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Wednesday, November 27, 2013

The Honourable NOËL A. KINSELLA
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, November 27, 2013

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

Prayers.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, before beginning with Senators' Statements, I will invite Madame Comeau and her party to come and sit in the Speaker's Gallery here on the left.

[Translation]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE GERALD J. COMEAU, P.C.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-3(1), the Leader of the Government has requested that the time for senators' statements be extended today in order to pay tribute to the Honourable Senator Comeau, who will be retiring on November 30, 2013.

I would remind all honourable senators that, pursuant to our Rules, each senator offering a tribute will be allowed only three minutes and may speak only once.

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I cannot say that I am pleased to rise today to say a few words. On the contrary, I would prefer not to have to make this short speech to mark the retirement of our friend and colleague, the Honourable Senator Gerald Comeau.

Senator Comeau has chosen to retire before the end of his term in order to spend more time with his family. That is a very valid decision that we must not question. We must not question his decision, but we can most certainly lament it because, you will agree, Senator Comeau has made an exceptional contribution to the Senate for the 23 years that he has spent in this institution.

I have known Senator Comeau for a little more than four years. He has been a model for me with his integrity, his determination, his dedication to the institution and his strong work ethic. He has

also made me very aware of the importance of protecting the French language and, above all, how fragile it can be in minority communities and how important it is to fight for French-language rights and especially to see French flourish in Canada as well as in this chamber.

When I was appointed Deputy Leader in the Senate, Senator Comeau was very generous with his advice, his time and his observations. He generously helped and supported me in my new role, and today I cannot thank him enough, from the bottom of my heart.

I have also seen how Senator Comeau operates. He has been very supportive of many senators. He is always available to listen to his colleagues, answer their questions and make suggestions, always with the utmost respect.

Senator Comeau is a smart and caring parliamentarian who has definitely left his mark on the Senate.

He is a very hard worker, a studious man who takes his files seriously, as many of us do. Senator Comeau is a man you could count on; if you asked him to get something done, you knew with complete confidence that he would meet the objectives impeccably.

Senator Comeau is not leaving us this week because he did not like the Senate; quite the contrary. I have always sensed his complete devotion to and boundless respect for our institution. In that regard, he has also been an inspiration to me and to many of our colleagues. He is leaving us in order to spend more quality time with his wife, Aurore. In a way, what he is telling us is, "I love you, Senate, but I love Aurore more." We understand.

• (1340)

Gerald, all I have left to say is thank you for everything you have done for your colleagues in the Senate, for the upper house itself and for Canadians in general. Thank you for making such a wonderful contribution to building a better society.

I hope you enjoy your time with Aurore, and I hope that you miss us here and that you will give us the pleasure of a visit.

I also hope that you use your retirement to overcome your biggest weakness: cigarettes. I hope you quit smoking. I have lost some very dear loved ones to this habit. Gerald, we all want you to remain in good health for as long as possible so that we can continue to go to you for advice. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): In February 2006, I think it was, our respective leaderships decided that Senator Comeau should be the Deputy Leader of the Government and I should be the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. This was brand new territory for me, so I thought the first thing I should do was seek a meeting with Senator Comeau. He graciously accepted to meet with me. We set a time, and I blew it. I missed the meeting.

An Hon. Senator: Oh, oh.

Senator Fraser: I thought, “Oh boy, this is not a good way to begin what has to be a good working relationship.”

When I finally did turn up for the meeting, I was reassured because, although I had never worked with Senator Comeau before on any committee or any such thing, as far as I recall, I was greeted by a man of such grace, such gentlemanly courtesy and such warmth that I knew from that first fouled-up meeting that it would work, and it did.

Gerald Comeau is a man who has always been of unswerving loyalty to his party and his leader. That was evident in everything we ever did together, but he also has unswerving loyalty to Parliament and to this institution. That was also evident in everything we did. He is a man of his word, a man of considerable subtlety when necessary and of frankness when necessary.

[Translation]

He is a proud Acadian, and what always struck me was that as a member of an official language minority community, he was always responsive when I spoke to him about the completely different situation of the anglophone community in Quebec, which has its own problems. I always appreciated how open he was to talking about it.

[English]

He told a journalist the other day that his proudest moment in the Senate was when he had a bill passed to make August 15 National Acadian Day, and it must have been a moment of incredible emotion as well as pride. He is a man who has remained close to his roots. I'm sure that's why he was so interested in fisheries. He was Chair of the Fisheries Committee, both in the other place and here. I remember calling him one day, on behalf of another committee, saying something like, “Do you think we could swap sitting hours?” It was the only time I have ever seen him bristle with some outrage because I was intruding on the sacred territory of the Fisheries Committee. He eventually agreed, but he exacted a high price, as I recall.

It has been a great pleasure, sir, to work with you and to consider you a friend.

It is 29 years since Senator Comeau first came to this place. He has earned the right to leave us so that he can spend time with his lovely wife Aurore, but I still feel a little bit of resentment. You are going too soon. On the other hand, we know he loves gardening.

[Translation]

In *Candide*, Voltaire said that we must cultivate our garden. Senator Comeau will now have all the time in the world to cultivate his garden. I wish him much happiness, in the garden and in everything else that he does.

Thank you for everything you have done with us and for us.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton: Thank you, Your Honour. Honourable senators, I am sure this is a very happy day for Gerald, but it is a very sad day for us. I rise today to pay tribute to our colleague, the Honourable Gerald Comeau, P.C. Senator Comeau has had a very long and distinguished career as an accountant, a university professor and a member of Parliament since 1984, when he was elected as a member of the House of Commons for the riding of South West Nova. Unfortunately, as a result of a Liberal/left campaign of fear and misinformation about the historic Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, he was not successful in the federal election of 1988. Not to be denied the talents he possessed, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney saw to it that less than two years later, in August of 1990, he returned to Parliament as a member of the Senate. Senators Carignan and Fraser have appropriately referenced his tremendous contribution to Parliament.

Honourable senators, my remarks will specifically reference the five years that Gerald Comeau and I were seatmates. When the Conservative Party won the federal general election in January 2006 and formed the government in February, I was humbled and honoured to be named as the Leader of the Government in the Senate. As I contemplated the task before me, a moment of panic set in. My thoughts turned to who I would have as deputy leader. I did not have to think very long about this. The name of Gerald Comeau immediately entered my mind. I consulted the Prime Minister, and he wholeheartedly agreed — a respected parliamentarian, a leading spokesperson for his beloved Acadian community and bilingual, which I was not, with a knowledge of parliamentary rules and procedures that, I must confess, I could not match.

So it came to be that Gerald Comeau served the position of Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate for over five years, from February 2006 until May 2011. We faced a daunting task, outnumbered, as we were, by the official Liberal opposition by three to one, massively outnumbered in all Senate committees, the majority of which were chaired by the opposition Liberals. This imbalance was the reality we lived with and the reality that Gerald lived with for three of the five years that he was Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate. When in that period of time, from February 2006 until January 2009, only two senators

were appointed to our side — Michael Fortier, to give a voice to Montreal in the cabinet, and Senator Bert Brown, elected by the citizens of Alberta — that we managed, as a government, to get legislation through the Senate at all is a testament to Senator Comeau's understanding of our bicameral system of government, to his negotiating skills and, most of all, to his personal style of dedication, commitment and respect for the views of others.

It was not an easy assignment, but at all times he conducted himself in the most exemplary way. All of us, most particularly me, the Prime Minister and all of our colleagues in government can only say thank you, thank you, thank you for a job well done.

Senator Comeau advised the Prime Minister and me in late spring or early summer that it was his intention to take leave of the Senate before the end of 2013.

Honourable senators, the date is upon us, but I think it is important to note that Senator Comeau is leaving this place seven years and two months before the required mandatory retirement date. Of course, I totally understood and respected his decision. Within a few days of his advising me of his decision, I reached out to him again and asked if he would take on another challenge, to step in as the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration. As honourable senators know, Senator Tkachuk had stepped out of the position to deal with a serious medical issue. Honourable senators, a lesser person would have declined, but not Senator Comeau. Into the breach he stepped, and, from that moment until now, he has done one terrific job managing the difficult issues we have faced over the Senate expenses issue.

• (1350)

Honourable senators, as a mark of respect and tribute to Senator Comeau, Prime Minister Stephen Harper recommended him to be a member of the Queen's Privy Council and personally attended the ceremony bestowing this honour upon him on September 19, 2013. Henceforth, he will always be known as the Honourable Gerald Comeau, P.C.

Finally, on a personal note, I shall miss his sense of humour and his jokes. Many times when we were seatmates we would confound our colleagues on both sides by breaking into gales of laughter — I had just been treated to one of Gerald's jokes.

Good luck to you my friend, Gerald. Enjoy your life with your lovely spouse, and best friend, Aurore. We know you are not retiring. We will hear much about you. Sadly, it will not be from your seat here in the Senate.

[Translation]

Hon. Claudette Tardif: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak today in tribute to Senator Gerald J. Comeau.

My dear colleague, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your long and productive parliamentary career. You were elected to the House of Commons in 1984 and appointed to the

Senate on May 30, 1990. During that time, you earned a reputation for being passionately devoted to serving our country.

Our parliamentary institutions are better because of your tremendous contribution and your generosity. The values you worked so hard to impart strengthened democracy in our society.

To borrow a maritime analogy, you are like a lighthouse. Just as lighthouses enable ships to avoid reefs, so your experience, knowledge and wisdom have guided us.

You were the Deputy Leader of the Government from 2006 to 2011. As Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I met with you daily for over four years. I used to joke that I saw Senator Comeau more often every week than I did my husband. New to the position in 2007, I witnessed a senator who was passionate about politics, proud to be a parliamentarian, involved in and loyal to his party and deeply dedicated to the Senate itself, a senator who expressed his ideas on the floor of the Senate earnestly and with conviction. As a rookie, I learned from a skilful and clever politician and I had to be at the top of my game when attempting to persuade him during our negotiations as deputy leaders.

Senator, I know that I learned a lot from you.

Senator Comeau is proud of his Acadian heritage and of the Francophonie. We share an interest in promoting francophone communities across Canada. Senator, we may not always have agreed on how to move our ideas forward, but we have always worked respectfully with each other. Here in the Senate, in the Official Languages Committee and in the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association, I have observed and appreciated your staunch commitment to the French fact. Your commitment to the Francophonie is undeniable.

