

Canada Elections Act

[English]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, I would ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: Shall the notices of motion be allowed to stand?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS—PUBLIC BILLS

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: Shall all orders listed under Private Members' Public Bills preceding No. 383 be allowed to stand by unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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[English]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE INCREASE IN CANDIDATES' DEPOSIT

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South) moved that Bill C-583, an Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (deposit), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

He said: Madam Speaker, Bill C-583 has been in my mind and in the minds of a number of people who have assisted me in elections for some considerable period of time. The Bill involves the matter of the deposit that a candidate in an election must place with the returning officer in the riding in order to be a candidate.

The deposit under Section 23(2)(j) of the Canada Elections Act has been the princely sum of \$200 since 1882. The purpose of my Bill is to increase that figure of 1882 to a more realistic figure in light of today's economic conditions namely to the sum of \$2,000.

Over a hundred years ago a deposit of \$200 was a great deal of money. Indeed, a lot of people who worked a whole year did not earn \$200. It was a very significant sum. It was real honest money that people put up in order to be a candidate in an election. Until very recently, unless a candidate got half the winner's vote he lost or forfeited his deposit. The concept of the deposit was to ensure that those who honestly wanted to run for the House of Commons were prepared to put up some

earnest money and to compensate the Crown for the cost of the election. If they did not get a realistic number of votes, they would lose that money.

The sum of \$200 has now become a pretty nominal sum. The average industrial wage today is in the area of \$385 per week. Therefore, \$200 represents just slightly more than half a week's wages for the average industrial wagger. It is not really earnest deposit money; it is nothing but a shell in the total organization of an election.

For very little money, someone can be a candidate in a federal election. Some do this for personal reasons, wanting to have their name before the public, advertising their name, if you like. For \$200 you can have your name spread before the City of Mississauga for 60 days or more. The Government will print your name on ballots for some 80,000 electors. You will be publicized in the newspapers. This is all at the expense of the Government of Canada. What a wonderful way to get your name across to the public if you have some kook idea!

You can force your way into every all-candidates meeting in the constituency. I have had that experience. People run honest, all-candidates meetings in my constituency. They try to ensure that the point of view of those seriously running for election is made known to those constituents who are interested. Time and again we have candidates who really have no interest and no possibility of winning. They make no personal effort to win other than to appear at the meeting to make a speech, using up the time of the meeting. Because of this the rest of the community cannot get at the issues they want to discuss.

The \$200 deposit has made it possible for people to make a joke of our election system. For a very nominal sum, you are entitled to expenses that, according to the Chief Electoral Officer, cost the Government of Canada an additional \$1,000 for every candidate beyond three who runs for election. In other words, if a ballot contains three names, it would cost on average \$1,000 to put on an additional name. For \$200 a person puts the Government to the expense of \$1,000. For that \$200 the candidate is entitled to ten copies of the voters' list to do with as he or she wants. You receive the names and addresses, the detail of where every single person who has the right to vote in the federal election lives within a constituency. Not only that, you are entitled to demand from the returning officer an election key and election map. What a wonderful amount of material! The material itself, on a straight paper basis, is worth more than \$200.

● (1550)

It really is not a question of being unfair when I ask to raise the deposit level. It is really a question of saying to those who honestly want to run in an election: "Pay your own costs". Is it going to deprive anyone who has a chance of winning? I say it is not.

Under the present Canada Elections Act, if a person receives 15 per cent of the vote or better, that \$200 is now returned. Indeed, not only is the \$200 returned, but, as we know, under the Elections Expenses Act, virtually all the