

*Private Members' Business*

first of all, that I am not the first to consider this kind of legislation, since the subject came before the House on December 18, 1990. I suppose many members may have forgotten, or did not have a chance to read, the *Votes and Proceedings* of December 18, 1990, where it says under *Presenting Reports from Committees* that Mr. Danis, from the Special Committee on the Review of the Parliament of Canada Act, presented the sixth report of the committee, which is as follows: On December 14, 1989, the House of Commons, by unanimous consent, approved the following motion: "That a special committee of the House be appointed and empowered to review the Parliament of Canada Act regarding the powers, duty and obligations of the members of the House in relation thereto and regarding the authority, responsibilities and jurisdiction of the Board of Internal Economy—"

"Since its mandate began in December 1989, the work of the special committee has ranged widely over many of the legal and administrative structures relating to the House of Commons and its members. In the course of the past year, we have tabled reports dealing with such diverse matters as the general principles that guide the activities and functions of members, procedures relating to the execution of search warrants within parliamentary precincts, and extensive amendments to the Parliament of Canada Act. The special committee also sat as a legislative committee in relation to Bill C-79, which arose directly out of the committee's work, and reported that bill back to the House last month after intensive study".

"Thus, over one full year, much has been accomplished; but there is much yet to do. The purpose of this report is to indicate the outstanding matters that the committee believes remain to be addressed. Some of these are related to issues discussed in earlier reports, while others flow from the passage of Bill C-79. The committee has concluded that all are important to the members of the House and the public we serve, and are therefore worthy of future consideration".

A little further, in the same report tabled on December 18, 1990 by the hon. member for Verchères, we see the following heading: Public disclosure of expenses. We must remember that the committee consisted of members of all the opposition parties, Conservatives, Liberals

and New Democrats. I shall continue: "The committee has concluded that there should be increased disclosure of those expenses over which members have direct control." The Canadian people have a right to know how the money that is entrusted to their elected representatives is being spent. Mr. Speaker, that was on December 18, 1990. On January 14, 1991, in my federal riding of Abitibi, in my home town of Val-d'Or, I gave a press conference and read these proceedings.

In a spirit of openness and financial accountability to the electorate, information should be made available on the use of such funds. The committee remains uncertain, however, about the best way to achieve this goal. In devising a system, the principle of accountability must be weighed against the principle of the independence of members, and a proper balance struck between the two. Disclosure must be detailed enough to be informative, but not so detailed that the purpose of disclosure is lost in a mountain of irrelevant detail. The privacy concerns of employees must also be respected, as must the privileges of members. All of these aspects of disclosure, as well as all the administrative details that would need to be developed, deserve thoughtful consideration."

That is where I decided to take the lead on behalf of the taxpayers of Abitibi, Quebec and Canada. I told the media that I would publicly disclose my expenses every three months, because for me, it is essential to control expenses paid from public funds.

Given the federal government's sustained commitment to restrict spending in departments, Crown corporations, et cetera, the people of Abitibi are entitled to know how their member of Parliament spends the money given to him. In a spirit of openness and accountability, following the tabling of some bills and the sixth report on December 18, 1990, I told the media that I would go ahead and disclose my expenses.

A little later, in February 1991—it is important to give the dates. Hon. members think that I am doing this for electoral or political reasons, in order to get votes. If that were the case, I would have waited until just before the election, but I did not wait. I made this decision on January 14, following the recommendations in the sixth report of the committee on the Parliament of Canada Act which recommended that we disclose our expenses.