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Wednesday, May 14, 2014

The Honourable NOËL A. KINSELLA
Speaker

CONTENTS

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

Wednesday, May 14, 2014

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

IRAN ACCOUNTABILITY WEEK

Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk: Honourable senators, I rise today in support of Iran Accountability Week and as a participant in the Iranian Political Prisoner Global Advocacy Project. The project is an initiative launched by Canadian Member of Parliament Irwin Cotler and U.S. Senator Mark Kirk. Around the world, parliamentarians are linked with Iranian political prisoners to raise awareness about their plight. In Iran, some 2,600 activists, lawyers, students and journalists remain behind bars for expressing their opinions.

Last May, I rose to draw attention to the plight of Iranian political prisoner Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh. She is a 50-year-old human rights lawyer who dedicated her life to defending the rights of women and mothers, opposition activists and politicians, abused children and children sentenced to death. She was imprisoned in 2011 for “spreading propaganda” and “conspiring to harm state security.”

Last September, I rose to inform this chamber of Ms. Sotoudeh's release. Ms. Sotoudeh herself credited her release to the international advocacy on her behalf but implored that more be done for her fellow Iranians. She said:

I may be free, I may be out of this small prison, but we are all limited and still being circumvented by the big prison, which is the entire country.

This year, I will be raising awareness about the plight of yet another political prisoner. Ms. Bahareh Hedayat is a 32-year-old student, celebrated for her promotion of gender equality and students rights. She is serving a nine-and-a-half-year sentence connected to her participation in the Green Movement protests following Iran's 2009 presidential elections. She has been repeatedly denied medical treatment for gallstones and kidney problems she developed in prison. Authorities reacted to a hunger strike she staged in 2010 by imposing new limits on visits from her husband.

Many common threads connect the stories of Iran's political prisoners, but if any one feature is more overarching and consistent than others, it is the systematic manner in which Iranian authorities seek to break the will of their political opponents.

I am proud to use my freedoms and privileges to speak out on behalf of Ms. Hedayat. I urge all honourable senators to join me in standing with her and with others who have sacrificed their liberties in the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and democracy for their fellow Iranians.

Thank you.

ABDUCTED SCHOOLGIRLS IN NIGERIA

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, today I want to raise my voice to condemn in the strongest possible terms the militant group Boko Haram for its horrific abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls in Nigeria. One cannot imagine the terror these innocent girls are experiencing and the agony of their parents, families and friends. This brutal act has rightly brought international condemnation of this terrorist Islamic organization.

Nearly a month has passed since this crisis of tragic proportions began. We all hope and pray it will be brought to a quick and satisfactory conclusion.

What is more, these abductions strike at the fundamental right of a girl to an education. Although the right to an education for a girl is one that is taken for granted in many parts of the world, it is the reason for which these girls have been terrified. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of extremist Islamic groups that object to this right.

In many countries, particularly poorer ones, education makes a major difference in the lives of women and girls. The World Bank has estimated that an extra year in primary school increases a girl's eventual wage by some 20 per cent. Education enables women to provide better health care and education for their children, participate in the labour market and have a stronger voice in society overall.

I applaud those countries that have provided resources to help the Nigerian government deal with this crisis. The first priority should be to rescue these girls and bring their abductors to justice.

• (1340)

For more than a decade, Boko Haram has caused havoc throughout Nigeria. It has done so through waves of bombings, mass attacks on villages, burnings, killings, assassinations, attacks on police stations, government buildings, and shootouts. All this is in support of its primary efforts to overthrow the Nigerian government and establish a strict Islamic state.

Up until now, most of these atrocities were regarded as part of a local struggle. Now, with these abductions, it has attracted international attention and condemnation. No longer can nations

of the world ignore its lethal and extremist agenda. They must help to end the scope and scale of the brutality and devastation that has inflicted havoc on the Nigerian people.

Honourable senators, the world must send a clear message that situations such as this are never to be tolerated and must never happen again.

[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY OF HONOUR

Hon. Josée Verner: Honourable senators, on Friday, May 9, Canadians across the country came together for the National Day of Honour to commemorate the end of the mission in Afghanistan, which took place from 2002 to 2014.

The day was intended to pay tribute to the fallen soldiers, acknowledge the accomplishments of our soldiers and veterans, and recognize the strength and perseverance of the families who supported them continuously during the 12 years of this dangerous mission.

