

Private Members' Business

There are serious questions that we have to deal with in committee. However, I do applaud the minister's approach. I think it is salutary for the House to present a bill in this way. I hope for a speedy passage of it in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Departmental envelope.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being five o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 30(6), 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

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Wednesday, February 10, consideration of the motion of Mr. Crawford that Bill C-301, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act (financial information), be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Economics envelope.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, just by way of background, I compliment my colleague again for having the foresight to bring what I call the accountability and reliability of taxation measures before the House of Commons by way of a private member's bill.

On the last day we spoke on this legislation we were discussing in some detail the effects that legislation like this would have.

Suffice it for me to say that this legislation would make all government programs to be costed out fully and completely before any programs were implemented. Any cost overruns would need the special authorization of Parliament. That really is the critical issue with respect to this legislation.

Even if this House were to approve some project, once that project exceeded the approved limitations of this House, the legislation would have to reappear before the House of Commons. Every member would be apprised of the efficiency of that project. Then there would be a debate on the full extent of the additional costs involved in any program the government implemented.

It would require long-term planning by cabinet ministers. They would have to give the House a very detailed statement on the original cost of the program, the cost in the previous two years and the expected cost over the next five years.

The last time we were debating this particular legislation I made a statement with respect to the goods and services tax. Let me use the goods and services tax as an example of what this legislation is all about. When it was implemented there was some accountability with respect to what it was supposed to do on the taxation system in Canada.

We heard many statements on what was the original start up cost on the goods and services tax. The estimate we heard at the time was that with the addition of 4,000 employees by Revenue Canada in order to monitor and police the goods and services tax, the start-up costs in implementing this tax were going to be \$1 billion.

That \$1 billion was only an estimate. The tax has been in effect for some two years. We still do not know how much revenue that tax has generated to pay off our debt. We heard at one time that when comparing the goods and services tax with the manufacturers' sales tax which it replaced, that it was going to be revenue neutral. We still have not heard. We have had no accountability from the government with respect to whether the goods and services tax is revenue neutral as it said.

• (1705)

What is the net revenue of the goods and services tax with respect to how it affects the total debt of this country? What are the original set-up costs? To this date we do not have the figures with respect to the actual