

Points of Order

comments or assertions in our questions, to ensure that the parliamentary secretary is not permitted to include in answers extraneous material that has nothing to do with the question asked, namely the amount of time it took to complete and the estimated cost of completion. It is very nice of the parliamentary secretary to provide the information, but I suggest it is quite out of order and I ask Your Honour to so rule.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might be permitted to reply. I think my hard working, very capable and outstanding parliamentary secretary is being much maligned unnecessarily. The member for Kingston and the Islands is correct that the answers he has received, and will receive, put down factual information. Whether the questions come from this side or that side, or wherever they come from, it is simply factual information. If it is as he alleges, the answers to the questions themselves that show great waste and so on, surely those who read *Hansard* diligently, as he does and I do, and I am sure millions and millions of Canadians do, can make their judgments as to the validity. But I find it passing strange that we have a member of the opposition standing up saying: "We don't want this information about how our tax dollars are being spent". Providing the information about how government spends the taxpayers' money is what we are prevailed upon to do constantly, and we are doing it as openly and as frequently and as thoroughly as we possibly can.

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I would like to say that on the answers I received back yesterday, I was really surprised and amused to see the time, four hours, and the amount of money, \$72 an hour, I think.

I would like to know if we can state in our questions, when placing them on the Order Paper, how many letters we have sent asking the minister's office or the minister for information, or in questions or in committees how long we have been asking for those answers. I found it very ironic that it took four hours of time of somebody in the department at \$72 a hour to answer two of the three questions that I had asked. I also found it very ironic that I am not allowed to say how long my

constituents have been waiting for some of the answers I got yesterday. I cannot believe that there was one involving a program that I have been asking since last year for the answer and I could not get it until I put it on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker, I think that my rights as a member of Parliament should be the same as those of the ministers or the civil servants who prepare the answers who have at their disposal those answers to those questions for a year, some of them, and I am not allowed to have them. How do you think my constituents feel when the government will not even respect the right of a member of Parliament in this House to have an answer and yet I am told it takes them four hours to prepare it. when we have been waiting a year in some cases to get answers.

I think that we should be able to put into the questions that we put on the written Order Paper how long we have been asking for such an answer.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, the arbitrary change in the manner of reporting answers to the House disturbs me. The questions on the Order Paper are a tool provided to members of Parliament and, through them, their constituents, to seek information from the government of the day; information about programs, information about government practices, information about government spending.

It may be quite legitimate for this House to make a determination as to whether the cost of providing that information should also be provided as part of the response. But I do not believe it is up to the government of the day to arbitrarily provide the additional information, particularly because this House has no understanding of how it was arrived at, no assurance that it would withstand an audit, no understanding or knowledge of how the calculations are made. I mean, what are the rates? Also, Mr. Speaker, there is no indication of what this new process is costing the taxpayer in order to track this information.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to review this, and until such time as you have reviewed the correctness of this change—in fact, to determine whether or not the government can arbitrarily do this—that until that time this information not be collected and not be included in the answers to questions tabled in this House.