Senator, you should be proud of everything you have accomplished. I wish you a joyful and well-deserved retirement during which you can spend hours renovating and restoring your seaside home and gardening. I hope you get to spend a lot of quality time with your charming wife, Aurore. Happy retirement, dear colleague.

[English]

Hon. David Tkachuk: “Are you sure you want to do that?” If you know Senator Comeau, you have heard these words. They mean he has just saved you from yourself. I wish I had listened more often.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Tkachuk: Senator Comeau has been our colleague here for 23 years. The first 16 were simply preparation for February 23, 2006, when he became our Senate house leader. These were not normal times. We had formed the government but still had a minority here with 23 Conservative members, 65 opposition members and 5 independents.

[Senator LeBreton]

Bills were raining in from the Commons and Gerald skillfully managed the Senate agenda over the next five years, passing countless bills and almost the whole government agenda. We all watched him move tirelessly around the Senate — we all saw that — from Tardif to Fraser to Cools to LeBreton, back to LeBreton, back to Murray, to McCoy and Rivest, often into the night. The rest of us were too tired to care and we simply prayed for his success.

His skillful work allowed us to complete our legislative agenda under the most difficult circumstances. He did that for three years, until 18 or 19 senators were appointed and then 9 more a short time later. Only then did he allow himself to smile more often, his job became easier, but the rest of us missed the intimacy of our daily contact with him.

Gerald brought class to this place. Don't get me wrong, he was as political as the next senator, but he made his arguments quietly and without bombast, and they were effective. Let me quote from one of his speeches:

Partisanship is a fact of life in Parliament, but I sincerely believe that Senator Chaput does not bend to any political agenda. She would never profit from her position or dedicate her efforts to benefit a political agenda.

That was nice guy Senator Comeau, and then he goes on:

In fact, it is amusing to see her embarrassment when she is sitting next to Senator Mercer as he launches into his partisan rants, which is basically any time he opens his mouth.

He could skewer you, but substance was also a hallmark of his speeches. My favourite one, of course, was the one in the chamber on December 7, 2010, on Bill C-232. He got straight to the heart of the issue. He said:

Bill C-232 proposes to impose, for the first time in Canadian history, individual bilingualism as a prerequisite for serving in a Canadian federal institution. That is very different from requiring federal institutions to provide the Canadian public with services in both official languages, a requirement that stems from our constitutionally-entrenched language rights, from our federal legislation on official languages and from our linguistic policies.

Senator Comeau presented an exquisitely reasoned and effective argument as to why this bill should be rejected. And when he speaks on this subject we would do well to listen. He is an expert on our official languages legislation, having sat on the appropriate committees while a senator here and a member in the other place.

He has been my friend, my colleague and my sounding board on many issues for the last 20 years. On behalf of all your colleagues, Senator Comeau, I want to thank you for your service to our country, to our party and to your beloved Nova Scotia.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. George J. Furey: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about our esteemed colleague Gerald Comeau on the eve of his retirement from the Senate. When speaking on occasions such as this, I am reminded often of Aristophanes, who once quipped, "Quickly, bring me a beaker of wine so I may wet my mind and say something clever." However, I want to assure colleagues that with respect to Senator Comeau I have no need of such a beaker of wine. It is quite easy to say something clever about a senator who has contributed so much to this institution and to our country at large.

I have known Gerald since I came to this place 14 years ago. Although we sit on different sides of the chamber, I have always had the deepest of respect for him. He is not someone who shies away from engaging in debates. Rather, he fiercely defends his views on all matters of policy and legislation. Yet, I have never known him to be vitriolic, nor mean, nor nasty. Rather, I have always known him to be fair, reasonable and respectful of other's views. He is someone for whom loyalty to party and cause is extremely important; however, he has never let loyalty overshadow fairness and honesty. While we sit with different parties, in a sense we are political foes, I have always considered Gerald a friend, one who shares the same goal we all share in this great institution: The betterment of our regions and the betterment of our country.

• (1400)

Gerald was appointed to the Senate in 1990 on the recommendation of then Prime Minister Mulroney. Before that, he served as Member of Parliament for South West Nova from 1984 to 1988. Before coming to politics, he was a well-respected accountant and professor at Université Sainte-Anne. He has served on many committees including as Chair of Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration; member of the Rules Committee; Chair of Fisheries and Oceans; member of Official Languages; and he was former Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate.

I want to especially thank you, Gerald, for taking on the leadership of Internal Economy at a very difficult time for us all in this chamber — a time when, among other things—

[Translation]

We need to be more Catholic than the Pope.

[English]

You have served us briefly, but so well.

Many of you may not know this, but this former accountant, this former professor, this present politician, is also somewhat of an artist. If you've ever had an opportunity to sit by Senator Comeau in committee, you've probably noticed that

while most of us doodle or scribble on our notepads, Gerald creates beautiful sketches. Actually, he's quite an accomplished artist. No doubt once he is unshackled from his burdens of office here, we will be hearing more about "Comeau l'artiste."

Gerald, no one deserves retirement and good health more than you. You have always done the people you represent proud, in particular your beloved Acadian community. You have given much to Parliament in general and to the Senate in particular — an institution that is such an integral part of our Westminster system of government. You have been a great example for all of us.

To your wonderful wife, Aurore, I want to say that all of us here know how difficult politics is on families; but know this, Aurore: Our institution, the Senate of Canada, is a better place for having known Gerald Comeau, for having had him amongst our ranks.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy once said:

Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future.

Gerald, it is far beyond my ability to craft better words to describe how you have always approached your work in the Senate. Thank you for your service to the Senate and to Canada.

[Translation]

Best wishes to both you and Aurore.

Hon. Jean-Claude Rivest: Honourable senators, I would like to say a few words about my very good friend, Gerald Comeau, another one of Mulroney's boys and girls leaving the Senate. There are not very many of us left.

[English]

Of course, with Marjory, Raynell and Janet.

[Translation]

I will always hold fond memories of Gerald because, after all, that is what is important. When I first came here, the Senate was under the distinguished leadership of Noël Kinsella, John Lynch-Staunton and Lowell Murray. At that time, those of us on the backbenches, including Jean-Maurice Simard, Fernand Roberge and I, had the utmost respect for the authority of our caucus leaders.

We have forged a deep friendship since then. I believe it was Claudette Tardif who said that it was important that French Canada have someone who could represent Nova Scotia's

Acadian community, which is different from New Brunswick's Acadian community. It is certainly not the Quebec Francophonie. You brought Nova Scotia's Acadian community and its voice here, Gerald.

We travelled. I would never suggest that Gerald could, at times, have a bad temper. I would say that he had a unique temperament, especially when there were unforeseen circumstances while travelling. I can think of a couple of incidents when we were travelling together. Like everyone, I will remember Gerald Comeau's deep devotion to his region, his province, the Acadian community, the Canadian Francophonie and the fisheries.

Gerald Comeau has done tremendous work in that area, which is so important for his region. Here is to Gerald Comeau, someone we have all deeply admired and loved during his time here.

Hon. Percy Mockler: Honourable senators, it is with great emotion and a little sorrow — not to mention a twinge of regret — that we bid farewell today to one of our own, a great defender of Acadia, Senator Gerald Comeau.

He has been an advisor and mentor to many of us. I have no doubt, Senator Comeau, that your contribution as a parliamentarian has been exemplary. You have always been known for your pride, your honesty and your great tenacity.

On behalf of my colleagues, it is a great honour for me to pay tribute to our dean of Parliament and to thank him on behalf of the Acadian communities of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia for his 28 years of devoted service to our provinces, his region and his country.

As the FCFA often says, you have earned your stripes. Dear friends, with over 28 years as a great parliamentarian there was no way he could not have done so. Our friend Gerald skillfully represented the Acadian community in his province and never hesitated to stand up for minority communities across the country.

As a result, the Fédération canadienne des francophones et acadienne, the FCFA, recently stated that Senator Comeau was one of the main reasons why it felt that the Senate should not be abolished.

[English]

Honourable senators, Senator Comeau is the embodiment of what the Senate stands for and what it means to so many great Canadians and Canadians at large. He is the champion of sober second thought, an advocate for minorities wherever they may be in this great country, and a true and strong representative of his native Nova Scotia and its l'Acadie de la Nouvelle Écosse.

[Senator Furey]

[Translation]

Senator Comeau, for us, your name is and will always be synonymous with friendship and loyalty. You are a trusted advisor and a man of principle, and you have always worked to make your region of La Baie, your province and our country a better place to live, work, raise children and even lend a helping hand to the most vulnerable members of society.

One could say that you earned your spot on the team just like Wayne Gretzky. You always managed to get behind the puck and make plays. Why? In order to achieve your goals and make your mark like that little guy from back home, Sidney Crosby, from Nova Scotia.

We wish you and your wife Aurore a wonderful and well-deserved retirement. Senator Comeau, we thank you for the great contribution you made to the Senate of Canada as a remarkable parliamentarian.

• (1410)

You are our champion. As you requested, we will continue to consult you on important matters affecting Acadia. Thank you, dear friend.

The Hon. the Speaker: The very distinguished member of Her Majesty's Privy Council, the Honourable Senator Gerald Comeau.

[English]

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE HONOURABLE GERALD J. COMEAU, P.C.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau: Honourable senators, I wish to thank all my friends for the kind words.

[Translation]

Thank you, Senator Carignan. Thank you, Senator Fraser. Thank you very much, Senator Tkachuk, Senator Mockler, Senator Furey, Senator Tardif, Senator LeBreton, and of course, my independent friend across the way.

[English]

My decision to retire, I should say right at the outset, was not a sudden decision. Two years ago, I made my decision that it would be this fall that I would leave. After 28 years of travel back and

forth between Meteghan River — we say “Meteghan River” in English; it’s “La Butte” in French. So going from La Butte to “la Colline du Parlement” was a little bit of a distance.

I felt it was time to move on, and I did not want to go after my best-before date. I won't use the analogy to fish.

This spring, I informed the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Government in the Senate that I would be retiring this fall from the Senate — but not from life. A short time later, Senator LeBreton, as she indicated, asked if I would take on one last assignment as Chair of Internal Economy, with the understanding that my retirement date was still on. Marjory readily agreed that the date was still on.