Today, I want to take this opportunity, as the former Minister of International Cooperation, to also pay tribute to the efforts and professionalism of the employees of the Canadian International Development Agency and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade as they worked on the humanitarian component of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

Like the soldiers, these workers had a colossal task, namely to support the efforts of the international community to stabilize and rebuild a country devastated by several decades of conflict. Throughout this mission, Canadians were informed of the results of our humanitarian involvement, which made it possible, among other things, for young girls to go back to school and for women to become more involved in regional and national decision-making bodies.

Honourable senators, these historic gains for the people of Afghanistan were made possible not only by our massive investments, but also through the efforts of civilian employees deployed in Afghanistan and those who coordinated Canadian aid in Ottawa.

I saw the strength of their commitment to working with the local populations and the non-governmental development assistance organizations, especially during my trips to Afghanistan: one in Kabul in fall 2006, and the other in Kandahar in spring 2007.

Honourable senators, these men and women deserve our gratitude, so I invite you to join me in thanking them sincerely on behalf of all Canadians for promoting Canadian values in their day-to-day actions for the duration of the mission in Afghanistan.

[English]

ERA 21 NETWORKING BREAKFAST FOR YOUNG CANADIANS

Hon. Lillian Eva Dyck: Honourable senators, on Wednesday May 7, I was honoured to host the tenth annual Era 21 Networking Breakfast for Young Canadians at the Parliamentary Restaurant. It being the tenth anniversary of the event, I was happy that the co-founder and the first patron of the Era 21 event, my friend and former colleague the Honourable Vivienne Poy, was able to attend and deliver a fantastic keynote address to the 100 Grade 11 and 12 students from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board who were present.

As honourable senators may know, when Senator Poy left the red chamber in 2012 she asked me to take over as the patron of the event. She was really passionate about the value of bringing high school students to Parliament Hill and creating an event that instills in these students, who are approaching the end of high school, her vision of lifelong learning focused on understanding and accepting your own story and heritage, and also the stories of other cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

During her remarks to the crowd, she shared with us that even as she has retired from the Senate she continues to learn about her own heritage. This sort of learning never stops. We should always push to learn more about ourselves and the increasingly diverse and interconnected world around us.

For our young leaders' panel, I was honoured to have two strong female panellists from very different backgrounds deliver some powerful remarks. The first panellist was Kluane Adamek. Kluane is currently working at the Assembly of First Nations and is the Jane Glassco Northern Fellow at the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation. She has recently been named a Global Shaper — Ottawa Hub as part of the World Economic Forum, and she was also selected as one of 23 "bold visionaries" as part of the 2014 Bold Vision Women's Leadership Conference.

Coming from a mixed Aboriginal and German background, Kluane didn't connect with her Aboriginal ancestry until she was a teenager. She continues to learn as much as possible of her Aboriginal languages, Southern Tutchone and Tlingit. Kluane's story of struggling with coming to grips with her mixed heritage during her teenage years, which is already a time of insecurity for many young adults, was an inspiring story with which many of the students in the room could probably connect.

Our second panellist was King Kimbit. She is a spoken word artist of Vietnamese heritage and is currently studying pure mathematics at Carleton University. King immediately captivated us all with her brutally honest poems. Her inspiration comes from events unfolding around her, and she shared a poem based on the Trayvon Martin shooting in Florida in 2012 and the subsequent trial, to illustrate the darkness of racism and discrimination. Her message was that living in an increasingly diverse community and country, it is important that we possess the ability not to shut down or isolate ourselves when confronted with the negative

prejudice of strangers. Instead, we need to have courage and an openness to try to learn as much as possible from each other, and create a shared understanding of one another.

I want to thank these courageous, strong and remarkable young women.

The annual networking breakfast event is a joint Asian Heritage and Black History Month diversity celebration and could not be possible without the Ottawa Asian Heritage Month Society, the J'Nikira Dinqinesh Education Centre, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and our sponsor, the Royal Bank of Canada.

Additionally, we were graced this year by a wonderful emcee, Puneet Birgi of CPAC. Thanks to CPAC for filming the event for future broadcast. Through CPAC, we will be able to reach out to countless other young people who will be inspired by this year's role models, Kluane Adamek and King Kimbit.

[Translation]

ACADIAN ARTISTS

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: Honourable senators, today I would like to tell you about the success that a number of Acadian artists have been experiencing lately at the regional, national and international levels. Over the past few years, more and more Acadian artists have been getting noticed beyond Acadia and Canada. Most of them are young ambassadors who exude Acadian culture wherever they go. You can be sure that folks at home are all very proud of them.

