

We'll end frozen pensions for expats, says Green party

Manifesto includes commitment to pay full state pension, and annual increases, to all overseas pensioners



Canada is one of the countries in which British expats do not receive state pension increases Photo: Gaertner / Alamy

By Richard Evans

3:15PM BST 14 Apr 2015

Expatriate pensioners could receive the full state pension in future if the Green Party holds the balance of power after the general election.

The party's manifesto, published today, contains a commitment to restore full state pensions to those expats whose payments have been frozen since they moved abroad.

Expatriate British pensioners in many countries, including Australia and Canada, do not receive the normal inflation-linked increases in the state pension every year. As a result, their payments are frozen and some elderly expats receive just a tiny fraction of the full basic state pension of £115.95 paid to those who live in Britain.

Campaigners have been calling for years for a change in the "discriminatory" policy but, although they have received support from some MPs, ministers have dismissed the calls, saying that restoring full pensions would be unaffordable.

The Green party's manifesto said the party would "make sure that all pensioners living abroad receive the same pension and annual pension increase as those living in the UK".

While the party has no chance of winning power on its own, it may win enough seats to be courted by other parties in search of coalition partners. A commitment to ending frozen pensions for expats could therefore be included in any agreement reached with another party, although it could equally be dropped as part of the horse-trading.

A year ago *Telegraph Money* disclosed that David Cameron was sympathetic to the plight of British expats whose state pensions had been frozen, according to an MP fighting for a change to the policy.

Successive British governments have said that only pensioners who live in a country with which the UK has a reciprocal agreement on pension increases will receive index-linked rises every year. These countries include Spain, France and America.

In 2013 the International Consortium of British Pensioners called on Britain to be suspended from the Commonwealth over the issue, which it described as one of "discrimination and inequality".

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