At that time, we decided that we would postpone officially my announcement. I didn't want to appear to be a lame duck, because once you've announced your retirement, then you don't keep the authority that you wish to have. I wasn't going to lie. If I was asked, I was going to confirm. But actually, it was one of the best-kept secrets on the Hill. For those of you who continue on in Internal Economy, please remember that there is such a thing as being able to keep a secret.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

Senator Comeau: I don't want to get too mushy, but I would like to thank the love of my life, my wife of 43 years, Aurore.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Comeau: Aurore has always supported me and encouraged me in all my undertakings. She has been the motivating force in my life since we were both teenagers. She has always inspired me to go beyond my own expectations. As the old saying goes, behind every successful man there is a surprised wife. In this case, she was, in fact, a great motivation.

I want to thank my assistant, Lise Ratté, for 28 years of devoted service to me. The ultimate professional, her capabilities and talents are surpassed only by her wonderful personality.

Thank you, Lise, for always believing in me. We're going to miss you.

So I had two great women in my life. And Claudette, we would meet every day, but . . .

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

Senator Comeau: I also had two great women in my life.

I say this: I've made friends on both sides of this chamber, in both houses of Parliament, and many friends within the Senate administration and staff as well. I treasure these friendships that I've made over the years.

Contrary to what may be said sometimes, you do make friends across the chamber. In fact, those of you who recall the GST period will probably have heard of the fact that many people actually didn't speak to one another for long periods of time afterwards, and some animosities remained for years. In fact, those GST people whom I faced across the aisle at that time I've actually made friends with and kept them as friends over the years. So this can be a place where opposition is accepted.

I would like to thank Gary O'Brien and our highly devoted Senate workforce, which is always on hand to support us and make the Senate function so efficiently.

Thank you, Gary, and please pass on my thanks to everybody. I'm not going to name them all because there are quite a number of services.

One has only to be around when major activities take place on the Hill, such as ceremonial activities in our meeting rooms and the chamber itself, to witness the devotion and dedication of the workforce who work late into the night to prepare the next day's activities. As well, there are people we don't see — the translators, interpreters and so on — who have to work into the wee hours to try to make sense of some of the comments that are made in this place. I congratulate them all. They make us look and sound so good once you actually read it.

I do want to thank my colleagues and their staff for the great support they gave me during my five years as deputy leader. One of the things I always felt was that my back was covered, and for that I do say a special thank you to my side for always covering my back. I never felt that I had to worry about taking the knives out. That, if you are in a leadership position, is absolutely tremendous.

As for senators on the other side, I was always able to depend on their word, so I appreciate that as well.

I want to thank Senator LeBreton for having given me the opportunity to take on some very interesting assignments. When Senator LeBreton first called me up shortly after the election of 2006, she said, "Senator Comeau, I'd like you to come in and serve as my deputy leader." I said, "What? Are you sure?" And she said, "Yes."

As well, I want to thank Senator Fraser and Senator Tardif for the professional and friendly working relationship we were able to establish. We did not always agree, but we were always confident that our agreements would be respected. We were never disagreeable, and that was great.

I want to give special thanks to Prime Minister Harper for always finding time to listen to me when I had to pass on requests and suggestions. I tried not to abuse his availability, but I do appreciate his willingness to listen with an open mind. I believe he is one of the finest persons I've ever had the pleasure to work with. I pass on my thanks to him for his confidence in me over the years.

[Senator Comeau]

Honourable senators, it has been an honour to serve my community, my region and my nation. It has been a pleasure to serve with bright, talented, competent senators from many professional backgrounds, devoted people with very impressive resumé — former premiers, federal and provincial cabinet ministers, scientists, university presidents, medical doctors, ambassadors, lawyers, novelists, accomplished professionals from sports, industry, and the list goes on.

When I first came to the Senate, I was intimidated by the people who were in here. When I walk in, I'm still intimidated by some of the resumé in this place. I say, "What am I doing here?"

Honourable senators, be proud of your accomplishments in life because each and every one of you has had accomplishments in life, and be proud of those resumé. I invite Canadians to look at the impressive resumé of our senators and to see for themselves. I'm quite sure the contributions of people in this chamber would be looked at differently.

[Translation]

My belief in the need for two houses of Parliament is unshakable. A federation as large and diverse as Canada needs a second chamber to reflect on the work of the House of Commons. We need a chamber that considers the interests of small regions with small populations, a chamber that stands up for the interests of minority and under-represented groups. We absolutely must modernize our chamber and bring it into the 21st century. I am convinced that Prime Minister Harper shares this vision, and that is why he tried to convince us, the members of the upper chamber, to support his efforts to achieve this modernization. Even senators who do not support the Prime Minister should be able to support the objective of Senate reform and to make constructive proposals instead of resisting change. There has never been a better time for change. Now is the time.

• (1420)

I also urge honourable senators to review our Rules in order to fully benefit from the talents, experience and motivation of members of our chamber. The quality of debates on bills, studies in committee and reports is unparalleled, and changes to the Rules could further improve the contributions of our senators.

I would ask all of you in this chamber, to continue to be attentive and receptive to the needs of communities to which our support is vital. I wish to speak primarily about official language minority communities. As others have mentioned, Canada has been enriched by linguistic duality, or bilingualism. The historic agreement between francophones and anglophones led to the creation of Canada in 1867. We should not fall into the trap of saying that Quebec is French and the rest of Canada is English, thereby creating the impression that francophones live only in Quebec. There are francophones and also anglophones across the country.

The reality is that there are anglophones and francophones everywhere, and we should be proud of that. Our vision must be that citizens, no matter the language they speak, should feel at home anywhere in Canada. I believe that this objective can be attained.

If you are approached by certain groups, I would ask you to be responsive to their requests and needs. I will mention a number of these groups, as follows: the Société nationale des Acadiens; the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada — and any affiliated groups, such as the affiliated members of francophone minority community newspapers, such as the *Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*. This is a very important newspaper that has existed for nearly a century and continues to serve francophones in Nova Scotia.

Other groups include the Réseau de développement économique, which seeks to create jobs in francophone areas and encourage francophones to remain in their region through employment; and groups representing the interests of anglophone minority communities in Quebec, as mentioned by Senator Fraser, for instance, the Quebec Community Groups Network — I know that Senator Seidman takes a keen interest in these groups and I would encourage her to continue doing so.

These groups are run by volunteers and share our mission to strengthen Canada, the country that we hold so dear to our hearts.

In closing, I wish you all good luck and thank you for your kind cooperation during the 23 years that I spent here in the Senate. My time here affected me deeply, and I have no regrets. I sometimes had misgivings about the time I had to spend away from my family, but my loved ones have always encouraged me, and I am grateful for their support.

Honourable senators, I will not say goodbye, but rather, until we meet again. Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE SASKATCHEWAN BLACK ROD

Hon. Pana Merchant: Honourable senators, I join with others belatedly in extending best wishes to J. Greg Peters on becoming the seventeenth Usher of the Black Rod and our senior parliamentary protocol officer.

I am prompted by his appointment to speak about a relevant event in Saskatchewan regarding the role of the office of Usher of the Black Rod and the symbolism of the physical entity of the Black Rod itself in our constitutional history.

The Saskatchewan government instituted the ceremonial role of the Black Rod to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

On September 23, the Black Rod was unveiled at Government House in Regina by Her Honour the Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. It

was carried on parade in public for the first time a month later at the opening of the Saskatchewan legislature.

Cabinet Secretary Mr. Rick Mantey was appointed Saskatchewan's first Usher of the Black Rod. Saskatchewan became the fifth province, following British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, to officially incorporate the Black Rod into its practices.

The rod's ornate design incorporates Saskatchewan gold and silver, a wheat sheaf, a prairie lily, a bison, feathers, a Metis sash, a 2005 gold sovereign centennial coin, 100 Saskatchewan diamonds marking the one hundredth year of our legislative building, and Duchy of Cornwall wood presented during the visit to our province of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in 2012.

Colleagues are familiar with the history of the Black Rod dating from 1348 and recognize the Black Rod as the royal symbol that is used for the summoning of the members of the House of Commons to attend the Queen or her representative the Governor General in the Senate.

The oldest legislative council in Canada, in Lower Canada, now Quebec, established in 1774, adopted the Black Rod royal symbol and the office of the person to carry that symbol, known today in our Parliament as the Usher of the Black Rod.

In present-day legislative assemblies in Canada, it is the Sergeant-at-Arms who carries the Black Rod on certain ceremonial occasions, rather than the mace, which, when placed in legislative chambers each day, symbolizes the authority of the assembly to conduct public business and indicates that the representatives assembled may proceed with their deliberations.

Both the Black Rod and the Senate mace have deep symbolic meaning for our history of parliamentary representation and our continuing relationship with the Crown.

I am delighted that Saskatchewan has embraced the long history of the Black Rod with incorporation of it into its ceremonial legislative customs and traditions.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Governor General's Literary Award recipients for this year.

The recipients include the following: Geneviève Mativat, *Jeunesse* texte; Teresa Toten, *Children's* text; Isabelle Arsenault, *Jeunesse* illustrations; Matt James, *Children's* illustration; Sophie Voillot, *Traduction*; Donald Winkler, *Translation*; Katherena Vermette, *Poetry*; Fanny Britt, *Théâtre*; Nicolas Billon, *Drama*; Sandra Djwa, *Non-fiction*; Yvon Rivard, *Essais*; Stéphanie Pelletier, *Romans et nouvelles*; and Eleanor Catton, *Fiction*.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I also wish to draw to your attention the presence in our gallery of Marie-France Kenny, president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et Acadienne. She is a guest of the Honourable Senator Mockler.

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

[English]

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Ms. Ayesha Gulalai Wazir and Ms. Maria Toorpakay Wazir, two outstanding sisters from the tribal region of Pakistan who have both made great strides for women and the larger human rights cause. Ayesha is the first and youngest female parliamentarian from her region; while Maria is the number one female squash player in her country. Both have been honoured with the “Voice of Hope” award from the Economic Club of Canada. They are accompanied by Mr. Jonathan Powers, Director of Squash for the Power Squash Academy and the National Squash Academy. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Meredith.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

BELL CANADA PRIVACY POLICY

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, I rise today because I'm very concerned by the new privacy policy of Bell Canada, which will undermine the security of our personal information.

• (1430)

On October 23, Bell Canada issued a press release where they stated the following: Bell “. . . confirmed that its relevant advertising program, set to launch November 16, is designed to

protect the data of individual mobile customers while delivering them the online advertising that's most relevant to them.”

In the same press release, they reveal further:

Bell collects data such as Web sites visited, apps downloaded and search terms, and aggregates the data into broad user group profiles to deliver to customers ads that are most relevant for them.