Just recently, Acadians watched proudly as Caroline Savoie, a young singer-songwriter from Dieppe, charmed all of France on that country's version of *The Voice*, becoming one of 16 finalists. Very few young artists have performed in front of an audience of up to nine million viewers before the age of 20. Despite being eliminated from the competition, Caroline will never forget what a wonderful experience she had.

She will pursue her artistic development in Granby, a place that has welcomed many Acadian and francophone artists, including Lisa LeBlanc of Rosaireville. She won top honours at the Festival international de la chanson de Granby in September 2010, and her career has since taken off. In October 2012, she released her first album to critical and popular acclaim. It sold 80,000 copies, going platinum. She has given over 400 performances across Canada, in Europe and in the United States, been nominated for or won many awards, and more. Lisa radiates the spirit of Acadia around the world.

Another band, the Hay Babies, recently released its first album. The band is made up of three Acadians in their early twenties from three different Acadian communities. They are Vivianne Roy, from Rogersville; Katrine Noël, from Dalhousie; and Julie Aubé, from Memramcook.

[Senator Dyck]

• (1350)

The Hay Babies began by playing local venues and then slowly but surely released an album and began playing festivals in Canada and Europe, sharing their Acadian warmth and culture with everyone. These young Acadian musicians are following in the footsteps of other artists such as 1755, Radio Radio, Natasha St-Pier, Kit Goguen and Zachary Richard.

I would be remiss if I did not point out the importance of the various galas and events, such as the Gala de la chanson de Caraquet, the École nationale de la chanson de Granby's international festival, La Francofête and Accros de la chanson, that provide a venue exclusively for Acadian and francophone artists. Year after year, these events continue to provide an exceptional opportunity for our young artists who are trying to get their break and live their passion for music.

Honourable senators, please join me in congratulating our artists and encouraging them to share the many wonderful facets of Canadian culture with people across the country and throughout the world.

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of The Government): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 27, 2014, at 2 p.m.

[Translation]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

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-23, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts.

(Bill read first time.)

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

[Translation]

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

[English]

CANADA NATIONAL PARKS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Government) introduced Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve of Canada).

(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.)

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, MARCH 11, 2014— REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the Fifty-eighth Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York, New York, United States of America, on March 11, 2014.

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE, AUGUST 28-SEPTEMBER 6, 2013—REPORT TABLED

Hon. David P. Smith: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to the Fifth-ninth Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from August 28 to September 6, 2013.

QUESTION PERIOD

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NIGERIA—CANADIAN AID TO FIND ABDUCTED GIRLS

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, it has now been 29 days since 200 young girls were kidnapped by the Boko Haram group in Nigeria. Three weeks after this horror began, the same terrorist group kidnapped eight other young girls.

“Boko Haram” essentially means “education is forbidden.” This is a group of Islamist extremists who are terrorizing their own country and their own people. I remind honourable senators that this situation is similar to Joseph Kony’s attempts to recruit child soldiers in Uganda. I am sure that you all remember the day when Evelyn Apoko, a survivor of Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army, visited Parliament and received a warm welcome.

These individuals are using terror to instill fear within their communities. However, all across the world, this fear is being transformed into outrage. Our thoughts are with these young girls and their families. We hope they will be freed and that they are safe and sound.

The eyes of the world are on the Nigerian government as it tries to resolve this situation. I congratulate our government for the action it has taken to help the Nigerian government through this crisis, but we must remain vigilant. We must keep in mind that these young girls are not the only ones to suffer this fate, and we must continue working tirelessly to make sure that this kind of situation does not happen again.

Leader, I want to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird, and the Government of Canada, who have offered their assistance to the Nigerian government to help bring home the young girls kidnapped by the Boko Haram group.

I completely agree with the minister, who said that the kidnappings are absolutely abhorrent. Leader, I know that you may not be able to share certain information for security reasons; however, could you tell us more about the assistance that will be offered?

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): Thank you for your question, Senator Jaffer. As you pointed out, I believe you are well aware of our government’s position on this.

The fact that Boko Haram kidnapped these young girls is abhorrent. It was a crime committed against innocent victims. These young girls and their families are in our thoughts during this difficult time.

Canada has offered its assistance to Nigerian authorities in their efforts to find the young school girls who have disappeared. Canadian personnel on the ground are simply there in a liaison and consultation role. As I said earlier in response to another question, Canadian representatives will continue to work with other allies that share our views, including the United States, the United Kingdom and the government of Nigeria.

