

Private Members' Business

toward reducing the deficit while telling Canadians we are making some very difficult choices and that we also believe as members of Parliament we are to make some difficult choices ourselves which will address the deficit issue.

We also see an opportunity to save money for taxpayers. However, we have seen governments in the past, and particularly this Liberal government, make some significant cuts to transfer payments in the health, education and social service areas. It is not really saving money. It says it is saving money by cutting back \$7 billion this year with respect to health, education and social services costs but all it is really doing is transferring this to other levels of government, the provincial governments and the municipalities across the country. The taxpayer has to make up the difference of the \$7 billion.

We are also seeing a government making cutbacks to unemployment insurance. In Saskatchewan's circumstance we have seen the unemployment insurance program cutback so dramatically in the last two years that over 15,000 people have been taken off UI as a result of the new cutbacks by the Liberal government. They are now being put on the Saskatchewan assistance plan case load, which costs an extra \$63 million a year.

In addition to the unemployment insurance reductions, the Liberal government has transferred responsibility for providing assistance to off reserve status Indians, adding another 10,000 people to the welfare case load of Saskatchewan alone at an estimated cost of \$37 million. We have seen \$63 million, \$37 million, \$100 million on those two initiatives under the unemployment insurance benefit scheme alone.

• (1740)

The Liberal government was elected on the platform of providing jobs and of course it has thrown more people out of work and on to welfare rolls in Saskatchewan than ever before, adding to the burden of the Saskatchewan taxpayer.

Bill C-314, which I am proposing, would assist in a very minor way but illustrates the Liberals have no new ways of trying to save money. All they want to do is pass off the expense of running our country to another level of government.

I will say a few words now about double dipping in the Reform Party. If the Reform Party is concerned about double dipping, it would support the bill. The bill creates a level playing field. Members of Parliament would see retirement income deducted from their paycheque during their tenures as members of Parliament.

Members of the Reform Party have stated they would not accept the parliamentary pension before age 60. Yet there are Reform MPs who gladly accept publicly paid pension benefits from the provincial governments they have served in other public sector jobs, be it teaching, municipal governments or other provincial government sectors.

This in my view is hypocrisy on the part of the Reform Party. The Reform Party is insulting the intelligence of Canadian taxpayers. If it is wrong for a former member of Parliament to accept his pension and take a public sector job, then why can a former MLA now in the Reform Party receiving a \$61,000 a year pension not do the same thing when he becomes a member of Parliament?

Reform Party members must lead by example and voluntarily deduct their pension incomes from their salaries and give the difference back to the House of Commons or to the deficit.

I have some very profound arguments and a great deal of support for the bill. Barbara Yaffe of British Columbia wrote in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 20:

Now that the diabolical double dip has been addressed, the Chrétien government might want to take action on the reverse dip.

Double dipping is to be forbidden under the reforms to the MPs' pension plan announced in February by Treasury Board President Art Eggleton. But the reverse dip was not mentioned in those reforms.

The column was quite laudatory for me and with respect to this bill. She does quote a number of members of Parliament who are serving in the Reform and Liberal parties: the member for Bonavista—Trinity Conception, a retired naval rear admiral; the member for Lethbridge; the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan; the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, a former armed forces officer, and it goes on and on. I would like to read the whole article but I do not think it would be appropriate at this time. However, the bottom line is there is a great deal of support for the bill.

I am not doing this out of mischievousness. I am doing this because it is a serious issue for Canadians and for Parliament. I am doing it with sincerity. As a former member of the Saskatchewan legislature, I have gone on record before and after the election that if I was serving my country in the House of Commons I would never take a pension for my former service as a member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. I will stick by that regardless of whether the bill is passed.

I reaffirm my position that as a former member I will not take a public pension, my legislative pension or my pension as a corporate planner with Saskatchewan Telecommunications because I believe it is a privilege to serve my constituents, my province and my country. Regardless of what position I am in, I will take only the salary due to me and disregard and postpone taking any pensions I am entitled to.