

# View From the Hill

By Brent Rathgeber, MP



Last week, the Board of Internal Economy turned down Auditor General Sheila Fraser's request for a performance audit of MP's expenses on the grounds that she had no authority to do such an audit. Canadians are not pleased with this decision and have spoken out, demanding answers. I have received calls, emails and letters from some of you expressing your views on this important matter.

First off, let me clarify that the Board of Internal Economy is chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons and has Members from all four Parties. I do not sit on the Board of Internal Economy and took no part in this decision or the deliberations that preceded it.

I feel strongly that Canadians deserve to know how their tax dollars are being spent and I would like to state clearly that I am prepared to accommodate all reasonable and legitimate inquiries. MP's expenses, including travel and receipt reimbursements, should be open for audit. However, I believe that giving the Auditor General unlimited discretion in this matter is unwarranted, especially regarding the privacy of constituents who come into constituency offices to access MP services and are entitled to retain their rights to privacy.

I am opposed to giving the Auditor General powers, similar to a Law Society Audit, for example, where investigators show up and have unlimited access to all files, including client files. However, common sense should be able to lead to a compromise that limits the Auditor General's authority to financial matters such as MP expenses and keeps off limits non-financial matters that are confidential to the constituents who access our offices.

I would welcome a speedy compromise between all Parties and the Auditor General that satisfies the public's right to know but, at the same time, protects the non-financial operations of constituency offices and the privacy of those who come to these offices.

What do you think? If you would like to speak with me about this, or any other, issue do not hesitate to contact me at (780) 459-0809 or by email at [RathgB1@parl.gc.ca](mailto:RathgB1@parl.gc.ca).