In sum, under the guise of relevant information, Bell Canada has begun sharing private data and private information from their customers to their advertisers as of November 16. They have begun monitoring, or, more precisely, spying on their customers' habits with respect to website visits, mobile usage, TV watching and phone calling.

There is a trend in Canada and throughout the world, honorable senators, where companies claim that they are only trying to straddle between what is legally permissible and what is reasonably private. However, this is *terra incognita*. Until the government can legislate this unknown element, it is not fair to the consumer to sell his or her personal information.

Media giants such as Google, YouTube and Facebook, for example, have taken over this common space that is free and are extracting from it commercial gain. Google announced a dramatic change in their privacy policy, which will allow them to link personal information to advertisements. In fact, *The Washington Post* recently reported that an outraged Senator Ed Markey sent a letter to the Federal Trade Commission asking the agency to evaluate Google's policy and determine whether it violates an earlier agreement that the firm made with the FTC on privacy issues. And the same thing is unfolding here.

Dr. Michael Geist, a law professor at the University of Ottawa and an expert on online privacy concerns, is shocked by the extent of the “data grab” that Bell is preparing to undertake. In a recent CTV report, Mr. Geist stated:

When you look at the kind of information that they say will now be used . . . Bell is in an almost unique position of having it all.

He went on to say:

It's a level of intrusiveness and monitoring that I think is truly unprecedented in Canada.

Under pressure from consumer groups and concerned citizens, the Privacy Commissioner's Office is launching an investigation into Bell Canada's new privacy agreement. The real issue seems to be that consumers do not have the option to opt out from Bell's ability to collect their personal information.

[The Hon. the Speaker]

The Privacy Commissioner states:

Personal information has been called the oil of the digital economy. As organizations find new ways to profit from personal information, the risks to privacy are growing exponentially.

Therefore, the fundamental question is: What should we permit as a society? Where do we draw the line between what is private information and what can reasonably be shared with the general public as well as advertisers? We, as a society, must address these questions before media companies render it a moot point.

LEGAL AID

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, across the country every day, people are being forced to represent themselves in court because they cannot afford a lawyer nor get civil legal aid. Indeed, access to justice in this country has been termed “abysmal” in a report entitled *Reaching Equal Justice: An Invitation to Envision and Act* by the Access to Justice Committee of the Canadian Bar Association. Dr. Melina Buckley, Chair of the Committee, said in a news release:

Inaccessible justice costs us all, but visits its harshest consequences on the poorest people in our communities.

We cannot shy away from the dramatic level of change required: too many people think that justice in Canada is only for the rich and that our system of justice is broken.

Federal funding for legal aid is decreasing just as demand is going up. The report found that the federal government has reduced its proportionate contributions to both criminal and civil legal aid, from a 50-50 sharing in 1995, to now contributing about 20 to 30 per cent of the cost. Though more money is spent on criminal than civil legal aid in most provinces, direct service expenditures for civil legal aid on Prince Edward Island exceeded expenditures for criminal legal aid.

The Community Legal Information Association in my home province of Prince Edward Island has numbers to demonstrate the need for more comprehensive legal aid. Last year, CLIA fielded more than 3,000 inquiries, by telephone, walk-in and email, and during the course of workshops and presentations. The CLIA website saw more than 20,000 distinct visitors who downloaded more than 45,000 CLIA publications. More than 17,000 hard copies of those same publications were given out. Finally, more than 1,200 people took advantage of the lawyer referral program, where CLIA refers inquiries to a volunteer lawyer. The person then pays a nominal fee of \$25 for a 45-minute interview with the lawyer.

The experience on Prince Edward Island shows that the demand for accessible legal information continues to grow. There are more clients than ever before, and their legal problems are becoming

more complex. It is a fact that many Islanders, and many Canadians, struggle to access justice. People need help to navigate the system, and it is very difficult for them to do so alone.

I urge the federal government to work with the provinces and territories to ensure that no Canadian is denied the justice they deserve due to an inability to pay.

[Translation]

CANADIAN ORGAN DONORS ASSOCIATION

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Honourable senators, today I would like to tell you about the twentieth ceremony of the Canadian Organ Donors Association (CODA), which was held in Sherbrooke on October 25, 2013.

During this very solemn ceremony, the titles of Great Samaritan and posthumous titles of Ambassador of Health were awarded to organ donors from Quebec, in the presence of their families and many invited guests from the public and private sectors.

[English]

More than 1,500 people participated in this event, which is still the only one of its kind both in Canada and in North America. The ceremony was held under the patronage of the Honourable Pierre Duchesne, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec.

[Translation]

One hundred and ninety-nine donors from Quebec, represented by a designated member of their family, received the posthumous title of Ambassador of Health. Sixteen living donors were also honoured. In addition, as part of the ceremony, the donors' names were publicly unveiled on the Donors' Cenotaph, which is located in Jacob-Nicol Park in Sherbrooke.

This event is the affirmation of a society that recognizes and wishes to publicly acknowledge those who have contributed to passing on the most precious legacy of all, that of health and life. The CODA, in cooperation with all of its partners, including Transplant-Québec, Héma-Québec, the Kidney Foundation of Canada and the police forces that have been providing ground transportation for the organ harvesting teams for over 25 years, sincerely hopes that this tribute will help bring comfort to the donors' families and that this exceptional commitment toward our community will continue to grow.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the hard work of the CODA president, Richard Tremblay, an especially generous Quebecer and Canadian. Mr. Tremblay is a retired Sûreté du Québec police officer. He has been serving his community from the very beginning of his career.

[English]

There is no doubt that Mr. Tremblay has played a major role in making Quebecers more aware of the importance of organ donation. Since CODA was established, it has transported more than 8,000 organs and tissues for transplantation, such as hearts, lungs, livers, pancreases, kidneys, and more.

[Translation]

Mr. Tremblay used every forum available to him to raise awareness of organ donation and of giving the gift of life. He has been given several awards for his civic involvement.

Mr. Tremblay's message gives us some food for thought. He said:

Yesterday, they gave life. Today, they live on through those they saved.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LANDS AND RESOURCES DEVOLUTION AGREEMENT

DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement.

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 BILL, NO. 2

SECOND REPORT OF ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON
SUBJECT MATTER TABLED

Hon. Richard Neufeld: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and

[Senator Dagenais]

Natural Resources, which deals with the subject matters of Divisions 7 and 14 of Part 3 of Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to the order of the Senate of November 5, 2013, the report will be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate and the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance is simultaneously authorized to consider the report during its study of the subject matter of all of Bill C-4.

• (1440)

[Translation]

BOARDS OF DIRECTORS MODERNIZATION BILL

FIRST READING

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette introduced Bill S-212, An Act to modernize the composition of the boards of directors of certain corporations, financial institutions and parent Crown corporations, and in particular to ensure the balanced representation of women and men on those boards.

(Bill read first time.)

The Hon. The Speaker: Honourable Senators, when shall this bill be read the second time?

(On motion of Senator Hervieux-Payette, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons).

(Bill read first time.)

The Hon. The Speaker: Honourable Senators, when shall this bill be read the second time?

(On motion of Senator Martin, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

[English]

THE HONOURABLE GERALD J. COMEAU, P.C.

**MOTION TO PLACE INQUIRY ON NOTICE
PAPER FOR LATER THIS DAY ADOPTED**

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rules 5-5(j) and 5-62, I move:

That, notwithstanding rule 5-6(2), the following inquiry be placed on the Notice Paper for later this day:

“By the Honourable Senator Martin: That she will call the attention of the Senate to the career of the Honourable Senator Comeau, P.C., in the Senate and his many contributions in service to Canadians.”; and

That, notwithstanding rule 6-3(1), during proceedings on this inquiry no senator shall speak for more than three minutes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE
TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT AND EVOLVING
POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING
FISHERIES AND OCEANS AND REFER PAPERS
AND EVIDENCE RECEIVED DURING THE
FIRST SESSION OF THE FORTY-FIRST
PARLIAMENT**

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans be authorized to examine and to report on issues relating to the federal government's current and evolving policy framework for managing Canada's fisheries and oceans;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee on this subject during the First Session of the Forty-first Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee report from time to time to the Senate, but no later than June 30, 2015, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

**NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO
STUDY THE REGULATION OF AQUACULTURE,
CURRENT CHALLENGES AND FUTURE
PROSPECTS FOR THE INDUSTRY AND
REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE
RECEIVED DURING FIRST
SESSION OF FORTY-FIRST
PARLIAMENT**

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans be authorized to examine and report on the regulation of aquaculture, current challenges and future prospects for the industry in Canada;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee on this subject during the First Session of the Forty-first Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee report from time to time to the Senate, but no later than June 30, 2015, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

**STUDY ON MANAGEMENT OF GREY SEAL
POPULATION OFF CANADA'S EAST COAST—NOTICE
OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO
REQUEST A GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
SEVENTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
TABLED DURING THE FIRST SESSION OF
THE FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT**

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence, I will move:

That, pursuant to rule 12-24(1), the Senate request a complete and detailed response from the Government to the Seventh Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled: *The Sustainable Management of Grey Seal Populations: A Path Toward the Recovery of Cod and other Groundfish Stocks*, tabled in the Senate on October 23, 2012, during the First Session of the Forty-first Parliament, and adopted on April 24, 2013, with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report, in consultation with the Minister of Health.

STUDY ON LOBSTER FISHERY IN ATLANTIC CANADA
AND QUEBEC—NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE
COMMITTEE TO REQUEST A GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TO THE TENTH REPORT OF
THE COMMITTEE TABLED DURING
THE FIRST SESSION OF THE
FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence, I will move:

That, pursuant to rule 12-24(1), the Senate request a complete and detailed response from the Government to the Tenth Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled: *The Lobster Fishery: Staying on Course*, tabled in the Senate on May 28, 2013, during the First Session of the Forty-first Parliament, and adopted on May 30, 2013, with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report.

QUESTION PERIOD

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

NATIONAL SHIPBUILDING PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Honourable senators, last week, in response to a question I put to the honourable leader opposite, Senator Carignan said:

Senator Mercer wants us to comment on an Auditor General's report that has not been presented or released yet. When this report is published we will be happy to comment on it.

Well, the Auditor General's report has been released, and, as suspected, Mr. Ferguson is warning the federal government that the Royal Canadian Navy may not get either the type or the number of ships it was promised because of the Harper government's lack of leadership.

