

Private Members' Business

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Gaspé.

Mrs. Maheu: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I respect your judgment on the last intervention. I believe it was not a point of order. It was a point of partisanship.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It was not a point of order. I do not know where the no came from but there was a no. Therefore, we will now go to debate.

Mrs. Maheu: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. There were two noes, one from each side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Fine. The hon. member for Gaspé.

[Translation]

Mr. Charles-Eugène Marin (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on the bill put forward by my colleague from Abitibi to amend the Parliament of Canada Act.

• (1520)

The purpose of this bill is to require the disclosure of expenses made by members of the House of Commons in connection with their parliamentary functions. The hon. member's bill would amend the Parliament of Canada Act as follows, and I quote: "Every member of the House of Commons shall, each year, within thirty days after October 31 and within thirty days after March 31, prepare a statement of expenses incurred in connection with the member's parliamentary functions and shall immediately deposit such statement with the board".

The board may make bylaws exempting members of the House of Commons from preparing a statement of expenses where, in the opinion of the board, the period of time between the beginning of a Parliament and the time at which the statement of expenses is to be prepared is so short as not to warrant the making of such a statement. Third, the board may make bylaws prescribing items to be included in a statement of expenses, including expenses relating to salaries of a member's employees, rent for constituency offices, travel, stationery and telephone.

Furthermore, the Speaker shall table before the House of Commons the statements of expenses on any of the first 30 days after the statements are deposited by the members with the Board.

The Board of Internal Economy, as created by the Parliament of Canada Act, is responsible for financial and administrative affairs concerning the House of Commons, its premises, services, staff and members.

The board may make bylaws to regulate members' use funds, goods, services and premises made available to members within the context of their parliamentary functions. It may also make bylaws concerning management and accounting of funds made available to members. The Speaker shall table these bylaws in the House of Commons within 30 days after their approval.

Finally, the board has the exclusive authority to determine, bearing in mind the nature of its functions, the proper use by members, of funds, goods, services or premises available to them on the basis of their parliamentary functions and more specifically, whether that use is in keeping with the letter and intent of the bylaws.

The Parliament of Canada Act provides for sessional allowances for members of both Houses of Parliament. It also provides that any member of each House of Parliament shall be allowed certain expenses, such as moving, travel, transportation and telecommunications expenses.

In the course of an investigation by a peace officer into a member's use of specific funds, goods, services or premises, the peace officer may request an opinion from the board on the propriety of that use.

We must remember that a member of Parliament may face charges in court in the case of unlawful use of public funds. We already have mechanisms for monitoring members expenses.

Over the years, there have been a number of changes with a view to improving the existing system. I think everyone will agree it is important to ensure that taxpayers' money is used wisely and appropriately.

As members of Parliament and elected representatives, we must have an abiding concern for the proper use of public funds. Mr. Speaker, at this point I would