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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, November 22, 2012

The Honourable DONALD H. OLIVER
Speaker pro tempore

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(Daily index of proceedings appears at back of this issue).

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THE SENATE

Thursday, November 22, 2012

The Senate met at 1:30 p.m., the Speaker in the chair.

[English]

Prayers.

[Translation]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore* informed the Senate that the following communication had been received:

RIDEAU HALL

November 22, 2012

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 22nd day of November, 2012, at 11:01 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Secretary to the Governor General,
Stephen Wallace

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

Bills Assented to Thursday, November 22, 2012:

An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day
(*Bill S-201, Chapter 23, 2012*)

An Act respecting food commodities, including their inspection, their safety, their labelling and advertising, their import, export and interprovincial trade, the establishment of standards for them, the registration or licensing of persons who perform certain activities related to them, the establishment of standards governing establishments where those activities are performed and the registration of establishments where those activities are performed (*Bill S-11, Chapter 24, 2012*)

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

WOMEN'S ROYAL CANADIAN NAVAL SERVICE

SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Carolyn Stewart Olsen: Honourable senators, I spent Remembrance Day with our veterans at Legions in Port Elgin, Sackville and Cape Tormentine in New Brunswick.

This year, while celebrating their eightieth anniversary, the Sackville Legion also commemorated the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the Womens' Royal Canadian Naval Service. I had the opportunity to meet one of the surviving WRENS in Sackville.

Valda Fisher was a young teen when the war started. She joined the WRENS only two days after she turned 18. WRENS like Valda played a crucial role in Canada's war effort.

In the beginning, National Defence Headquarters asked the army, navy and air force to determine what roles women could perform in the three services. At the time, the navy believed it could employ women only as drivers, and only a small number at that. By the end of the war, 7,000 Canadian women served in the WRENS occupying 39 different trades, proving this belief wrong.

During the war, a vice-admiral visiting schools in Ontario and Quebec remarked:

Many of these jobs are not spectacular, but they are vital to the service. They must be done, and done well, or the service will suffer.

Women like Valda Fisher worked behind the scenes, performing difficult jobs. Regardless of what they were asked to do, the WRENS performed with distinction, enabling the navy to transfer their fighting men to the front lines of World War II.

Although they faced less danger by virtue of not being posted directly to the front lines, they were by no means exempt. WRENS posted to Newfoundland or Great Britain were faced with the threat of U-boat attacks as they sailed in the Atlantic and with bombings as they served in England.

• (1340)

The WRENS attracted women from all walks of life. Many women left well-paying civilian jobs to join. These women were motivated by a desire to do more and to contribute to the war effort.

Our heroes come in many different forms. They are ordinary people who have accomplished extraordinary things in the name of our liberty, our democracy and the rule of just law.

Our people put themselves in harm's way every day for us. We must always remember them.

[Translation]

LA LIBERTÉ

ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Maria Chaput: Honourable senators, *La Liberté*, the only weekly French-language newspaper published in Manitoba, will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2013. The francophone community has some special plans for celebrating this occasion. As Franco-Manitobans, we must show our appreciation and acknowledge the important ambassadorial role that *La Liberté* plays.

The celebrations will include several major events, including a film highlighting the evolution of *La Liberté*, which will be broadcast on Radio-Canada in 2013; a 100th anniversary gala showcasing regional bilingual artists; and the digitization of all editions of *La Liberté* published since 1913.

Furthermore, in June 2013, the celebrations will include a neighbourhood party in Saint-Boniface, a national symposium at the Université de Saint-Boniface and an exhibit tracing the history of the Franco-Manitoban community using media coverage from *La Liberté*.

I want to point out that for Franco-Manitobans, *La Liberté* was and still is a symbol of success, collaboration, struggle — certainly — and accomplishment. From 1913 to this day, what the newspaper's various stakeholders and collaborators have given us will forever be part of our written history and heritage. We owe them a debt of gratitude. I sincerely congratulate the entire *La Liberté* team and all of the volunteers who are helping to plan *La Liberté*'s 100th anniversary celebration in 2013.

I am optimistic that *La Liberté* will continue to benefit from the financial support of the federal government. Supporting an official language minority community under certain circumstances is a matter of true equality.

[English]

UKRAINIAN FAMINE AND GENOCIDE (“HOLODOMOR”) MEMORIAL DAY

Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk: Honourable senators, every fourth Saturday of November, Ukrainian communities around the world pause to remember the victims of the Ukrainian famine and genocide of 1932-33.

