



CANADA

Debates of the Senate

1st SESSION

•

39th PARLIAMENT

•

VOLUME 143

•

NUMBER 38

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 19, 2006



THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER

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

Debates and Publications: Chambers Building, Room 943, Tel. 996-0193

Published by the Senate
Available from PWGSC – Publishing and Depository Services, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5.
Also available on the Internet: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

THE SENATE

Thursday, October 19, 2006

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

THE LATE HONOURABLE MARK LORNE BONNELL

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have received a notice from the Leader of the Opposition, who requests, pursuant to rule 22(10), that the time provided for the consideration of Senators' Statements be extended today for the purpose of paying tribute to the Honourable Lorne Bonnell, whose death occurred on October 9, 2006.

I would remind senators that, pursuant to our rules, each senator will be allowed only three minutes and may speak only once and that the time for tributes shall not exceed 15 minutes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Daniel Hays (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, today we pay tribute to a man we were privileged to have as a friend and colleague, the late Senator Lorne Bonnell, who died last week surrounded by members of his family at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in Charlottetown.

From his humble beginnings in the small rural community of Hopefield, Prince Edward Island, to his career in medicine, provincial politics and the Senate, the Honourable Lorne Bonnell's private, public and professional life was a monument to community service, conscience and social action.

[*English*]

Born in Hopefield, Prince Edward Island, and educated at Dalhousie University, Dr. Lorne Bonnell made a tremendous contribution to the political life of his province, as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island and in the roles of Minister of Health, Minister of Welfare, Minister of Housing and Minister of Tourist Development.

Appointed to the Senate in 1971 by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Lorne Bonnell served this institution with unfailing loyalty and extraordinary dedication for nearly 30 years, chairing various committees such as the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science and the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.

Perhaps his finest quality was his love for and belief in people. He spent his entire life tending to their health, be it as a medical practitioner or as a passionate and eloquent defender of medicare, advocate for seniors' rights and critic of child poverty. Moreover, he was a staunch believer in the perfectibility of human nature

through education, and one of his most lasting and valuable contributions to the deliberations of our chamber, to the future of our country, is surely the report of his Special Senate Committee on Post-Secondary Education.

Senator Bonnell was a good friend to both my father, who served in the Senate with him, and to me, and I was deeply saddened by the news of his death. His integrity, warmth and decency earned him countless friends and admirers, and his passing leaves a void in the hearts of all those who knew and loved him.

We extend our sincere condolences to his family, in particular his children, Mark and Linda, and his four grandchildren and all other members of the family.

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to one of our former colleagues, Senator Mark Lorne Bonnell, who passed away on October 9.

I must tell you, honourable senators, that, on a personal level, when I was appointed to this place in June 1993, I, like many of my colleagues who were appointed around that time, was made to feel most unwelcome by the then Liberal leadership.

Senator Frith used the occasion to question my legitimacy and that of my Conservative colleagues. With his unkind words ringing in my ears, I was approached by Senator Bonnell, welcoming me to the Senate and wishing me well as I embarked on my new career. I was struck at the time by his extreme kindness.

While I did not know Dr. Bonnell until I was appointed to the Senate, I made it my business to inform myself of the background of all my Senate colleagues at the time. I learned that Dr. Bonnell's political career began in 1951, with his election to Prince Edward Island's provincial legislature. Over the next 20 years, he enjoyed considerable electoral success, winning re-election five more times. He held several different provincial government posts, including Minister of Health, Minister of Welfare and Minister of Tourist Development.

In 1971, Dr. Bonnell stepped down from Prince Edward Island's legislative assembly, but his absence from political life did not last long, because in November of that same year, Lorne Bonnell was appointed to the Senate of Canada. As a member of this chamber for the next 27 years, Senator Bonnell represented the people of Prince Edward Island. In particular, he championed P.E.I.'s potato producers and he was a strong advocate for the creation of a fixed link between his province and New Brunswick long before the Confederation Bridge came into being thanks to the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney.

I was impressed by Senator Bonnell's Special Senate Committee on Post-Secondary Education, which in 1997 produced a comprehensive report on the post-secondary education system, including the very first parliamentary review of the student loan system. He was also a member of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, where I had an

opportunity to work with him on reviews of our legislation and on the committee's study on the health of our veterans and servicemen and women.

Although he retired from this place in 1998, Senator Bonnell remained an active figure. In 2001, in recognition of his lifetime of public service, he was awarded an honorary degree from the University of Prince Edward Island.

On behalf of all Conservative senators, I wish to extend our sincere condolences to Senator Bonnell's children and grandchildren, and his many friends and colleagues.

