

The NDP Trades Reason for Theatrics in Bill C-377

Terrance Oakey – December 3, 2012

Often the first sign of someone losing a debate is the tactics they employ. This maxim has proven true in recent weeks with the public and parliamentary debate on Bill C-377, a federal private members bill that would require unions and other labour organizations to report annually financial statements, salaries paid to union employees, the amount of time spent on lobbying and political activities, and certain information about expenditures over \$5,000. These measures would bring union disclosure laws in-line with those in countries like the U.S., U.K, Australia, New Zealand, France and Germany.

The recent rhetoric and tactics employed by unions and their proxies in parliament, the New Democrats, have ranged from abhorrent to desperate. For example, a prominent union member compares the Prime Minister to Hitler [in a video posted to the left-wing website Rabble.ca](#) (coincidentally funded by many unions). Then earlier last week the NDP MPs on the Finance Committee launched a filibuster to block consideration of amendments to Bill C-377 that were designed to address the concerns raised about the legislation by union leaders and the NDP.

Merit Canada believes that Canadians deserve a reasoned and thoughtful debate on Bill C-377, not theatrics and offensive comparisons. Merit Canada and its 3,500 members support this bill because we believe the general public has come to expect financial transparency for all entities that benefit from the public trust, whether businesses, governments, charities, or unions. Unions and other labour organizations in Canada benefit enormously from the public trust, through the collection of mandatory dues from workers in unionized workplaces and generous tax breaks on union dues that are worth \$400 million annually.

At the same time, Merit Canada recognizes that some legitimate concerns have been raised about the bill and for this reason supports amendments that would enshrine important privacy protections, limit salary disclosure to senior level union executives, and ensure that legitimate trusts that make payments for health and dental benefits are exempted from the legislation -- all things that unions have said need to be fixed.

Democracy works when MPs, Senators and other interested parties stick to arguing the substance of their position on an issue and are prepared to acknowledge when improvements can be made to legislation. However, all Canadians lose when theatrics and obstruction replace reasoned debate.

Bill C-377 is now awaiting final debate in the House of Commons, where hopefully the NDP will allow legitimate concerns to be addressed through amendments. However, if Canada's union leaders and the NDP continue to obstruct and oppose Bill C-377 -- to the point of trying to prevent amendments that would address their concerns with the Bill -- Canadians have every right to ask why Canada's union leaders are so afraid of public transparency.