Boko Haram has been considered a terrorist organization by Canada since 2013, and the group's actions simply strengthen our commitment to fighting terrorism and protecting the rights of women and young girls around the world. That is what our government will continue to do.

• (1400)

Senator Jaffer: Will we provide this support over the long term or was it offered solely for this specific incident in order to help the government of Nigeria rescue these young girls?

Senator Carignan: I do not wish to comment further because of the security issues that you mentioned. However, our Canadian representatives on the ground, together with representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom and the government of Nigeria, are doing everything they can to find the young school girls.

SUDAN—CANADIAN AID TO FIND ABDUCTED GIRLS

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: I have a supplementary question. Canada provided assistance to Sudan to rescue the young girls who were kidnapped by Joseph Kony in Uganda. Is this assistance still in place?

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): I will take this specific question on another subject as notice and get back to you in the next few weeks.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

CANADA-EU COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate, who is aware of my interest in the Canada-Europe free trade agreement, which, as he says, should be signed shortly.

When studying the budget bill, with respect to the inclusion of clauses on trademarks, we questioned a number of people. All the private sector businesses that deal with these issues, as well as SMEs, are worried about the changes made in order to align Canada with European countries. In this case you could explain this to our colleagues a name can be registered without there being any goods or services provided. It could take a long time, up to three years, before these names acquire a monetary value that our Canadian companies will then have to purchase. I would like to know whether that is part of the agreement, because I could find nothing in the agreement on the issue of trademarks.

[Senator Carignan]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): Thank you for your question, Senator. Copyright provisions contained in the agreement take into account the fact that the Copyright Modernization Act of 2012 updated the Canadian regime. That legislation was designed to bring Canada in line with two World Intellectual Property Organization treaties that were adopted in 1996 concerning copyright, interpretations, performances and phonograms.

The agreement reinforces aspects of our copyright regime, including protection and distribution rights and technological protection measures, meaning the technology that applies to copyrighted products. It also covers the protection of rights management information and the responsibility of intermediary suppliers, such as Internet service providers. I hope that response is satisfactory.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: The Copyright Act is a specific piece of legislation; I am talking about the Trade-marks Act. I can give examples: Coca-Cola, Tim Hortons and so on. These are specific names that certain companies use and register so that no other companies can acquire them.

The vast majority of people working in this sector do not object to complying with the Madrid Protocol, which gives access to countries the world over. Generally speaking, small and medium-sized businesses have no interest because of the cost — it is hugely expensive to make these requests — and because we use a common law system, whereas Europe uses civil law.

There is a fundamental problem here in that these measures are working against our companies. The legislation should require that there be activities — a service or a product — when the trademark is registered. The new measure means that the company simply goes to the trademark office, registers a name — Coca-Cola for example — and does not have to produce anything whatsoever for years.

My question is the following and I would like you to pass it on: can you ensure that our small businesses can export to the European market with the same protections as the Americans — who signed on to the Madrid Protocol 20 years ago when it took us 20 years to sign on to it — and at the same time require trademark holders to be already associated with a company that provides services or products that may be available, and not block Canadian companies that wish to use these trademarks from entering the market?

Senator Carignan: As I said, the agreement takes into account the Canadian system updated by the Copyright Modernization Act. As for the rest of the text, its technical details, you will have the opportunity to look at that more closely once the text is published. If you have any more specific questions on the text, I would be pleased to answer those.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: You keep coming back to the issue of copyright when I am talking to you about trademarks. Copyright is one thing. It's when someone produces a work and registers it so that no one else can copy it. We all know about the saga with Cinar and Robinson in Quebec and the scope of the issue. Trademark is something entirely different.

What I am asking you is to understand — because it's in the bill — is that the entire community concerned by this issue is against the fact that Europeans and all those who signed on to the Madrid Protocol are allowed to have access to our system without being required to produce anything, while our companies are required to buy these trademarks when the European company doesn't have to produce anything.

Please ensure that we will not be subjected to such a measure because it is already in a bill. Things absolutely have to change so that when our people register a trademark, they can expect the same level of protection as the Americans. We also have to insist that Europeans use the trademark. The measure that's in the bill now doesn't require anyone to produce any product or deliver any service at all.

Senator Carignan: Senator, I hear what you're saying, but I don't agree with your criticisms of this agreement. This agreement is a major victory for Canada and Canadian businesses. It will result in thousands of new jobs for Canadians and half a billion new clients for Canadian businesses. We should all be celebrating the conclusion of this agreement.

