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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 27, 2013

THE HONOURABLE GERALD J. COMEAU
ACTING SPEAKER

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

Debates Services: D'Arcy McPherson, National Press Building, Room 906, Tel. 613-995-5756
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THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 27, 2013

The Senate met at 1:30 p.m., the Honourable Gerald J. Comeau, Acting Speaker, in the chair.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Prayers.

[Translation]

ROYAL ASSENT

NOTICE

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

RIDEAU HALL

March 27, 2013

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Marshall Rothstein, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 27th day of March, 2013, at 4 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain bills.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace
Secretary to the Governor General

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

[English]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Ms. Kim Peterson with her son Ryder; and Ms. Heather Rose with her daughter Molly, who are here on the occasion of Autism Awareness Day on the Hill. They are accompanied by supporters and families of children on the autism spectrum. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Munson.

On behalf of all honourable senators, we welcome you to the Senate of Canada.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Hon. Jim Munson: Honourable senators, I would also like to recognize Suzanne Jacobsen, who is in our gallery. She has single-handedly led an effort here in Ottawa dealing with QuickStart, a program that is very important to all of us and to the autistic children in our city.

Honourable senators, over the past four years I have stood on many occasions to request your support for my private member's bill, An Act respecting World Autism Awareness Day. Next Tuesday, April 2, Canada will for the first time join over 100 countries worldwide in officially celebrating World Autism Awareness Day.

Ten years ago, I began a journey to help improve the lives of people affected by autism. The people I meet by way of my involvement with the autism community are a constant source of learning and motivation.

In the spirit and perspective of our 2007 Senate report, *Pay Now or Pay Later: Autism Families in Crisis*, we can clearly see the life cycle needs of autism spectrum disorders people. The urgency for people and families is intensifying. A child who was 2 at the time of our report is now 8; a child who was 12 is now an adult, 18. The numbers grow. The need for our leadership and follow-up on the report recommendations is critical.

In Canada, we are just beginning to put together a national surveillance of autism program. Mostly, we still rely on American surveillance findings from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to determine Canadian numbers. It is estimated that 1 in 88 Canadian children has an autism spectrum disorder, up from 1 in 110 two years earlier. One in fifty-four boys has ASD.

Our federal government has to take more leadership and responsibility. This is a national issue that cries out for a collective effort of politicians and everyone involved in the autism community.

Though researchers are only now taking initial steps to study autism among First Nations youth, they are already alarmed by what they have uncovered. This issue is a federal responsibility, adding to the push for the Government of Canada to take more action.

While we, as a nation, are always increasing and enhancing services and resources for people with autism, we still have a long, long way to go. For children who are 2 to those entering into adulthood, wait times for diagnosis and treatments are excessively long. An estimated 4,900 Canadian teenagers with autism come of age every year. This number and the implications of growing from a child with autism to an adult with autism are hugely daunting. Once children with autism turn 18, they lose their pediatricians. They lose their eligibility for publicly funded speech and language

services and behavioural therapy. At 21, they can no longer attend public school. Only a lucky few live in group homes, attend day programs or even have part-time jobs.

Last October, Parliament passed An Act respecting World Autism Awareness Day, and I am humbled by the respect my colleagues, especially in this chamber, and everyone else on the Hill have paid this simple act to strengthen Canadians' understanding and commitment to helping people with autism. You have contributed to an important milestone and given us a national vehicle for building our capacity to address the autism crisis. On April 2, let us show Canadians living with autism that we respect and admire them and their families and are grateful for their contributions to our society. Let this be an occasion to take stock of what has been accomplished and what we must continue to advocate for. Let us celebrate those progressive Canadian values that guide our efforts.

• (1340)

SASKATCHEWAN

Hon. Denise Batters: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to my home province of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan has undergone a metamorphosis in recent years, transforming into a leader among provinces in economic growth and promise. I have witnessed this change firsthand. When I graduated from law school, most of my peers left Saskatchewan to seek employment. Almost 20 years later, I am so pleased to report that Saskatchewan's young people are now building their futures and families within our province.

Three of my four grandparents sailed from Ukraine to Saskatchewan, attracted by the promise of free land and a better future. It is amazing to me that, only two generations later, I now have the immense honour to represent Saskatchewan in this national chamber. Now, as in their time, Saskatchewan is a land of opportunity as wide open as the prairie skies.

People are seizing that opportunity, honourable senators. At last count, more than 1,089,000 people called Saskatchewan home, growing, in the last six years, at a rate faster than Saskatchewan has seen in 90 years. We boast the lowest unemployment rate in the country, adding 21,000 jobs in the last year alone. Saskatchewan is drawing in an unprecedented level of investment as its key industries continue to grow and drive the economic engine of the Canadian nation.

The pioneering spirit that settled Saskatchewan is leading us to a bright future. Last week the provincial government tabled a balanced budget which also manages Saskatchewan's growth. They are to be commended for that.

Premier Wall's stated purpose to ensure Saskatchewan's continued growth is in stark contrast to the attitude demonstrated by the federal NDP leader. Like so many people who live in Saskatchewan, I was dismayed to read the comments that federal NDP leader Thomas Mulcair recently made abroad, denigrating the Keystone XL pipeline project. This is a project which would create even more jobs in Saskatchewan and capitalize on our flourishing resource sector.

Mr. Mulcair will find that Saskatchewan cannot be held back. Saskatchewan is moving forward as a leader within Canada, a province rich in resources, innovation and in the strength of our people.

In 2013, the eyes of the nation will be on Saskatchewan as it hosts the Juno Awards, the Memorial Cup and, in November, the granddaddy of all Canadian events, the Grey Cup. Perhaps our beloved Roughriders will even play one of Senator Braley's teams in that championship match. Honourable senators, if that does happen, I am confident that the Rider Nation will ensure that Saskatchewan emerges triumphant.

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

MR. KEVIN PAGE—TRIBUTE

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to Canada's first Parliamentary Budget Officer, Kevin Page, whose term ended this week.

Some of you may have noticed that we on this side do not often find ourselves applauding initiatives of the Harper government, but the establishment of the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer is one I believe all of us welcomed.

While there has been some debate about the nature of the position, and especially whether the Parliament of Canada Act should be amended to make the Parliamentary Budget Officer an officer of Parliament, that is a discussion for another day.

Today I want to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Page to our work as parliamentarians and to thank him for all that he has done.

Our most fundamental responsibility as parliamentarians is to hold the government to account, especially for how it spends taxpayers' money and manages the national finances. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's most fundamental responsibility is to assist each of us in fulfilling that responsibility to Canadians.

In that respect, Kevin Page has done an exemplary job. He came to this position after a long career in the federal public service, during which he worked extensively in the heart of the economic and fiscal community of the Canadian government: the critical central agencies of the Department of Finance, Treasury Board and the Privy Council Office.

At PCO, he was the assistant secretary for macroeconomic policy. In other words, honourable senators, he came to the PBO position with a deep and broad knowledge of the economic and fiscal issues addressed by the federal government and also of the government institutions themselves. In his words:

... for 27 years, I worked on the other side of the fence, a public servant supporting the executive, so now an opportunity literally using a hockey metaphor, on the other side of the red line. So now you're supporting Parliament as opposed to supporting the government.

As I have said, Canada never had a Parliamentary Budget Officer before. The office was created in December 2006 under the

Federal Accountability Act. We had the Library of Parliament, which always did its best to assist us in our work, but the proposed PBO was something quite different. Mr. Page had to create something virtually from nothing.

He succeeded, honourable senators. When he stepped down from the position this week, he was able to look around and take satisfaction, knowing that he had built and led a team of exceptionally dedicated and knowledgeable professionals who shared his absolute confidence that, if provided accurate, complete information and analysis, then Parliament would be properly positioned to hold the government of the day to account; then, and only then, our parliamentary system would work as intended in the very best interests of our country. Mr. Page knew that the job of the PBO is not to tell us what we want to hear, but to provide us with the information and the analysis each of us needs to do our job.

Honourable senators, no one would ever accuse Kevin Page of courting favour or power. On so many files he called it as he saw it; the facts and figures, unvarnished, with no "massaging" for one or another partisan purpose. Time and again his figures, though they may have been questioned at the time, were ultimately proven correct.

Mr. Page has done his job with a laser-like focus and dedication which deserves the admiration and appreciation of us all. We should all be very grateful for his work, both on particular files and in building a superb office that hopefully will have a long and very productive future. We send all of our very best wishes to Mr. Page and his family.

PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Judith Seidman: Honourable senators, Parkinson's Awareness Month in Canada begins next week. Parkinson's is a chronic, degenerative, neurological disease caused by a loss of dopamine in the brain. Close to 100,000 Canadians have Parkinson's. Symptoms are commonly treated with prescription medications and physiotherapy, however there is no cure. Although Parkinson's is usually diagnosed in those aged 60 or over, it can affect people as young as 30 or 40.

Parkinson Society Canada celebrates caregivers this year by making April's awareness theme "Managing Parkinson's Disease is a Family Affair." A diagnosis of Parkinson's affects the entire family. Daily care and quality of life is possible thanks to a cohesive team including doctors, health care professionals and family members.

