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The Honourable Rob Moore

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC)): Good afternoon, everybody. We'll get started.

Pursuant to an order of reference made on May 16, we're studying today Bill S-201, An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day.

We have with us Senator Terry Mercer, who is here to speak to his bill.

I understand, Senator Mercer, that you have some opening comments, so we'll let you lead off. The floor is yours.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer (Senator, Lib., Senate): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'd like to thank you and the clerk for rearranging the committee's schedule in order for me to appear here today. I appreciate that.

I would also like to thank Geoff Regan, who is sponsoring the bill through all stages in the House of Commons.

I'd also like to thank all members who've supported this legislation, both past and present. Because of prorogations and a couple of elections, I think this is about its seventh time.

This is, by the way, the furthest.... We've finally gotten to this stage. We've never gotten this far before. We've been to where we were almost at this stage, when.... I can't recall whether it was an election—I think it was probably last year's election—that interrupted it. We're hoping that the seventh time will be the lucky time.

Thank you for this opportunity of speaking before you in support of this legislation. It would create the world's first nationally recognized National Philanthropy Day.

I thought I'd give you a bit of background on myself, since many of you may not know my background.

I've been a professional fundraiser since 1978 and a volunteer since childhood. Before being called to the Senate, I held many positions in the philanthropic sector. I was the executive director of the Metro Toronto branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association; I was vice-president of financial development at the YMCA of Greater Toronto; I was on contract with the Nova Scotia Lung Association and with St John Ambulance Nova Scotia Council; and I was the executive director of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Nova Scotia branch.

I know that developing and maintaining relations with donors, volunteers, and philanthropists who provide the necessary funding and services for such things as education, health care, medical research, and the arts is highly important.

On November 15 each year, we recognize and thank the contributions that philanthropy has made to our communities, our provinces, our nation, and indeed the world. The purpose of this day is to increase public knowledge of philanthropy and to say thank you to those who give throughout the year, not only those who give money, but those who volunteer their time. It is a time to honour both local individuals and larger corporations for their charitable works.

First held in 1986, National Philanthropy Day celebrates the daily contributions that people make to many causes and to missions that are important to them. This year there will again be more than 100 National Philanthropy Day events and activities across North America alone, and more than 50,000 people will participate. Last year, 16 Canadian events honoured philanthropists in most major cities across the country. Some events attracted more than 1,000 people, some about 200, and some about 50.

I will be attending the National Philanthropy Day celebration in Calgary this year, which usually has more than 1,200 people in attendance. Over the years I have attended events in Halifax, Ottawa, St. John's, Victoria, Windsor, Kingston, and Toronto, so I have seen quite a few of the celebrations across the country.

What is important to point out is that the way in which we say thank you is different in every community, but the thank yous are always received with great support and appreciation.

Why is recognizing National Philanthropy Day important?

Recent research reveals that the economy has negatively impacted charitable giving. The number of Canadians giving to charities has stagnated, and donation levels are not rising in response to the increase in the need for the services that charities provide.

According to a StatsCan report released in April of this year, and using the numbers from 2010, the total amount of financial donations that individuals made to charitable or non-profit organizations stood at \$10.6 billion, about the same amount as in 2007, when it was at \$10.4 billion. The total number of donors stood at about 28.3 million, as compared with 27.1 million in 2007, and the average annual amount donated per donor was \$446, as compared with \$457 in 2007. As you can see, there is not much of a change; we're not moving up.

The demand upon charities continues to grow, so we need to ensure that the donor and volunteer bases continue to grow to match it. That is why formally recognizing National Philanthropy Day can be a vehicle for positive change in the charitable sector, as giving of oneself is one of the values that Canadians hold most dear.

• (1535)

To put this in perspective a little more, the charitable sector in Canada has more than \$100 billion in annual revenue. It's made up of more than 160,000 organizations, one million paid staff, and over six million volunteers. Charitable and philanthropic organizations provide jobs and services in our communities where constraints in municipal, provincial, and federal government funding prevent similar services from existing.