• (1340)

Hon. Lorna Milne: Honourable senators, I have a short, personal anecdote in respect of Senator Bonnell. He was not only a legend in Prince Edward Island, he extended a warm, welcoming hand to me when I first came to the Senate — a brand new senator in this rather strange and rather cold place. We all know how overwhelming this place can be when you first come up, and you are almost immediately drowned in a sea of paper.

I was working through such a sea of paper late one night in my office and not looking forward to a lonely meal in a restaurant when there was a knock on my office door. It was Senators Derek Lewis and Lorne Bonnell, who said that they had seen a light under my door and thought that I might be working all alone, so they invited me to join them for a Chinese meal. I almost trampled them on my way out the door, I was so grateful for the invitation.

That evening, we shared good conversation and a dry sense of humour, which Lorne Bonnell had in great measure. That was the first of a series of weekly get-togethers, mainly with senators from the Atlantic area. I have always appreciated it very much. I always appreciated Senator Bonnell's warmth, humour and his kindness to a brand new senator.

Hon. Wilfred P. Moore: Honourable senators, it is with sadness that I rise to pay tribute to the Honourable Lorne Bonnell, M.D., who passed away on October 9, 2006, in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Dr. Bonnell was born on January 4, 1923, in Hopefield, Prince Edward Island. Educated in medicine at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, it is said that he delivered more than 3,000 babies over the course of his medical career.

First elected to the House of Assembly of Prince Edward Island in 1951, he was returned to office by the wise voters of 4th Kings for the next five elections — a clear indication of just how hard this man worked on behalf of his constituents and the people of his province, and how much he was appreciated. His career in provincial politics was a great success. He served as Minister of Health, Minister of Welfare, Minister of Tourism Development, Minister responsible for Housing and as Liberal House Leader.

Appointed to the Senate on October 15, 1971, by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Senator Bonnell, like his colleagues in that Liberal government, dedicated himself to the

public good. His great respect for the dignity of Canadians and the betterment of their lives would lead him, while Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science, to produce a report in 1981 entitled *Child At Risk*, which is regarded as a blueprint for addressing the issues faced by the youth of our country. His contributions as Chair of the Special Senate Committee on Post-Secondary Education resulted in the release of a report on the education of our youth that brought the importance of this issue to the attention of the government of the day and, on a personal note, inspired much of the work to which I have dedicated myself in this chamber.

It is with such mixed emotions that I stand here today to pay tribute to a man who touched so many lives in such a positive way over his 83 years. I am proud not only to have known the man, but also to have been mentored by him, to have been his colleague and, most important, to have been able to call him a friend. All of this is tempered, of course, by the sadness of his passing. My condolences go to his children, Mark and Linda, and his entire family. As I said on February 17, 1998, upon the occasion of his retirement from this place, "Senator Bonnell has done his Island and Canada proud...We shall miss him."

Hon. Elizabeth Hubley: Honourable senators, I am pleased to join in the tributes to the late Senator Bonnell, a remarkable Islander and a truly great Canadian. For most people in my province, Senator Bonnell was a living legend, having accomplished so much during his lifetime in his chosen profession of medicine and in the realm of politics and government. He was a man of great energy and purpose with a desire to make a difference in the lives of others.

Senator Bonnell was a member of the cabinet of PEI's former Premier Alex B. Campbell at a time when Prince Edward Island was undergoing tumultuous social and economic change. As the then-Minister of Health, he introduced polio vaccination for children and the pasteurization of milk to prevent tuberculosis. He served as Minister of Health, Tourism Development, Welfare, and Minister responsible for Housing during his time in provincial politics.

• (1345)

In 1971, he was appointed by Prime Minister Trudeau to the Senate of Canada. Over his long and distinguished career in the Senate, he was deputy chair of the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, where he fought to secure pensions for the widows of veterans and their families. In addition to other committee work, in 1997 Senator Bonnell also chaired the Special Senate Committee on Post-Secondary Education, an important policy issue that I addressed in my own 2004 inquiry, with the late senator's encouragement.

Honourable senators, the late senator's biographer, Hesta MacDonald, compared her subject to an old horse chestnut: a little hard and imposing on the outside but beautiful and soft on the inside. Senator Bonnell's wisdom, intellect, unique personality and public spirit will be greatly missed. I join with my colleagues in expressing sincere condolences to Mark and Linda and to all family members.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

NOTICE

Hon. Terry Stratton: Honourable senators, earlier today, according to rule 43(3), I submitted written notification to the Clerk of the Senate that I intended to raise a question of privilege later today. Consequently, I hereby give oral notice, according to rule 43(7), that at the completion of the Orders of the Day today, I intend to put before the Senate particulars of what is, I believe, a contempt of Parliament and constitutes an affront to the privileges of every senator and of this place.