In 2012, Parkinson Society Canada launched the first Canadian guidelines on Parkinson's disease. The guidelines are targeted to educate health care professionals on symptoms, diagnosis and treatment. They also recognize the importance of educating family members and providing access to the same information and service as the person diagnosed.

Often, a close relative takes on the role of primary caregiver. Each family and their care partners build a plan that works for them. There are more than 400,000 family members in Canada who understand that well.

During April, the Parkinson's community asks that we focus on families and the impact Parkinson's can have on those close to a person living with the disease. Caregivers are at risk for their own health problems if appropriate support systems are not available in the health network and community.

Since 1965, Parkinson Society Canada has been dedicated to improving quality of life for Canadians living with Parkinson's through education, advocacy and support services. They also provide support to health care professionals. Parkinson Society Canada's national research program funds innovative research to test new ideas that are vital in the global search for better treatments and a cure. Since 1981, more than \$21 million have been invested in over 400 research projects.

Honourable senators, this year's Parkinson's Awareness Month celebrates caregivers. It is likely all honourable senators know someone living with Parkinson's and are aware of the challenges they and their caregivers face on a daily basis. Many are in need of support. It is essential that services and programs are readily available, not only in acute care settings but in the community as well.

• (1350)

Please join me in paying tribute to caregivers in Canada as we recognize April as Parkinson's Awareness Month.

THE LATE HONOURABLE LÉONCE BERNARD

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, it is with deep regret and sadness that I rise today in tribute to the Honourable Léonce Bernard, who passed away at Prince County Hospital in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, last evening.

Mr. Bernard had a long and distinguished public career and served his fellow citizens with great distinction. He was elected to the Prince Edward Island legislature in a by-election in 1975. At that time, I was a member of the legislature, and Senator Hubley served with him from 1989 to 1993.

We soon developed a great admiration for his wisdom and insights. As an indication of the esteem in which he was held, Mr. Bernard went on to win five successive elections and serve in the cabinet of Premier Joe Ghiz.

Mr. Bernard was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Prince Edward Island in 2001 and served that office with style and elegance throughout his term, which ended in 2006. He was just the third Acadian to hold that position. He was passionate about Acadian history and culture, and throughout his career he was instrumental in advancing the recognition of the Acadian people in Prince Edward Island.

Léonce Bernard was also passionate about serving his community. He held a number of leadership positions in the cooperative and credit union movements, and served on a number of community organizations. Even as his health deteriorated, he remained active, helping to raise funds for a new rink in his

beloved community of Evangeline. He will be greatly missed as an outstanding Islander, especially by his family, to whom he was devoted.

Honourable senators, I ask you to join with me in extending our sincere sympathies to his wife, Florence; his children Michel, Pierre, Francine and Charles; and his three grandchildren.

NEW BRUNSWICK SPORTS HALL OF FAME

CONGRATULATIONS TO 2013 INDUCTEES

Hon. John D. Wallace: Honourable senators, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to recognize and applaud the most recent inductees into the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame who were announced last week.

The six new members will receive this momentous honour and enter our Sports Hall of Fame following a lifetime of excellence and dedication to their respective sports. All of these individuals are outstanding New Brunswickers.

Peter Cameron, from Dalhousie, who tragically lost his legs following a car accident in 1982, excelled as a player for New Brunswick's provincial wheelchair basketball team. Peter was the first player to score 5,000 points in the Maritime wheelchair league, and he also became the highest-ranked wheelchair tennis player in Canada in 1989 and 1991.

Ronald Hooper, from Petitcodiac, coached the Petitcodiac High School basketball team to more than 1,200 wins and 10 provincial titles. He has spent more than 50 years volunteering as a coach, administrator and official with numerous local sports teams. The New Brunswick "Class A" provincial basketball trophy is named in Ronald's honour.

Dean Hitchcock, from Saint John, was a member of the Canadian Seniors Volleyball Team from 1977 to 1984, winning a bronze medal with the team at the 1979 Pan-American Games. That same year he was named New Brunswick's male athlete of the year. In 2001 Dean was inducted into the Volleyball Canada Hall of Fame.

George LeFeuvre, from Jemseg, has long been recognized internationally for his talent in cross-country ski trail grooming and track setting. During his 40-year career, he has participated in the preparation of six Olympic Games and numerous international, national and provincial championships. In 1999, Cross Country Canada awarded George the distinguished Dave Rees Award.

The 1987-88 Campbellton Tigers hockey team won the national Hardy Cup in 1988 with a playoff record of 20 wins and 2 losses. They were the only team in Canada to win three Hardy Cup championships. In 2001, the Campbellton Tigers were inducted into the Campbellton Sports Hall of Fame.

Finally, John Steele, from Rothesay, has had a remarkable golf career that spans more than 75 years. In 1938, he recorded an astounding 19-stroke victory at the New Brunswick-Prince Edward Island Junior Golf Championship, and that same year he competed in the first-ever Canadian junior golf championship.

After serving with the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War, John went on to win the 1954 and 1956 New Brunswick-Prince Edward Island Amateur Golf Championships. He is the only golfer to have won the New Brunswick-Prince Edward Island Junior Golf, Amateur Golf and Maritime Seniors Golf Championships.

Honourable senators, John Steele's induction into the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame has very special meaning for my family. John is my wife Jill's father and of course the grandfather of our children and great-grandfather to their children. John is a very special person, and we are extremely proud of him and what he has accomplished.

Honourable senators, to each of these exemplary New Brunswickers I offer my most heartfelt congratulations for their induction into the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame and thank them for the outstanding contributions they have made to competitive sports in New Brunswick. Thank you.

MR. JACK YAZER, C.M., O.N.S.

CONGRATULATIONS ON ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I am truly pleased today to speak in honour of my friend Mr. Jack Yazer from Sydney who will be celebrating his one hundredth birthday on April 7 with family and friends. Jack was born in 1913 in the small village of Suprasl in Poland. He said it was very difficult growing up Jewish in Poland at that time. With the help of relatives, Jack immigrated to Sydney Mines, Cape Breton, when he was 14 years old. He joined his brother and a sister who had come to Cape Breton previously.

When he arrived in Canada, the only English words that he knew were "can't speak." However, it did not take him long to learn the language. Jack and his brother, Mendel, peddled clothing, which they carried on their backs to the small communities around Cape Breton, like Bosidale, Bay St. Lawrence and Grand Narrows. The people in these small remote communities did not have access to clothing stores, so the Yazer brothers were a welcome sight when they made their rounds on the island. As Jack once said, "We brought the store to them."

A few years later, Jack and his brother started Yazer Brothers Men's Clothing Stores in Sydney Mines and later another store in Sydney. Through hard work, the stores became a success and a staple in the community. Jack became a successful and respected businessman and a community leader. His ability to envision what had to be done and his determination to get things done resulted in positive changes to his community. He was the driving force behind the Cape Breton Regional Hospital and the Cape Breton Cancer Centre, and he led a group of volunteers to raise \$6 million for the project. The hospital foundation, for which he was the founding chair, honoured Jack by renaming the Caring Spirit Award in his name.

Jack did volunteer work for the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Red Cross, United Jewish Appeal, and the Nova Scotia Family and Child Welfare Association. He drafted the Yazer

graduated licence two-point merit plan to promote safe driving, and he founded the Youth Speaks Up program, which promotes healthy choices for young people. I was proud to speak to this group about the Senate.

Jack Yazer is the recipient of the Order of Nova Scotia and the Order of Canada, and he also received an Honorary Doctor of Law degree from St. Francis Xavier University. He is one of the most amazing people I have ever known. Jack is an outstanding Canadian, and I am proud that he is my friend. Please join me in wishing Jack Yazer a happy one hundredth birthday.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MINE AWARENESS AND ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION

Hon. Elizabeth Hubley: Honourable senators, on April 4, the world will recognize International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. It is a day to remember land mine victims who have lost their lives and limbs, a day to celebrate the progress that has been made in reducing the use and prevalence of these terrible weapons and, finally, a day to reaffirm our commitment to clearing land mine fields and achieving universal ratification of the Ottawa Convention.

This year marks the twenty-first anniversary of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the fourteenth anniversary of the coming into force of the Ottawa Convention. The success of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Ottawa Convention can be measured in lives saved and injuries prevented. Between 1999 and 2011, the number of land mine casualties dropped by half, from almost 9,000 a year to just over 4,000 a year. While that means that 11 to 12 people still die needlessly every day from land mine injuries, the good news is that the treaty is working and most countries around the world have either signed the convention or at least pledged never to use or sell their land mine stockpiles. In fact, the only government to use land mines in 2012 was the Syrian government.

Nevertheless, we must maintain our vigilance. While only rogue states now use land mines, far too many non-state armed groups still do. Land mines were used last year by these types of groups in Afghanistan, Colombia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand and Yemen. These land mines pose a serious threat to civilians and render farmland and infrastructure useless.

• (1400)

Clearly, there is a continued need for land mine clearance and victim assistance, not only in these countries but in countries, like Cambodia, that are still heavily burdened by unexploded land mines and high rates of casualties.

Canada has long been a strong supporter of land mine victims and has contributed significantly to clearance programs, but over the last few years our financial commitment has dwindled. Whereas only a few years ago Canada was contributing \$30 million per year, we are now down to around \$17 million per year. This is not enough. I believe we can and should be doing more.

