

*Senate and House of Commons Act*

to a collective wisdom. Parliament should be the hub of political action with the rays of its policy deliberations stretching over an ever mobile society.

There are moments when those goals are not upheld. There are times when Members fail to abide by the rules of the House. This Bill is an effort to ensure that those moments are less frequent. The Bill is a statement that the House does not support the actions of a Member who deliberately flouts the traditions and practices which bring credibility and responsibility to these Chambers.

The Bill would ensure that, if a Member is ejected from this House or a Senator from the other place, his or her sessional allowance would be deducted for the period of suspension. In other words, the Bill is an unequivocal statement that the House, and indirectly the people of Canada, do not support the actions of Members which are unacceptable in the parliamentary tradition.

The monetary penalty is not the significant issue, because in reality it is not an amount that is so large as to have a great impact. It is somewhat like a hockey player who earns a \$300,000 salary receiving a fine of \$1,000. What is significant, just like the hockey fine, is that it sends a signal regarding appropriate or, more correctly, inappropriate behaviour in this place.

There is no doubt that behaviour of the type we have seen displayed in this House from time to time is unbecoming, and is offensive to most Canadians who watch these proceedings. It casts a negative cloud on all Members of the House, not only the offenders. It reduces the respect of Canadians for politicians, Parliament, and governments. This is neither healthy nor desirable in a democratic society.

I have a list here of some past incidents and Members who were suspended. I have decided not to reiterate those events as it would simply give credit, credibility, and attention that they do not deserve.

Members of the House have welcomed the increased independence and responsibility that our work has been given through parliamentary reform. Through recent reforms to the committee system and the process of Private Members' Bills such as this one, we are increasingly given the opportunity to voice our individual opinions, expertise and dissension, and to seek the inclusion of those views in public policy.

This is certainly a legitimate process, and it is an integral part of our representation of constituency and regional concerns. We are failing to serve our electors if we do not effectively use parliamentary debate and scrutiny.

However, there are cases when a Member persists in actions which do not serve the interests of Parliament or constituents. Members can, through intentional misconduct or a mere lapse, bring discredit to the House. It is neither warranted by tradition nor desired by our colleagues. The Speaker may intervene to avoid conflict, and will always exercise great care in ensuring that the rules of the House are followed. In most

cases, the Speaker uses the skills of tact and knowledge of procedure to effect a resolution. In a few cases reconciliation is not possible, and disciplinary action must be taken.

Currently, the strongest punishment that the House through the Chair can exact is suspension. This penalty is not levied frivolously. In fact, a full series of events must occur before suspension is considered. A Member might challenge another's statements in terminology that is unparliamentary, or refuse to withdraw an inflammatory comment. Under recent reforms, the Speaker may eject that Member from the House without, as was previously the case, seeking a vote in the House. This single reform removed the ties of political partisanship from the disciplinary process. The second reform that I am proposing strengthens that process.

This Bill will not mean the end of suspensions from the House. Differences of opinion and interpretation will continue to mean that Members oppose one another's analysis of events and policies. This opposition is constructive, because it improves the openness of Government and the effectiveness of its policy. Rather, this Bill will mean that suspension is discouraged as a means to achieve goals which are inconsistent with the honour of these Chambers. Regretfully, what is chastisement to the House is an event to the media, and Members can incur a suspension for purposes of showmanship, not thoughtful criticism.

Clearly, a suspension of a Member may come about because he or she chooses to put political grandstanding ahead of the work of the House. Priorities such as this reflect poorly on all politicians individually, and on our parliamentary system generally.

This Bill will not prevent Members from establishing those priorities should they so choose, and it will not prevent suspensions in the future. It simply states that parliamentarians will not receive benefits for violating decorum in the House for personal political advantage.

In summary, the Bill asks Hon. Members to strengthen their commitment to decent parliamentary behaviour and practice. It asks them to assert unequivocally that they do not support the actions of those who flout the guidelines of the House. This is a Bill consistent with the goals of reason and discipline which the House espouses, and I feel it is worthy of support.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West):** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member has raised an interesting point in presenting this Bill to the House. I certainly would like to see the matter studied further. I do want to observe that the impression that might be conveyed to someone following these proceedings is that nowadays the naming of a Member and the resulting suspension of that Member from the sitting is a frequent occurrence, so frequent that some additional sanction is required in order to prevent this from happening.

Over the last year or two, it seems to me that the actual naming and suspension of a Member from a sitting has become extremely rare. This is due not only to the interest of Members