At the appropriate time, I will prepare and move a motion referring the matter to the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order.

The Hon. the Speaker: Points of order should be raised following the time provided for Question Period.

Senator Fraser: In reading rule 23, points of order may not be raised during the daily routine of business or the daily Question Period, but we are not into the daily routine of business yet.

The Hon. the Speaker: If the honourable senator will refer to the Order Paper, on page 2, "Daily Routine of Business," No. 1, Senators' Statements. We are under daily routine of business.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING CUTS

Hon. Norman K. Atkins: Honourable senators, we are all aware of the government's spending cuts that were recently announced. Indeed, Minister Flaherty stated that these cuts are in line with the priorities of Canadians. How would he know? Judging by the rapid feedback and outcry, it is clear that there was little or no consultation.

Almost all jobs in this country require literacy, so it stands to reason that increased levels of literacy can ultimately decrease unemployment rates. Higher literacy rates also increase the opportunities open to workers with lower skill levels. It is clear that Canadian adults who are literate are better able to maintain their independence and therefore less likely to rely on social programs.

There are already differences in the availability and quality of literacy programs and services across the country because many are offered at the community level, where financial capacity varies so greatly from one part of Canada to another. That suggests a need for better funding to help overcome that disparity. Cutting literacy programs is, at the very least, short-sighted.

As we all know, tourism is a very important part of our economy in Canada. Cuts to an agency such as the Canadian Tourism Commission, which promotes international tourism including many visitors from the United States, and at a time when the industry is just recovering from the effects of 9/11, will be felt by people dependent on the tourism industry. This combined with cuts to funding for our museums, and the decision

not to proceed with projects such as the Portrait Gallery, lessens our ability to appeal to and attract tourists.

• (1350)

Eliminating programs such as the Court Challenges Program inhibits the ability of minority individuals within Canada who have no other means to make representation to the court on issues that affect them.

Being fiscally responsible should not affect facilities and programs that raise education levels and should not destroy tourism, affect minority rights or affect those who are already at a disadvantage in the employment environment.

Contrary to the government's suggestion otherwise, many of the targeted programs are currently deemed to be very effective and useful. While I recognize that budget cuts are always difficult, are budget cuts that affect the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society prudent, especially at a time when we have a \$13.2 billion surplus? Most Canadian families trim their expenses when their incomes drop. When Canadian families earn more, not only do they try to pay down their debt, but also they usually invest in the future. This type of balanced approach would ensure that we can continue to nurture an even brighter tomorrow.

Honourable senators, I believe we all understand the importance of reducing the debt. However, the government must be careful not to undermine our economic potential and the potential of Canadians by making changes that cut the heart out of social and cultural programs. The unintentional outcome of today's short-term cost savings may, sadly, bring a greater financial burden and a dimmer future for many Canadians.

MINIMUM WAGE

Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein: Honourable senators, yesterday I questioned the wisdom of the Government of Ontario, a region I proudly represent, with its refusal apparently to increase the minimum wage to \$10. Senator Murray, after my statement, questioned whether the federal government had an existing minimum wage standard. To my surprise, and I think to his as well, we discovered that the federal government some years ago had given up the attempt to establish a minimum guideline for wages across Canada.

I went further into this question. I did not mean to single out my own province, but I think this would be of interest to senators who represent all provinces and all regions. I have a short outline of the minimum wages across Canada for adult workers, as of 2004 — and these are the latest statistics I was able to find; I will try to update them if I can. The list is as follows: Alberta, October 1999 to 2004, \$5.90 — again, I repeat, \$5.90; British Columbia, as of November 1, 2001, \$8; Manitoba, April 2004, \$7; New Brunswick, January 2004, \$6.20; Newfoundland, November 2, 2002, \$6; Northwest Territories, December 2003, \$8.25; Nova Scotia, April 2004, \$6.50; Prince Edward Island, January 2004, \$6.50; Quebec, May 2004, \$7.45; Saskatchewan, November 2002, \$6.65; and the Yukon, \$6.20, as of October 1998. We talked about Ontario earlier.

In looking at this, honourable senators — and the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce has examined the question of productivity — I have been able to discern no satisfactory evidence that raising the minimum wage to

\$10 across the country would in any way, shape or form impair either our productivity or our competitiveness. I encourage honourable senators to give consideration to this matter and to urge their provincial governments and the regions they represent to change what I consider to be a very unsatisfactory failure to salute the working poor of this country who are seeking to educate their children and to raise them to be contributing members of this country.

