I believe there would be some interest within this House to express some support for some sort of initiative to ensure that former members of Parliament who so honourably served in this Chamber would also be given some consideration in terms of pension reform.

I think most members of Parliament will have received an awful lot of input from their constituencies about MP reforms. It is referred to often as a gold plated pension plan and that it costs a great deal of money.

One of the things that really does not come up with regard to the discussion of the pension plan is how that relates to the overall compensation of members. I have to declare right off the bat that I am very supportive of comprehensive pension reform. I think it is the right thing to do and I hope that the reform will take place in conjunction with an overall reassessment of the compensation of members of Parliament.

I believe that Canadians would want to ensure that all members of Parliament receive a fair and reasonable compensation for the work that they do comparable to that which they could earn within the private sector. I think those principles should be sought and pursued by the government.

Most Canadians are not very familiar with the lifestyle of an MP and as most members know when you become an elected member the first thing you have to do is wind up your previous affairs. It is virtually impossible to maintain other income earning activity and still be a member of Parliament. I can speak

from some experience as a chartered accountant. I know that it took some time for me to make arrangements to have my clients transferred to others so that they would receive the service they needed.

● (1510)

However, the fact remains that right now my chartered accounting practice as it existed no longer exists. In the next election, should I not be re-elected, I will be unemployed just as anybody else might be unemployed and will have to start again. That is a sacrifice that members do make. I hope that hon. members will continue to remind Canadians that all members of Parliament have left investments that they have had in other careers to come and serve in this place.

The other aspect of the pension discussion is what members of Parliament do here. I am sure that most members of Parliament work four or five days a week in Ottawa, some nine months a year away from their families. That investment and that contribution to Canada is very significant. I know this should be taken into account very carefully when the government considers compensation to members.

On top of that Canadians should also be aware that when members of Parliament go home when this House is recessed that does not mean that all of a sudden members of Parliament are somehow on vacation. Every member of Parliament has at least one office in their constituency, their riding. They have staff there to service the needs of their constituents. Their job in the riding is just as busy and important as it is in Ottawa. I am sure every member of Parliament has experienced the same thing where we find that we are working 80 hours a week to make a contribution to the betterment of Canada and to the concerns of our constituents.

When we make changes to compensation plans a fair and reasonable rule should be that every member of Parliament or every candidate for elected office should know what the compensation package is so that they can make an informed decision. To make changes over and beyond what was promised to be made, for instance the changes in the pension plan, is asking a lot for members of Parliament to take at this time without some reasonable expectation that there would be equity and fairness for all.

This whole question of when changes should be made really should come up in the debate. I would be interested if the Reform Party would care to comment on the general principle that when changes are going to be made to compensation of elected officials such as members of Parliament those changes should be fully debated, discussed, tabled and decided upon before an election but not to be effective until after an election.