So now, since the leader has seen the report, could he inform the Senate whether or not the navy can expect some ships any time soon?

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): Thank you for your question. I was expecting you to ask me a question about the Auditor General's report, particularly with respect to building the various ships.

Obviously, as I said earlier, after the Liberal decade of darkness, we have here in this Parliament a government that is committed to providing the men and women serving in the Royal

Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard the equipment they need, while getting the best value for taxpayers' dollars. I indeed read the Auditor General's report and I would like to quote from the report. On page 2 of Chapter 3, the Auditor General's report says and I quote:

The competitive process for selecting two shipyards resulted in a successful and efficient process independent of political influence, consistent with government regulations and policies, and carried out in an open and transparent manner.

Senator Mercer, I am not sure whether you had the opportunity to read this excerpt from the Auditor General's report, but I felt it was important to draw your attention today to this statement by the Auditor General. As you know, we have a long-term approach that will help end the economic boom and bust cycle in the shipbuilding industry by creating 15,000 jobs and generating annual savings of \$2 billion over the next 30 years in Nova Scotia.

[English]

- (1450)

Senator Mercer: Well, it is very interesting that Senator Carignan brings up something that we agree with. We have said the process works. We agreed that when the process was put in place, it removed the political influence, and we've said that. What do you not understand about "yes"?

What I want to know is this: When are you guys going to start taking some of the blame for some of your inactions?

Honourable senators, I was just aboard HMCS *Halifax* on Friday. This is the first frigate in the Canadian navy to be refitted for the new Cyclone helicopter. You remember those, Senator Carignan — the ones that are replacing the Sea Kings. I can see why you might not recall them because we don't see those, either. There are none. There are four sitting in the hangar at CFB Shearwater and no Canadian sailor is allowed to touch them.

The sailors I met with on Friday and last evening don't want to hear any more rhetoric. They want to see action. Like most Canadians, they know that every year things get more expensive by way of inflation, trade, surpluses, deficits, higher interest rates, et cetera.

It seems that this growing-old government does not understand simple math or economics. The longer we wait to start building ships, the more expensive they will become through higher labour and material costs.

Middle-class Canadians have suffered long enough and have not had a decent raise in over 30 years. They and all Canadians really know that something that might have cost 50 cents last year could cost 75 cents this year. Canadians budget for such things when they do their household finances. Why can't the federal government do the same?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Thank you, Senator Mercer. I remind you that we welcome the Auditor General's recommendations and are working to implement them. We are pleased with the successful conclusion of the shipyard selection process and we are pleased that the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy is effective and has been deemed a success.

We welcome the conclusion that we are managing the procurement of military ships in a timely, affordable manner, in order to support the construction industry in the years to come.

[English]

Hon. Jane Cordy: Supplementary, please. I also agree that the process was excellent for determining who would win the shipbuilding contract. That's why Nova Scotians were so excited about the shipbuilding. This is going to create jobs, not just for Nova Scotians — not just for those in Halifax — but indeed for all Atlantic Canadians, many of whom are currently travelling to Alberta and Saskatchewan to get jobs. So the opportunity to have good-paying jobs by staying in Nova Scotia was welcomed throughout the whole region.

But we did learn from this report that the government's own projections show that not enough money was budgeted for this shipbuilding project. This was not even as a result of the Auditor General's report; these were the government's own projections. So can you tell the Senate chamber how the government plans to overcome the budgetary shortfall?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: I think that you are twisting the Auditor General's words about the second stage, which is the construction and ordering of the various ships that will be required. The Auditor General said:

The competitive process for selecting two shipyards resulted in a successful and efficient process independent of political influence, consistent with government regulations and policies, and carried out in an open and transparent manner.

This long-term approach will help put an end to the boom and bust economic cycle. You mentioned job creation. We are looking at 15,000 jobs and annual savings, as well as revenues of \$2 billion a year for the next 30 years. Yes, we will build these ships, senator.

[English]

Senator Cordy: Senator Mercer, I think Senator Carignan is actually in shock that you and I would compliment the government on the process that went on. Indeed, I've said that the bidding process was successful and done properly. As I said earlier, that's why Nova Scotians were so excited about the shipbuilding contract that Halifax Shipyard received.

But the 15,000 jobs can be created only if the shipbuilding takes place as promised.

Maybe there was something wrong with translation, because my question actually was this: How does this government plan to overcome the budgetary shortfall to ensure that these ships are going to be built?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: I do not know if there is a problem with the translation, with the microphone or the earpiece, but the Auditor General was very clear about the audit stage of the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy. If I tell you that we plan on creating 15,000 jobs and generating savings of \$2 billion a year over the next 30 years, I hope you take that to mean that we will be building ships.

[English]

Senator Cordy: I thank you very much. I am only hoping there are 15,000 jobs. That's what Nova Scotians are counting on, so that the young people in our region do not have to travel to Alberta and Saskatchewan to get jobs. Again, you didn't answer my question.

This government seems to be in the habit of over-announcing, over-promising and under-delivering, and this seems to be what's happening here. Does the government plan to increase the shipbuilding budget, since the government's own projections are showing that there is not enough money to fulfill the obligations as set out by the contract?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: I realize that with that number of jobs, it is actually easier to be congratulated by the Auditor General than by the senators opposite.

I will repeat that it is the government's intention to continue with its National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy. The first stage — selecting the companies that will build the ships — was successful. To date the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy has provided work for more than 75 Canadian companies. I have said this before and I will repeat it: the objective is to create 15,000 jobs and to generate \$2 billion in savings a year over the next 30 years. I can assure you that all Canadians will benefit from this strategy, especially Nova Scotians.

[English]

Senator Cordy: It's a big step between reading a recipe and having a finished cake baked, so we might have the bidding process, which was really good — and again we've said on this side that the bidding process was great, but we need the budgets to build the ships. My question is simply this: Does the government plan to increase the shipbuilding budget? Simple question.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Whenever I have cooked something without following a recipe, I have regretted it. At this time, we are following the recipe and I am convinced that the results will be excellent.

[English]

Hon. Wilfred P. Moore: My question is also for the Leader of the Government in the Senate, and we're looking for \$3 billion. We don't know where that went.

• (1500)

The reports are that the program that Senator Mercer and Senator Cordy asked you about is now \$4 billion over budget. Are you thinking you might find that \$3 billion and apply it against the 4, or are we really out 7? Will we be reducing the number of ships that we're going to build?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Need I remind the chamber that the Auditor General praised the process in his report? You just keep rephrasing the same question, so you will keep getting the same answer.

The important thing here is that we respect the process. The first part of the process has been established. The Auditor General did an audit and we were congratulated on that process. However, I do not want to keep talking about our government's successes because it seems to upset you.

I do not want to upset you with our successes, but we will continue our work with the national shipbuilding strategy. We have made a commitment, after a period of darkness, to give the men and women of this country, particularly those in the navy, the tools they need to carry out their work with dignity.

[English]

Senator Moore: I don't know how much longer you think you can say, "the period of darkness." You've just about worn that out.

You forget to say that the \$46 billion deficit that we inherited just might have caused that period of lack of funding for our armed forces. Do you ever think of that?

Beyond that, somewhere between the procurement process and the budgeting for this project, synchronization doesn't seem to have been there. We are now \$4 billion over, and we haven't cut a

piece of steel. So I'd like to know: Do you propose to put more funding into the program or to reduce the number of ships that we're going to have built?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Senator Moore, I understand that you were part of the period of darkness and that it is hard for you to see the light. However, we have been very clear about our national strategy. We have established a process that was lauded by the Auditor General. We will launch the second phase of the process by ordering and building the ships so that the men and women of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Coast Guard have the equipment they need at the best cost-benefit ratio.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

MARINE HELICOPTERS

Hon. Wilfred P. Moore: The Leader of the Government in the Senate mentioned the helicopters, and we heard Senator Mercer mention it as well. We know that there are four fully equipped Cyclone helicopters sitting in the hangars at the Shearwater base in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Have we officially taken delivery of those aircraft, and, if not, why not?

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): As I have already explained, we will ensure that the contract, as awarded, is honoured and that everything is delivered in compliance with the contract that was originally awarded.

[English]

Senator Moore: It has been years now, and are there deficiencies? Can you provide a list of deficiencies to the chamber so that we'll know what we're talking about and why we don't have that latest equipment for the men and women in service?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: I said this earlier. Our government is committed to ensuring that the Canadian Forces have the maritime helicopters they need, while getting the best value for Canadian taxpayers. The previous Liberal government entered into a contract with a company that still has not provided Canada with the helicopters in accordance with the contract, and the government has not yet decided how best to proceed for the moment.

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

FIRST NATION EDUCATION—CONSULTATION

Hon. Lillian Eva Dyck: My questions are for the Leader of the Government in the Senate, and I'm not going to test your psychic powers to guess what the topic of my question is going to be. It's going to be aboriginal education, and I'm going to ask you four questions.

Last week, the Assembly of First Nations youth held a summit in Saskatoon. It was the First Nations Youth Summit. More than 300 Aboriginal youth attended this event, and, by all accounts, it seemed to be an inspiring and uplifting summit that demonstrated the vast potential of the next generation of Aboriginal leaders in Canada. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development was there, and he delivered a speech to the summit promoting the recently uploaded First Nation Education Act. The Aboriginal youth responded to his speech with harsh criticism and skepticism. They see this education act as paternalistic and told him that his speech to them could not be considered consultation. In response, the minister said the following:

No decision has been made as to whether or not we introduce a bill. We will see what the consultation results in.

While I'm happy to hear this, my question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate is this: What are the most up-to-date plans on the First Nation Education Act? Is the government undertaking real consultation with First Nations leaders and stakeholders, as well as the National Youth Council?

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): As you said, the government is committed to holding consultations for the draft proposals concerning First Nations education. You talked about the summit that the minister attended, after which young Aboriginal students were able to share their point of view. I think this is a very good example of the consultation process that is under way. As for when this bill will be introduced, no final decision has been made as of yet.

[English]

Senator Dyck: Thank you for that answer. The youth did stand up and say very clearly—that this was not consultation. It was a one-way dialogue. It was a speech given by the minister, so I fail to see how that could be consultation. Perhaps you could provide us with a definition of what consultation is according to the government.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Any comments from individuals who wish to express their opinion on the bill are welcome. The draft was made public on October 22, and people who wish to share their point of view are welcome to do so.