This year, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines is once again spearheading the Lend Your Leg or Arm Campaign. They invite everyone to raise awareness by rolling up their pant

leg or sleeve in support of land mine victims. I participated in this last year and encourage all honourable senators to join me and millions around the world again this year in lending our legs and arms and helping to promote the International Day for Mine Awareness.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, last Saturday, March 23, in Edmundston, New Brunswick, I joined almost 1,000 people in a march to protest the employment insurance reform. Some of the participants gave me a letter, and I would like to read a few excerpts from it. It says:

Seasonal workers throughout New Brunswick have been protesting for many months to express their opposition to the changes that the federal government is making to the Employment Insurance Regulations. The media have been talking about changes such as workers being obligated to accept jobs that pay 70 per cent less than their previous salary and that are located up to 100 km away from their homes. The media have also reported that, in order to meet certain quotas, federal government employees responsible for employment insurance will allegedly have the right to make surprise visits to — essentially search — the homes of unemployed workers to get information about these people's private lives, which is completely inappropriate.

There are other changes that will have negative consequences for seasonal workers in the Madawaska region.

The first is the elimination of the board of referees, which is the only way for workers to file an appeal and to be heard when they are denied benefits. On April 1, the board of referees will be eliminated. From that point on, if a worker is denied employment insurance benefits and files an appeal, the decision will be made by one or more public servants. This process is not fair to workers. Given the cuts that are being made to the public service, the public is under the impression, and rightly so, that public servants will have to meet certain quotas in order to keep their jobs. In order to protect workers, prevent conflict and maintain the reputed integrity of these public servants, the government must reverse its decision and keep the board of referees in place.

Second, the transition period granted to workers in our economic region has been eliminated. In July 2000, a group of seasonal workers demonstrated in front of the Service Canada office in Edmundston to show that they were unhappy with the revised EI economic region boundaries. The creation of the new economic region of Madawaska-Charlotte has had a positive impact on the Restigouche and Acadian Peninsula regions, but has had a harmful effect on workers and seasonal industries in Madawaska.

This change requires workers to accumulate more hours in order to qualify for benefits and shortens their benefits period, which creates a spring gap or a period of 6 to 8 weeks without income.

[Senator Cordy]

...By applying these regulations, the federal government is showing that it does not care about the issues facing seasonal workers and that it basically has no respect for them. The government is treating seasonal workers like second-class citizens.

I did not read even half of the letter, which is signed by two workers, Daniel Michaud and Adrien Pat Fournier.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

CANADIAN HERITAGE

NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

Hon. Marie-P. Charette-Poulin: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. In last week's budget, the government announced its intention to demote the National Capital Commission by transferring its mandate to promote the National Capital Region to the Department of Canadian Heritage. I find this move puzzling. The independent review of the NCC's mandate commissioned by the Conservative government in 2006 reported that:

"The NCC has a solid reputation for organizing quality celebrations...."

We all know the old saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Would the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell us please tell us why the change was made?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I suppose I should have, back in the Mulroney government, followed that criterion — if it ain't broke, don't fix it — because, in fact, that mandate was with the Canadian Heritage before it was moved to the NCC in 1988 under then chair Jean Pigott.

With regard to this particular change, honourable senators, as we approach Canada's one hundred fiftieth birthday in the year 2017, our government will take the steps necessary to ensure a broad national perspective is brought to all of the celebrations in the National Capital Region. The Department of Canadian Heritage is better placed to broaden the scope of the celebrations taking place in the National Capital Region and to encourage more citizens to visit the nation's capital and participate in these celebrations that are meant for all Canadians.

Even the Mayor of Ottawa, a well-known Liberal, Jim Watson, praised this change by saying, "This brings a little bit of clarity to what their role should be on a go-forward basis and those kinds of celebratory activities are better suited at the Department of Canadian Heritage." It is not often that I agree with the Mayor Watson, but in this case I most certainly do.

Senator Charette-Poulin: I have a supplementary question. Minister Baird has described this change to the NCC's mandate

as simply "an organizational structural shift," with no resulting cost savings and no job losses. In fact, he says that the NCC employees responsible for promoting the capital will simply be moved over to the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Again, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. What is the government's objective? I do not understand.

• (1410)

Senator LeBreton: I think I answered that question in my first response, honourable senators. The senator is right. The people who were working at the National Capital Commission specifically on Canada Day festivities and Winterlude festivities will be moved to the Department of Canadian Heritage.

However, as I mentioned, it is believed by the government and supported by a lot of people that the Department of Canadian Heritage is the best place to broaden the scope of the celebrations taking place in the National Capital Region but really intended for all Canadians. The Department of Canadian Heritage can involve more Canadians in the celebrations, promote them across Canada and bring people into the celebrations, much like what is happening with the way the Department of Canadian Heritage is connecting various museums around the country with the Canadian History Museum.

Senator Charette-Poulin: I have a supplementary question, honourable senators. I am glad the leader brought up the museums, because several people are wondering if this is a trend. If we look at what is happening in our cultural institutions, we have already seen changes to the name and the scope of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. We have recently witnessed the muzzling of employees at Library and Archives Canada. Now the government is transferring a key responsibility of an arm's-length agency, the NCC, to a minister. It seems as though the government simply wants tighter control. How in the world would the department be able to better involve Canadians when already it has been proven — and it has been written in a report that the NCC is doing a good job — that the NCC is exactly meeting that objective through cooperative partnerships of involving Canadians across the country in its activities?

Senator LeBreton: Precisely, honourable senators, because it broadens the scope by moving the NCC to Canadian Heritage, just like the connecting of museums all over the country which has been applauded across the country. It is to broaden the scope and make the celebrations for Canada's one hundred and fiftieth birthday involve Canadians from all across the country under the Department of Canadian Heritage, rather than making it a focus of an agency based here in the national capital.

CHARLOTTETOWN CONFERENCE—MARKING ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Honourable senators, the leader mentioned the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Canada. As she knows, the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference is coming up next year. Can the leader advise what funding the Government of Canada is providing for that celebration?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for the question. Knowing my history, I am

well aware of what took place in 1864. I do not have a specific answer at the moment, but I will take the question as notice.

FINANCE

TARIFFS ON CONSUMER GOODS

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. In last week's budget, the government made a big show of removing the import duties on baby clothes and sports equipment. That is not a bad idea, but in the same budget it included a tariff increase on more than 1,000 items coming from countries such as China and India. In fact, the government's own analysts say that there will be an increase in tariffs of over \$333 million. It is about four times more than will be saved on the sports equipment and baby clothes.

The Retail Council of Canada expects that the new tariff will add about 3 per cent to goods coming from the affected areas.

Senator Mercer: There goes deflation.

Senator Callbeck: Right.

Why did the government give so little to consumers on one hand, and at the same time take so much more with the other?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with regard to the tariffs on baby clothes and sports equipment, we should be very proud that the government listened to a very good report that unfortunately got blown off the front pages by more than one of our colleagues. However, the fact is the Senate report, chaired by Senator Day and deputy-chaired by Senator Smith, made some recommendations to the government. The Minister of Finance listened and cited the Senate report in his budget speech and statement. He took the advice of the Senate committee and focused in on those two particular areas, sports equipment and baby clothes. This will be a wonderful chance to see if the testimony before the committee from both sides of the border bears out to be true when we see how consumers react across the border in terms of these two items.

With regard to the General Preferential Tariff, it is important to point out that this was a foreign aid program created in the 1970s to give special treatment to help companies in poor countries. However, this program had not been reviewed. It has been this way since the early 1970s. Just think about it, honourable senators. We probably have colleagues in Parliament who were not even born in the early 1970s, maybe not in this chamber but the other — although there might be a few in here.

That means countries such as China and South Korea, whose economies are now booming, are receiving privileged access to our market when competing against Canadian business. Surely we cannot support that continuing. We want countries such as these, where we have made these changes, to compete on a level playing field. It is about fairness.

Senator Callbeck: The honourable senator talks about the Minister of Finance listening to the recommendations of the Finance Committee in the Senate. I was on that committee and

the major recommendation was a comprehensive review of Canadian tariffs with the objective of reducing price discrepancies for certain products between Canada and the United States. That review, to my knowledge, has not been done. There would not be time to do it, because I think the report was just tabled here in February. The government has gone ahead and added these tariffs.

Chief Economist of the Bank of Montreal, Doug Porter, told CTV News that these changes may widen the price discrepancies between Canada and the United States. What this government is doing with the changes it has brought in with the budget is widening the discrepancy between Canada and the United States.

I would like to know if the government has any intention of carrying through on the committee's first recommendation?

Senator LeBreton: First, honourable senators, I note that the senator speaks about Doug Porter. That is one person's opinion. Is the honourable senator saying that the Minister of Finance should have just ignored the Senate report, ignored the good work of Senator Day, Senator Smith and the people who sit on the committee, and not acknowledged this report at all?

Obviously, the honourable senator is right; it only came down in the first week of February. However, the fact is that the minister acknowledged the work of the committee and focused in on two specific areas, where we lift these tariffs and see whether the situation improves. I would dare say if the situation improves and prices level on both sides of the border, then the Minister of Finance and Department of Finance officials will look at further items. That seems to me to be a prudent way to proceed.