This Saturday's Holodomor Memorial Day marks the seventy-ninth year since the Soviet regime set out to systematically destroy the Ukrainian people's aspirations for a free and independent Ukraine. Through policies of agricultural collectivization and the use of peasants to fuel urban industrialization, Stalin inflicted mass famine on an area once known as Europe's breadbasket.

As I have told this chamber before, at the height of the famine, Ukrainian peasants were dying of hunger at the rate of 17 persons per minute, 1,000 persons per hour, and 25,000 persons per day. Mostly the victims were Ukrainians, whose nationalism Stalin

sought to eliminate, but many Kazakhs, Russians, Jews, Poles and others also lost their lives. Entire villages were wiped off the map.

Historian Timothy Snyder describes the isolation in which Ukrainians died by the millions as causing an eerie silence to spread over the Ukrainian countryside:

Cut off from the attention of the world by a state that controlled the press and the movements of foreign journalists, cut off from official help or sympathy by a party line that equated starvation with sabotage, cut off from the economy by intense poverty and inequitable planning, cut off from the rest of the country by regulations and police cordons, people died alone, families died alone, whole villages died alone.

Throughout the Holodomor, the Soviet regime denied the failure of its policies, and afterwards, by suppressing, distorting and destroying records, it sought to cleanse its genocide from the annals of Soviet history.

Many survivors of the Ukrainian famine and genocide came to Canada and helped to build Canada as we know it today. They carried with them the memories of life under authoritarianism. I was, therefore, proud when, in June 2003, this chamber unanimously called on the Government of Canada to recognize the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33 as an act of genocide. Today I am proud that the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (“Holodomor”) Memorial Day Act, passed in 2008, gives all Canadians pause to remember the victims of the Holodomor every year. Holodomor Memorial Day helps ensure that successive generations of Canadians continue to uphold the fundamental freedoms of a democratic society in which ideology can never again be used to justify murder and the denial of basic human rights.

It is in that spirit that I ask that you all join me and other Ukrainian Canadians across the country in commemorating the victims of Holodomor this Saturday, November 24th.

CANADA-INDIA RELATIONS

Hon. Asha Seth: Honourable senators, I want to speak about my recent experience in India. Nelson Mandela once said that there is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.

After two weeks in India, I am happy to be home. I am proud of the work that our delegation was able to accomplish. Canadians working in India can feel more secure thanks to new international accords like the social security agreement signed on November 6 and the new consulate in Bangalore, which will open next year.

Thank you to everyone involved, especially Minister Ed Fast, High Commissioner Stewart Beck, and of course Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In the past weeks, we have shown that Canada will not be passed over. We are determined to win in the global competition for markets, capital and labour.

High Commissioner Stewart Beck and I sat down with two of India's most influential chief ministers, Mrs. Sheila Dikshit from the state of Delhi and Mr. Akhilesh Yadav from the state of Uttar

Pradesh. Thanks to the Prime Minister's delegation, both chief ministers are committed to supporting our government's efforts to increase trade with India. During our meetings, both chief ministers were eager to ensure that relations with Canada improve and grow.

Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav accepted my invitation to come to Canada in 2013 and lead a delegation of high-powered industrialists and investors. The states of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh represent billions of dollars in investment potential. Prime Minister Harper has cleared the path for us to engage with our international counterparts and ensure that Canada's economy remains strong. We are a team, and together we will meet our goal of increasing bilateral trade between Canada and India to \$15 billion by 2015.

MS. NASRIN SOUTODEH

PRISONER IN IRAN

Hon. Linda Frum: Honourable senators, I would like to draw your attention to the urgent situation of Nasrin Sotoudeh, a brave attorney held behind bars in Iran since September 2010.

Senator Eaton first told us about the case of Nasrin Sotoudeh last February during the Senate's inquiry into human rights abuses in Iran. Nasrin Sotoudeh is currently serving a six-year prison term and has been banned from her profession for 10 years for her defence of other political and religious prisoners.

Today Nasrin is on her thirty-eighth day of an indefinite hunger strike. Her husband's public updates regarding her well-being have been frightening. Yesterday he announced that her weight has dropped to 95 pounds and that she was finally transferred back to the Evin Prison general women's ward after the Iranian authorities secretly held her in solitary confinement for 19 days.

• (1350)

One of the main reasons she launched her hunger strike is reportedly because the Iranian authorities continuously harass and threaten her family. For example, the Iranian authorities have banned her 12-year-old daughter from leaving the country. During a cubicle visit on Tuesday, November 20, Nasrin Sotoudeh told her husband, "I cannot just sit here and allow them to do whatever they like to my family."