• (1355)

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Before proceeding, I wish to draw to the attention of honourable senators the presence in the gallery of Mr. Vilhjalmur Vilhjalmsón, Mayor of Reykjavik, and His Excellency Markus Antonsson, the Icelandic Ambassador to Canada. They are guests of our colleague, the Honourable Senator Janis Johnson.

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

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SPEAKER AND DELEGATION'S VISIT TO UNITED STATES

REPORT TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report on my trip to Washington in June 2006, with a Senate delegation.

[English]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

2005-06 REPORT TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the annual report for 2005-06 of the Chief Electoral Officer, pursuant to section 72 of the Privacy Act.

QUESTION PERIOD

ENVIRONMENT

REMOVAL OF SUBSTANCES FROM LIST OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES—GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Hon. Tommy Banks: Honourable senators, my question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Today, the government introduced a clean air bill with the inference that it will be the first

clean air act. In fact, the first clean air act was introduced by the government of Mr. Trudeau in 1971 and it, along with other acts, was folded into and streamlined in the context of the present CEPA, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. That act has been subjected to certain challenges, some of which went to the courts.

• (1400)

In its study of CEPA, the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources has been informed by what we regard as expert legal opinion that the court's decision to uphold the provisions of CEPA and the capacity of that act to guard Canada's environment depended, in large degree, upon the fact of the designation of certain substances as toxic.

Honourable senators understand, as do most people familiar with this act, that "toxic" does not mean that it will kill you. Toxic has a clear and well understood scientific meaning. However, it is certainly generally harmful to human life and to other aspects of our ecology.

The proposed legislation, which is called the clean air act, and which, as I will address later, seems to confuse clean air with certain other ecological considerations, has the effect of removing, as set out directly in the proposition, a long list of substances from the list of designated toxic substances that have heretofore existed in CEPA. I am wondering if the removal of substances from the list of toxic substances in CEPA is what the government actually intended to do, and if the government actually believes that in some way that will further the interests of human health and the Canadian ecology?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for his question. As honourable senators know, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Health introduced the proposed clean air act this morning. This is an approach that this government is taking with regard to the environment. In many ways, the environment is very much a health issue.

Before I answer the honourable senator's question specifically, it is important to point out that air quality in Canada has worsened over the past decade. Canada now ranks 27 out of 29 OECD countries for per capita sulphur dioxide emissions, and 26 out of 29 for nitrous oxide emissions. Over half of Canadians live in places where air quality does not meet existing standards. Smog accounts for 60,000 emergency room visits and 17,000 hospital admissions in Ontario alone. Air pollution contributed to a fourfold increase in the incidence of asthma among children over the last 20 years. This is the situation that the government faces as we try to address the issue of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

The first part of the series of announcements that we will be making about the initiatives we will be taking was carried out today by Ministers Ambrose and Clement. I was pleased to see that the Liberal critic in the other place, Mr. Godfrey, indicated they are prepared to send this bill to committee, something which I often interpret as agreement in principle with what has been started.

I wish to put on the record that this is the first government to regulate emissions. We are regulating the auto sector for the first time ever in Canada. We are proposing tougher new regulations

on air pollutants. We are proposing new regulations to deal with hazardous pollutants from consumer products, such as paint, ink and spray cans. We will monitor polluters and fine those who do not meet their targets. We are proposing a solution whereby we would invest the environment fines in a fund to help clean up the environment.

With regard to toxins, as the honourable senator knows, there was recently a long list of toxins categorized by the minister. There is no question that this is a complex issue. Canadians are concerned about the air they breathe, the water they drink and the toxins that are in their foods.

• (1405)

Senator Banks: I apologize for not having made my question clear. If this bill passes in its present form, among the 60 substances that will be removed from the list of toxic substances that until this point have existed in section 1 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act are the following: gaseous ammonia, nitric oxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide.

Does the government believe that the removal of those substances from the list of toxic substances under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act advances the interests of the ecology of Canada? Is that what the government actually believes?

Senator LeBreton: Perhaps I did not make my answer clear enough. The fact is that today we started with the proposed clean air act. In my answer I indicated that this is the first of a series of announcements we will be making over the next few months to deal not only with the quality of our air, but also with the issue of toxins in our food and in the environment, including some of the products the honourable senator listed. I assure the honourable senator that over the next few months the next phases of how we intend to deal with products like this will be announced.

Senator Banks: I thank the leader for that answer. I will be very interested, as will all senators, I am sure, in following the means by which removal of toxics from the list of toxic substances will improve things.

The leader mentioned clean air. As I said earlier, it is my impression, and has been for some time, that this government and its welcome initiatives, as stated, have to a degree confused clean air with greenhouse gas emissions. The two are linked only indirectly.