I would dare say that, had the Minister of Finance ignored the recommendations of the Senate, I would be hearing about it in spades.

Senator Callbeck: The leader has not answered my question. What I said was that the Finance Committee recommended a comprehensive review of Canadian tariffs with the objective of reducing the price discrepancies for certain products between Canada and the United States. A lot of people think what the government has done in the budget will increase that discrepancy, including Doug Porter of the Bank of Montreal.

My question was this: Does the government have any intention of carrying through on the major recommendation of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance?

• (1420)

Senator LeBreton: The honourable senator did not listen to my answer. I said that the minister did listen to the Finance Committee report. He picked a couple of areas to start. The honourable senator should not read into that or assume that the Minister of Finance will not be absolutely paying attention to the other recommendations of the committee. I did not suggest that, nor would the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Madam Leader, I was sitting on that committee, and the report was adopted unanimously. There are many recommendations, so we all agree on this. It seems that the government, most of the time, is talking out of both sides of

its mouth. On the one hand, it is negotiating free trade agreements with China, and on the other hand, it is imposing new tariffs, so I try to reconcile myself to the position of the government.

Why would the government apply increases on a thousand products on the one hand, and on the other hand claim and go around the world and negotiate free trade agreements?

Senator LeBreton: I have actually answered that question, honourable senators. With regard to China, South Korea and Brazil, surely the honourable senator is not suggesting that a policy brought in in the early 1970s, created to give special treatment to those countries that were then classified as poor countries, should go on forever.

Surely the honourable senator would not suggest that they should be given preferential treatment to compete with Canadian businesses, because that is precisely why the government took the decision. We want those countries that are now competing with the world to compete on a level playing field.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: The leader is misunderstanding the purpose of our report. The purpose of our report was to diminish the price differences between the two countries. The Americans will import from China; we will import from China. There is already a discrepancy now — we still pay more — and then the government is adding another tax. I guess it is understood that this is not going along with the recommendation of our report. We are recommending review.

The previous honourable senator asked whether the leader will review and ensure that when the government says “negotiate free trade” that the word “free” should mean free trade. This means sitting at a table, looking at the tariffs and bringing them down. We do not ask for special treatment.

The 1970s passed a long time ago. The government is still negotiating with Europe. We just ask that it is meaningful when talking about free trade, tariffs and the report of the Senate.

Senator LeBreton: It is nice to see the other side finally getting on the bandwagon of free trade. It is something that only this side seems to be able to actually negotiate and implement.

Honourable senators, with regard to the report of the Senate Finance Committee, it is rather remarkable that a committee of the Senate makes a report, tables it in the first week of February, and the Minister of Finance responds and puts portions of it in the budget within six weeks. One is not, therefore, to deduce from that action that the Minister of Finance is not fully cognizant of the overall recommendations of the committee, because he would be. I am certain that he and his officials are looking at the report in its entirety.

With all of the things we have had to deal with in the Senate in the last month and a half, I took it as a glimmer of hope that there was actually a positive report and a positive response on behalf of the government to something that was done in the Senate. I would have thought that the people on the committee and the people in

the Senate — all of us — would be very pleased by that action on the part of the Minister of Finance and not have it be the subject of some derision. I am rather surprised.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, a year and a half ago, Minister Flaherty himself made sure to tell all Canadians that they were paying far too much for consumer goods. He then asked the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance to look into why there is a price gap on certain goods sold in Canada and the U.S. so that Canadian consumers could save some money. The committee produced an excellent report, but instead of heeding the recommendations in the report to help Canadians save money, the minister announced measures last Wednesday that will cause Canadians to pay more for consumer goods.

A year and a half ago, the minister practically blamed the Retail Council of Canada for the price gap on certain goods sold in Canada and the United States. He should go back to the drawing board, listen to what Canadian consumers are saying, and heed the recommendations of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance. This is not right. He does not know what he is doing.

[English]

Senator LeBreton: There is only one thing the honourable senator said that we can both agree on. It was an excellent report from the Finance Committee of the Senate. The rest of the question is basically the same as the questions asked by Senators Callbeck and Hervieux-Payette. I pointed out that the minister responded to the Senate committee. That is not to say that it will be his final response. However, based on the testimony, he picked two particular items, and we shall see from consumers whether doing this in those two areas makes a marked difference. We hope it will. It will be a good way to find out, and it will also give the Minister of Finance direction as to where we go from there.

[Translation]

Senator Ringuette: The leader says that the Minister of Finance needs direction as to where to go from here. The National Finance Committee gave him precisely that information in order to reduce the price gap between Canada and the United States, to ensure that Canadian consumers pay less for the products they need. Retailers are not to blame. Wholesalers are not to blame either. If all of these people along the supply chain pay a much higher base price for consumer goods than Americans do, then how are the Canadian economy and Canadian merchants supposed to be able to compete and how are Canadian consumers supposed to enjoy the same relatively reasonable prices that Americans do?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: First, I think the Minister of Finance is an outstanding finance minister. The record proves it. The Canadian economy is performing very well.

The Minister of Finance has thanked the Senate Finance Committee for their very good work, has taken some immediate action as a result of the work, and absolutely is committed to

further studying the report. Bear in mind that it came down in February. Consultations for this budget began last summer. Therefore, I think it is rather impressive that the Minister of Finance reacted so quickly to the report. That is not to say and it was never intended to be his full response. He has actually committed himself to studying the full report.

• (1430)

[Translation]

Senator Ringuette: Honourable senators, I do not agree with the comments of the Leader of the Government in the Senate concerning the Minister of Finance's ability to carry out his responsibilities towards Canadian consumers. In the past two weeks, through his budget, the minister has managed to increase consumer prices by increasing tariffs and, what is more, he has taken it upon himself to contact Canada's banks and ensure that Canadians who needed a mortgage will now pay more for it.

Quite frankly, honourable senators, it is clear that the Minister of Finance is not accountable, and that he is not attentive to the demands and the expectations of Canadian consumers.

[English]

Senator LeBreton: First, going back to the study, it was Canada-U.S. I think the chair and the deputy-chair would point that out.

Second, I do not expect the honourable senator to agree with me or with the Minister of Finance. Obviously she would not, although she would have to recognize that Canada's position and our financial position is very robust. Furthermore, we are the envy of the world. I would not expect Senator Ringuette to agree with the way we operate or run the government, as I did not agree, when she worked for Canada Post, with the way that Canada Post operated.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

Senator Ringuette: There is a contrast here because when I was at Canada Post, Canada Post was delivering a profit to Canadians.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Ringuette: Since this government has changed the parameters of income for Canada Post, they have lost money and so are Canadians.

Another funny thing — and maybe the leader could enlighten us with regard to the Minister of Finance — is that since 2007, I have been fighting in this chamber to achieve fair merchant fees for merchants and consumers throughout this country. The continuous reply of the Harper government is that they will not micromanage banking systems and that supply and demand will rule the day. Well, where was supply and demand in the minister's office when he made those calls to financial institutions to keep interest high rates on mortgages? Where was it?

Senator LeBreton: Since the honourable senator brought up Canada Post, first, we are still waiting for that sponsorship

money. Of course, Canada Post was a big part of it. That \$40 million would go a long way.

The fact of the matter is, honourable senators, I answered the question about the mortgage concerns that the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Canada had and I believe the financial institutions acknowledge this. We are concerned about household debt and we do not want people overextending themselves so much so that they would be in a position where they could not properly handle any potential changes in the housing market.

Senator Ringuette: The leader said that this government is concerned about household debt and I certainly agree — with household debt. The Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. Carney, has indicated that the biggest problem we have economically is the situation of household debt. Most of that is because of mortgages that, in 2007, were brought in to lower the down payment. We went from 30 years to pay down a mortgage to 40 years. That was the result of a policy of the Harper-Flaherty government. They had to backtrack on that. I hope they will also backtrack on ensuring that Canadians who have mortgages will have the opportunity — without interference from the Minister of Finance — to have the lowest mortgage rate available.

Senator LeBreton: Since the honourable senator insists on calling it the "Harper-Flaherty government," she will not mind, then, if I refer to the sponsorship money as the "Ouellet-Ringuette Canada Post."

On the whole issue of household debt, as I have stated before, we really do not want Canadians to be overextended. The honourable senator is wearing a red dress.

Senator Ringuette: There were three brown envelopes. We only know about one.

Senator LeBreton: Senator Ringuette would be surprised what I know. She does not want to ask me what I know about this file. Believe you me, I know about some files and it is not good for her.

Senator Manning: Tell me more!

Senator LeBreton: I will finish my answer, if I may, since the honourable senator took so much time.

On the issue of household debt, clearly we do not want Canadians to be overextended. We have taken significant action to help Canadians make more informed decisions in their best interests.

Senator Ringuette: Are you asking for five more minutes?

Senator LeBreton: The honourable senator took at least 10 minutes to ask her question, so at least I can have two to respond.

For example, Bill C-28, to provide a financial literacy leader in the government, is awaiting Royal Assent. We have cut taxes and created the Tax-Free Savings Account to encourage Canadians to save for the future. Canadian consumers deserve access to credit on fair and transparent terms.

Some Hon. Senator: Oh, oh! —

[Senator LeBreton]

Senator LeBreton: That is probably why Senator Ringuette does not get any of this, because she does not listen.