Honourable senators, there is no doubt that Nasrin Sotoudeh and her family are innocent hostages of the Iranian regime. Members of the Iranian community, including the Iranian Canadian Congress, have asked that Iranian authorities be reminded that they are accountable for Nasrin Sotoudeh's life, her inhumane treatment and her false imprisonment.

Let us unite our voices collectively to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Nasrin Sotoudeh and all of Iran's unlawfully held political prisoners.

[Senator Seth]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

JOBS AND GROWTH BILL, 2012

EIGHTH REPORT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER TABLED

Hon. Percy Mockler: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, which deals with the subject matter of those elements contained in Division 19 of Part 4 of Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, and, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding the order of October 30, 2012, I move that the report, in addition to being referred to the National Finance Committee, also be placed on the orders of the day for consideration at the next sitting.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(On motion of Senator Mockler, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate. Pursuant to the order of October 30, 2012, the report is also deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance.)

[Translation]

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY (CCSVI) BILL

FIFTEENTH REPORT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE PRESENTED

The Hon. Kelvin Kenneth Ogilvie, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, presented the following report:

Thursday, November 22, 2012

The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology has the honour to present its

FIFTEENTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-204, An Act to establish a national strategy for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI), has, in obedience to the order of reference of Thursday, April 26, 2012, examined the said bill and now reports as follows:

Your Committee shares the concerns of the sponsor and proponents of the bill with regards to the high prevalence rates of multiple sclerosis (MS) in Canada. It is estimated

that between 55,000 and 75,000 Canadians are living with MS, an incredibly complex, debilitating and unpredictable condition. More must be done to understand the disease and determine why Canadians, and certain populations of Canadians, are disproportionately affected. To this end, we encourage continued efforts on the part of the Government through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Scientific Expert Working Group and the Public Health Agency of Canada's Canadian Multiple Sclerosis Monitoring System.

Your Committee also shares the concern expressed by proponents of the bill that, in the early stages, some patients were refused medical treatment after having experienced complications resulting from venoplasty performed in other countries. However, it should be noted that provincial health authorities and the colleges of medicine took quick action to ensure that no Canadians would be denied medical treatment.

Despite these shared concerns, your Committee recommends that this Bill not be proceeded with further in the Senate for the reasons that follow.

Your Committee has heard that research to date is inconclusive as to whether or not chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI) is more common in MS patients than in the general population; that there has been a large discrepancy in the reported benefits and harms of using venoplasty in the treatment of CCSVI; and, that CCSVI may in fact be a condition that leads to symptoms independently of MS.

Your Committee heard from expert witnesses that the only appropriate way to determine whether or not to approve of venoplasty in the treatment of CCSVI in MS patients in Canada is through double-blind clinical trials. On September 28, 2012 the Government of Canada announced that a research team will undertake interventional Phase I/II clinical trials for CCSVI in persons with MS. The experts testifying before your committee indicated that the Canadian trials are amongst the best in the world. These trials render large parts of the bill unnecessary.

Your Committee also heard that a national registry, such as is proposed by Bill S-204, would be costly and provide little benefit in the understanding of CCSVI and patient outcomes resulting from venoplasty. The experts again stressed the need for double-blind clinical trials as are currently being undertaken at multiple sites in Canada and elsewhere around the world.

Finally, your Committee shares an overriding concern with the bill and believes that, in regards to CCSVI, MS, and health matters generally, the best path forward should be determined by science and medicine, not by Parliament.

Respectfully submitted,

KELVIN K. OGILVIE
Chair

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Ogilvie, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM

Hon. David P. Smith: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Canada's 13 premiers are arriving in Halifax today for a Council of the Federation meeting, which is being held with the sole purpose of striking a national plan for economic growth. This meeting comes as a recession once again looms in Europe and a precarious fiscal situation exists in the United States.

Since the stimulus funds, known as the Economic Action Plan, have stopped flowing, provinces have been asking that the federal government provide leadership in regard to the economy so that the strategies implemented at all levels are coherent and fully integrated. They wish to work together with the federal government, their constitutional partner, to ensure that Canada weathers the upcoming economic challenges.

Unfortunately, the premiers' invitation to the Prime Minister has been declined. Prime Minister Harper simply refused to meet with the leaders of Canada's provinces and territories, saying he meets with them regularly and that the economy remains his prime concern.