Without adequate donor and volunteer resources, these organizations will not be able to provide these essential services in the communities in which we all live. National Philanthropy Day provides the opportunity to encourage more Canadians to become volunteers and donors and to simply say "thank you". It is a chance for local volunteers to be recognized for the impact they have in their communities or to recognize that larger donor or philanthropist.

During my appearance before the Senate committee on Bill S-201, I was asked about this very thing. One of the things we try to do with National Philanthropy Day is to not focus solely on the major givers. While we do need to recognize them, we also need to put the emphasis on the small donor too. The young person who gives \$5 is just as important as the person who gives millions of dollars. It is the commitment that is important.

Indeed, at last year's celebration of National Philanthropy Day in Ottawa, which I attended, there were some wonderful people recognized. Some of them had given away a lot of money or gave a lot of time, but the person who attracted the most attention at that event, which was held at the Chateau Laurier, if I recall, was a young lady who was 13 years old when her best friend committed suicide. You'll probably remember part of this story because it became very public when the Richardson family allowed the story to be used to help educate young people on the dangers of suicide and the dangers of bullying, as we've seen in the last couple of days.

This young lady took it upon herself to honour her friend by organizing a campaign in the community to sell simple wrist bracelets, which we've all seen. Hers were purple in colour. Over the time of selling them, and in combination with work with the Ottawa Senators Foundation, they put together nearly \$1 million that came out of that one effort by a 13-year-old girl. Now, when you see that, that's philanthropy at its best.

In closing, I would ask you to think about the charities you may know and perhaps even volunteer with, such as: the Canadian Red Cross, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation, Cara Transition House in Gander, the Colchester Community Workshops in Truro, the Lethbridge Therapeutic Riding Association, in Lethbridge, to which I happen to be a donor, and L'Antre-temps, a homeless shelter for at-risk adults in Longueuil. The list goes on and on. You could all add to that list.

How often have you bought a chocolate bar from a young person for the local elementary school? How often have you gone to a dinner to support your local church? How often have you bought Girl Guide cookies or an apple from the Boy Scouts? How many times have you sponsored a family member, a staff member, or a friend in a run for medical research, many of which have just recently happened? How many people do you know who organize these types of events?

It is for these reasons and for those people that the government recognizes that National Philanthropy Day is so important. It is for these reasons that I urge you to pass this important piece of legislation.

I'd like to thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to any questions you may have.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Senator.

Now we are going to have time for some questions and answers.

First up is Mr. Young.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Senator, for being here on this highly admirable initiative. As a former chair of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and a certified fundraising executive, you bring expertise to this as well, which is very helpful.

At one time, I worked for six months as a loan representative. I worked for a large telecommunications company, and I went to work for the United Way campaign in Metro Toronto for six months. I think they hit \$50 million for that one year. It's not that I was responsible, but it was a nice, satisfying thing to hit \$50 million that year. I learned a lot about the needs of the community during that time. It was a fantastic experience.

I was taking notes and I want to review, if you don't mind, some of the stats you presented to the committee. I think you said that the average donation last year was \$406.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: I want to clarify the date from StatsCan. That was in a report released this year and they were referring to 2010.

Mr. Terence Young: Okay.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: They were comparing it to 2007. In 2010 the average donation was \$446 and in 2007 it was \$457, so it's down slightly.

Mr. Terence Young: And what was the total amount that Canadians donated in 2010, Senator?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: The non-profit organizations stood at \$10.6 billion, and it was a similar amount in 2007, which was \$10.4 billion.

Mr. Terence Young: Do you know, by any chance, how that compares to our American friends, per capita?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: On a per capita basis, they do a little better than we do, but we're doing much better than we used to. There are analyses of how we give provincially. We are doing better. The Americans are still better at it than we are, but they've had a similar decline. The effect of the economy on charitable giving in the United States has been even stronger.

I know, Mr. Young, you were on that loaned executive program with the United Way. It is a very rewarding program. In my time, when I was vice-president of financial development at the Y in Toronto, one of my responsibilities was to liaise with the United Way. We were a United Way agency. We had only 5% of our funds from the United Way. I used to spend a lot of time working with loaned executives in helping them understand how the agency I worked for delivered services. It's a very important program.