[English]

HEALTH

ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES

Hon. Elizabeth Hubley: Honourable senators, my question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

I would like to follow up on yesterday's line of questions concerning the sale of electronic cigarettes. The question was posed by Senator Callbeck on behalf of a Canadian doctor who was shocked to find that people he thought were smoking in a waiting area of the hospital. I think he found out later they were smoking electronic cigarettes, but his concern grew at that point.

Yesterday, unfortunately, we did not receive an answer when it comes to what your government will do with the growing issue of e-cigarette use in our country.

In 2009, Health Canada asked anyone selling e-cigarettes to stop doing so, but since then, they have done nothing. Today, e-cigarettes are a growing problem in our country. They are trendy and easily purchased by our youth, while at the same time, they are not approved for sale in Canada.

This week, we learned that two Edmonton school boards have banned the use of e-cigarettes after police caught a handful of students with e-cigarettes filled with marijuana oil. As well, the Nova Scotia health minister has said their government will introduce legislation this year to govern the use of e-cigarettes.

So I will ask again: When will your government do the right thing and finally ban or regulate the use of harmful electronic cigarettes?

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): Health Canada has not approved any kind of electronic cigarette that contains nicotine, let alone marijuana.

• (1410)

Our position is completely different from yours and that of your leader, Justin Trudeau. Your leader's lack of judgment is probably contributing to the use of this product. He needs to discourage people from using this product, and he is not going to get young people to stay away from marijuana by making the kinds of comments he makes and showing a lack of judgment.

As for electronic cigarettes, Health Canada has not approved any nicotine-laced electronic cigarettes. The sale of these products is not authorized in Canada, and as there is no scientific evidence to prove that they are effective, Health Canada must continue to discourage Canadians from using them.

[English]

Senator Hubley: I have a supplementary question. When I asked the question, I certainly knew what the answer was going to be. I would like to add that it somewhat trivializes an important issue that is not only facing Canadians but is now endangering our young people. It certainly came as a surprise to me when I learned that a school board had to act to ban electronic cigarettes after some of their students were found to be using them not only in an inappropriate way, but in a way that was probably a surprise to all of us.

To suggest any sort of political motivation here is to, again, belie the fact that we have a problem here and that we do have to find a solution to it. It lies within your government's purview to do that.

Again, I would like to say that certainly electronic cigarettes are growing in popularity and your government has so far done nothing to ban them. Health Canada has not authorized the sale of them; they are still available. Simply advising people not to use them is not working. Some analysts project that e-cigarettes will outsell regular cigarettes within a decade. Your government needs to act now before their use becomes an even greater issue.

My question, again, is simple: What is your government doing to correct this problem, and are you taking it seriously?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: I encourage you to ask your leader, Justin Trudeau, to stop trivializing marijuana use. You could ask yourself what you can do to eradicate this scourge.

As I said, electronic cigarettes are not authorized by Health Canada. Minister Ambrose strongly encourages all Canadians who are trying to quit smoking to consult their doctor to discuss the products available on the market that could help them. I think people agree that quitting smoking is one of the best decisions a

person can make for their health, and our government is committed to supporting Canadians as they do so. I encourage you, once again, to talk to your leader, Justin Trudeau, and ask him to stop trivializing marijuana use.

[English]

Senator Hubley: Honourable senators, that is just not satisfactory. That is not a satisfactory answer to a very important issue that is facing us. I can understand that seniors or people who have been smoking for years are susceptible and they can respond to advertising to give up smoking. We are talking about kids here. We are talking about kids in school. These kids have taken —

Senator LeBreton: Then why does your leader encourage our young people to smoke marijuana?

Senator Munson: Let her answer the question.

Senator Hubley: The problem goes far beyond what the position is of any of our leaders, and that is bringing a political response to an issue that, as a government, you should be responding to.

I don't sense that you have any concern that young people might be doing this. If they are doing it in Edmonton, I know there are a number of very well-known people on your side who will know that they will be doing it in many other parts of the country. I certainly can applaud Nova Scotia, which is bringing in legislation to ban this.

In the meantime, I will again ask you: What are you doing now to ensure that young Canadians will be protected against this — again, another type of drug abuse — and how will your government handle that?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: We continue to speak out against marijuana use, unlike your leader, Justin Trudeau, who invites Canadians to take a page from what is happening in Colorado, which is totally irresponsible. We will continue to speak out, loud and clear, against this kind of behaviour by your leader.

[English]

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): That is a bit rich coming from the government that is commercializing the production of medical marijuana.