However, in the words of Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter, who is hosting the meeting:

It's difficult for us to know how we can best blend our own planning in with the funding of the federal government if we don't know what their plans are.

Does the leader's government not recognize that the premiers' concerns are quite serious and very legitimate? Why did Prime Minister Harper refuse to show leadership and sit down with his provincial counterparts in order to forge a coherent national plan to strengthen the Canadian economy, like every prime minister since Mackenzie King has done?

• (1400)

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): The Prime Minister indicated quite some time ago that he would not be participating in this meeting, honourable senators. Our government, as the honourable senator acknowledged in his question to me, is focused on the economy each and every day. Since 2006, the Prime Minister has had over 250 meetings and

phone calls with the premiers. He is in regular contact with them. The premiers are very well aware of the government's budget initiatives, our economic initiatives and our job creation initiatives. I repeat: They are very well aware of these things.

Furthermore, Minister Flaherty meets regularly with his provincial and territorial counterparts. As a matter of fact, there is a meeting next month of the provincial and territorial ministers of finance, and Minister Flaherty will be attending.

Senator D. Smith: Honourable senators, there is a fundamental difference between one-on-one meetings, which are the meetings the leader has been referring to, and a meeting where all the premiers are present. The Prime Minister's refusal is more than a snub to the premiers. Federalism implies a form of cooperation, consultation and dialogue. As I said earlier, all prime ministers since Mackenzie King through to Paul Martin have held First Ministers' conferences. Prime Minister Harper has broken with this tradition at a time when Canadians are worried about the economy. The premiers considered it — and their word was — “urgent” that their federal counterpart join them for this meeting.

In the last few days, we have seen stories of how Paul Martin, prior to the turnover in 2006, spent hours meeting with them. I would point out the record of Prime Minister Chrétien and Paul Martin when he was finance minister. They had inherited a \$43 billion annual operating deficit in 1993. Within a few years, it was turned over to a surplus. When they left office, they left the Conservatives with about a \$12-billion annual operating surplus that has since been turned into a record deficit of \$56 billion.

An Hon. Senator: The GST.

Senator D. Smith: I just do not understand, when he says the economy is his top priority, why the Prime Minister will not meet with them. Could the Prime Minister not just follow that verse in the Bible: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord”?

Senator LeBreton: First, I am surprised that the honourable senator would bring up the record of Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, who, in the mid-1990s, drastically reduced transfer payments to the provinces, which severely impacted the health care and education systems and led to a lot of the doctor shortages and the various problems that were created as a result of it. That was the problem, so why now provinces and territories would want more of that is beyond me.

Of course, as I have said in this place before and honourable senators know full well, the worst deficit that was ever left on the books of this country was left by the great hero of the Liberals, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, when it was 8.3 per cent of GDP.

Senator D. Smith: That is not true.

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the leader cannot resist an opportunity to launch an attack rather than answer a question. The question was a very simple one: Does the leader not understand that there is a difference between having telephone calls with premiers on a

one-on-one basis, or having a meeting with a premier from time to time, and sitting down around the table with the first ministers to talk about the affairs of the nation?

The economy is not a federal issue. It is not a municipal issue. It is not a provincial issue. It is a Canadian issue, and it deserves strong leadership on the part of the federal government and on the part of the Prime Minister. His job is to sit down with the first ministers of the provinces and the territories and talk about a common problem. Does the leader not understand that?

Senator LeBreton: I fully understand, and I do not need a lecture from the honourable senator. After listening to Senator Smith, I was simply responding to some erroneous facts that he put on the record.

The fact of the matter is that there was a report during Veterans' Week about the OECD report and about how Canada is going to lead the world for years. I would say to Senator Cowan that the Prime Minister is doing just as he suggests: showing strong leadership in shepherding our economy through very difficult times, along with the Minister of Finance. He meets regularly with the premiers on a face-to-face basis and on the telephone.

The most recent example was with the premier of Alberta earlier this week. When she appeared on television to discuss that meeting and the upcoming meeting, she made it very clear that the Prime Minister is fully cognizant of the issues that are facing the various provinces and territories. There is a lot of dialogue between them. The fact that the council is meeting is a good thing. I think the council was set up by the former premier of Quebec.

Honourable senators, the Prime Minister is fully engaged. Officials of the government are fully engaged. The Minister of Finance is fully engaged. Our primary responsibility is jobs and the economy. I would say the proof is in the pudding, because we have the results to prove that the Prime Minister has shown great leadership in that area.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Cowan: Thank you for the applause.