Mr. Terence Young: Of course, Canadian taxes, on the whole, are a little higher, so that may partially explain why Americans give away or donate a little more than Canadians, per capita.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: One of the analyses, and this is changing, was that Canadians had the attitude that the government did so much for us. We went through cutbacks in the nineties and we need some growth in these programs now. Canadians are coming to understand that it's important to volunteer. There was a time when people thought it was automatic for somebody to build a rink in their community and that somebody else coached the children, but they are now understanding that it's up to all of us to participate in those programs that are provided in each one of our communities.

● (1545)

Mr. Terence Young: I used to commute to Toronto. I'd go through the crowds every morning in the underground Path in Toronto. I used to see a man, I presumed he was homeless, and every piece of paper he had was written on, so I knew he suffered probably from some sort of mental illness. I always wondered where he slept at night and where he went during the day.

When I was with the United Way we went to this place at Spadina and College called The Corner. It was a drop-in place for homeless people, and I realized that these are the people who take care of people who everybody else walks by. They're doing this work, and I would hate to think what would happen if they ever weren't.

Could you maybe comment on the benefits that we get in Canada from philanthropy?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: It's a tremendous service. You've touched on one particular one. I'll stick to your community for a moment, but I'll also talk about a place like Phoenix house in my hometown in Halifax.

Those benefits are very real and the programs that are provided by the charities that receive the funds are very real. You mentioned The Corner. The YMCA had a very important facility on College Street, where they had overnight rooms particularly for young people.

The other issue is trying to prevent people from getting on the street. When I was at the YMCA we developed a program called the First Stop program. It was a program that was operated at the bus terminal on Bay Street in Toronto. I think that's where the main terminal is. It's been awhile since I've lived in Toronto.

We had trained professional people at the First Stop program who were there to identify young people getting off the bus from somewhere in Ontario—God knows from where, and God knows why they were there and what they were fleeing from at home. Their job was to intercept those people, to befriend them, ask them why they were there and if they needed services. Many of them would say, "I'm going to visit my aunt in Etobicoke. I'm going to go stay with her." That was a safe refuge to them, but they didn't have the subway fare. First Stop would provide them with the subway fare, but they would also try to provide them with other services to prevent them from walking outside of the bus terminal and bumping into people who had more unsavoury plans for these young people who arrived in the big city.

Mr. Terence Young: Actually, after visiting The Corner, I met this man, and then I saw him again in the subway, months later, so I chatted with him. I said, "Where do you sleep at night?" He said, "Oh, I sleep out"—this is in winter. He said, "I grew up in the Arctic. The cold doesn't bother me." My guess was that he had claustrophobia or something, because I know some people are not comfortable in shelters. They feel crowded in, or sometimes they're not acceptable. There are fleas or God knows what. So it's comforting to know that philanthropy is supporting organizations like the United Way, which enables these people to come in from the cold, or they go out and find them and try to get them in from the cold while the rest of us are home in our comfortable homes.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Hopefully, the gentleman you interacted with also encountered a number of charities. For example, in Toronto it might have been the YMCA or the Salvation Army, or a number of other groups that operate outreach programs. Again, they don't sit in an office somewhere, waiting for people to come to them, but they go out at night and try to find that gentleman in a cold night, to make sure that he's comfortable, that he has a warm parka or blanket. If he insists on sleeping in the street, they make sure that he's in a safe place, because it's not always safe in the street.

Those are the wonderful things, the stories that we are privileged to see, and, hopefully, privileged to participate in either as volunteers or donors.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Young.

Next is Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

● (1550)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator.

I want to talk about some of the fantastic volunteer organizations. A lot of volunteerism is going on in the country, and a lot of the work is run by them, and I want to say thank you.

