

Personally I am not sure that pension changes will single-handedly turn around this perception but I am convinced that removing the right to double dip will help.

I recognize that double dipping is a term that can be applied in different ways. There are several types of double dipping: governor in council appointments where the salary is met by statute; governor in council appointments where the salary scale is discretionary; appointments to the public service under the Public Service Employment Act; serving as a member of the RCMP or the Canadian forces; or by acting as an independent contractor to the federal government. Therefore, dealing with the double dipping question is more complicated than it appears on the surface.

Some members opposite speak of the need for urgency to end double dipping. There is somewhat of an urgency but not as much as some members would like to think as of today. Members will not quit tomorrow to get their pensions. Many of them work hard and serve their constituents. They continue to do so and will continue to do so.

There are some members opposite who do not feel the urgency. One is already collecting a federal public service pension and another is collecting a provincial pension as well as their federal salaries. These members have said they earned their pensions and will not give them up. Could not the Governor General make the same argument?

One of the aims of this government since its election has been the responsible reform of the MPs pension plan. I am sure that hon. members opposite share with us the desire to see that the job of pension reform is done well and not in a haphazard manner. We will not cut the pension plan in order to appease certain interest groups. We must be thorough and fair in what we do.

The political representatives in this Chamber serve Canadians well, as I said earlier, but there is a widespread perception that politicians want to feather their nests. That view is wrong. Yet it will remain as long as we fail to deal with the irritants such as this double dipping.

Politics is a noble calling, referred to earlier by the member opposite, and reflects members' wishes to serve the people of Canada and give something of themselves to their communities.

• (1650)

I reject the claim that most politicians are in politics for the money. No one comes to this place for the sake of money. It does not pay. Many members of Parliament were doing better financially in other careers before they entered politics. They were making contributions to their pension plans and RRSPs which reflected their financial positions.

Supply

We must ensure that entering Canadian politics is not a financial drain and that no one is unduly penalized. This place must be accessible to all, not only the rich. It must reflect all aspects of Canadian society. The sacrifices are not only monetary. All members can attest to the time away from their families. One member opposite said: "Of any criticism I ever made of a politician I am now biting my tongue, having lived the life for a year. It is quite demanding."

Although the sacrifices are real they are not an excuse for double dipping. The pension and the salary come from the same taxpayer who has a single pocket. That is why I consider the government's commitment to end double dipping as a very positive signal to the country. It is a sign that this government is listening to Canadians and acting on what it believes in. It gives me hope that Canadian political life will gain in stature in the eyes of the people.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it pleases me that this motion was put forward today. I am pleased that the movers of this motion saw the importance of the red book position, particularly the statement on double dipping. I look forward to their support when the government introduces legislation in the near future.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's speech raises the following comment: What a pity the government did not do its homework in this case and has no comprehensive proposal it can table on this issue, because what we have here is a motion that is unsatisfactory.

The Reform Party's motion has no really comprehensive approach to the questions being asked by all voters. Earlier, the hon. member said it contained a point similar to what was said in the Liberals' red book. I think some modesty is in order. The point was raised by all voters we met during the 1993 election campaign. Everyone everywhere, in Quebec and the other provinces, at all levels of society, was wondering how their elected representatives had managed to get terms of employment that were far better than those of most people in this country.

The government, by the way, has yet to meet its commitment, because it has not yet tabled legislation it promised to introduce. And of course the Reform Party could be blamed for presenting a motion that is so vague we cannot vote in favour of it, since we really do not know how the alignment with private sector plans would work.

It seems to me that in his speech, the hon. member talked a lot about avoiding double dipping and also about reviewing the age at which members would receive a pension and introducing a minimum age, and I think we could agree on that. For instance, during the election campaign, people said: Paul, you are 40