

# Alliance MP flip-flops on pension plan

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After calling it a plan for pigs at the trough, one of the most vocal critics of the pension plan for Members of Parliament has signed up for more than a decade of lost benefits.

Canadian Alliance MP Deborah Grey said Thursday she has decided to put her family's interests ahead of politics.

Her former boss, Preston Manning, had a brush with prostate cancer a few months ago a scare that convinced Grey to make sure her loved ones are taken care of in case something happens to her.

"All of a sudden you look pretty mortal," Grey says.

"You start thinking if I had to leave office, if (my husband) got sick and I decided to leave office to be home with him, then you have no pension plan whatsoever," she adds.

When she first arrived on Parliament Hill in a byelection in 1989, Grey was a member of the Reform Party a group that assured voters that its members would opt out of what was lambasted as an overly generous pension plan for MPs.

"I think that any MP out of any caucus who decides to stay in this pension plan runs a big risk of not getting re-elected," she once told reporters. During at least one protest, supporters hauled pigs on to Parliament Hill to drive home her point.

Last June, the House of Commons passed legislation forcing all MPs to join the pension plan.

But members were not required to make their contributions retroactive.

Grey, however, has now decided to pay \$89,000 to cover all of her years on Parliament Hill including the time she spent railing against the MPs' pension plan.

The Canadian Taxpayers' Federation says Grey's decision proves that it's virtually impossible for political candidates to remain objective critics of a system they themselves become part of once elected.

"It just shows that people come here to change things," says the head of the federation, Walter Robinson.

"At the end of the day they become 'Otta-washed.' Ottawa changes them."

Grey's new leader, Stockwell Day, says the Alliance still thinks the pension plan is too "generous" and will lobby to have the benefits reduced to levels comparable to what the average working Canadian receives.