I am sure the leader knows that the committee of this house I presently have the honour to chair, having succeeded Senator Taylor, who succeeded Senator Hays, has for decades been extremely critical of the lack of progress and action by previous governments in effecting the things that ought to have happened under the CEPA framework legislation. However, with this bill the government seems to be planning to spend the next year determining a framework for regulation of greenhouse gases. CEPA is already a framework for the regulation of greenhouse gases. Following that, the government intends to spend two more years figuring out the specifics of those regulations. They plan to finalize the regulations by 2010, if everything stays on schedule. The government will somehow, by 2020, make those regulations applicable.

[Senator LeBreton]

Does the government believe, with respect to greenhouse gases in particular — not clean air, particulates or smog — that 2020 is the earliest time by which emissions can be controlled?

Senator LeBreton: If the honourable senator looked at the package released this morning and listened to the media conference of Minister Clement and Minister Ambrose, he would certainly not come away with any impression other than we certainly do know the difference between air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

• (1410)

The Alberta government has set 2020 as a target year, and that is a very ambitious date. One of the federal Liberal leadership candidates announced a target of 2050.

Many initiatives have been taken already. The announcement today is an important initiative in a long series of initiatives that the government will be taking. For the first time, this government is serious about addressing all issues with regard to the environment, including air and water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. As I said to the honourable senator, in answer to a question he posed the other day, it is a pity his own government did not listen to him and his committee.

Senator Banks: I agree with the leader's last sentence; it is a pity our government did not do those things. It should have and did not.

Will the Leader of the Government in the Senate confirm that the present government intends not to impose caps on emissions of greenhouse gases prior to the year 2020 and that that is represented in the proposed legislation presently before us, as was said today in the lockup and was said today in the press conference given by the ministers?

Senator LeBreton: I shall seek clarification on that point and provide it in a delayed answer.

TREASURY BOARD TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

MUNICIPAL CONTRACTS

Hon. Daniel Hays (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question to the Leader of the Government today concerns Canada's Strategic Infrastructure Fund.

A controversy has arisen as to whether the President of the Treasury Board is interfering in matters involving funding of a light rail transit system in Ottawa. It is not that that I want to ask about.

I understand there are some 10 projects across Canada of this nature. For instance, among others, there is a \$300-million transit project in Toronto, a \$300-million RAV project in Vancouver and \$108 million in my own province of Alberta for the city of Edmonton. I wonder if I will be reading in papers about the same exchange in terms of what is being characterized here as interference.

I do not think there is a question of the validity of the contract, but certain information is being disclosed. By any measure, the President of the Treasury Board has involved himself in a

municipal issue. We would be very sensitive, in my province, if a federal minister were so much in the news regarding one of our cities.

Can the Leader of the Government advise, with regard to these 10 contracts, if this is the kind of review and involvement in a municipal issue of this nature under this program that we can expect from the President of the Treasury Board?

• (1415)

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for that question. I do not believe the President of the Treasury Board is inserting himself in municipal politics. As to the particular issue here in Ottawa, we have three high-profile people running — the incumbent mayor and two others — and the light rail line has become an issue. There are some questions about the validity of this proposal. Two of the people running against the incumbent have questioned it.

Honourable senators, we are talking about \$200 million of federal money. There is conflicting information about the deadline by which the contract would be required to be signed. I am just going by what I have been reading in the newspaper accounts. Apparently, there was some view it was October 15 when in fact it was December 15.

By the way, the President of the Treasury Board has been supported in his decision by many people polled in Ottawa and by the local newspapers. He simply feels that because there is significant federal money here, this proposal should be ratified by the new city council.

I do not believe that Minister Baird has involved himself in the mayoralty race. He has been on the public record as saying he has taken no position in who he wants to see as mayor.

Senator Hays: I take it this is a matter of interest for the Treasury Board such that if this project was in Calgary, hypothetically, or in Edmonton, he would involve himself in the same way as he has with the City of Ottawa?

Senator LeBreton: The honourable senator said “hypothetically,” and it is hypothetical. I will not answer hypothetical questions. However, this was a unique circumstance in Ottawa whereby the people involved were questioning the decision to go ahead with this rail contract without full explanation to the public. In the interests of fairness, the President of the Treasury Board, when he realized that there was no danger in delaying the delivery of the \$200 million, simply left the matter to be decided by the new council.

Senator Hays: The test is that if it becomes a municipal election issue and people are expressing different views on it, then the President of the Treasury Board will involve himself, if I understand the leader’s answer, in Ottawa, at least. If he would not do the same in Edmonton, the question is not hypothetical. There is a \$108 million Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund program being made available for light rail transit in Edmonton, although there is an existing LRT. If the same issue came up at the municipal level as has come up in Ottawa and Mr. Baird is even-handed in terms of what is under his jurisdiction, namely this program, then he would involve himself as much in Edmonton as he would in Ottawa; is that right?

