

MHF NEWSLETTER

2010-06-08

THE AUDITOR GENERAL, MP EXPENSES AND IMPROVING QUESTION PERIOD

*THE AUDITOR GENERAL AND MP EXPENSES*

Thank you so much to everyone who responded--and so positively!--to my last newsletter with respect to the Auditor General's audit request. I have been trying to answer all of your comments personally, but please be patient with me as the response was overwhelming.

As you know, I supported the Auditor General's request from the beginning, and I am pleased that, since then, Michael Ignatieff and the Liberal Party have officially asked the Auditor General to meet with the Board of Internal Economy to determine an appropriate way forward. As you know, I have committed a large part of my work as a Member of Parliament to ensure that your taxpayer money is spent by this Government responsibly, effectively and transparently. I know that you expect the same standard of your elected representatives. I agree with you, and I have encouraged this to happen.

Thank you for your support.

*IMPROVING QUESTION PERIOD / IMPROVING PARLIAMENT*

Many people are turned off politics because all they see are clips from Question Period in the House of Commons, where MPs behave badly, heckle—and never actually answer questions. (I am glad to say that I am one of the ones who

doesn't heckle.) Because of this, I am very pleased that Michael Chong (MP for Wellington—Halton Hills) has put forward a motion in the House of Commons, proposing changes to improve Question Period and to make it more effective. I was particularly honoured when Michael asked me to "second" his Motion—which I did, gladly. Among the changes recommended: "(i) elevating decorum and fortifying the use of discipline by the Speaker, to strengthen the dignity and authority of the House, (ii) lengthening the amount of time given for each question and each answer, (iii) examining the convention that the Minister questioned need not respond, (iv) allocating half the questions each day for Members, whose names and order of recognition would be randomly selected, (v) dedicating Wednesday exclusively for questions to the Prime Minister, (vi) dedicating Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for questions to Ministers other than the Prime Minister in a way that would require Ministers be present two of the four days to answer questions concerning their portfolio, based on a published schedule that would rotate and that would ensure an equitable distribution of Ministers across the four days..." These changes, if implemented, would significantly improve how Question Period is conducted, both in substance and decorum. Although Michael Chong and I are in different parties, we both agree on the need to improve Question Period, and to improve the process of Parliament. I commend Michael on his initiative, I am honoured to be a part of it, and I am working with Michael, and others, to encourage all MPs, of all parties, to support this effort.