My riding is a high-needs community and has many newcomers. Help provided by volunteers is really what's keeping the community going. We have volunteers who help, even in my office, with case work in immigration and everything we're doing. We have the Tamil seniors, the Malvern Tamil Seniors, the Scarborough Tamil Seniors. The Islamic Foundation runs a weekly soup kitchen. The Muslim Welfare Centre runs shelters, free health clinics for asylum seekers and refugees. There's the Chinese Cultural Centre.... I could keep going. There are so many organizations doing a lot of good work in my community.

My question to you is, how will the voluntary sector benefit from the designation of National Philanthropy Day?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Well, you and I are sitting here and we're saying how wonderful this is. I know in your community, Scarborough, it's a very important part of the community. I've worked with many people in the Tamil community over the years. I know how generous the community is to each other and to the community around.

They will benefit, number one, by our taking it one level up and saying here's how important we parliamentarians think this is. We recognize that you're doing good work. We recognize how important the work that you're doing is, whether it be for refugees or the Tamil seniors groups—all of those things. We recognize how important they are.

Now, we're giving it a little more status, so that as we celebrate it, it has the official stamp of approval, if you will. I don't know that it ever needed the stamp of approval, because we all do it, every day. Many of us do it by volunteering and, hopefully, by donating.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: I'll pass the rest of my time over to Mr. Cash.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Thank you, and thank you, Senator.

I'm curious, first of all, to comment on my colleague Mr. Young's compassionate dissertation on homelessness in Toronto. I'd like to thank him for that concern. I certainly hope he'll be supporting our national housing strategy when it comes up for a vote in the House of Commons. That would be an excellent start.

Senator, you seem to suggest in your comments that philanthropy replaces the government's obligation, or that if the government backs away on social spending, volunteers should therefore fill the breach.

I'm curious. Could you flesh out what you're talking about there?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: I'm a Liberal, and I'm a fairly left-wing Liberal, as my colleague Mr. Simms will tell you. I believe government has a very important role to play, but I also think that in the absence of government's ability—whether that judgment is right or wrong—or in the absence of someone else doing it, it's very important that there be people out there willing to do it, that there be people who are willing to step into the breach to find ways of addressing these problems.

I lived in Toronto for many years. I lived, actually, in the riding next to yours, in Parkdale—High Park, so I'm familiar with some of the problems you see, particularly in the southern part of your riding. While you and I may think it's important that there be government

programs to help address this, those aren't happening tomorrow, and even if you and I could have our wishes fulfilled, that still would not solve all the problems. There's always going to be a gap that we need to make sure the philanthropic and the charitable sector is healthy enough to fill.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Thanks. I'll pass the rest of my time to Mr. Nantel.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Thank you very much, Senator.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for being with us today. I also want to thank you for putting the spotlight on this kind of generosity, as it is tremendously meaningful to those on the giving end. At least, that is what I have heard from people in my riding, where the volunteer network is quite extensive. They are extremely dynamic communities that are genuinely changing lives. Centre d'action bénévole de Boucherville comes to mind; there, grandparents help the young ones with their homework. It's wonderful.

As I see it, the idea behind this sort of philanthropy, this kind of volunteer work—similar to what Mr. Young was describing with people sleeping on the street and such—is that when these individuals are well looked after, often they can get their lives back on track. Volunteers don't see them again.

Could the exposure generated by a national philanthropy day draw attention to these injustices and highlight the so-called unseen miracles being performed by volunteers every day?

Would you say that's what happened with Katimavik? That program had a charitable component, a philanthropic side that was lost.

• (1555)

[*English*]

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: It is important in all parts of Canada. These are the important issues: that we don't forget; that we need to continue to reinforce this, whether it be homelessness....

Homelessness is not a problem that Toronto has the market cornered on. You just need to go to my town of Halifax. Even in some towns the size of Truro, where my friend Mr. Armstrong is from, you'll find homeless people. Sometimes we think of homelessness as Toronto's, Montreal's, Vancouver's, or Winnipeg's problem, but it really isn't. It's a problem that's in all of our communities.

It's through organizations such as the ones we're talking about... But we also need to recognize that it's not only rich people who do this. It is very important to understand that some of the most generous people we have are the people who have very little. There are so many examples of someone giving who has very little.