[English]

Senator Dyck: On Monday of this week, the Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo wrote a letter to Minister Valcourt stating that the current draft of the First Nation Education legislation is inadequate and unacceptable. In his letter, he outlined five conditions that need to be met before First Nations will be onside or will agree with any legislation on First Nations education.

First, the government must give First Nations control over their children's education.

Second, there must be a guarantee of adequate funding.

Third, there must be a commitment to promote First Nations' languages and education.

Fourth, the government cannot assume it will provide unilateral oversight.

Fifth, there must be meaningful engagement going forward.

• (1510)

My question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate is: Since the minister has already signaled that the draft bill is open to changes, and now this week you said it may not even be tabled, will National Chief Atleo's conditions be incorporated into any new drafts or new versions of the bill?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Senator Dyck, as you know, it is fairly rare for consultations to be held on the draft of a bill. Usually, the bill is introduced and the process begins in Parliament.

I think that it is very open-minded of Minister Valcourt, who made the draft public on October 22, to be willing to listen to any constructive comments and suggestions that are made. In fact, knowing the minister and given our government's policy, I am convinced that all of the constructive comments and suggestions, including those that you expressed here, will be taken into account.

[English]

Senator Dyck: This will be my final supplementary question. Honourable senators, a week ago I was surprised to hear on the CBC news that in the documents that the RCMP have seized,

there was actually reference to the Senate committee reports. In a memo from Nigel Wright and others to the Prime Minister dated March 22, he does talk about First Nation education. I was quite shocked that that was in the report. I'm going to read into the record parts of that memo from March 22 to the Prime Minister. He's talking about the Senate:

What we see is a laissez-faire system that requires constant direction, supervision and follow-up [from PMO] to ensure that Government messaging and direction are followed. This problem is not limited to expense and residency issues. There are Senate committee reports that call on the government to lower airport rents, create a national pharmacare plan, . . .

And this is the important point here:

. . . and invest heavily in Aboriginal education.

Now, almost a year ago, the Aboriginal People's Committee from the Senate released its report on First Nation Education. We had four recommendations. One of them clearly said that we must close the funding gap for First Nations schools on reserve; so my constructive criticism would be: Will you follow those recommendations outlined in that report, particularly with regard to closing the funding gap? That is a constructive criticism. That is a recommendation from our committee's report adopted by the Senate as a whole. Will you take that recommendation to Minister Valcourt and say, "Please, this is a good recommendation. Let's follow it."

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Senator, as you know, once again, we have a very good track record on this issue. We have built and renovated over 260 First Nations schools since 2006. We have made new investments in First Nations elementary and secondary education programs and in the operation, maintenance, repair and construction of First Nations educational institutions.

Minister Valcourt was very clear. He said:

In the best interests of Canadian taxpayers, and particularly in the best interests of First Nations youth, our government will not sink any more money into a system on reserve that continues to fail far too many young people year after year. Many experts, leaders and organizations, including the Auditor General, are calling for a legislative framework. We remain committed to working with First Nations in order to create a legislative framework that will allow them to exercise more control over education on reserves through a system of good governance and accountability.

[English]

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: I listened to the leader carefully, and I want to share something with honourable senators. I am not as conversant on these issues as Senator Dyck, but when the Senate Human Rights Committee was studying the issues of education for people off reserve, we heard from the First Nations University of Canada in Saskatchewan. The president said that their challenge is that Aboriginal people do not have the education

from kindergarten to Grade 12. I'll never forget that. If they're not prepared between K and 12, how do they survive in the community? How are we going to make sure that Aboriginal children have the same education as all Canadians? They deserve the same education from K to 12 as every Canadian. What is this government specifically going to do to help them catch up?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Honourable senators, as I explained to Senator Dyck, I do not want to rehash the government's record on construction or on First Nations education.

I simply wish to remind you that we are currently working on a draft proposal regarding First Nation education. No final decision has been made. We are still in the consultation phase for the draft, and we welcome any constructive comments and suggestions that could improve it.

[English]

Senator Jaffer: Leader, I appreciate your response and what you said to Senator Dyck on education. However, when you were speaking, the thought that went through my head was that I have a grandson who is seven years old and who will get the best education in Vancouver because he happens to live in Vancouver. The same seven-year-old child on a reserve will not get the same education. Are they both not Canadians? How long are we going to consult? When are we going to produce the best education for both children?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: As I explained, Senator Jaffer, we are working to improve education in general and education for First Nations youth as much as possible. That is why we have built more than 260 schools in First Nations communities since 2006. That is also why we have provided new funding for elementary and secondary school programs for First Nations. We have also invested in operations and maintenance, repairs and construction of educational institutions.

[English]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MUSEUMS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING— DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Nicole Eaton moved second reading of Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

[Senator Dyck]

She said: Honourable senators, I'm honoured to rise today to speak to you about Bill C-7, proposed legislation creating the Canadian Museum of History, Canada's newest national museum.

Museums are mirrors of the societies in which they are situated and it bears pointing out that while our society is still a young one, our historical heritage is robust. We are only three years short of Canada's 150th birthday, a time to focus on the people, places and achievements that bring us together as Canadians. It's an occasion to learn and take pride in all that makes Canada unique and an opportunity to explore and celebrate our long and rich Canadian history.

• (1520)

Aboriginal people have continuously inhabited this land for 10,000 years, the Vikings visited our shores more than 1,000 years ago, and successive waves of immigrants endured the harsh environments of this huge land to make this country their home, while helping to build this nation. People continue to choose to make Canada their home. We are a nation of immigrants. Discovery and adventure are in our genes. We have stories to be told and events and people to learn from and to celebrate. These stories tell us who we are and how this country has evolved over time.

Honourable senators, despite the richness of our past, I was surprised and, quite frankly, saddened to learn that 82 per cent of young Canadians could not pass a basic Canadian history exam. Colleagues, I believe that you will agree that this situation must change. I believe equally that the creation of the Canadian museum of history will help us in this endeavour by enabling us to tell our fulsome story sequentially, in a more linear narrative fashion.

It is an opportunity not only to enhance the presence of a great institution in the capital of Canada but also, and perhaps equally important, to support Canadian history museums across the country.

National museums exist in countries all over the world. The U.S. has the Smithsonian, the National Museum of American History, the German Historical Museum and the National Museum of Japanese History, to mention a few.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is a beloved national museum valued by Canadians for its collections, its exhibitions, its expertise and its unique architecture. It is Canada's largest and most popular museum. This is why the Government of Canada recognizes and equally values this museum. It is for exactly this reason that the decision was taken to build on the strengths of this great museum rather than to create a completely new organization.

The museum will continue to exist but with a new name and a clearly focused mandate. There will be no interruption of the corporation's ability to operate and no impact on the status of the employees, officers and trustees. In fact, it is most important to

note that the change from the "Canadian Museum of Civilization" to the "Canadian Museum of History" will not diminish or disturb its operations. These are protected under section 27 of the Museum Act, providing a virtual firewall around the following matters: one, the acquisition, disposal, conservation or use of any museum material relevant to its activities; two, its activities and programs for the public, including exhibitions, displays and publications; and, three, research with respect to these matters previously referenced. I am confident that the management and staff that made the Canadian Museum of Civilization a great museum will make the Canadian museum of history an even greater one.

Nothing in Bill C-7 will interfere with the museum's ability to conduct research. In fact, the museum recently released a joint research strategy for the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Canadian War Museum that will guide research activities over the next 10 years. The strategy defines the important role that the research function plays in the museum, acknowledging it is a core institutional activity.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization has always had an international role as a knowledge-creating institution. This will not change. The museum will continue to conduct scientific research and share its expertise on collection management, research and conservation, both nationally and with other museums around the world.

It will continue to host international travelling exhibitions. In fact, this past October 31, the Canadian Museum of Civilization announced an agreement to host a major exhibition chronicling 5,000 years of Greek history in 2015. On November 12, the museum signed an agreement with its Japanese counterpart, the National Museum of Japanese History. This agreement refers to the pursuit of collaborative research, the exchange of scholars and scholarships, and collaboration relating to exhibitions and educational activities. Like the agreement with Greece, it demonstrates a clear commitment on the part of the future Canadian museum of history to maintain its international and research activities.

In 2012, the Government of Canada announced a significant one-time federal investment of \$25 million that will allow the Canadian Museum of Civilization to undertake the renovation of more than 52,000 square feet — the first major renovation in 25 years. The museum will continue to thrive, to be a national and international destination, but will also focus on its role as a national leader and centre of expertise.

In order to support the government's investment and to ensure that Canadians from all regions have an opportunity to become more familiar with Canada's history, the new museum will sign agreements with other museum across the country to create the Canadian history museum network. The museum will work closely with other Canadian museums to make its national collection available through loans and travelling exhibitions. It will also provide a permanent venue, an additional 7,500 square feet at the new museum, for other Canadian museums to showcase their collections and contribute to the larger national narrative. These partnerships will further a collective telling of

Canadian history, leverage strengths of partners, focus on gaps in the collection and achieve financial benefits through, for example, cost-sharing and joint initiatives.

The museum plans to establish three levels of partnership: a history museum network, a museum affiliate program, and formalized partnerships with federal organizations and other key public and private institutions.

One such partnership was announced this week. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, with funding from Canada's oil sands producers, will be an official partner of the museum and the national presenting sponsor of its 1867 exhibition and related programming. 1867 will be an eye-opening exhibition on the birth of Confederation, to be presented from November 2014 to September 2015 at the Museum of Civilization, soon to be, with your blessing, honourable colleagues, the Canadian museum of history. The petroleum producers' sponsorship will also support the production and distribution of travelling versions of the exhibition, helping the museum engage directly with Canadians as they commemorate this national anniversary in their own communities.

The history museum network will consist of several of the largest museums in the country, museums that have significant capacity and have a mandate to cover the history of Canada. These agreements have already been signed, and discussions are under way with several other museums in the country.

Subject to meeting some criterion standards of care, the network will include smaller museums too, through the museum affiliate program. Comprised of smaller institutions across the country, they too will be able to borrow or cooperate on collection, program and exhibits. They will also be invited to an annual meeting, providing an opportunity to share expertise and ideas that will benefit all involved.

On June 11, 2013, the Minister of Heritage and Official Languages announced a range of measures to promote Canadian history. These measures included money for new heritage minutes, funding to allow more veterans and soldiers to connect with students in their classrooms, and support for museums and youth groups to discover Canadian history in their communities.