Senator LeBreton: I do not agree with that statement at all. The question is very simple. The Treasury Board decided to allow the new council to endorse this proposal. If they endorse it, the money will be forthcoming.

Senator Hays: As people observe in other municipal governments, and during campaigns these things are bound to come up, it may well be that the President of the Treasury Board will be asked by one side or the other to involve himself and say, “Hold this up,” because there is an unresolved matter. In terms of my province, we would resent a federal official involving himself or herself that way in what is essentially a municipal matter. The program involves the three orders of government, and neither the federal government nor the provincial government are involved in the procurement.

Mr. Baird has put a process into question, and he could be asked to do that anywhere. I think he should have the same role in one city as in another. I am asking the Leader of the Government whether that is, in fact, the case.

Senator LeBreton: In the case of Ottawa, the funding is one-third, one-third, one-third. I would imagine and hope that other cities with projects such as this would be more forthcoming with the public so that there would not be the concerns that have been expressed specifically here in Ottawa.

Senator Mitchell: It is none of your business.

Senator LeBreton: It is \$200 million of Canadian taxpayers’ money.

• (1420)

Senator Mercer: People are saying that the agreement is not worth the paper it is written on.

Senator LeBreton: There are many members of the present Ottawa City Council, and two credible people are running against the incumbent mayor. There were significant questions, and no one knew anything about the decisions behind much of this proposal. It was simply a prudent decision to allow the new council to ratify or review the decision about the light rail system in Ottawa. When the members of the new council, who will be elected in a few weeks, agree they want to proceed with this project, the Treasury Board will be pleased to turn over the \$200 million.

Senator Hays: I will make one last try. I understand what the leader is saying and what the rationale is, rightly or wrongly. However, my point is that if the same circumstance existed in another city where we have this Canadian Strategic Infrastructure Fund — I am asking because as a regional representative, there are such programs in my province — would the President of the Treasury Board assume it was his role to do in Edmonton, for example, what he is doing in Ottawa?

Senator LeBreton: I hope that the people in Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver and other cities would be a little more forthcoming with information and not precipitate this type of situation. Perhaps Senator Eggleton’s and Senator Atkins’ candidates for the mayor’s job could assist me in answering this

question — I am only joking. They are supporting credible candidates for the mayor's job who have serious concerns about the lack of openness and transparency about this particular light rail system in the city of Ottawa.

[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION— CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

Hon. Claudette Tardif: Honourable senators, on August 16, 2006, a website informed the Canadian public that Human Resources and Social Development Canada was conducting consultations concerning the federal government's role in post-secondary education. Unfortunately, the Web site that announced the consultations was not the department's. Rather, it was a blog belonging to Paul Wells, a *Maclean's* columnist.

[English]

As Mr. Wells stated:

It's insane to have a secret public consultation.

The deadline for submissions was September 8, but few had been informed that the consultation process had even begun. Furthermore, the HRSDC web page did not outline the parameters as to who could respond nor provide discussion documents on the issue to guide feedback.

[Translation]

My question for the minister is this: Given the importance of post-secondary education, why was the consultation process not extended, better explained and more widely publicized to university associations and institutions, as well as to Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I do not read blogs and thus did not read the one written by Paul Wells. The honourable senator asks a very good question, and I will endeavour to find out because I do not have an answer for her at the moment.

Senator Tardif: I thank the minister. I look forward to the response because I know that in many other instances consultation has not been done. I think of the abolition of the Court Challenges Program in which, once again, there was no consultation with the communities that were impacted.

• (1425)

Senator LeBreton: As the honourable senator knows, I was part of the process in looking for savings this summer. We consulted many people during that process. Obviously, some people who felt they should have been consulted believed they were not. We were involved in a long consultation.

[Senator LeBreton]

With respect to the particular question raised by the honourable senator, I would not think it wise to post the notice and not give an opportunity to respond. The honourable senator is quite right.

FINANCE

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

FUNDING FOR LITERACY PROGRAMS— PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn: Honourable senators, I have a question again today. I went back and I read the statement of the Leader of the Government in the Senate yesterday about the funding that was being offered by the federal government on literacy. It was not unlike what we had already been doing: It touched on skills training for immigrant populations; it touched on essential skills and workplace initiatives from HRDC; it touched on money that is to be allocated for Aboriginal teaching. The leader threw in some good information on computers for schools. She also tossed in some special money for Prince Edward Island and some sector council programming on workplace skills and training. The foundation of the government's proposals is not so very different from many of the things we were doing before.

