

Private Members' Business

I have a letter here from the Speaker of the House of Commons dated February 8, 1991. I will read the paragraph on reporting expenses: "As you know, the Special Committee on the Parliament of Canada Act recognized that expense disclosure is an important subject which deserves thorough investigation." This is not just anybody; it is the Speaker of the House of Commons.

A little later, in September of the same year, I disclosed my spending in the previous quarter for the people of my riding, that is my riding expenses and my office expenses.

I see the Liberal member from a small, isolated, remote part of the Island of Montreal trying to interrupt me. Anyway, she does not even dare to publish her expenses for the taxpayers.

I have a letter here dated September 5, 1991 and signed by the Clerk of the House of Commons, one of the best clerks in Canada, Robert Marleau. He wrote this in his letter: "nevertheless, nothing prevents members from voluntarily disclosing their expenses, as you have already done—".

On September 25, 1991, I tabled Motion M-591 in this House. It said that the member for Abitibi would table a quarterly report of all his expenses, including privileges, as of August 1, 1991. It is important for me to tell Canadian taxpayers and my constituents all I have done since December 18, 1990, when, before Christmas, I read the proceedings of the Special Committee on the Parliament of Canada Act, in which there was a really important recommendation for all federal MPs. It would set an example for Canadian public servants and all provincial legislators. That is important. Later, I made a first attempt to table a document in the House on November 5. I then asked the House for unanimous consent to table, in both official languages, a briefing note entitled, "Expenses incurred in the performance of my duties as member of Parliament for Abitibi for July, August and September 1991". I was refused the first time. On November 6, I was refused a second time and on November 7 I was again refused. I stopped, because if I did that every day, I would still be refused, and it gets on members' nerves.

• (1510)

That month, the Speaker of the House of Commons was presented a report of the audit of the House of Commons administration by the office of the Auditor

General of Canada. That is not just anybody. It is a study of the Parliament of Canada and members' expenses. We see in section 6, on members' expenses, that members spent \$116 million or 53 per cent of the total spent by the House of Commons.

I want to say that there are several really important things in this report and I must tell Canadian taxpayers about them, because not all taxpayers have access to this report. The reason I quote some parts is that it is important in showing why I, the member for Abitibi, disclose my expenses. I am the only MP to do so even though mayors and councillors disclose theirs every month in their city or town.

Paragraph 6.9 says, "We reviewed the administration of members' expenditures and tested a sample of individual transactions, invoices and claims submitted by members for payment. Our audit of the Comptroller's financial procedures concerning members' expenditures disclosed few problems".

Members pay attention to their budget and are not wasteful. Whatever our party, we have a budget, a salary, offices, funds for travel, et cetera. And the Auditor General says that there are few problems. So why do we not publish our expenses? It is well described in the report. There is no shame in publishing our expenses. I am not ashamed and I have been practising for it since January 14, 1991. The taxpayers thought I was spending a million dollars a year. I proved that my expenses were \$236,000, in addition to my salary.

There are several important recommendations in this report. Members are not informed and no statement on our expenses is provided regularly to the administration of the House or to members.

One thing I did since February 1990, after the finance minister's budget, is that I checked how much I cost. Before, I did not check. It is as if I did my weekly grocery shopping with \$200 in my pocket and left the store without a bill and it cost \$800. Today I can say how much I cost and I have practice with it.

In paragraph 6.39, the Auditor General says, "Public disclosure of members' expenditures needs to be expanded. We have earlier recommended that more information be made available to the members themselves, and to the board. If these recommendations are accepted, it will be an easy, and yet important, final step to make public the details of members' expenditures. We believe that publication of this information, coupled with the