

Private Members' Business

This office would benefit from efficiency improvements resulting from completing work in progress rather than having to put it aside and then pick it up again at the time of tabling of the annual report. This disruptive effect of the annual report tabling on the smooth and orderly flow of work through this office cannot be overemphasized.

Underlying this Mr. Desautels said: "Ultimately the taxpayers of Canada will be the main beneficiaries". Earlier reporting of audit results will lead to faster correction of problems. In my view this means greater savings for Canadians, reduced risk, better management and generally better government.

Therefore for these reasons I ask the House, in a spirit of better accountability to Canadians, in a free and open spirit, to assure the passage of the bill. By the way I am proud to say I have the support of many members of Parliament. I have at least 70 letters of support for this bill from this House. I am very proud of that. I think it is a good sign. It is a hopeful sign.

• (1400)

I hope the bureaucracy does not meddle in this issue, that it stays out of this debate and does not start trying to prevent this from happening. It did it before. I hope this time we parliamentarians keep our minds open, that we do it with an open and free will. Let us not have the bureaucracy tell us what we should be doing in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier wish the unanimous consent of the House to table the document? He did not move it at the end. I do not know whether he wants to or not.

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that this letter be tabled. I think it is an important letter and it should be appended to today's minutes.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed.

[Editor's Note: See Appendix.]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking my hon. colleague from Ottawa—Vanier for introducing Bill C-207. He explained very well the overall nature of the bill which is aimed at giving the Auditor General of Canada a little more room to manoeuvre so as to allow him to present the information the House truly requires as quickly as possible. The hon. member gave a good account of several great examples of totally outrageous spending. We had heard of these expenditures. He pointed out that the Auditor General's report was enormously useful to members, and I cannot disagree with this statement.

However, I would like to say that this report should also be useful to the people. The public can obtain copies of the report from the Auditor General of Canada. The published report is available free of charge. Many citizens would do well to read it. The Auditor General's Office will be happy to send them a copy if they request one.

To all those who are listening to us at this moment, let me say that the role of the Auditor General of Canada is to act as the government watchdog in matters of national finance. Each year, the Auditor General inspects a portion of the government's books and each year, as my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier said, he releases a report anywhere from 600 to 700 pages long describing some administrative horrors of which the government is guilty.

Very often, and that is something that my colleague also stressed, the media jump on this report and it makes headlines for two or three days, a week at best, and then it is shelved. I believe my colleague was right to mention it.

Naturally, the Bloc Québécois will support this bill, but I must say that ever since we arrived here, we have asked for something much larger than this. We believe that the role of the Auditor General is not wide enough. We have been asking the government to open its books to the public, so it can review, item by item, all government spending, including fiscal spending. By the way, we know that fiscal spending is beyond the reach of the Auditor General, he is not suppose to review that, it is nor part of his mandate, and I talked about that with Mr. Desautels during a meeting we had with him.

For those who would like to know what fiscal spending is, I recommend a book published in Toronto I believe, a couple of year ago. It is called *The Lion's Share*, by Linda McQuaig, and it describes how people who control Canadian fiscal policy could grab it for their own profit.

Unfortunately, the way things are now, I believe that government operations are not fully transparent since some elements which should be audited are not accessible to the Auditor General of Canada.

• (1405)

That is the case for tax expenditures; that is also the case for family trusts, which the government does not want to touch. We do not know how much money there is in these at the present time. There were also other examples, such as Ginn Publishing, things that remain secret, but that should be known in the House.

There should not be secret relationships between secret people on secret decisions. What is going on in the government should be known here, in the House, so that we could take good decisions on the matter.

Unfortunately, that is why we got the budget that we did. If we look at that budget, and that was still evident in the media today, the government is directly attacking the unemployed. In that budget, it is the unemployed and the old people who will be hurt.