

# THE CONSERVATIVE ATTACK

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## Bill C-377 Disclosing union finances

The government has reintroduced Bill C-377, which would force unions to publicly disclose all spending above \$5000 to Revenue Canada. Failure to disclose would result in fines administered by the government. Mainly the government seeks disclosure on political contributions and mobilization activities. The bill has been called unconstitutional and serves no purpose.

There is already a law that governs this, namely the Canada Labour Code which states in article 110 that unions must, **“forthwith on the request of any of its members, provide the member, free of charge, with a copy of a financial statement of its affairs to the end of the last fiscal year, certified to be a true copy by its president and treasurer or by its president and any other officer responsible for the handling and administration of its funds.”**

In addition to this, the UCCO-SACC-CSN constitution states in article 11.10, Open books for members:

**“All Union members may request, in writing, the financial balance sheet from the national executive, the regional executive or the local, which shall be provided in accordance with Article 3.04.”**

This is the same bill the Harper government passed in the last session of Parliament. However, the Senate, including 16 Conservative Senators, voted to send it back to the House of Commons last June with several

important amendments that essentially rendered the bill inoffensive.

The changes included increasing the mandatory disclosure on union spending from \$5,000 to more than \$150,000. Similarly, mandatory salary disclosure increased from \$100,000 to \$444,000. And the bill as amended would only apply to unions with 50,000 members or more.

Senator Hugh Segal led the Conservative revolt against the bill. As he told his Senate colleagues last spring, the bill “lists the need to declare what is spent on labour-relations activities, with no concurrent disclosure imposed on the management side. How about a law that forced my political party to disclose its campaign, travel, research and advertising budgets to the Liberal Party of Canada or to the NDP two weeks before the election was called?”

The government has now pushed the original bill back to the Senate, without the amendments made last spring. We hope the original Tory 16 will maintain their stand for fairness.