That is why we have taken action to protect Canadians using credit cards by banning unsolicited credit card checks, requiring clear and simple information, providing timely advance notice of rates and fee changes, limiting anti-consumer business practices and ensuring prepaid credit.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Senator: Order!

Senator LeBreton: One more thing: We introduced a code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry, which was welcomed by consumers and small business. We will continue to monitor compliance and any possible violations that may lead to investigation.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Senator: Well done!

ANSWERS TO ORDER PAPER QUESTIONS TABLED

CANADIAN HERITAGE—CANADA'S ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government) tabled the answer to Question No. 52 on the Order Paper by Senator Dallaire.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS—PASSPORT SERVICES ON PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government) tabled the answer to Question No. 54 on the Order Paper by Senator Callbeck.

NATIONAL REVENUE—OVERSEAS TAX EVASION

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government) tabled the answer to Question No. 56 on the Order Paper by Senator Downe.

[Translation]

DELAYED ANSWER TO ORAL QUESTION

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the answer to the oral question asked by the Honourable Senator Callbeck on February 26, 2013, concerning Canada student loans.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

CANADA STUDENT LOAN—SECURITY OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

(Response to questions raised by Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck on February 26, 2013)

Why did the Department wait until January 11 to alert the public? Has the department notified every person affected by

this privacy breach? If not, how many letters have gone out so far, and when will the notification process be complete?

Given the seriousness of the situation, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) ensured that all reasonable efforts were exhausted before it could be in a position to notify the public of the privacy incident.

The search for the portable hard drive had three distinct phases. The first phase started on November 5, 2012 when an employee was unable to locate the portable hard drive. The employee then searched for the hard drive in the immediate work area, spoke with colleagues and eventually the individual's manager. The missing hard drive was brought to the attention of the Director on November 22, 2012, who then asked all managers and employees within the division to undertake additional searches for the hard drive. At that time, the search focused on locating a missing asset.

On November 26, 2012 the Director General of the Canada Student Loans Program was advised that the hard drive was the one used to create a backup of files from a network drive as part of a process to migrate files from one area of the server to another. Some personal information on clients and employees were stored on the network drive. As a result, senior management was advised immediately of the missing hard drive and that an analysis be undertaken, including all the files located on the drive, to determine what information had been lost.

The second phase of search efforts began with the notification of the Departmental Security Office on November 28, 2012. As well, Corporate Security then began a number of activities including detailed sweeps of the physical premises and interviewed both current and former employees in the area from which the hard drive went missing. There was no evidence of malfeasance, and it was assumed that the hard drive was most likely still in the building.

Based on the analysis of what files were contained on the hard drive, it was discovered on December 6, 2012 that the hard drive contained the personal information of 583,000 Canada Student Loan borrowers as well as personal contact information of 250 Departmental employees. Extensive search efforts at the building where the hard drive was stored continued, including additional comprehensive sweeps of the building's ground floor by the Regional Security Office, and the analysis of all of the Learning Branch's existing hard drives content. These efforts failed to recover the hard drive and the Department informed the Office of the Privacy Commissioner on December 14, 2012 that an external hard drive containing personal information was missing.

By early January 2013 it became less and less likely that the hard drive would be found. It was then that the Department launched the third phase with a formal administrative investigation with the Corporate Investigation Unit of the Integrity Services Branch. In addition, the incident was referred to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) by the Minister's Office on

January 7, 2013. The Department then developed a strategy to inform Canadians that included web, social media, call centres, and letter notification. This strategy was initiated on January 11, 2013 and is ongoing.

In particular, the Department set-up a toll free number for individuals to verify if they have been affected by the privacy incident and to ask additional questions regarding the incident. The toll-free number will remain in place until such time as it is no longer required. The Department has also sent letters to individuals affected, for whom they have current contact information, to advise them of the incident and what steps to take to protect their personal information. As of March 8, 2013, more than 338,050 letters have been sent and efforts to inform affected individuals will continue where possible.

HRSDC has also entered into a contract with Equifax Canada to offer those affected by the privacy incident with the option to receive credit protection services. As a result of purchasing these services, a fraud alert flag will be placed on an affected borrower's file for a period of six years, which alerts credit grantors to the fact that the individual's personal information may have been comprised. Through the purchasing of this service, HRSDC is ensuring that all affected individuals across the country can receive this service free of charge. The inclusion of the flags purchased by HRSDC means that not only are credit grantors notified that an individual's information may have been comprised but, it requires that they take additional safeguards to verify an individual's identity before granting credit or opening an account. For example, they may be asked for additional pieces of supporting documentation, or to respond to questions for which only the affected individual would know the response.

Why is Human Resources and Skills Development Canada not using both reporting services when even the government's own financial consumer agency recommends doing so? How did the process evolve with regard to protecting these credit ratings?

While HRSDC currently has an agreement with Equifax Canada, the Department is also exploring the possibility of obtaining credit protection services through other authorized financial institutions.

Equifax Canada has confirmed that the credit protection services being offered is a reliable strategy that meets industry standards and will assist in preventing the misuse of personal and credit information. As a result of purchasing credit protection services from Equifax Canada, a fraud alert flag will be placed on an affected borrower's file, which alerts credit grantors to the fact that the individual's information may have been comprised. This flag alert will be placed on an individual's credit file for a period of six years. By purchasing this service, the Department is ensuring that all affected borrowers across the country can receive this service free of charge. It is important to note that not all alerts provided by Equifax Canada mandate that a credit grantor be able to receive such alerts. The service that

has been purchased by the Department requires that all Equifax members be able to receive these alerts. The alert has no impact on an individual's credit rating.

The inclusion of the flags purchased by HRSDC means that not only are credit grantors notified that an individual's information may have been comprised but, it requires that they take additional safeguards to verify an individual's identity before granting credit or opening an account. For example, they may be asked for additional pieces of supporting documentation or to respond to questions for which only they would know the response. By way of this agreement, Equifax Canada will also monitor the activity of consumers affected by the incident with the object of identifying any patterns of behavior to spot any anomalies, and potentially fraudulent activities proactively. If any patterns of fraud are detected, the Department will be notified immediately. To date, there has been no evidence that any of the information on the hard drive has been accessed or used for fraudulent purposes.

[English]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CANADA NATIONAL PARKS ACT CANADA-NOVA SCOTIA OFFSHORE PETROLEUM RESOURCES ACCORD IMPLEMENTATION ACT CANADA SHIPPING ACT, 2001

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator MacDonald, seconded by the Honourable Senator Beyak, for the second reading of Bill S-15, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to the Canada Shipping Act, 2001.

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-15, the Expansion and Conservation of Canada's National Parks Bill.

• (1440)

Bill S-15, as our colleague Senator MacDonald explained to us, has several parts. First, the bill would establish Sable Island, in my home province of Nova Scotia, as a national park reserve. Second, the bill would make certain changes to Yoho and Jasper National Parks. Finally, it would amend a general section of the National Parks Act. I will speak briefly about each of these initiatives.

Let me say, at the outset, that we on this side wholeheartedly support the designation of Sable Island as a national park reserve. Sable Island is a very special place, honourable senators. It is a

small area, 42 kilometres long and a mere 1.3 kilometres across its the widest point. Sable Island in French is Île de sable, or island of sand, and that is exactly what much of it is. It is home to some of the largest sand dune systems in Eastern Canada. The official Sable Island Visitors Guide warns us that “walking on steep slopes, both vegetated and non-vegetated, is prohibited as it leads to dune collapse.”

Parks Canada has described Sable Island as a “biodiversity gem” and for good reason. The island is home to over 190 species of plants. It also provides habitat for the largest breeding population of grey seals in the world, and it is home to some 350 species of birds. Sable Island is situated on an important flyway for migratory birds and, as a result, is a migratory bird sanctuary with protection for all migratory birds, their nests, eggs and habitat. Sable Island is also the only known breeding place in the world for a subspecies of the Savannah Sparrow known as the Ipswich Sparrow, which is listed in Schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act as being of special concern. As honourable senators will know, Sable Island is home to the very special Sable Island wild horses.

Until a year ago, the island was primarily managed by the Canadian Coast Guard. There were legislated requirements for prior written authorization from the Minister of Transport for anyone wishing to visit the island, and the minister could attach terms and conditions.

I can personally attest to the difficulty of visiting Sable Island. I tried several times and each time the weather did not allow the plane to land. Even from the air, one can see that it is a unique place. There is good reason why it holds a special place in the hearts of Nova Scotians and, indeed, of all Canadians, even though very few have actually been able to visit.

In that regard, I was intrigued by a proposal advanced by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society for a Sable Island pavilion and interpretation centre in downtown Halifax. Visitors would be able, through state-of-the-art multi-visual displays, to experience and learn more about this extraordinary piece of Canada without risking the damage to the fragile ecosystem that could be caused by mass visitations to the island itself.