The point that we are trying to make, honourable senators, is that there is a difference from the Prime Minister sitting down, as he should, and talking to premiers of the provinces about problems that the Prime Minister is concerned about and that the premiers are concerned about. That is entirely appropriate. However, there are some issues which affect all of the provinces and affect the country. Those are occasions when, it seems to me, and I suggest should seem to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, it is appropriate for the Prime Minister to sit down with the other first ministers to discuss these common problems. That would demonstrate to Canadians that all of them understand that this is a common problem which requires a common approach and an approach which involves all of the jurisdictions and not just one-off conversations.

Senator Mitchell: However, that would be leadership.

Senator LeBreton: The fact is, honourable senators, that I do believe Canadians understand that the government is working in their interest in terms of jobs, the economy and long-term prosperity.

I would make the argument that the Prime Minister has one-on-one meetings and many consultations with the premiers, but it is action that counts and not sitting around and just talking about it. It is action in each province. The federal government is acting as they deem appropriate and the Prime Minister, of course, has taken the lead.

Again, the Minister of Finance, I believe, is the longest serving Minister of Finance perhaps in the history of the country. He is doing an outstanding job. As I pointed out to honourable senators, the ministers of finance are the ones who sit down and deal directly with financial issues. He is meeting with them next month.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION— BROADBAND IN THE NORTH

Hon. Nick G. Sibbeston: Honourable senators, throughout the years we, in the northern parts of our country, have received the benefits from many modern services and technology that the South now takes for granted. We have roads and highways, except in Nunavut; we have airlines — jets that go to the major cities in the North; and we have planes that go to many communities in the North. We have water transport, just for a few months of the year; and we have satellite TV, radio and such services. One of the things, though, that we do not have is high speed broadband wireless services.

I would like to ask the government leader a question on that, particularly on the role of the federal government in providing these services to the North.

A number of months ago, Northwestel, a northern communications company, at the direction of the CRTC, announced a plan to upgrade and modernize communications in the North, specifically to provide high speed wireless services for smart phones and Internet in all communities in Northern Canada.

Part of that plan was to be funded with funds provided by Bell Canada as a condition of their takeover of Astral Media, which was turned down by the CRTC. The total impact is unknown, but the company's president has been quoted as saying that small communities are likely to be dropped from the plan because providing these services is unprofitable to them.

• (1410)

The lack of affordable broadband access to the Internet is impacting many aspects of northern life: health, economic opportunities and such things. While private firms, whether Northwestel or its competitors, have an important role to play in the provision of these services, there is also a role for the federal government, particularly in the case of the remote communities.

What specifically is the federal government doing to ensure that all communities in the North benefit from high-speed broadband and digital technologies, and what commitments is it prepared to make to ensure that all Canadians can reap the economic rewards of these essential services?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator. He always asks relevant questions that are very important to the area he represents, and I appreciate it.

The honourable senator quite rightly points out that great strides have been made in developing the North, and he points out that broadband Internet access is the one area that is completely lacking. Of course, the government is working very hard, because we do believe that Canadians in the rural and remote areas are entitled to the same services that people in the urban centres have access to.

We have been working very hard and have set a target that 98 per cent of Canadians will have access to broadband before the end of 2012. This is a very ambitious target, but we are working towards that goal. Obviously, in this new age of technology, access to the Internet is crucial for commercial reasons, and it is also crucial to people's individual lives. We are working very hard on that front, honourable senators.

The decisions with regard to Bell, of course, are decisions of the CRTC and are at arm's length from the government. However, we are definitely committed to expanding the Internet to all Canadians.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

SERVICES AND BENEFITS

Hon. Wilfred P. Moore: Honourable senators, my question is also for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I raised the matter of veterans' burials and the Last Post Fund prior to the Remembrance Day break. I quoted at that time a response from the government to Senator Lucie Pépin last year, which stated:

The department continues to listen to stakeholders' concerns as it explores options for program improvements in a fiscally prudent manner.

Let me suggest that the stakeholders have spoken. They feel that a two-thirds rejection rate for financial support for burials, combined with the exclusion of Korean and Cold War veterans, is not acceptable.

Could the Leader of the Government inform the chamber what changes to the program are forthcoming to aid our veterans?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for the question. I had the honour of laying the wreath on behalf of the Government of Canada and the Prime Minister at the Remembrance Day ceremonies, and afterwards I talked to a great many veterans who expressed to me their thanks to the Canadian people for their support and to the government for the many services we are now providing to veterans. There is a long list of improvements that have been made.