However, the fundamental difference is that the federal government will no longer partner up with the provinces and the territories on joint programming taking place on the ground in those areas. That is very different from what we have been trying to do over the years.

Without the partnership with the provinces and territories, how does one expect to take on literacy program funding in the future that will actually create learning for people of all ages who are in difficulty and need that kind of help? How will the government be able to do that unless they maintain a close partnership with the provinces? Indeed, the programming that is done on the ground always has been on a joint basis with the federal government.

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for her question. I misspoke in my answer yesterday when I listed all of the projects. I left the impression that those projects were part of the \$81 million. I should have said that the \$81 million was in addition to the amount allocated for the literacy and skills programs that I listed yesterday. When I read my answer, I realized that it appeared as if I was listing those figures as part of the \$81 million.

With regard to our continuing the relationship with the provinces and the territories, with the \$81 million in hand, Minister Finley will be working together with her provincial and territorial counterparts on these literacy and skills programs. I do not think it is fair to assume that somehow or other we will be running these programs without the cooperation of the provinces and territories. During the last election, one of the very important planks in our platform was more cooperation and more work with the provinces and territories.

• (1430)

[Translation]

**PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES
HUMAN RESOURCES
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

TARGETED INITIATIVE FOR OLDER WORKERS

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the minister for Montreal and it concerns the new targeted initiative for older workers, announced this week by the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Ms. Finley.

As we all know, this initiative is intended to help older workers — here in the Senate, we would not consider them that old — between 50 and 64 years of age, who have lost their job and are not able to work elsewhere. The purpose of this initiative is therefore a noble one. The total federal contribution — \$70 million, including \$19 million for Quebec — is not overwhelming, but it is better than nothing.

However workers in major metropolitan areas such as Montreal, cannot benefit from this program. In Montreal, there is a very large group of workers, especially female workers, who need, almost desperately I would say, such a program. I am referring to the workers in the textile industry, most of them women and often immigrants, who tend to have low levels of literacy, I might add.

[English]

They are not capable of functioning particularly well in either of Canada's official languages, and we know that this is an industry that faces significant trouble.

We also have indications that the Government of Quebec would have wished the details of this program to be other than they are.

[Translation]

The Quebec Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity, Michelle Courchesne, indicated as much in a scrum earlier this week. She mentioned a certain uneasiness and said that the program announced by the federal government was not very realistic.

[English]

Can the minister please explain why this large group of vulnerable workers, who it would seem would be ideally suited for a program like this, will not be able to benefit from it?

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Fortier (Minister of Public Works and Government Services): Honourable senators, I will answer the senator's question in two parts.

Regarding the program, as the honourable senator knows, with the plant closures that are taking place in the forestry and paper industry in Quebec, it is important to have a program that targets workers in that sector.

With regard to Montreal, I will make two comments. First, the honourable senator will understand that it is more difficult for someone living in La Tuque to find work in La Tuque when the town's only sawmill closes than for someone in the LaSalle district of Montreal, who has other opportunities.

The honourable senator also mentioned the clothing industry.

[English]

I am happy to share with the honourable senator that I visited Peerless, the large suit-manufacturing business in Montreal, which employs 2,600 people on Boulevard Pie-IX, just east of St. Laurent. The honourable senator should visit Peerless, because the company is hiring hundreds of people every month. Peerless is looking for employees.

The reason this type of program does not apply to a large city like Montreal is because there are other opportunities in Montreal for people of that sector. Peerless is just one example. This is why the program is designed the way it is.

Senator Fraser: Pie-IX is actually quite a chunk east of St. Laurent. Of course, I have been there.

Everyone knows that forestry workers desperately need help, and a large number of those who desperately need help are in Quebec. God forbid that anyone should begrudge any help that is going to them. It seems to me that the one should not exclude the other. The Government of Quebec made it plain that it did not think that the one should exclude the other, and this is a federal-provincial program. Therefore, I ask the minister again: For those workers who do not get hired by Peerless, or anyone else, why could we not have designed the program to help them?

• (1435)

Senator Fortier: I believe I answered that question. The reason is that, in a large city such as Montreal, there are other opportunities for folks in that age group — 55 to 64 years — in the textile and clothing industry, as well as opportunities outside that industry. That is the answer. People understand that. When in Montreal, step out of Westmount and talk to real people, who will tell the honourable senator that they understand that they can find employment in other areas of Montreal. Montreal's economy is doing very well and normal people understand that these policies apply to folks that live in remote areas where there is only one industry. There is a big difference between La Tuque and LaSalle.