Concern for Sable Island is not a partisan issue. Back in January 2005, Stéphane Dion, then Minister of the Environment in the Liberal government of Prime Minister Paul Martin, together with my colleague Geoff Regan, then the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, issued a press release entitled “Federal Government Announces Steps to Ensure the Protection of Sable Island into the Future.” It reflected close work with the Nova Scotia Government to protect the island. Here is an excerpt from that 2005 press release:

“The federal government, along with the province of Nova Scotia, agree that it is in the best interests of Canadians to ensure that Sable Island, with its special history and unique scientific and ecological value, is preserved for generations to come,” said Minister Dion. “We believe the best way to achieve this is by maintaining a human presence on the island,” said Minister Regan.

“Canadians understand the historical and environmental importance of Sable Island. The federal and provincial

governments are responding today to Canadians’ concerns for the future of Sable Island and remain committed to finding a viable long-term solution to protect Sable Island’s future,” said Minister Regan.

“The Province of Nova Scotia has worked very hard with the federal government and Sable Island stakeholders to ensure that the island would be preserved and protected. We welcome the federal government’s commitment to continue a year-round human presence on Sable Island,” said Nova Scotia’s Minister of Natural Resources Richard Hurlburt.

Of course, a federal election took place not long thereafter and I am pleased that the Harper government is now continuing along this path to protect Sable Island.

Honourable senators, while we absolutely support the decision to designate Sable Island as a national park reserve under the National Parks Act, we do have some questions about some of the specific provisions proposed in Bill S-15 and look forward to the opportunity to consider these at greater length in committee.

For example, as Senator MacDonald told this chamber, Sable Island is located in a hydrocarbon basin. The issue has been to find the right balance between protecting the island and allowing appropriate and safe oil and gas development offshore of Nova Scotia.

Over the years, a number of exploration licences that included parts of Sable Island were granted. As Senator MacDonald told us in his speech, it is my understanding that all of the holders of those licences have voluntarily amended their licences to prevent drilling on the island and within a buffer zone of one nautical mile.

Clause 6 of the bill would legislate this into the National Parks Act. The new section 140.1 of the National Parks Act would provide as follows:

No person shall carry on any work or activity related to the drilling for petroleum, including exploratory drilling for petroleum, in Sable Island National Park Reserve of Canada or within one nautical mile seaward of its low-water mark.

This section seems fairly straightforward, but some have questioned whether the word “petroleum” is broad enough. Would it also include exploratory drilling for natural gas? I have also heard questions asking why one nautical mile was chosen. I know from meetings I have had with some groups that they would like to see that extended farther, perhaps to five nautical miles. I look forward to examining that in committee and to hearing from those witnesses.

The bill then sets forth some exceptions to the general prohibition on drilling. One of particular concern to some is in clause 8 of the bill. It would add a new subsection, 142.1(3), to the National Parks Act and would allow on Sable Island:

(b) petroleum exploration activities with a low impact on the environment, including seismic, geological or geophysical programs;

Honourable senators, you can see why this wording is raising some alarm bells among those concerned for the protection of Sable Island. Seismic petroleum exploration can sometimes involve explosives. How could that not disturb the dunes and the wildlife on this small island? What standard will be applied in assessing whether a particular activity would have a “low impact” on the environment? Who applies this standard, and with what checks and oversight?

Under that same subsection, surface access rights are limited, but horizontal drilling would be permitted. It is difficult to conceive of horizontal drilling that would not impact the delicate ecological balance of the island, honourable senators, and I look forward to hearing more about this in committee. If walking on steep slopes is prohibited because it leads to the collapse of sand dunes, what impact could there be from horizontal drilling, and why do we need this exception?

There are also concerns about whether these exceptions would establish a precedent. As I understand it, honourable senators, never before have we allowed this kind of exploration activity in any of our national parks.

When dealing with offshore energy, the landmark 1986 Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord must also be factored into our discussion. Currently, the federal and provincial acts that implement the accord take precedence over the Canada National Parks Act and it has been suggested that, if we wish to give Sable Island the protection it truly deserves as a remarkable sanctuary, then the governments of Canada and of Nova Scotia should consider amending their respective acts. I hope that the committee will be able to explore how easily this could be done.

I am sure that the committee will, during the course of its work, also want to hear about the status of the claims on Sable Island by the Mi’kmaq. As Senator MacDonald explained, the reason this bill would establish Sable Island as a national park reserve, rather than as a national park, is in order to respect the fact that Mi’kmaq assert rights and title in Nova Scotia, including Sable Island potentially. Those claims are being addressed through the Made-in-Nova Scotia Process, between the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia and the Mi’kmaq. We will want to be sure that the Mi’kmaq agree with what is happening in this bill.

• (1450)

Honourable senators, these are a few of the questions that I look forward to exploring with witnesses in committee.

As I noted at the outset of my remarks, Sable Island is dealt with in one of the three parts to this bill. The bill would also make changes to Schedules 4 and 5 of the National Parks Act. These relate to Yoho National Park and Jasper National Park. I understand that the changes affecting Yoho National Park are minor, but of course in committee we will want to hear more.

With respect to Jasper National Park, the amendments arose out of the desire by the operator of a ski area at Marmot Basin, inside the park, to make some changes that would allow them to significantly expand their facilities. In exchange, the operator would give up an area that provides habitat for various wildlife. I

am told by officials at Parks Canada that they consider this to be a positive development — an environmental gain. Again, we will hear more about that in committee.

The final issue about which I want to raise concerns is an apparently small change in the National Parks Act, but it is one that I am concerned may have far-reaching implications.

Currently, subsection 4(1) of the Canada National Parks Act reads as follows:

4. (1) The national parks of Canada are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment, subject to this Act and the regulations, and the parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Bill S-15 would amend it to change “subject to this Act and the regulations” — that is, the Canada National Parks Act — to read “subject to any Act of Parliament.” The whole subsection would then read:

4. (1) The national parks of Canada are dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment, subject to any Act of Parliament, and the parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Honourable senators, what impact will this have? Would this allow an omnibus bill, for example, to amend some other statute and thereby authorize oil or gas drilling in a national park? Right now, when we designate an area to be a national park, it provides the strongest form of environmental protection possible under Canadian law. Could this apparently small change of a few words potentially undermine this and allow a completely unrelated statute to overrule this protection?

As honourable senators can see, there are a number of issues to be explored in committee.

As I said at the beginning, we on this side support the principle of this bill. Protecting Sable Island is the right thing to do.

I look forward to the work of our committee in studying this bill in detail, making sure that there are no unintended consequences so that we actually do provide the best protection possible for the soon-to-be Sable Island National Park Reserve.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator Carignan, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources.)

THE ESTIMATES, 2012-13

MAIN ESTIMATES—SEVENTEENTH REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE— DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the seventeenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance (2012-2013 *Main Estimates*), tabled in the Senate on March 20, 2013.

Hon. Joseph A. Day moved the adoption of the report.

He said: Honourable senators will be pleased to know that this will be the last time this year that I will be speaking on finance matters — at least for this fiscal year.

I would like to begin by thanking the Honourable Leader of the Government in the Senate for her kind words about the good work of the Finance Committee. I share the honourable leader's view that the work of the Senate Finance Committee is a credit to the entire Senate. I thank her very much for those words.

Honourable senators, in this report we have the final report of the work that the Finance Committee has done to the end of this fiscal year, 2012-13, which ends in a week. We have here the final report. There were two other interim reports, so three reports in total on the Main Estimates for fiscal year just ending, including this one. The other two have been reported and adopted. We are now into this final report for fiscal 2012-13 Main Estimates.

In addition to that, honourable senators, as I have pointed out in other opportunities I have had to address you, there were three supplementary estimates. There are the Main Estimates plus three, Supplementary Estimates (A), (B) and (C), and there are three separate reports for those supplementary estimates as well. I would commend them all to honourable senators, but I will restrict my comments at this time to this report that we are asking you to adopt so that all of our reports will have been presented to this chamber and adopted.

Honourable senators, the committee heard from the Public Service Commission of Canada, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions and the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, Treasury Board Secretariat, and also the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. In this report there are brief summaries of our hearings with respect to each of those departments and agencies.

Honourable senators, it is our role as the Finance Committee to choose different departments or agencies to study each year. We obviously cannot go to all of the 120 different departments and agencies each year, so we randomly select different departments and agencies. Those are the ones we looked at this year.

Briefly, with respect to the Public Service Commission, one highlight of the session with the president of the Public Service Commission was that the merit principle, the fundamental basis

upon which we hire to the public service, is perhaps not being followed as closely as it should. In some cases we saw inadequate assessment tools being used by the various departments.

A few years ago we passed a piece of legislation whereby the Public Service Commission was statutorily required to delegate the hiring of personnel to the various departments and deputy ministers. Those deputy ministers must follow the rules of the Public Service Commission in relation to hiring and the Public Service Commission acts as an overseer to make sure the hiring rules are being followed. We then hear from the Public Service Commission as to whether the rules are actually being followed. That is how that works.

Honourable senators, there is a provision in hiring for priority appointments for those who qualify in three main areas. First, there are surplus employees within an organization, if there is a reduction in employee numbers for whatever reason; second, employees on leave for more than one year and whose positions were indeterminately staffed during their absence; and, third, persons who have been laid off are on a priority list for rehiring.

• (1500)

We heard from the Public Service Commission that another priority group includes members of the Canadian Armed Forces, in particular those who have been released for medical purposes. Concerns were raised about the appointment rates for medically released Armed Forces personnel because, first, the rules are a bit too complicated and, second, the Public Service Commission is not satisfied that those with disabilities are being hired to the extent that they should be. We will watch those statistics in the future, but honourable senators should be aware of these concerns and know that we will keep an eye on the situation.