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUEST

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

[Senator Carignan]

As you may be aware, colleagues, the CBC had put in an access to information request pertaining to an official visit to Ottawa in September 2011. Two years later, the Privy Council Office provided a bunch of truly heavily redacted answers. For example, one note that was addressed directly to the Prime Minister reads, as provided by the Privy Council Office:

(REDACTED)— .

— that is, the name of the person is redacted —

— will greet (REDACTED) at the airport and you —

— the Prime Minister —

— will greet him at Confederation Square to witness a 19-gun salute and to review the honour guard.

(REDACTED) will lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier . . .

— the note continues, and concludes:

All of the above will be open to the media.

So the media was allowed to be there — the official welcome at the airport, the 19-gun salute and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier — but the Privy Council Office isn't prepared to tell us who "(REDACTED)" is.

Here is your skill-testing question for the day, leader: Who is "(REDACTED)"?

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): As you know, the documents or information are provided in accordance with the law, and it is the public servants who are responsible for handling these access requests and redacting what has to be redacted under the law.

With respect to transparency, we have nothing to learn from your side. Since 2006, our government has made unprecedented improvements to Canadians' ability to access all kinds of information and files held by the government. The Federal Accountability Act of 2006 broadened the scope of the Access to Information Act so that it applies to 250 institutions, including some crown corporations. Our government received more requests under the act than the number of responses given by the previous government. In fact, there were 53,933 requests in 2012-13, which represents an increase of 27 per cent compared to the previous year, or over 10,000 additional requests. The government published a record number of documents — more than six million pages, an increase of almost two million. If you are talking about transparency, the facts and our actions speak for themselves in terms of access to information, and we have nothing to learn from your side.

[English]

Senator Fraser: I'll answer my own question. "(REDACTED)" was the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. David Cameron.

I ask the question not just because it is funny to think that the Privy Council Office is busy trying to hide something that was known to virtually every citizen of Canada at the time, but because this really is symptomatic of what appears to be a truly pervasive attitude in this government.

It is all very well to say that you have published — and I don't have the statistics by heart that you cited, leader — thousands and thousands of pages. Experience shows that significant portions of those pages were redacted, blacked out.

Can you tell me why this government is so resistant to letting the people of Canada know what it's up to and, in particular, how it's spending their money on things like "visits by REDACTED"?

• (1420)

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Senator, coming from you — knowing how familiar you are with the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act and given that you, at times, laud the importance of protecting certain important information — I find it surprising that you are questioning the need or the appropriateness of redacting information. You know full well that this information is controlled and made public by public servants and bureaucrats who must apply the law. There is no political interference of any kind in this type of request for information or in sharing information.

PUBLIC SAFETY

MISSING AND MURDERED ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. It is a follow up to the questions that you were asked yesterday, and the series of repetitive answers that you rattled off. I want to ask about the ongoing requests — not only from senators on this side but also from a great many Canadians, and the Aboriginal population in particular — for an inquiry into the missing Aboriginal women in Canada.

Your response has always been the same: measures are being put in place and so on. However, a fundamental aspect in the disappearance of these women is that it happened in the past. We have a good understanding of what happened in the past in certain Aboriginal communities and what certain Aboriginal peoples went through at school. We are trying to establish a reconciliation process so that these people can have closure.

We need to recognize that as long as there is no commission of inquiry looking into, studying and trying to uncover the truth about the disappearance of these women, there will never be

closure. Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal women, and women across the country have repeatedly asked me about this, but I have never been able to give them a reason, tell them what the situation is, or tell them why. I have never been able to give them an answer that will help these families and communities get closure.

For that to happen, there has to be a starting point. That starting point is what we are asking you for: an inquiry to uncover the truth, to provide a way for these people, these families and all Canadians who believe in human rights to someday get an answer and close the book on this issue.

We are not the only ones asking for this. All Canadians, all Canadian women, and especially Aboriginal women are asking the government to set up an inquiry so that we can find out the truth and start the healing process.

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): Senator, as you probably know, one of our priorities is to get tough on crime, and that includes getting tough on violence against women and girls. We are still the only party that is taking concrete measures to put an end to violence and keep our streets and our communities safe.

Over the years, there have been some 40 studies on missing and murdered Aboriginal women. The time has come to take action, not to keep studying the issue. In Canada's Economic Action Plan 2014, we committed to spending an additional \$25 million over five years on our strategies to tackle this problem. That's \$50 million in total.