That being said, there are always areas that still cause some concern. I believe, as the Minister of Veterans Affairs said, the government, once they have all the facts and have been made aware of particular incidents or problems, will have a look at all these programs. Of course, this program is no different than any of the others. We will be doing so.

Senator Moore: I, too, participated in a Remembrance Day ceremony, and a number of veterans mentioned to me the shortcomings and their disappointment with the Last Post Fund funding. According to the departmental report, Veterans Affairs is authorized to spend \$29.4 million for funerals, burials, memorials and grave maintenance. It actually spent \$25.9 million. This means that \$3.5 million went unspent, which could have gone to providing our veterans with a dignified burial. That, coupled with the rejection rate of two thirds when it comes to applications for funding for burials, is alarming indeed.

This is not really a story of fiscal prudence, honourable senators; this is a story of shortchanging those who have served when they need us the most. They were there for us. Why is this government not there for them?

Senator Tkachuk: We are always there for them.

Senator LeBreton: Incredible improvements have been made all across the Department of Veterans Affairs in providing services to veterans, and we all know that. We also know that there are always cases that come to the attention of the government and the public. We always strive to deal with these cases.

With regard to the funeral and burial expenses, I have said — in answer to a question from Senator Moore, I believe — that since 2006 we have provided assistance to over 10,000 veterans and their families, not only for funeral services but also for burials. Obviously, some questions have been raised, as the honourable senator mentioned, and as I have acknowledged. As Minister Blaney said, when concerns are raised about any program — especially programs that involve our veterans, men and women for whom we have enormous respect — obviously it is in the interests of the veterans, and also in the interests of the program delivery, that we have a look at them and assess what the actual situation is.

Senator Moore: It seems to me, honourable senators, that the Last Post Fund is a credible, working, worthwhile initiative. We have heard repeatedly from various corners the fact that for a number of veterans and their families, funeral expenses were not covered and they were in need of financial assistance.

If there was \$3.5 million left sitting, why was it not applied to the fund and used for these cases that we have heard so much about?

Senator LeBreton: That is a fair question, honourable senators, and I am sure that the Minister of Veterans Affairs, as he looks at this program, will probably be asking the same question. On that particular topic, honourable senators, I will be happy to take the question as notice and try to ascertain that for myself as well.

Hon. Roméo Antonius Dallaire: As a follow-up, if I may, in 2006-07, as the body bags were coming back from Afghanistan, the Minister of Defence at the time, Gordon O'Connor, found

himself in the situation where the amount of money that was provided through sudden death benefit for burial of soldiers was in the order of the same amount that we are talking about here for the Last Post Fund. It was deemed absolutely unacceptable that the families would get that amount of money, knowing full well that for a classic burial you easily need between \$10,000 and \$12,000. I just recently buried my mom and went through that.

Within weeks, the minister had that amount changed. Of course, there was a lot of media pressure, pressure from the families, and so on. It seems that if you have a body there, you will get something rapidly; however, for a person who has served before but who is now maybe in the care of the government, the parameters are different.

Why does the leader believe that a minister, who holds that much power in a ministry, cannot change a number that is so overtly in need of a significant readjustment to the realities of today, versus an amount that was there since the 1960s?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, with regard to people who were killed in Afghanistan and came back in body bags, this was a terrible tragedy for the country. I will not get into a discussion of “them” versus older veterans now.

• (1420)

The fact of the matter is there have been some questions raised about the Last Post Fund. Senator Moore put on the record some figures that I have indicated I will look into and ask for a written response.

We have done a lot of great work in support of our veterans, including dealing with the more recent issues as a result of the Afghanistan war. Obviously there have been some questions raised about the Last Post Fund. I do not think it serves any of us any good to treat this as anything other than a serious matter. As I indicated, the minister said that, like all programs of the government and specifically with regard to all programs regarding our vets, he will be looking at the program to ascertain what has and has not been happening and how it can be improved.

[Translation]

DELAYED ANSWER TO ORAL QUESTION

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table the answer to the oral question raised by the Honourable Senator Hubley on September 27, 2012, concerning land mines.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OTTAWA CONVENTION— LAND MINES AND CLUSTER MUNITIONS

(Response to question raised by Hon. Elizabeth Hubley on September 27, 2012)

Canada has committed \$6M for all types of mine action programming including clearance, survey, victim assistance and mine risk education in fiscal year 2012-13, and currently

has 17 on-going mine action projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Jordan, Libya, Mozambique, Palau, South Sudan and Tajikistan.