In testimony before the Senate committee, someone related the story of a person within the group of homeless people who had fallen on even harder times; something had happened. They took up a collection among themselves. That's pretty significant, that they stepped up to the plate themselves. Yes, they would try to access other programs to help their friend, but if their friend needed that 50¢ to get something to eat or to help with shelter or clothing, they were there. It's very important that this happen.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nantel.

Next is Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Senator, thank you. It's nice to see you again. It's been ages.

We mentioned earlier—I think it came from this side—the burden on the volunteer sector when it comes to the work they have to do. I'd like to relay a story about what I see in my neck of the woods—and I won't assume that it's only in my neck of the woods; it's yours too, especially if you're rural.

It's about the burden of paperwork, the burden of regulatory responsibility of volunteers. I would love to see philanthropy day look at issues of philanthropy. This is a big one, because there is so much paperwork to do for many of these people, and they get so frustrated. This is one of the biggest reasons why they stop doing what they're doing. They want to be helping people—there is a direct benefit in getting out there and helping these people—but they don't because of responsibilities from the government.

For instance, you now have to go through a security check, a screening. Now, there is nothing wrong with that. The system has changed such that if your name is similar to someone else's, you have to get certification to be involved with a school, a sporting group, and that sort of thing. If your name is similar to someone who has been convicted, tried, and so on and so forth, then there are problems. But the problem is that we only have one small office here doing it. We were waiting weeks for people in the volunteer sector. Finally they got frustrated and said "Forget it".

There are people who sit on boards of volunteer organizations. People threaten to sue them. They get in trouble with Revenue Canada. Some of them are on the hook personally. It happens. We've seen it.

All this I think plays into the decrease in time given for organizations that are worthy.

Now, I'm not saying that these regulations are unnecessary, but it would be nice if we had, in conjunction with philanthropy day, the government making a concerted effort to help these people take the burden off them when it comes to regulations and standards.

•(1600)

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Scott, one of the interesting things that doesn't readily jump off my resumé is that I was also a member of the Special Senate Committee on Aging, as well as a member of the Senate's agriculture and forestry committee, which conducted a study on rural poverty. As I said, these problems are not urban; they're problems across the board.

One of the things we found out about when we were doing the Special Senate Committee on Aging in particular was the burden that's imposed on the not-for-profit and charitable sector by the regulations that come along with it. Actually, I was in Vancouver, and I'm sorry that I can't remember the name of the agency there, but that agency had created their own specialty within the not-for-profit world in helping not-for-profits handle the paperwork of being a not-for-profit.

I think there has been a recognition of this at the municipal and provincial levels. Many of these regulations are not federal, other than the CRA ones. One of the things you should know, if I could segue and talk about CRA, is that the Canada Revenue Agency has done a terrific job over the past 10 years in reaching out to the not-for-profit sector and sitting down with them, not letting the not-for-profit sector dictate what's going on, but asking the simple questions.

When CRA asks a charity for a particular piece of information, CRA will ask how long it takes to provide that information and how much it costs them. This actually happened. The charity responded and said, "Here's how much time it took." The person asking the question turned to his colleagues in CRA and asked, "Well, what do we use that data for?" The people at CRA said, "Well, we really don't use that data anymore."

Mr. Scott Simms: So it's getting better—

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: So the CRA people have changed that. They've said, okay, we're going to help to streamline the reporting.

That's where it works. It works when the government agency, whether it be municipal, provincial, or federal, sits down and says to a charity, okay, here's what we need, and then asks how they can best provide it and how it is easiest for them to provide so that it's not going to cost them a lot of money. What no government wants to do, I think, although there are certain things they should and must do, is put a burden on them that is going to add a huge cost.

The security check thing is always an annoying one, because it's something that's at the control of our colleagues on the government side, whether they be here in Ottawa, in St. John's, or in Halifax. It gets into the management of the police departments.

