

consider it or talk about it—the MLAs pension plan. Only then did he move on to work on other government programs.

A good leader only asks of others what he himself is prepared to do. Government members would do well to heed this management principle. The words of comfort to university students and UI recipients facing cutbacks will ring hollow indeed if members choose not to lead by example.

A wise saying applies here. It goes like this: “Your actions speak so loudly I cannot hear your words”. Let us put the empty rhetoric aside and start a massive overhaul of our pension scheme starting today.

• (1335)

Finally, we come to the solution. What do we offer MPs who give their considerable time and effort to serve their country? We want to be fair and equitable. I think we need a pension plan that is comparable to private sector pensions, but which ones I suppose you could ask. There are all sorts of pensions in the private sector. I think we need pensions comparable to those that are available to private sector executives, for example.

Private sector executives get where they are because they display talent, ability and commitment. They are rewarded according to their performance rather than their seniority. They make major companies work and prosper in this country and they compete with the best in the world.

We want to be able to attract this kind of talent, this kind of person to run for Parliament. We need top flight, private sector individuals to make our country run. Not only do people sacrifice careers and time, privacy and family and other things to become elected officials, they also take a drastic cut in the salary portion when they enter Parliament.

Since the salary range for members is already lower than the salary range for private executives, there are few other things that Parliament can offer them in the way of compensation. There are fringe benefits, I suppose, such as a certain amount of notoriety or prestige. Thankfully, this costs nothing to the taxpayer and it is at best a double-edged sword since it also means a corresponding loss of privacy.

Another benefit is the personal satisfaction derived from having direct influence on government policy. Yet another compensation might be the pension they would receive. I think MP pensions need to be as generous as possible while remaining within the industry standard for those types of people.

It would be fair for government to match the contributions of members like other civil servants rather than paying two and a half times what MPs currently contribute. I remind the House that the public service pension fund is in fact overfunded through employee contributions by a large margin. There should

be no special deals, no long term obligations that would cost the taxpayer exorbitant amounts of money, just a fair deal that would allow MPs, like everyone else, to plan their future with a minimum of government involvement.

Canadians have a right to demand an end to the current plan. It is an issue that crosses party lines. Let us not grant ourselves special privileges. Let us lead by example and use this opportunity to restructure the current plan. By doing this I believe we can take a step toward restoring the confidence of the Canadian people in the integrity, the equality and the leadership of all members of Parliament.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member for his party's views on double dipping when it comes between levels of government. I know his party's position is against double dipping as is ours within the same level of government.

One of his colleagues, and I will not mention names, does draw a pension of \$61,000 I believe and now is getting a salary of \$64,500. This gives him a salary of \$125,000 plus a year. What is his party's position and his own position on this kind of cross level of government double dipping?

Mr. Strahl Madam Speaker, I only have to suppose which member the hon. member opposite refers to. Let me talk at least in the broad principles. A couple of things are fairly obvious. If a politician gives 25 years of service to a province or to the Government of Canada or to the Chamber here, that in itself is a considerable difference than the six year minimum that is currently available here in the House.

One thing is the length of time it takes to qualify for such a pension. I think 25 years is significantly different than six years. The other is that there should really only be one pension paid to that individual. I know in the case he is mentioning that has already been made obvious. The member will not be receiving another pension from this level of government since he has already put in 25 years of service in the position of an MLA. I think that is a very honourable and noble thing he has done. It is another leadership by example as he explained it well in his constituency. He has made it obvious that he has refused. He has written across his forms that he will refuse any future parliamentary pension because obviously as the member has pointed out, one pension is certainly enough for any one individual.

• (1340)

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): Point of order, Madam Speaker. The smart-ass question which we just got—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): That is not a point of order.