Modifications to the Canadian Heritage Museums Assistance Program were also announced. These modifications will assist small history museums that wish to borrow artifacts from the Canadian Museum of History by helping to fund the cost of packaging and safe transportation. The Museum Assistance Program has also been adjusted to eliminate the requirement for exhibits to travel outside of their province or territory of origin.

• (1530)

Why has the government made these changes, honourable colleagues? Because local and provincial history are a very important part of our broader national history.

[Senator Eaton]

The Government of Canada supports heritage institutions and organizations through a range of measures to increase their professional knowledge, skills and practices and to enhance their abilities to preserve and present Canada's heritage and history. This is done so that Canadians will have access to and an enhanced appreciation for our museums' treasures and our collective legacy, not just here in the National Capital Region but across the country.

Since its announcement, this project has received broad-based support from Canadians, including numerous historians and people in historical associations from every corner of the country. While some people do not always agree with our government, they do support the need to create a national infrastructure for the teaching of Canadian history. One such supporter is Douglas Cardinal, the original architect of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and a very well-known and accomplished Canadian. In response to the creation of this museum he said:

I love the fact that the museum keeps evolving and growing, and people still feel that it's a national monument that can expand and serve all of Canada.

This project has the support of two of Canada's award-winning historians. Michael Bliss said it was very exciting that Canada's major museum would now be explicitly focused on Canada's history and he thanked the government for making the museum possible.

Jack Granatstein, who, as many in the other place know, wrote the book *Who Killed Canadian History?* said:

This move (to create the Canadian Museum of National History) is exactly what I thought should happen. I'm delighted the government and the museum are doing it.

Further to this, Deborah Morrison of Canada's National History Society said:

... the potential for the new Museum to help create a national framework for our history is compelling. And the time is right.

John McAvity of the Canadian Museums Association said:

The renaming of the museum is essential, that it is good news and that it will give Canadians greater access to their heritage and history.

The Historica-Dominion Institute said:

We enthusiastically welcome the creation of this new Canadian Museum of History.

John English, a former Liberal member of Parliament and a biographer of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, said:

Congratulations on the Canadian Museum of History.

There is indeed widespread support for this idea, and it is a great boost to the museum. The museum's proposal has also had the support of the former Mayor of Gatineau and the Mayor of Ottawa, Marc Bureau and Jim Watson respectively. They both support this initiative and its importance to the National Capital Region.

Many other historians have added their names to the list of those who support the initiative: Réal Bélanger, Charlotte Gray, Anne Trépanier, Norm Christie, Yves Frenette, Bob Plamondon, Richard Gwyn, Jane Fullerton, Suzanne Sauvage, Brian Lee Crowley and many others.

Again, colleagues, these are people who may not be Conservative politically yet who understand the value of working together and of putting aside partisanship to support the creation of institutions that seek to bind this country together.

The *Toronto Star*, a well-known Conservative paper, said it very well in its editorial on the subject:

It was welcome to hear [the government] announce...the rebranding of the Canadian Museum of Civilization...as the Canadian Museum of History. Canada's history should be celebrated in [this] revamped museum. ...we want to make history come alive, ensure we don't forget our shared past and [that we] honour our heroes.

It is a true statistic, but a sad one, that in only four of Canada's 13 provinces and territories it is necessary for a child to take a history class to graduate from high school. While this reality speaks to an area of provincial jurisdiction, it does not mean we should step away from the importance of it as a national government and a national Parliament.

We can work together and do what we can to talk about Canada's history. Together, we can improve education by supporting our museums, by building a great national museum, by uniting all our museums and working together on this project. In the past, Canada's Parliament has come together. When a former Liberal government decided to build the Canadian War Museum people said it was divisive and a waste of money and we ought not to do it. However, the Liberal government had a vision and said it was the right thing to do. The Canadian War Museum is now one of the best museums in the world, rivaled only by Les Invalides in Paris and the Imperial War Museum in London.

A rich and vibrant Canadian museum of history enables an expression and a reflection on the depth and breadth of that which makes us a great nation. We have a compelling, dynamic

and fascinating story that needs to be shared with all Canadians and indeed the world, through a world-class museum of history, and for this reason I commend this bill to you for passage forthwith. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Joyal, debate adjourned.)

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Carignan, P.C.:

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General of Canada:

To His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Military Merit, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the Senate of Canada in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Honourable senators, I rise today to offer my thoughts on the Conservative government's latest Speech from the Throne.

It is a speech that contained recycled ideas, recycled rhetoric and recycled leadership. While it promises more accountability and effective government, we have recently debated the suspension motion of our colleagues while the Prime Minister would not even answer questions and remained silent about secret deals and backroom politics. While it promises better treatment for veterans, the Conservatives are closing Veterans Affairs offices all across the country in places like Sydney, Nova Scotia, or Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland and Labrador, or Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

While it is filled with pragmatic ideas, many of them have already appeared somewhere in Parliament through private members' bills or various motions.

All of a sudden, the Conservatives care about consumers, yet they were silent when Geoff Regan, MP for Halifax-West, was fighting for better consumer protection for cell phone users. They have been silent when Senator Ringuette has been fighting for better banking practices for Canadians and fairer credit card fees for small businesses. When Liberals tried to advance these initiatives, the reception from the Conservatives was colder than the Arctic.

We do know, however, that Stephen Harper claims to love the Arctic and has a singular obsession for finding Franklin. He has been searching for him for years now, yet he still has not found him.

To quote the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker:

... our Government will continue efforts to solve one of the most enduring mysteries of our past. We will work with renewed determination and an expanded team of partners to discover the fate of Sir John Franklin's lost Arctic expedition.

Honourable senators, while exploration and pride in our past is important, at what cost? We are in the midst of very uncertain economic times, so every dollar counts.

The Conservatives keep searching for Franklin while young Canadians are searching for jobs and trying to pay off their student loans. The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while universities are trying to lower tuitions and keep their buildings open. The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while provinces are struggling to balance their budgets because the conservatives are cutting transfer payments for health care and social services.

The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while at the same time attacking the rights of workers to negotiate for fair pay and fair working conditions. The Conservatives are searching for Franklin, and yet they are reducing federal support for affordable housing for the most vulnerable of Canadians. The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while also dramatically underfunding First Nations student education.

Honourable senators, the Conservatives are searching for Franklin while we Liberals are being transparent and open and opening up our books so the public can have a look at how we do business.

The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while the Member of Parliament for Peterborough in the other place, the Prime Minister's former parliamentary secretary, has been charged with four counts of breaking election laws. The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while household debt levels are skyrocketing and Canadians are having trouble paying their bills.

• (1540)

The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while costs like post-secondary education or transportation have risen far faster than inflation.

[Senator Mercer]

The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while employment levels continue to be dismal, at best.

The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while they continue to allow our national debt to rise at an unprecedented rate, adding more than \$150 billion in just eight years.

The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while middle-class Canadians have not had a decent raise in 30 years.

The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while seniors are struggling to stay in their homes and keep up with rising costs.

The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while threatening our farmers, our producers, and the security, safety and quality of our food.

Honourable senators, the Conservatives are searching for Franklin while we Liberals continue to fight for Canadian values like multiculturalism and respect for others.

The Conservatives are continuing to search for Franklin while our soldiers in the army are looking for new combat vehicles and better equipment. The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while our sailors in the navy are looking for their new ships and new helicopters to replace the Sea Kings. The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while our pilots in the air force are looking for their new jet fighters. The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while our Arctic Rangers are using rifles almost as old as Franklin.

The Conservatives are searching for Franklin while at the same time discounting the science behind global warming, the very thing that might make it possible to actually find Franklin.

We all know generally where Franklin is, but the Conservatives continue to search for him. Meanwhile, Canadians are left searching for a fair and just society.

Perhaps if the Prime Minister and his Conservatives want to see Franklin, I would suggest that they can tune in to the cartoon on Treehouse TV any day and watch the Canadian-made cartoon called "Franklin and Friends." They will find him there pretty quickly. Perhaps then they can spend more time trying to help Canadians, because Canadians deserve better.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Conservatives should stop looking for Franklin and start looking after Canadians.

Hon. Lillian Eva Dyck: Would the honourable senator take a question?

Senator Mercer: Certainly.

Senator Dyck: This definitely is a centuries' old cold case — looking for Franklin. When I saw that, I was astounded. I thought here we have the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, cold cases of Aboriginal women that go back only three decades, not two or three centuries. Don't you find it shocking that we would spend money to find Franklin but not to find the missing and murdered Aboriginal women?

Senator Mercer: Senator Dyck, I do find it shocking. I find a lot of things shocking about this government. The complete abandonment of the idea of dedicating time, money and energy into the cases of missing Aboriginal women and girls is a crisis for Canadians, and Canadians are starting to pay attention. They are starting to realize that some of our most vulnerable people have been abandoned by this government.

It's important to understand that they're thinking about going off to the Arctic and they haven't outlined how much money this will cost. But they're going to go out and going to find Franklin and they can't find what is causing the missing Aboriginal women and girls. This is disgraceful, and it's a shame that the country has to bear this because of this government's inactions.

(On motion of Senator Andreychuk, debate adjourned.)

NATIONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS DAY BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE

Hon. Nancy Greene Raine moved second reading of Bill S-211, An Act to establish a national day to promote health and fitness for all Canadians.

She said: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak today and to introduce Bill S-211, An Act to establish a national day to promote health and fitness for all Canadians.

I have been in the Senate for five years now, and this legislation, while minor in the big picture, represents something that I have been itching to sink my teeth into. I also believe that it can contribute to one of the most pressing issues facing our country today. I know I do not have to tell you that we are facing seriously rising rates of obesity. We are not alone. Almost every country in the world is seeing a decrease in the physical fitness of their citizens, especially their youth. Lots of studies have been done on the causes. Now I truly believe it is time to stop studying the issue and start taking actions.

Establishing one day a year as national health and fitness day can make a difference, especially if we rally all the many organizations and stakeholders to take action and to use this day, not only to educate the public, but also to celebrate health and fitness. We need to do this where we live and play, where we gather and socialize, and where we can look each eye to eye and say, "We need to change."

Also, why should we not aspire to be the most healthy and fit nation in the world?

Honourable senators, there are many of you in this chamber with more education, more scientific knowledge, and more experience and leadership than I have. I invite you all to contribute to the debate on Bill S-211 and to bring your experience and ideas onto the public record.