Typically, the Auditor General of Canada is invited when he or she issues a report. The AG appeared before the committee and also expressed concern about assistance for injured and medically released members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Both the Public Service Commission and the Auditor General expressed concern that injured and medically released Armed Forces personnel are not receiving the special consideration that parliamentarians requested be given to them. It is another situation that we will watch. The Auditor General informed the committee that the program designed to help such Armed Forces personnel is far too complex and that the process is long and difficult, so many of them fall by the wayside.

The Auditor General expressed another concern that is also of interest to the committee: The Department of Finance is not publishing its analyses of the long-term impacts of government economic policies. We know that the Department of Finance does that analysis and it would be very helpful to parliamentarians if that work were published. Certainly, it would help honourable senators to understand the fiscal challenges facing the federal government with respect to various policy initiatives.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer was also looking for that information, as honourable senators will recall. He said that the numbers should be released and the Office of the Auditor General said that the information should be released.

The Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions is almost self-sufficient. OSFI regulates banks and credit unions,

sets certain rules and standards that have to be met, and ensures compliance. They spend quite a bit of money, but they receive a lot of money from the agencies that they supervise; and they provide us with that information.

The Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada is an analytical organization separate from the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. FINTRAC receives reports from many financial departments and agencies. The committee was told that FINTRAC looks at 18.5 million reports per year from 32,000 reporting entities. Honourable senators can appreciate the volume of work involved. FINTRAC provides analyses of the reports, which might relate to anything out of the ordinary such as money laundering, to the RCMP. An excellent report was prepared by the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce that expands on the issue of money laundering and the role of FINTRAC, which I would commend to honourable senators; and that involves the Canada Revenue Agency. Under certain protocols, information with respect to money laundering can be provided to foreign entities, as well.

The Commission of the Environment and Sustainable Development remains under the Office of the Auditor General. I have spoken to this matter before. I still think it should be a separate, stand-alone agency. Mr. Scott Vaughan, Commissioner of the CESD, will leave his position two years early. The committee had hoped to hear from him before he left because he indicated that he was not satisfied with the balance between the importance of national resource exploitation to Canadian economic development and measures to protect the environment. He suggested that the environment might be lagging behind. The Senate Finance Committee or another Senate committee may want to look at that issue. Mr. Vaughan indicated that there is still room for improvement in a number of offshore activities and their monitoring.

Honourable senators, Treasury Board Secretariat is the final department that I will speak to. One issue that the committee has been engaged with and concerned about for some time was raised by Treasury Board: the two different methods of government accounting and the confusion it creates. One method is accrual accounting and the other is cash accounting. Confusion arises because an accrual schedule cannot be compared to a cash schedule, realistically. The committee was told that the federal government will come forward with a position at the end of this month as to how that will be rectified. The change will be favourable because financial information received by parliamentarians for oversight will then be meaningful in holding the government to account.

For example, the federal budget and volume I of the Public Accounts of Canada use accrual accounting, while the main estimates, supplementary estimates and volume II of the Public Accounts of Canada use cash accounting. That is the type of confusion that must be rectified.

Honourable senators, what can be gathered from the documents that the committee has looked at over the year? The total estimates for last year were \$259 billion. The actual expenditures against the approved \$259 billion are unknown

until the public accounts are looked at, and they do not come out until six months after the fiscal year end. By that time, we are well into the next fiscal year, which makes it difficult for the committee to draw any conclusions or to provide any advice to the government.

However, looking at the history of what is happening can help the committee to predict. Considering only the main estimates, and not the three supplementary estimates which seem to add about \$7 billion to \$9 billion in fiscal year 2011-12, \$250 billion was requested by government for approval as total authority for various government departments. For 2012-13, the fiscal year that is just ending, the request was \$251.9 billion. That is pretty close; it is a billion-dollar difference. The Main Estimates that we are looking at right now for next year are \$252.4 billion. Therefore, \$250 billion, \$251 billion and \$252 billion are very close in terms of what the government is asking us to approve as maximum expenditure.

• (1510)

Could I have five more minutes?

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: The honourable senator is seeking an extra five minutes. Is it agreed?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Day: Honourable senators, it will not take five minutes for me to finish this analysis, but I thank you for your consideration.

The public accounts will give us the actual amount that was spent. If the government wanted total approval of \$251.9 billion for the year, we do not know until the end of the year, until the summer, when public accounts come out, what actually was spent. However, you can be assured that it will be pretty close to the full amount that was authorized.

Honourable senators, projection of the deficit is something we can look at, and right now many institutions are projecting a deficit of \$26 billion for this particular year. Out of the \$251 billion authorized in the Main Estimates, a deficit of \$26 billion is resulting.

We are being asked to approve expenditures for the coming year of \$251 billion. It is interesting, honourable senators, to look at what the government had predicted last year for a deficit. We know now that the deficit for this year is likely to be \$26 billion, plus or minus, but the government's budget last year predicted that the deficit was going to be only \$21 billion. They were out by 25 per cent, honourable senators, and the reason they were out is that the economic activity had not picked up to the extent that it would reduce the deficit. You can see that the predicted amount and the requested amount of expenditure are the same. If the expenditure is the same, where are you going to get the money to reduce the deficit? Where will you get it, if your expenditures are the same? It will be from taxes, from greater taxes by virtue of greater tax activity.

Let us look at what the budget predicted last year for the fiscal year we are about to begin on April 1. They were predicting that the deficit for 2013-14 would be \$10.2 billion. What does this

budget say about the deficit for fiscal 2013-14? It says it will be \$18.7 billion. Honourable senators, that is a difference of 80 per cent in predicted deficit for this year, and we are not yet into it and we still do not know where all the revenue will come from. This budget is betting on the economy to pick up enough to get us out of the trouble we are in.

That, honourable senators, is the basis upon which we go into the next fiscal year, and that is what we, as a Finance Committee, will be watching as we go through the various steps. The first step will be budget implementation; the next step will be main supply at the end of June, the supply for the rest of the year, and then we can expect two other supplementary estimates. We will be keeping an eye on expenditures. Hopefully, honourable senators, it will be positive news for all of Canada; however, it is very difficult to have a lot of positive feeling from the documents we have seen thus far.

(On motion of Senator Callbeck, debate adjourned.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR MALALA YUSUFZAI AND HER FAMILY— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Ataullahjan, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin:

That the Senate of Canada express its support for Malala Yusufzai in light of her remarkable courage, tenacity and determined support for the right of girls everywhere to an education; offer its best wishes for her full recovery; express its gratitude for the courage of her family and the work of the staff at the Birmingham hospital in the United Kingdom; and offer its solidarity with girls and young women everywhere whose absolute right to equality of opportunity and quality education in every country of the world is and must always be universal and real.

Hon. Yonah Martin: Your Honour, I know this motion is adjourned in Senator Cools' name, but I would like to speak at this time.

Honourable senators, I rise to add my support for the Honourable Senator Salma Ataullahjan's motion that she put forward on December 5, 2012. Senator Ataullahjan was touched by Malala Yusufzai's courage in standing up for her universal right to an education despite Taliban oppression in her home country of Pakistan.

At the age of 11, Malala blogged about her experiences for the BBC under an assumed name. She described hiding books under her clothes to remain unnoticed, and wrote: "I don't mind if I have to sit on the floor at school. All I want is education. And I am afraid of no one."

Tragically, 15-year-old Malala and two of her schoolmates, aged 13 and 16, were attacked by the Taliban on the way to school in October of 2012. Deeply touched by Malala's courage,

and after visiting Malala and her family in the hospital in the U.K., Senator Ataullahjan moved:

That the Senate of Canada express its support for Malala Yusufzai in light of her remarkable courage, tenacity and determined support for the right of girls everywhere to an education; offer its best wishes for her full recovery; express its gratitude for the courage of her family and the work of the staff at the Birmingham hospital in the United Kingdom; and offer its solidarity with girls and young women everywhere whose absolute right to equality of opportunity and quality education in every country of the world is and must always be universal and real.

As an educator who spent 21 years in the classroom, witnessing the power of education in the lives of thousands of students, I wholeheartedly support this motion. I also believe that education is one of the most effective methods of alleviating poverty, as well as addressing other issues and concerns that we have and to effect the kind of change that we need. When girls are educated, economies grow, communities prosper and poverty declines.

Honourable senators, let us unanimously pass this important motion and send a clear message of support to Malala, to girls and young women in Pakistan, in Canada and around the globe.

(On motion of Senator Martin, for Senator Cools, debate adjourned.)

• (1520)

CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Cowan calling the attention of the Senate to the 30th Anniversary of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which has done so much to build pride in our country and our national identity.

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I have spoken to Senator Andreychuk, and she has agreed that I may speak before her and the matter will be adjourned in her name.

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Cowan's inquiry on the thirtieth anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which has, for three decades, promoted and enshrined Canadian values: human dignity, liberty, equality, diversity and compassion.

Before I begin, I would like to thank Senator Cowan for recognizing the importance of celebrating the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and for shedding light on the role that the Charter has played in shaping Canada's identity.