Details for on-going Canadian funded mine action projects can be found in Annex A. Please note that some on-going projects have no financial commitment for fiscal year 2012-13. These projects are grants which were paid in full last fiscal year, and activities are still on-going.

(For Annex A, see Appendix, p. 2867.)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STUDY ON THE USE OF THE INTERNET, NEW MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE RESPECT FOR CANADIANS' LANGUAGE RIGHTS

FIFTH REPORT OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE—DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the fifth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages entitled: *Internet, New Media and Social Media: Respect for Language Rights!*, tabled in the Senate on October 25, 2012.

Hon. Maria Chaput: Honourable senators, I move the adoption of the report.

Honourable senators, today, I am pleased to present the most recent report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages entitled: *Internet, New Media and Social Media: Respect for Language Rights!*

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all the senators who helped to examine this issue and prepare the report. I would like to thank all the witnesses for their valuable contributions. And I would like to thank our clerk, our analyst and our communications officer for the outstanding job they did.

First and foremost, this study shows that we have come to a crossroads. We have in our hands tools to promote both our official languages. Technology is evolving at a rapid pace, and the lack of a strategic plan to provide access to that technology could be detrimental to communities that could make good use of it.

That is why the report's first observation pertains to access to broadband and digital networks for all Canadians. When we talk about access, we mean universal, adequate and affordable access. Canada continues to lag behind in this area, as mentioned in other Senate committee reports.

Access to broadband, which is important for all Canadians, takes on another degree of importance for official language minority communities in rural and remote regions of our country. The Internet and social media make it possible to broaden the francophone space online. For example, a francophone from

Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes, Manitoba, could have access to a wealth of French resources online that are not available locally. As the report says, "accessibility is key."

The issue of access to broadband and digital networks was central to our study, and I am sorry that the Minister of Industry, a key player in the Internet access file, could not find any time to appear before our committee.

The committee spent a great deal of time looking at what federal institutions are doing to respect Canadians' language rights during this time of major technological change. It is generally accepted that online services must be offered in accordance with the principle of genuine equality of both official languages. Federal institutions that pay meticulous attention to linguistic duality at every stage of implementing their communication strategies, from knowledge of obligations to monitoring results, are those that perform the best. We must encourage best practices, promote them and ensure that appropriate strategies are put in place throughout the entire public service. Our study cites a number of examples of best practices. It is up to the government to ensure that every one of its departments adopts these initiatives.

We must not forget that new media are also being used within the federal government. The use of wikis and internal blogs allows government employees to share information with colleagues across Canada. We must ensure that the use of these media is also respectful of rights related to language of work, rights that are set out in Part V of the Official Languages Act.

Much is said in this report about young people and their use of new media. We all know that young people are very adept at using the Internet and new media. They use it more than most.

Federal institutions can use these media to reach young people wherever they are in the language of their choice.

• (1430)

In that regard, I am thrilled about the number of young professionals who have joined the public service and are really leading the government's efforts to reach out to other young people.

This issue is particularly important for the development of official language minority communities, and especially francophone minority communities, since the creation of French-language virtual space helps maintain the vitality of the language. Young people are able to connect with other francophones across the country and increase their interactions in French.

The federal government needs recognize this historic opportunity and support the development of these communities in the digital world. This means supporting innovative projects for fostering the development and use of social media and mobile applications. This also means providing long-term support for building the capacity of these communities to use the Internet, new media and social media. This also means recognizing the special needs of official language minority schools, community media and the arts and culture sector in terms of support for new technologies.

Immediate action is needed, since the report recognizes that French remains underused in the new digital world. If the government does nothing, this will be a missed opportunity for the government and for communities to create a new space for minority communities. Inaction will contribute to assimilation, since these new media platforms are becoming more and more popular among our young people and risk becoming even more difficult to access in French.

That summarizes my main observations of the report. The report details many government achievements and identifies some of the challenges that lie ahead on the way to substantive equality of both official languages in the virtual world.

The committee also made six recommendations: to increase universal, adequate and affordable access to broadband Internet and digital networks; to develop French-language content on the Internet, in new media and in social media; to provide ongoing support to develop new technologies in anglophone and francophone minority communities; to ensure ongoing support for innovative projects involving the development and use of social media in anglophone and francophone minority communities; to establish an appropriate official language governance structure, from understanding obligations to monitoring results; and to share good practices with all federal institutions.