Before I go further, please let me pause and give you some background on how Bill S-211 came into being. It goes back to the 2010 Olympics. No, actually, it goes even further, to the days when the bid committee was developing their rationale for hosting the Olympics. I remember much discussion as to why we were going to take on such a challenge. We all fantasized that it could become a catalyst for instilling a new spirit of excellence for Canadians.

If we were going to put on the Olympics, we wanted Canada to have a chance, and a good chance, of performing well. We remembered Montreal and Calgary, where the host organizing committees ran outstanding games, but Canadian athletes were not able to win one single gold medal. So the 2010 Vancouver bid committee said, "Not only will we host an excellent games, but our athletes must be given a chance to win." Own the Podium was born, and you all know the result: Canada won 14 gold medals in Vancouver and Whistler, more than any other nation.

I'm pleased to say that we're still aiming for excellence, and I do believe that this attitude has spilled into other fields. Canadian academics, researchers, innovators and entertainers are also showing they are world class.

Honourable senators, during the lead-up to the Vancouver Olympics, I also remember many conversations with people who wanted these games to be more than just about winning medals. We wanted to spark a real change in how Canadians look at lifestyle decisions around their own personal health and fitness. How could we make our Olympics a real catalyst for change at the personal level?

I know most people never aspire to be an Olympic champion. In fact, I have to admit that I also never considered it until I went to my first Olympics and found myself a rookie at age 16, rooming with Anne Heggveit, and being there when she won the gold medal in slalom. You can imagine the impact it had on me. I was rooming with her.

She shared with me the extra things she did to get her competitive edge: the morning exercise routine, tips on how to concentrate. I saw her up close, and although I was in awe of her, I also saw that she had to wash her socks in the sink at night just like I did.

It was pretty easy for the seed to be planted. If she can do it, I can do it. That's the inspirational power of an Olympic champion, and every champion I have known fully appreciates and enjoys their position as a role model for the next ones to come.

• (1550)

But I digress. I wanted to let you know, honourable senators, that I fully appreciate that most people never get so inspired as I did, but — and this is the magic of the Olympics — people, even couch potatoes, can and do get motivated to set their own personal goals. This is what we used to always come back to in our analysis of whether it would be worth it to host an Olympic games.

Most of us wound up saying that if we could change Canadians' attitudes toward personal health and fitness, then we would really have won the Olympics.

Did we do it? I would argue that we got started, but there is a long, long way to go. None of us foresaw the rapid adoption of technology, especially by young kids, which has somewhat derailed the progress we had hoped for. The year 2010 was only four years ago, yet, back then, having a BlackBerry was a status symbol. I would not have believed it if you had suggested to me then that elementary school kids would have devices that were just as powerful less than four years later, but that's what happens with technology. I sat with an elementary school teacher on the flight to Ottawa this week, and she estimates that by grade 5 over 50 per cent of the kids now have mobile phones. We know that increasing screen time often comes at the expense of active play.

Honourable senators, today, as we head into a new Olympic season, I want to emphasize that we really do have a long way to go in motivating Canadians to take charge of their personal health and fitness. Our rates of inactivity are still rising. We know that the future will be bleak if we cannot reverse this trend. Recent studies confirm what most of us fear — that our generation's children and grandchildren may not live as long as us and that their lives will be much more sedentary. It's not just a question of longevity. That is just a statistic. It is how you live your life, and the next generation risks missing out on many of the wonderful activities that so many of us have enjoyed. Many of them will not have learnt the basic skills needed to enjoy physical recreation. Others will have health conditions that prevent them from playing games or will suffer from chronic diseases that used to be old people's diseases. It is very sad.

The reality is that we can build a health care system, but that is not health. No government or agency can build health. Only individuals, parents and children can create their own health through good nutrition and physical activity. We have a huge task ahead, to educate and motivate people to adopt healthy lifestyles. It is multi-faceted and multi-jurisdictional. I am encouraged that the most recent meetings of federal, provincial and territorial health ministers have recognized the issue and that the ministers have all pledged to work together to find solutions.

Honourable senators, today I want to tell you a bit more about the national health and fitness day legislation. What is it exactly? It is a simple bill naming the first Saturday in June as national health and fitness day. It does not come with any funding, so no one should come looking for grants to do studies or to put on

special events. We are calling on the government just to name one day, the first Saturday in June, as a day dedicated to the promotion of health and fitness for all Canadians.

We chose the date because it comes as the school year is winding down, and we hope that it can be used as a motivation to get people, especially kids, involved in physical activities through the summer months and, of course, to continue through the year.

We want the day to involve everyone, from municipal parks and recreation departments to private fitness and sports clubs to retailers of sports equipment.

I am encouraged that already companies like Canadian Tire are getting involved in promoting active play. I love their commercials. They go right to the heart of what has been happening in our society, to the fact that kids today don't play like their parents did.

Honourable senators, over the past three years, a small group of people have spread the idea of national health and fitness day and have already signed up 68 municipalities to endorse the initiative, some by opening up their recreational facilities to the public free of charge or at a reduced rate, some by organizing special events to promote health and fitness. For example, the 5,000-member Fitness Industry Council of Canada endorsed the day, and several hundred private clubs opened their doors free to non-members.

Last year, I attended Kamloops' National Health and Fitness Day event, and it was an inspiring example of community collaboration in celebration of health and fitness. There was a mass fitness class on a soccer field, with hundreds of participants, lasting an hour and a half, led by the city's most enthusiastic fitness motivators and with all kinds of people taking part, regulars and first-timers.

By reaching out to the community at large and celebrating health and fitness, they were able to engage all demographics, from young children to seniors, to find the fun in fitness and movement.

Honourable senators, our group's short-term goal is to have 300 municipalities join the initiative by next June, and we will challenge each one of them to use their imagination and to harness the energy and spirit of their staff and their local fitness leaders to get things going. We don't want to prescribe what municipalities should do. We want to put in place a mechanism to spread their experiences, to show their successes and to stimulate more and more municipalities to join in the fun.

As I said, the roots of this initiative were planted during the 2010 Olympics, when MP John Weston and I talked of our desire for the Olympics to stimulate change. That September, I introduced an inquiry in the Senate, calling on us to use the

success of Canada's Olympic athletes to motivate kids to become fitter, and many of you spoke on it. I have continued to follow what is happening with regard to the obesity issue. MP Weston pulled together a group of concerned citizens to assist. Over coffee in his office and potlucks at his home, John has picked brains and cross-pollinated people with knowledge, experience and passion to make a difference. This ad hoc advisory group, all volunteering their time and expertise, deserves great credit for the National Health and Fitness Day Bill. Please allow me the pleasure of naming them today because, without their contribution, the initiative would not exist: Pierre Lafontaine, former Olympic swim coach and now head of Canadian Interuniversity Sport; Phil Marsh, Regional Manager for the Running Room; Marilyn McIvor, Public Health nurse and mother of Olympic champion Ashleigh McIvor; C.J. Noble, Executive Director, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association; Chris Jones, Executive Director of Physical and Health Education Canada; Bob Elliott and Steven Trainor of the Sport Matters Group; Christa Costas-Bradstreet of ParticipACTION; Chris Gray with the Heart and Stroke Foundation; Ron Kunstadt, Kunstadt Sports; Robert McClure of the Ottawa Bicycle Club; and Ottawa Councillor Mathieu Fleury.

These are just a few of many, many Canadians who are very concerned about the rising rates of inactivity and obesity in our population. We all know that one of the causes of obesity is a lack of physical activity, especially the kind where you exert yourself to get puffed out and sweaty. This kind of physical activity used to be common in child's play. We can all remember games of tag or just kicking a ball around a field. Running was part of being a child, but not so much anymore.

A few years ago, if you went past an elementary school at recess, you might have seen more kids playing on their Game Boy than actually playing. Thank goodness the schools have recognized the need for active play and are doing their best to get the kids moving.

But as I said earlier, we have a long way to go. Last week, at the American Heart Association's meeting in Dallas, a study was tabled saying that today's children are about 15 per cent less fit than their parents were when they were young. The study is the first to show that kids' cardiovascular fitness has declined around the globe since about 1975. Across nations, endurance has declined consistently by about 5 per cent every decade. In a mile run, kids today are about a minute and a half slower than their peers 30 years ago.

Today's lack of physical activity is compounded by the rise in fast foods and convenience foods that have changed the way many families are eating. Michael Moss's recent book, *Salt Sugar Fat*, is an indictment of the food processing industry, exposing a deliberate design of food products to be addictive, without caring if the product is nutritious.

Honourable senators, we used to eat meat and potatoes, fruit and vegetables, eggs, fish and chicken. We used grains and baked from scratch. Our food came from farms and gardens and our

mother's kitchen, not from factories. This has all changed. Now, it's about convenience and taste, and taste can be the killer. Food manufacturers now know that the right combination of salt, sugar and fat lights up the so-called "bliss point" in brain scans, and when this happens, food designers know they have a winning formula great for profits but nothing to do with nutrition.

My husband Al has a simple rule when it comes to food: If it tastes great, spit it out; it's bad for you.

That's why, honourable senators, we can't just eat a few potato chips. We have to eat the whole bag.

Today, some people will say that only the well-off can afford good food, and there is no doubt that many people can't find the time to cook from scratch. Too busy keeping up on Facebook, I guess.

We need to give our heads a shake and ask where this is all leading. Without a drastic change in our lifestyle of too many calories and not enough exercise, it is easy to foresee a rising burden on our health care system. Canada's Public Health Agency has put a \$7-billion annual price tag on health care for cardiovascular problems and diabetes arising from obesity. Surely we need to be proactive in promoting healthy living and, yes, perhaps even demanding that people take responsibility for becoming fit and active. We all have excuses for why we don't exercise and do indulge in too much food. I don't have time. It's cold outside. I don't have the right gear. I'm too old to do that, et cetera, et cetera. It is just so easy to sit back and watch TV and have another drink or just a little popcorn.

So I challenge all of us to become leaders in a new way of thinking, one that asks: Why can't we become the healthiest and fittest nation on earth?

I believe we will have to start at the beginning with new mothers and healthy babies, then with quality physical activity programs in daycares, preschool and kindergarten and with at least one hour per day of quality physical education in our schools. If we invest soon in early childhood active play, we can save the next generation. We need —

The Hon. the Speaker: Order. Honourable senators, it being four o'clock, pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on November 19, 2013, I declare the Senate continued until Thursday, November 28, 2013, at 1:30 p.m. The Senate so decreed.

(The Senate adjourned until Thursday, November 28, 2013, at 1:30 p.m.)

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