

Superannuation

suspended, reduced or terminated as result of the provisions that the present Bill is supposed to eliminate.

• (1130)

[English]

It is a pleasure to present a Bill of this nature which complements other major pension reforms that the Government has brought into being through substantive amendments to the Pension Benefits Standards Act, the Canada Pension Plan, and the Judges Act.

On a final note, I am aware that there are number of outstanding and important pension issues which need to be addressed in the public service plans. Agreement on some of these matters has already been reached with plan members, while other matters need further consultation. The Government will resume, where it is appropriate, consultations with plan members, their representatives, and pensioners. Public service pension reform is a priority matter with me, and I look forward to returning to the House with a comprehensive pension Bill in the not too distant future.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this morning to extend my compliments to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) for doing the honourable thing for the widows, widowers, and children of federal pensioners.

After four long years, he has managed to overcome the inertia of his Government and table a Bill that is a first step toward bringing federal pensions in line with the equality provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. At last, the survivors of those who worked for the people of Canada will not have to choose between "living in sin" to continue receiving income they relied on for their retirement years, or remarrying and forgoing a pension to which they are entitled.

In 1985, the report *Equality for All* recommended that federal superannuation legislation be amended to remove the discriminatory provisions that offended Section 15 of the Charter, on the basis of marital status, gender or age.

Specifically, the report recommended the repeal of provisions terminating pension benefits for a surviving spouse who remarried, for surviving children who mar-

ried, or reducing pensions to survivors more than 20 years younger than the pensioner, the so-called "sugar daddy" clause. These are the recommendations the Bill before us today finally implements.

In its response to the report in 1986 entitled *Towards Equality*, the Government stated that it was studying these amendments as part of the public service pension reform process then taking place. In fact, for other pensioners, it did implement those changes. The Canada Pension Plan was amended effective January 1, 1987, and the Pension Benefits Standards Act of December 1985 covering agencies under federal jurisdiction also ensured the continuation of benefits upon remarriage.

Yet when the report on public service pension reform was tabled by the Minister in June 1986, it left the discriminatory features in federal superannuation legislation for future consideration by a yet non-existent pension management board. Future consideration may be acceptable in trading hockey players. It is not acceptable when dealing with people's livelihoods.

The next stage in this saga was the introduction of the infamous Bill C-33 to reform public service pension legislation. It removed guaranteed indexing from federal pension plans, but did nothing to remove glaring inequities based on marital status, gender, and age. That Bill died on the Order Paper two years later as the Government faced an election and the wrath of a quarter of a million public service employees across Canada.

In bringing forward this Bill today for second reading, the Minister is doing more than correcting contraventions of the Charter. He is also saving the taxpayers of Canada a very hefty legal bill. Lest anyone believe that this Bill is motivated by a new spirit of generosity or concern for the deprivation of widows, widowers, and children of federal pensioners, let me draw the attention of the House to the more likely motivation. A court case was launched on April 13 of this year by the Federal Superannuates National Association.

The association has applied to the Federal Court of Canada for a declaration that the termination of pension benefits based on marital status is unconstitutional. In the case of the particular plaintiff, the application seeks reinstatement of the pension, reimbursement of lost