We also pledged to spend \$8 million on a national DNA-based missing persons index, and we have passed over 30 bills to make our streets and communities safer.

Senator, I think it's time to take action. That's what we are doing, and I also want to emphasize the fact that, every time there's a crime or someone goes missing, the RCMP investigates. Concrete action is being taken, and that is our priority.

• (1430)

[English]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTH AND POVERTY

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck rose pursuant to notice of February 26, 2014:

That she will call the attention of the Senate to the well-documented connection between health and poverty, and to

the pressing need to alleviate the burden poverty places on our healthcare system and on millions of Canadians.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to an issue that, despite affecting millions of Canadians, continues to be ignored by all levels of government and, far too often, the general public as well. We are all guilty of walking by someone sitting on the street, palm outstretched for any change we might be able to spare. Yet for many of us, the natural reaction is to look away. Honourable senators, to look away and ignore the person is also to ignore the problem. And the problem, poverty, has an impact on this country that goes far beyond what most can comprehend.

It's estimated that 9 per cent, or over 3 million Canadians, are living in poverty every day. In 2012, a record 882,000 Canadians used food banks each month, the highest level of food bank usage ever; in 2011 the number was only slightly lower at 851,014, which is still 26 per cent above the 2008 levels. About 3.1 million households pay more than 30 per cent of their income on housing, making them housing insecure, and 150,000 to 300,000 are visibly homeless, while 450,000 to 900,000 Canadians represent the hidden homeless. Not surprisingly, those numbers are having a dramatic impact on the Canadian economy.

According to Canada Without Poverty, every year poverty costs the Canadian economy between \$72 billion and \$84 billion. That's an astronomical amount of money. To put that into context, that's the equivalent of what the government will spend, according to this year's Main Estimates, on Employment and Social Development, Defence, Health, and Indian Affairs combined. More specifically, the Ontario Association of Food Banks estimates that poverty costs our health care system \$7.6 billion a year; and that is where I want to place my emphasis today: poverty and health. The two, without a doubt, are connected. By fixing one major problem, we can alleviate the pressure it places on the other.

This chamber is no stranger to the crippling effects that poverty has on our economy and the health of Canadian citizens. The Senate has spent a great deal of time and effort examining the issue and has produced some important literature on the topic. The report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*, was heralded by poverty groups across the country. It brought forth sweeping recommendations on how we should handle the issue of poverty, housing and homelessness. I'd like to take some time to remind honourable senators about what that report found when it came to poverty and the impact it has on population health. The report found:

The biggest health problem in Canada is inequality. The overall improvement in our health status masks the grim reality that health inequalities among social classes are growing — as they are in most highly developed countries. In Canada:

- Healthy life expectancy is three to four years less in low-income neighbourhoods than in high-income neighbourhoods.

- The infant mortality rate in low-income neighbourhoods is almost double that in high-income neighbourhoods.
- The average birth weight for babies born in low-income neighbourhoods is one-quarter pound less than for those born in high-income neighbourhoods.

Moreover, according to Dr. Cory Neudorf, Chief Medical Health Officer for Saskatoon, who testified before the committee:

While no one was surprised to learn that health was related to poverty, people were surprised by the extent and persuasiveness of the issue across so many of the conditions. Compared to high-income neighbourhoods, the low-income residents were 1,458% more likely to attempt suicide; over 3,000% were likely to have hepatitis C; and 1,186% were likely to be hospitalized for diabetes.

There are countless studies that back up the findings of *In From the Margins*. The World Health Organization states that poverty creates ill health because it forces people to live in environments that make them sick, without decent shelter, clean water or adequate sanitation.

Barbara Wolfe, Professor of Economics, Public Affairs, and Population Health Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, wrote in her paper on poverty and health that:

There is also empirical evidence of a link between poor health and poverty. . . . For every age group, those with lower incomes tend to report poorer health . . .

The Canadian Medical Association supports the claim made by Ms. Wolfe and many others in their most recent report from July of this year entitled *Health Care in Canada: What makes us sick?* According to that report:

There is overwhelming evidence of the impact of wealth on health. Many studies show that people low on the socio-economic scale are likely to carry a higher burden of just about any disease. Data from a public survey conducted by the CMA in 2012 confirmed these findings: When asked to rate their health, 70% of Canadians earning more than \$60,000 a year described it as excellent or very good. But of those earning \$30,000 a year or less, only 40% said they were in good or excellent health.

