

Private Members' Business

publication of financial information on House administration, would enhance public accountability”.

There is one thing I want to say to hon. members: It is not true that everything is public. Paragraph 6.40 on page 30 of the report on the House of Commons audit says, “Each year in the public accounts, the House reports a statement of indemnities, expense allowances and travel expenses by member. This represents only 37 per cent of members’ expenditures”.

Further on, in paragraph 6.43 of the same report, it says, “If the public disclosure we are recommending were put into effect at the beginning of the next Parliament, it would provide members with an opportunity to adapt to such disclosure and would provide the House administration with the time to develop the necessary means of providing it”.

Recommendation 6.44 is as follows: “Information on all expenditures of members should be publicly available, at a reasonable level of detail, effective the next Parliament”.

That is why I have been making my expenses public for several years now. I have received hundreds of letters from taxpayers from Vancouver, from coast to coast to coast, from my riding and elsewhere in Quebec and in Ontario. These are just a few of the letters of support I have received. I even got one from an 84 year old constituent congratulating me for doing this, a first in 125 years of Canadian history.

I know that I am running out of time—I do have 20 minutes—but I want the Canadian people to know how much I have cost them in 1991. My total expenditures for that year amounted to \$236,901, plus my salary and so on. I have three constituency offices and one parliamentary office. Insurance costs were \$578; post office box, \$261; travel expenses for myself, my family and my staff, \$33,670. That is not much, considering that, apart from the two Territories, my riding is the largest in Canada, with 553,837 kilometres square, including the northern tip of New Quebec.

Photocopying, \$3,650; office rental in Val-d’Or, Amos and Senneterre, \$25,639; stationery, office supplies in Ottawa, Val-d’Or, Amos and Senneterre, \$7,337; my

staff’s salaries, \$110,471 gross; telephone service in Ottawa, \$6,500; telephone service and equipment rental in my riding, \$26,600; translation, approximately \$5,000; travels in Canada and abroad, \$1,233. Householder mailings did not cost me a cent. There were none this year because I wanted to save the money of the taxpayers on account of the recession. Travels in Canada—ask my family—none; travels in Canada and abroad, none; travels for sponsors, none either.

I consider government as a public institution that should abide by the same rules as a municipal board or a private company. For instance, what would happen if the management of a company decided not to produce a financial report for its shareholders? I do not think that it would last very long.

Elected members of Parliament have a duty to be transparent, whether they like it or not. There is nothing personal in making a member’s expenses public. What is embarrassing about that? We are still in a recession. All governments have to tighten the belt. Elected members of Parliament must set the example for their staff. I cut my expenses and privileges to do just that because I know that change has to be instigated from the top.

In closing, I must say that the worst enemy of parliamentary democracy is secretiveness. I would like to ask you this, Mr. Speaker: to settle the issue, could I find unanimous consent in this Chamber to put this bill to a vote at the end of the day.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The members have heard the terms of the motion. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It is not agreed. I regret the hon. member’s time has expired. The hon. member for Gaspé now has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Saint-Julien: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I did not get unanimous consent for my request. I noticed that the “no” came from the Liberal member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.