[Translation]

Over the past few months, we have had the opportunity to hear what a number of senators have to say about the impact the charter has had and continues to have on the lives of Canadians.

Canada's identity is defined by a mosaic of language and culture.

With our shared values enshrined in the charter, we are a model of diversity and inclusion for everyone.

In Canada, difference and diversity are strengths, not weaknesses.

We welcome people from all walks of life, regardless of their race, religion or beliefs.

Today, as we celebrate the anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, I would like to draw the attention of my honourable colleagues to the sections of the charter that define Canada as a pluralistic nation and that reinforce the important role that equal opportunity, bilingualism, and multiculturalism play in Canadian society.

I wholeheartedly believe that these sections are the very essence of Canada's identity and they help to define Canada as a tolerant, welcoming and progressive country.

Honourable senators, multiculturalism was established in Canada 41 years ago within the framework of the policy on bilingualism and biculturalism.

In 1982, the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms marked another important step, and I am extremely proud to say that in 1988, by adopting the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, Canada became the first country in the world to pass legislation on national multiculturalism.

These policies not only contribute to preserving culture and language, but they discourage discrimination by helping to promote intercultural understanding.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognizes the importance of preserving and enriching Canada's multicultural heritage.

Section 23 of the Charter guarantees that the rights of minority language communities are protected. I completely agree with that. I believe that this vision will be fully realized when my grandson, who lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, can learn to speak fluently in both official languages or when we get to the point where our culture is such that all children can be part of our bilingual heritage.

[English]

The Charter also protects the rights of Aboriginal people under section 35. This is an area where we all have a lot of work to do to achieve real freedom and equality. Until we truly value the lives of missing Aboriginal women and address the root causes of violence, the rights written in the Charter ring hollow.

The Charter also ensures that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and the benefit of the law without discrimination. It affirms that everyone has the freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association, and it guarantees those rights and freedoms equally to all Canadians.

[Senator Jaffer]

Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms enshrines the equality of women. I remember clearly the three-year period that followed the adoption of the Charter. Many laws that discriminated against women had to be amended. I am proud of the work that many of us did to make sure laws did not discriminate against women.

Today, we have not achieved equality of women in Canada, but the Charter still exists as a tool, a standing commitment that we will continue to strive for equality. On the day when we are truly equal, women will earn equal pay for equal work. We will live in a world that proactively protects women against sexual violence.

To truly embrace the values entrenched in the Charter, we must all work harder to create a culture free of violence against women and children, where my daughter-in-law Shaleena, my daughter Farzana and all our daughters can walk without fear on the streets of Vancouver.

Freedom, equality and peace are among the fundamental principles that frame Canadian ideals. These are the rights guaranteed to each and every Canadian, regardless of their race, origin, colour, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation or disability.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, during one of the speeches marking the proclamation of the Charter, former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau described his vision of Canada this way:

I speak of a Canada where men and women of aboriginal ancestry, of French and British heritage, of the diverse cultures of the world, demonstrate the will to share this land in peace, in justice, and with mutual respect.

I speak of a Canada which is proud of, and strengthened by its essential bilingual destiny, a Canada whose people believe in sharing and in mutual support, and not in building regional barriers.

I speak of a country where every person is free to fulfill himself or herself to the utmost, unhindered by the arbitrary actions of governments.

Honourable senators, I am very pleased today to say that the vision Prime Minister Trudeau had for Canada 30 years ago is now reality.

[English]

Today, more than 6.8 million Canadians speak a mother tongue other than French or English. These Canadians represent over 200 ethnicities, and this number continues to grow.

In fact, according to the 2006 Census, visible minorities are projected to increase from 16.2 per cent to 30 per cent in 2031. Canada's cultural mosaic is renowned the world over. It is something that Canadians can be proud to share.

In 2010, I had the privilege of attending the tenth annual LaFontaine-Baldwin Symposium, which was founded by former

Governor General the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, and which featured His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan.

During his keynote address, His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan delivered an inspiring speech on the topic of pluralism. In his lecture, His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan spoke about the Global Centre for Pluralism, which has been established in partnership with the Government of Canada. He explained that this centre is one of the first institutions dedicated to tackling the questions of diversity and pluralism in our world.

His Highness the Aga Khan went on to explain that Canada is a natural home for this institution, given how Canadians value diversity. He said:

What the Canadian experience suggests to me is that identity itself can be pluralistic. Honouring one's own identity need not mean rejecting others. One can embrace an ethnic or religious heritage, while also sharing a sense of national or regional pride.

• (1530)

[Translation]

The very fact that Canada was chosen to be home to an institution dedicated to building pluralistic, welcoming and tolerant societies says a great deal about Canada and its values.

It also demonstrates that we Canadians have the opportunity to live in a truly multicultural society where people with different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds can coexist in peace and harmony.

Those values were first established by doctrines such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which are the foundation of our country.

[English]

Honourable senators, I am a Shia Ismaili Muslim woman of Indian descent who was born in Africa and educated in Europe. My identity is layered, but ultimately I feel privileged and honoured to identify first as Canadian.

[Translation]

Forty years ago, when my family and I fled from Idi Amin's Uganda to seek refuge elsewhere, we were very lucky to be welcomed by Canada.

My family and I worked hard to make a new life in a new country, learn a new language and adapt to a new climate.

We found it very comforting that it does not matter whether you are black or white, speak English, French, Swahili or Hindi, or practise your faith in a church, mosque or synagogue.

Being different does not hinder in any way one's ability to thrive in Canada.

[English]

Besides the profound sense of belonging that I feel in Canada, I am honoured to serve as the senior senator for British Columbia,

home to one of the most ethnically diverse populations in our country.

Honourable senators, we are all exceptionally fortunate to call Canada our home. However, we must not take this fortune for granted. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms entrenches many fundamental rights, which we have the right to excise and the responsibility to protect. As we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Charter, let us not forget the impact that it has had and that it continues to have on shaping the Canadian identity. Let us remember the role it has played in helping Canada to be recognized as one of the most accepting, diverse and pluralistic nations in the entire world.

Honourable senators, a few weeks ago, Senator Ataullahjan organized a medal ceremony for Zarqa Nawaz, a renowned journalist who wrote the acclaimed CBC television show *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. Ms. Nawaz spoke eloquently of how, as a Canadian, she could write a Muslim sitcom and have Canadians laugh with her rather than at her. I know that senators Marshall, Poirier and Martin, who were also present, will agree that Ms. Nawaz really made us proud to live in a multicultural Canada.

(On motion of Senator Jaffer, for Senator Andreychuk, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

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, April 16, 2013, at 2 p.m.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

(Motion agreed to.)

VOLUNTEERISM IN CANADA

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Mercer, calling the attention of the Senate to Canada's current level of volunteerism, the impact it has on society, and the future of volunteerism in Canada.

Hon. Fernand Robichaud: Honourable senators, I am still doing my research on this inquiry. Volunteers are active in every

community in our region. I move that the debate be adjourned to the next sitting of the Senate for the remainder of my time.

(On motion of Senator Robichaud, debate adjourned.)

[English]

POVERTY

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Robichaud, P.C., calling the attention of the Senate to the issue of poverty in Canada — an issue that is always current and continues to have devastating effects.

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I intend to speak on this inquiry, which is now at day 15, but I have not had an opportunity to prepare my final notes, so I would ask that this matter be adjourned in my name for the balance of my time.

(On motion of Senator Cowan, debate adjourned.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, the Senate has completed the business of the day. Pursuant to rule 16-1(5)(a), the sitting will be suspended until 3:55 p.m. The bells will start ringing at 3:45 p.m. in order for us to be here for 3:55 p.m. to receive His Excellency the Governor General. We will suspend the sitting at this time.

(The Senate adjourned during pleasure.)

[Translation]

• (1600)

ROYAL ASSENT

The Honourable Marshall Rothstein, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, having come and being seated at the foot of the Throne, and the House of Commons having been summoned, and being come with their Speaker, the Honourable the Deputy Governor General was pleased to give the Royal Assent to the following bills:

An Act to amend the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act (Bill C-28, Chapter 1, 2013)

An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada) (Bill C-370, Chapter 2, 2013)

An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (vexatious complainants) (Bill C-293, Chapter 3, 2013)

An Act to assent to alterations in the law touching the Succession to the Throne (Bill C-53, Chapter 6, 2013)

An Act to enhance the financial accountability and transparency of First Nations (Bill C-27, Chapter 7, 2013)

An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Bill C-55, Chapter 8, 2013)

The Honourable Andrew Scheer, Speaker of the House of Commons, then addressed the Honourable the Deputy Governor General as follows:

May it please Your Honour:

The Commons of Canada have voted certain supplies required to enable the Government to defray the expenses of the public service.

In the name of the Commons, I present to Your Honour the following bills:

An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2013 (Bill C-58, Chapter 4, 2013)

An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2014 (Bill C-59, Chapter 5, 2013)

To which bills I humbly request Your Honour's assent.

The Honourable the Deputy Governor General was pleased to give the Royal Assent to the said bills.

The House of Commons withdrew.

The Honourable the Deputy Governor General was pleased to retire.

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

(The Senate adjourned until Tuesday, April 16, 2013, at 2 p.m.)

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