The CMA goes on to make 12 recommendations in the report, and the first one is that the federal, provincial and territorial governments give top priority to developing an action plan to eliminate poverty in Canada. In fact, CMA President Anna Reid states, "In a nutshell, we heard that the biggest barrier to good health is poverty." That's an incredible declaration.

The problem is real, honourable senators, and the solution is obvious. If we want our population to become healthier and as a result save billions of dollars in health care spending, reducing poverty is the best way to do it.

Now at the beginning of my speech, I mentioned that more Canadians than ever are turning to food banks every year to feed themselves, a distressing 882,000 per month as of 2012. Food insecurity is a major problem in Canada; however, I don't think we realize the true magnitude of the issue. A study released in July by Valerie Tarasuk of the University of Toronto found that 3.9 million Canadians were affected by food insecurity; that 330,000 households were severely food insecure; and that 3.9 million marks an increase of 450,000 people since the last study was done in 2008. Nova Scotia, Yukon, Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories range from 15 per cent to 17 per cent, while Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan and B.C. vary between 11 per cent and 12 per cent. The lowest was Newfoundland at 10.6 per cent.

Newfoundland is an extremely promising case study. Five years ago, their level was 15 per cent. Now they are the lowest in the country. That decrease is no accident; it goes hand in hand with the province's aggressive anti-poverty strategy that was adopted in 2006. Newfoundland is a perfect example of how a commitment to targeted anti-poverty programs can pay off and show immediate improvements across the province.

The most troubling part about the food insecurity issue here in Canada is that it deeply affects our children. In New Brunswick and my home province of P.E.I., a shocking one in four children were living in a home where their parents had a hard time feeding them. According to Tarasuk, the situation is toxic to human health. She went on to say:

By the time [children are] teenagers and young adults, they're more likely to be diagnosed with a whole range of health problems.

Without a doubt, food insecurity plays a major role in the poverty cycle, particularly when it comes to the health aspect. I believe that putting resources towards alleviating food insecurity across Canada will go a long way to help with the overarching health issues that come hand in hand with poverty.

Honourable senators, I'd like to conclude with a quote from an op-ed piece Senator Eggleton wrote on this topic in June 2011 for *The Hill Times*. Senator Eggleton has done a lot of work on this topic, and I think he sums up the whole issue perfectly. He wrote:

Poverty has many consequences in terms of lives diminished, dreams deferred and potential denied. At least 3.4 million Canadians are living in poverty, that is a tenth of our population suffering from those very consequences. Their lives should not be exacerbated by sickness and disease. The health of our fellow citizens is an issue that should engage us all. And if we are going to reduce the cost of health care, it is an issue that *must* engage us all.

(On motion of Senator Eggleton, debate adjourned.)

(The Senate adjourned until Thursday, May 15, 2014, at 1:30 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, May 14, 2014

	PAGE		PAGE
SENATORS' STATEMENTS		QUESTION PERIOD	
Iran Accountability Week		Foreign Affairs	
Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk	1536	Nigeria—Canadian Aid to Find Abducted Girls.	
Abducted Schoolgirls in Nigeria		Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer	1539
Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck	1536	Hon. Claude Carignan	1539
National Day of Honour		Sudan—Canadian Aid to Find Abducted Girls.	
Hon. Josée Verner	1537	Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer	1540
Era 21 Networking Breakfast for Young Canadians		Hon. Claude Carignan	1540
Hon. Lillian Eva Dyck	1537	International Trade	
Acadian Artists		Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.	
Hon. Rose-May Poirier	1538	Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette	1540
		Hon. Claude Carignan	1540
<hr/>		Health	
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Electronic Cigarettes.	
Adjournment		Hon. Elizabeth Hubley	1541
Notice of Motion.		Hon. Claude Carignan	1541
Hon. Yonah Martin	1538	Hon. Joan Fraser	1542
Canada Elections Act (Bill C-23)		Privy Council Office	
Bill to Amend—First Reading	1538	Access to Information Request.	
Canada National Parks Act (Bill S-5)		Hon. Joan Fraser	1542
Bill to Amend—First Reading.		Hon. Claude Carignan	1542
Hon. Yonah Martin	1539	Public Safety	
Inter-Parliamentary Union		Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls.	
Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of		Hon. Pierrette Ringuette	1543
Women, March 11, 2014—Report Tabled.		Hon. Claude Carignan	1543
Hon. Salma Ataullahjan	1539	<hr/>	
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, August 28-		Health and Poverty	
September 6, 2013—Report Tabled.		Inquiry—Debate Adjourned.	
Hon. David P. Smith	1539	Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck	1543

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