

On a more serious note, I would like to use my few remaining minutes to speak about the effectiveness of the Senate, commonly referred to as the Upper House. When our colleagues in the Reform Party talk about the importance of a Triple E Senate, I would simply say to them, with all due respect, that to my mind, we already have a Triple E Senate, a Senate with zero effectiveness, zero efficiency and zero elected members.

In fact, we could even qualify the current Senate not as a Triple E Senate, but instead as a Triple I Senate, the I standing for ineffective, inefficient and inane. You may tell me, Mr. Speaker, that I am the only one who thinks this way.

• (1655)

You may think that the hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead is too harsh on the Senate. For the benefit of all my colleagues, I will refer to the report of the Auditor General, who is a serious and reputable man whose competence is recognized by all members of this House. The situation has not changed since he wrote his March 1991 report.

This is what he wrote: "The Senate is unique and operates in a rapidly changing environment. Managing the Senate is different from managing a department, a public organization or a private business. As a legislative body, the Senate can establish and adopt most of the regulations impacting on its conduct. It is not necessarily subjected to the same laws as the administration. It may not even be bound by the Financial Administration Act. The usual accountability mechanisms therefore do not apply. Without these mechanisms or appropriate alternatives, the Senate, just like the population, cannot be as certain as most other institutions that its administration is sufficiently concerned with economy and efficiency". That is what the Auditor General said in his report tabled in this House in March 1991.

He goes on to say: "A distinctive feature of Senate administration is that senators are collectively responsible. Senators are themselves responsible for their own administration. They are accountable only to themselves". He adds: "We noted that the Senate did not, either officially or unofficially, delegate clear responsibilities to the administration or clearly indicate what the administration was accountable for". In other words, the administration of that chamber resembles a free-for-all. They do what they want with public money, as the Auditor General pointed out.

He goes on to say: "The Senate does not report adequately on its administrative and financial record and its management of human resources. It does not have sufficient information to do so systematically. As far as senators' expenditures are concerned, we noted that the amounts declared in public accounts were incomplete and not informative enough to enable us to determine whether they constitute Senate operating expenditures under the Parliament of Canada Act. Neither the Senate's policies nor its practices provide assurance that all the amounts reimbursed were spent for the operation of the Senate". That is a damning judgement of the Upper House, the Senate.

### Supply

That year, the Auditor General made 27 recommendations to improve the operation and efficiency of the Senate. I will give some of them. These recommendations just as they are show that the Senate is ineffective, inefficient and useless.

Recommendation No. 1 is that the Senate should define more clearly the mandates of the Committee on Internal Economy and its subcommittees. Recommendation No. 2 is that the Senate should publish its expenditures of public funds and the performance of its administration. The Senate should regularly publish a summary of the activities and expenditures of its committees. Mr. Speaker, it goes on like that for 27 recommendations.

• (1700)

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the House to refer to this report of the Auditor General from 1991. I am told that this situation still goes on; according to all the information now available, the situation is still the same.

In conclusion, I will simply convey some facts on the Senate's spending as reported in an article by Claude Picher in *La Presse* of February 3, 1994. He drew on a report by Gord McIntosh in the *Financial Post*, which reported some Senate expenses like changes or improvements for \$125,000 to Senate premises. As was said right here in this House, a senator had his floor raised so that he could have a better view outside.

**An hon. member:** It is disgraceful!

**Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead):** Mr. Speaker, if you allow me, I will conclude with this. The Senate sat only 47 days in 1993, so each sitting day cost about \$1 million on average.

I repeat, this Senate is ineffective, inefficient and useless.

**Mr. Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask for unanimous consent to defer all divisions on this debate to 10 p.m. tonight.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** The House has heard the suggestion of the Official Opposition whip. Do hon. members agree?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** The five-minute period for questions and comments to the hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead will now begin. The Parliamentary secretary to the Leader of the government in the House.