I hope that the government will take note of our six recommendations and work toward developing a Canadian online presence that reflects our linguistic duality.

(On motion of Senator Fortin-Duplessis, debate adjourned.)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

Hon. Maria Chaput pursuant to notice of November 20, 2012, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages be authorized to meet at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 5, 2012, even though the Senate may then be sitting, and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

Hon. Joan Fraser (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Would Senator Chaput accept a question?

Senator Chaput: Yes.

Senator Fraser: Why?

Senator Chaput: I would like to thank the honourable senator for that very good question. We invited Minister Moore to appear before the committee, and we are requesting permission to meet at a different time because he cannot attend our usual Monday evening meeting, but he is free at the time in question.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Honourable senators, is it your pleasure to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Leave having been given to revert to Government Notices of Motions:

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(g), I move:

That when the Senate adjourns today, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, November 27, 2012, at 2 p.m.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Honourable senators, is it your pleasure to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(The Senate adjourned until Tuesday, November 27, 2012, at 2 p.m.)

APPENDIX
(See page 2865.)

ANNEX A: SUMMARY OF CANADIAN FUNDED ON-GOING MINE ACTION PROJECTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012-13

Country	Department	Project Title	Organization	Fiscal Year 2012-13 Contribution	Total Project Cost	Project is Funding:
Bosnia and Herzegovina	DFAIT	Support for mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina	ITF	0	\$500,000	Survey and mine clearance in Lukavac municipality
	DFAIT	Demining and technical survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina	ITF	\$499,974	\$499,974	Survey and mine clearance
Cambodia	CIDA	Agriculture in mine-affected areas	Geospatial International Pty Ltd.	\$11,500	\$1,250,000	Clearance of landmines and ERW
	CIDA	Clearing for results 2011-2015	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)	\$2,275,000	\$7,000,000	ERW clearance and capacity building
Chad	DFAIT	Strengthening national mine action capacity in Chad	UNDP	0	\$499,980	Technical assistance, vocational training and institutional support to the national demining center
Colombia	DFAIT	Integral humanitarian mine action in Colombia	Organization of American States	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	Mine clearance, community outreach, mine risk education, monitoring and survey in up to nine separate locations in two priority departments
Jordan	DFAIT	Jordan north border clearance/quality management	UNDP	0	\$250,000	150 quality assurance visits and post sampling and verification of cleared minefields
Libya	DFAIT	Emergency UXO clearance in Libya	Mines Advisory Group	\$100,000	\$1,000,000	Mine risk education, deployment of 2 clearance teams and training for 10 local deminers
	DFAIT	Emergency UXO clearance in Libya	Swiss Foundation for Mine Action	\$100,000	\$1,000,000	Deployment of two clearance teams and, where possible, clearance of excess stockpiles of weapons and ammunition
	DFAIT	Support to the UNMAS emergency response in Libya	United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)	0	\$400,000	Coordination of mine action operators on the ground, technical and managerial support to Libyan authorities in establishment of mine action coordination framework
Mozambique	DFAIT	Support to Mozambique Mine Action Program	UNDP	0	\$1,000,000	Deployment of clearance teams through Handicap International and quality assurance and impact assessments conducted by local mine action authority
Palau	DFAIT	ERW survey and clearance in Palau	Cleared Ground Demining	\$199,867	\$199,867	Survey, removal and demolition of explosive remnants of war as well as capacity building of local Palauan teams
South Sudan	DFAIT	Capacity development of the South Sudan Mine Action Authority (SSMAA)	Norwegian People's Aid	\$730,021	\$1,750,000	Training SSMMA staff in quality assurance, information management, logistics, etc, so staff is able coordinate mine action activities in South Sudan independently.
	DFAIT	Humanitarian mine action in South Sudan	Danish Demining Group	\$509,976	\$509,976	Mine risk education and deployment of two clearance teams

Tajikistan	DFAIT	Mechanical clearance along the Tajik-Afghan border	Swiss Foundation for Mine Action	\$114,846	\$1,148,459	Purchase of one MV4 mini-flail mechanical demining machine and operating and maintenance costs.
	DFAIT	Landmine and ERW clearance in Tajikistan	Swiss Foundation for Mine Action	\$499,361	\$499,361	Deployment of one survey team and two clearance teams
	DFAIT	Tajikistan Demining Program	UNDP	0	\$500,000	Deployment of survey and clearance teams, provision of physical and psycho-social rehabilitation for mine victims, and training for mine risk educators
				\$6,040,545	\$19,007,617	

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