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## Make MP expenses public: Canadian Taxpayers Federation

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OTTAWA — The issue of MP expenses isn't going away, much to the chagrin of many federal politicians.

Almost nine out of 10 Canadians want to know how MPs and senators spend \$537 million of public money every year running Parliament without having to disclose details of what taxpayers are paying for.

Social media campaigns have sprung up demanding the clandestine Board of Internal Economy, which oversees the House of Commons' secretive budget, allow Auditor General Sheila Fraser to take a look.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation's Facebook page, "Make Canadian MP expenses public," had about 2,000 fans as of Friday afternoon and a petition to open the books on the group's website had nearly 8,000 signatures.

"They all talk about openness and accountability unless and until it applies to their precious spending," said Kevin Gaudet, the federation's national director. "This type of hypocrisy cheapens the whole political establishment. As usual, when it counts, MPs choose not to lead by example."

Fraser asked to be invited — as per tradition — to do a performance audit on the Senate's and House of Commons' budgets over a year ago.

But the members of the Board of Internal Economy — nine MPs from the four parties — finally rejected her request last week, saying Fraser didn't have the authority to do a performance audit on Parliamentarians' expenses.

Besides, they argued, an external financial audit is already done each year to ensure the numbers add up and are recorded properly.

The Senate's equivalent board has yet to respond to Fraser's request.

While the \$537 million figure includes costs for the nuts and bolts of running Parliament — translation and staff, food, security on Parliament Hill, IT and printing costs, among other things — it also includes more than \$100 million in MP office expenses.

The details of that money — which MPs use to run their offices and pay for travel, hospitality and staff salaries — is completely hidden, with only overall totals being made public.

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