

Private Members' Business

like to consider in a more general way the issue of a member's accountability.

In fact, the issue raised by the hon. member for Abitibi is above all one of being accountable to the people of Canada. We are elected by the people and we are accountable to the people. We do this in various ways: through our presence in the riding where we were elected, by listening carefully to members of the community, and by always being available to help our constituents.

We are accountable in the House, when we take part in many debates on important issues when we put questions to members of the government, and when we draw attention to the problems of our fellow citizens. We are accountable through our participation on parliamentary committees, by ensuring at all times that the interests and the well-being of Canadians are always considered when important initiatives or legislation is discussed. Ultimately, we are accountable to the people at election time, when we show them what we have accomplished as members of Parliament during a given mandate. The people then decide whether or not to give another mandate to their representative in Parliament.

We all agree that public moneys should be used in an appropriate manner. Some mechanisms are already in place to control members' expenses. It is in compliance with those rules that we will accomplish our duties as members of Parliament.

[English]

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond on behalf of the New Democratic Party for a few moments. The member for Abitibi has received some notoriety on this subject, and gained perhaps both good and bad publicity.

He is a pioneer in this area and we salute him for the concept he puts forward. I know he must feel frustrated in his desire to bring forward this idea.

I have recently gone through a private member's bill that I felt was significant enough to move beyond a couple of votes and into committee. Fortunately I have reached that point. I have to thank both other parties for allowing that to happen. I also am quite aware of the long, rocky road to that final end and even when you get there, you may not be gratified with the results.

We do salute the member for his continued perseverance against great odds. I am sure he is receiving static from within his own caucus.

We must be accountable in this business of politics for the money we spend from the public purse. We must not only be accountable, we must not only be honest, but we must appear to be honest. The perception is of as much significance I suppose as the accounting.

I am sure that several members would be afraid of the static that would come forward. I just looked at my travel budget which brings me to work in Ottawa from Sault Ste. Marie once a week. I figure it out to be approximately \$28,000 per year. I am sure some of the constituents back home say it is quite a price tag to send me to work on their behalf.

I should point out that it costs \$670 for a return trip between Sault Ste. Marie and Ottawa at least once a week. I could travel to London, England, every week cheaper than going to Ottawa to work. That is an anomaly. That is the way the airline fares treat us and I suspect that next year it might cost \$750 for a member of Parliament to get to work each week. However, that is the reality of it.

We are looking to move our office. The lease is going to run out. We now spend \$800 a month for accommodation. I am disclosing my expenses, as did the member, in a forum that is not appropriate but I am not afraid to do so. It costs \$800 a month rent where we are. Our lease is running out. In order to find an appropriate spot within the community we will have to pay considerably more. We have outlived our accommodation but it is very expensive to move. I am not afraid to indicate to constituents what exactly their tax dollars are going toward.

I can appreciate that some people would be fearful of manipulation of certain statistics and have grave concerns about that as an individual.

I would ask that perhaps we as MPs could take the lead from the hon. member for Abitibi and disclose, as he has done. I have no problem with that. Perhaps I have not taken that initiative to this point, but it does not mean that I am fearful of doing just that.

• (1530)

I am sure the hon. member has been accused of self-aggrandizement with this initiative. I am sure people have suggested grandstanding, that he is not trying to set an example for anybody; he is just trying to show up other members of Parliament. I will take him at face value since he has been at this for so long. I would