I live just outside of Halifax now, and I had a constituent with a complaint. She needed a security clearance. She was out of the country, teaching in Australia, so she needed a Canadian security clearance in order to be allowed to teach in Australia. She went to the police department in her local community in suburban Halifax, and she applied through a process that she'd used before because she had taught in other countries overseas and had never had a problem. Well, arbitrarily, somebody decided to move that approval out of Sackville, Nova Scotia, out of the province to someplace else. They centralized it a bit. That centralization, of course, meant that the stack on the desk in Sackville suddenly became very high, and I don't know whether it went to Ottawa or Gatineau.

Those are the regulations that people don't understand. It probably makes some sense for the management of the police department, but it sure doesn't help people who are trying to do good work in the community.

Mr. Scott Simms: Am I okay for time?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Scott Simms: It's interesting that you say that, Senator. Just as a final comment on that, then, for National Philanthropy Day, wouldn't it be great to have an outreach program to say "This is what we provide as services of the government"?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: That is one of the things that happen at national philanthropy celebrations, but those of us celebrating don't necessarily put it in that context. We do draw to the attention of people the services we're providing.

One of the things I would love to be able to do at some point in my life is to catalogue just that: all of the charities in the country, all of the work they do. It would not be to prove to government that they're not doing something. It would be to prove to everybody that there's a need and it's happening.

It would also be to show government, of whatever political stripe, that this is happening on their watch, and it's important that they pay...because there are trends that will develop and that may be spotted by charities before they ever come to the attention of government.

You, as members of Parliament, see this every day when you're home in your constituency doing your constituency work. You can tell there's a problem that is going to become national in nature before it comes to the attention of the government, no matter what political stripe it is. You have constituents coming through your front door telling you what these problems are, asking for your help. They're also going down the street and asking for the help of many charities.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Senator, thank you. I applaud you for your efforts on this particular bill.

I thought Mr. Simms might ask this, but I'll ask it for him. Can you elaborate on what province gives the highest amount per capita to charity? Can you look at your stats and let us know that?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: There's a reason you mentioned Mr. Simms, as of course it's Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Right.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Historically it's been that way, although you should know that Saskatchewan in particular has come up significantly.

Generally across the board, Canadians are very generous. It's a bit of a mug's game to do the comparison, although Newfoundland, on a per capita basis, is so far ahead, and even the good people of Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor are also pretty generous.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: You bet.

The reason I asked is that most of those stats were from back when Newfoundland was a have-not province.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Yes.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: It was Saskatchewan coming in at a close number two.

Really, income doesn't matter. It's almost like a culture that's developed. Would you agree with that?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: No, absolutely, it is a culture.

One of the jobs that we have, using National Philanthropy Day as a vehicle, is to educate people, particularly newer Canadians, Canadians who come from cultures where this has not been the history.

There are some tremendous success stories. Your colleague from Scarborough talked about the work in the Tamil community. It's a community that has done an awful lot. But there are other examples.

The fact that Newfoundland and Labrador has been number one for quite a while, before they became a "have" province, is very significant, but I think it's more cultural than not. Even though Saskatchewan is a thriving have province now, I don't think their generosity is being driven by their wealth. I think their generosity is being driven by a unique culture that's.... Well, it's not unique; it's a culture that is Saskatchewanian.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: When I think back to what Canada did with Haiti after the earthquake, with the matching funds from the federal government, it was really a nationwide effort of giving to a country that was probably one of the most needy countries in the world. I see this culture building more and more from coast to coast, and that's what I want to get at.

As a professional fundraiser and putting forward this day of November 15, do you think there are other things we could do as a government to lead the way and continue to develop this culture? People give their money, but they also give their time. How can we as a government continue to build this culture of giving in Canada?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Interestingly, to go back to the Special Senate Committee on Aging, one of the things we saw and we made some recommendations on was the fact that there were a whole lot of things that didn't get recognized. One of the really big problems....

I remember being in Vancouver when this came up. They had a whole bunch of volunteers, but they weren't all in the centre, which was in downtown Vancouver. The volunteers came from all over the greater Vancouver area. They were losing the volunteers because of the exorbitant price of parking in downtown Vancouver, the availability of public transit to get them there, and actually, for many of them, even the cost of public transit.

