

Thursday, January 26, 2006

Letter to the Editor,

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) would like to apologize to the outgoing Member of Parliament for Kelowna, Mr. Werner Schmidt, for erroneously stating he had opted back into the parliamentary pension plan.

Following the 1993 federal election, the Reform Party caucus came to Ottawa vowing never to participate in the gold-plated MP pension scheme. Yet within a few years, almost all Reform MPs quietly opted back into the plan, signaling hypocrisy in Ottawa was not limited to the traditional political parties. Mr. Schmidt, however, remained true to his principles – and his constituents – by refusing to succumb to this culture of entitlement. To the best of our knowledge, only two Reform MPs kept their original commitment, the other is the Hon. Preston Manning.

Federal lawmakers have kept their pension plan shrouded in secrecy for a reason. Most are embarrassed by the plan's richness. They should be: lifetime pension payments to outgoing MPs following Monday's election will exceed \$77-million. That is more than \$3.4-million in benefits each year. Taxpayers contribute in excess of \$4 for every \$1 contributed by a MP to their retirement plan.

Kelowna residents should be proud for electing someone who kept his word in office. If our country had a greater number of politicians with Mr. Schmidt's integrity, Canada would be a better governed nation.

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