

People who own between 200 and 300 rifles will take them out, women will make sure that men get rid of rifles, and vice versa, and the problem will be solved.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.) moved that Bill C-263, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act and other acts in consequence thereof (exempted crown corporations), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the message was loud and clear to every member of Parliament during the last election. Our constituents demanded accountability.

All members of the House were asked by their constituents to come to Ottawa to work toward solutions to the debt problem facing our nation. I am sure all hon. members would agree that as elected representatives of the people we ought to work toward ensuring accountability in every activity of the federal government.

The Canadian people want us to provide the means by which we can all come to trust the government. When it concerns government programs my constituents, and I am sure many MPs feel the same way, are very inquisitive. They are like investigative reporters. They use the five *ws*: who, what, when, where, why and all the time when it comes to government programs they ask how much it is going to cost. The people of Canada want to know. They want to be proud of the activities and the performance of the federal government.

Bill C-263 provides all members of the House with an opportunity to say to their constituents that at least in some small way we have come together to work toward ensuring that the federal government is accountable to the Canadian taxpayer.

I feel strongly that members from all sides of the House should rally in support of Bill C-263 so that we can honestly say we have tried to respond to the wishes of the people who sent us here.

Bill C-263 is not all encompassing, dictatorial, unable to change or restrictive. Bill C-263 is flexible. I have tried to provide an occasion for all corners of the House to work together and at the end of the day five crown corporations will be more

accountable. We will all feel as though we have done a good day's work and proudly report to our constituents what we have done. Our constituents in turn will take note of our work and they will feel we are serious about doing positive and constructive work.

As members know, in the 1993-94 fiscal year crown corporations incurred losses of \$57.2 million. Their net borrowing from the Government of Canada amounted to \$14.2 billion and they received \$4.6 billion from the government through budgetary appropriations.

We say \$1 billion so often it just floats by. How much is \$1 billion? It is such a massive amount. If you earned \$1 per second you would be a millionaire in 11 days; but it would take you 33 years to become a billionaire.

When we are talking of billions of dollars it is very important that we do not just flash by it very quickly and not understand how large a sum of money it is. Our task is to ensure for our constituents that every government department and agency be accountable for every tax dollar spent. I dare say that everyone in the House wants to be able to say to the people at home that we are responsible to the people who ultimately pay the bills, the Canadian taxpayer.

• (1735)

On those occasions when constituents ask us why it is that certain public corporations do not report their financial status, members have no satisfactory response. The average Canadian wants to know about all federal agencies and departments.

When constituents hear about an activity financed by the government and they are not allowed to know about the finances associated with that activity, they become quite interested. They are concerned that maybe there is something to hide.

The Auditor General has a key role to play in this regard. In many cases, which I will refer to in a moment, the Auditor General has not only made available publicly the exact facts and figures concerning the activities and performance of the federal government, but the Auditor General has been able to improve such activities and performance levels by dissecting and evaluating agencies and departments.

There is no shame involved in the work performed by the Auditor General. The auditor's detection of poor performance and recommendations is seen by Canadians as routine and expected. Canadian firms, large and small, perform audits on their own activities and performance. Often the audits show that they are right on track with their objectives. And sometimes they must swallow tough medicine to cure ailments detected in their business audits. This is a fact of life. Canadians expect their government to follow good business practices as well.

No one can deny the performance of the Auditor General in recent history. Progress has been made. The Auditor General has