There was the recommendation and the thought that government needs to think creatively and outside the box...and measuring how this is done is the problem. It will sound like a good idea, but the devil is in the details.

So recognizing volunteers for what they do, and allowing them some relief of some sort, such as a pass for public transit—

• (1610)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I'll give you the example of what we do for volunteer firefighters' tax credits.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Yes, indeed.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Measures like that show that we value the efforts being made by volunteers and those who give. So developing efforts like that is something we continue to look at.

I'll just go back to what Mr. Simms was saying on the streamlining of bureaucracy and the mountain of forms you have to fill out. As a school principal, I did mountains and mountains of forms for coaches and volunteers to come into the school.

One of the things we had to do was actually bring the police into the school, and we had volunteer night. Everybody went through the criminal record check that night. It was a good way to get seniors involved. A lot of seniors didn't want to walk into the police station, because they didn't want people seeing them walk in there and thinking they had done something wrong—it's a small community and everybody knows everybody.

I think there's something we have to do to try to motivate this massive demographic of senior citizens who are going to have time. Time is so valuable. I think time is more valuable than money, quite frankly. If we can build a culture and involve our seniors and value what they do, I think there are some opportunities there. Do you agree with that?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Absolutely. There's a gentleman very close to home. I live in Mount Uniacke, Nova Scotia, which is a small community about 40 kilometres from downtown Halifax. We have a volunteer fire department, a Legion, an elementary school, and one gas station—and that's about it. But we have a really thriving community.

My son has been involved in sea cadets for years and has been an instructor and is an officer in the sea cadet program. When he moved back home while he was doing his master's degree, he wanted to continue to stay involved. There was no sea cadet corps in our neighbourhood, so he went off and helped some cadets in another community, and he would travel there.

Last year a group of people, through the Canadian Legion in particular, said, "We think we'd like to start a sea cadet corps in Mount Uniacke." Well, it takes money to get this done. The Legion, which was made up of mainly seniors, took this on as a project and raised the necessary funds for that. I talked to my son the other day about it, and he told me that in year two they now have 50 young people. Now, 50 young people is not a lot of people in downtown Halifax, but 50 young people in a community the size of Mount Uniacke, which can't be more than 2,500 people, depending on how you measure, is a big chunk. And it only happened because some older people in the community got together and said, "We're going to make this work", and there was some good leadership from the community and some support.

Actually, this year I'm looking forward to having for the first time a full contingent of sea cadets at a Remembrance Day ceremony. It'll be very nice.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Armstrong.

Are there any other questions?

Thank you, Senator. We're going to be moving into the clause-by-clause consideration of your bill. You're welcome to stick around if

you want to. I don't think it will take too long, but you never know. We'll just take 30 seconds and move into clause-by-clause.

Just so you know, it says that pursuant to Standing Order 75(1), consideration of the preamble and clause 1 is postponed. All this means is that we deal with the preamble and the short title after we've gone through the other clauses of the bill, of which there is only one other.

Shall clause 2 carry?

(Clause 2 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall the short title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the chair report the bill to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: Right away.

The Chair: Okay. I'll get to it.

That concludes what we have on our schedule today.

Is there anything anyone has before we wrap up?

There is one thing. I'll remind members that we have our upcoming study and we need the witnesses. I know that we have some we've talked about, but if you have your witnesses, please get their names to the clerk so they can be invited and we can begin our study on the software industry.

Mr. Nantel.

• (1615)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I have one information piece here about the first vote that has been carried on division. Just so I understand, what happened?

The Chair: What happens is that I call the question: shall the clause carry? Usually, if people just say "yes", then it carries. If I hear someone say "on division", then it carries on division.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Okay, and we don't have to know why it's not simply "yes"?

The Chair: No, not really. That's not the practice. We could have a vote, if people want to vote; it can carry on division or it can carry.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Andrew Cash: I think the question was that when you say "on division", does that mean it's recorded that we all voted for it or...?

A voice: No.

Thank you. The committee is adjourned.

The Chair: No. It's recorded as the clause passing on division.

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