Senator Fraser: The minister might be interested to know that I do not live in Westmount.

The Hon. the Speaker: I regret to inform honourable senators that the time for Question Period has expired.

[Translation]

DELAYED ANSWER TO ORAL QUESTION

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour of presenting a delayed answer to a question raised by Senator Carstairs on October 3, 2006 with respect to the comments of the minister to the International Congress on Care of the Terminally Ill.

HEALTH

COMMENTS OF MINISTER TO INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON CARE OF THE TERMINALLY ILL— TERMINATION OF SECRETARIAT ON PALLIATIVE AND END-OF-LIFE CARE

(Response to question raised by Hon. Sharon Carstairs on October 3, 2006)

This government, and indeed Minister Clement, is committed to ensuring quality health care for all Canadians, including palliative and end-of-life care.

Health Canada provides support for palliative and end-of-life care through the Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care. The Secretariat's budget is determined on a year-by-year basis by allocation from within departmental resources. The five working groups under the Secretariat are aware that funding is not ongoing and that there is no pre-set annual budget. In the past, these resources have supported the palliative care community in the implementation of national-level improvements to the education of health care providers, accreditation standards for palliative care, and networks for palliative care research. As well, the working groups are aware that at the end of this fiscal year work will carry on but through a new mechanism which will ensure the engagement of the palliative care community.

This is valuable work and this government looks forward to, and indeed counts on, continued engagement of the palliative care community, with available funding. This year, the government continues to support the Secretariat, along with a range of other health care priorities. For example, Health Canada is working with the Canadian Virtual Hospice to build an interactive website to provide one-stop shopping for Canadian palliative and end-of-life care researchers. This website will make available to researchers information such as sources of research funding, research methodologies, research findings, proposal summaries and the like. It will also provide opportunities for networking among researchers, allow researchers to build on each others' work, to broaden the scope of work and thus to improve the capacity in Canada for palliative care research. This work is already under way with available resources.

Another example is work now getting under way with the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing to secure consensus across Canada on specific palliative care competencies for nurses. These competencies will lead to changes in nursing curricula, and are key in improving the quality of care provided to Canadians. This initiative is building on a similar project, also funded by Health Canada, which will improve the training provided to physicians on palliative and end-of-life care.

In addition to funding provided through the Secretariat, the federal government supports palliative and end-of-life care through other means. Other important initiatives funded by Health Canada include the \$1.2M Educating Future Physicians in Palliative and End-of-Life Care, the \$750K Teaching Interprofessional Collaborative Patient-Centred Practice Through the Humanities, and the

\$4.3M Pallium Integrated Care Capacity Building Initiative. Furthermore, Human Resources and Social Development Canada is administering Employment Insurance Compassionate Care Benefits which allow Canadians to take time away from their jobs to care for gravely ill loved ones. Such federal initiatives are enhancing Canada's capacity to handle end-of-life issues.

[English]

NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE

RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR INFORMATION PRESENTED

Hon. Colin Kenny: Honourable senators, I have the honour of presenting a delayed answer to an oral question raised by the Honourable Senator Tkachuk yesterday with respect to the fourth report of the committee, specifically, the number of copies of that report that were printed and distributed up to October 17, 2006.

(Pursuant to rule 24(3), response to question raised by Hon. David Tkachuk on October 18, 2006)

MANAGED TURMOIL: The Need to Upgrade Canadian Foreign Aid and Military Strength to Deal with Massive Change (October 2006)

2,900 reports in English have been printed and 1,679 reports in English have been distributed. 300 reports in French have been printed and distributed.

POINTS OF ORDER

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, this is the point of order that I attempted to raise earlier. When I rose earlier, I was acting on my perhaps mistaken interpretation of rule 23(6) of the *Rules of the Senate*, which says that the Routine of Business shall be called after Senators' Statements. I took that to mean that the Routine of Business began after Senators' Statements. If I am in error, I would suggest that the rules need to be reworked.

The substance of the point of order has to do with the notice of the question of privilege that Senator Stratton raised earlier. Although all senators are aware because they have all received the honourable senator's letter and heard him give notice of question of privilege a few moments ago, they do not know what it is about. I would suggest, therefore, that this notice of question of privilege has not been properly devised.

The *Rules of the Senate* speak clearly to questions of privilege because, as every authority agrees, questions of privilege are among the most serious matters that parliamentarians ever have to consider. Essentially, they have to do with preserving the integrity of Parliament. The *Rules of the Senate*, like the authorities, are clear about the need to give timely and adequate notice that a question of privilege is to be given. In particular, rule 43(7) says that after a senator has given notice in writing — which was sent out this morning — the senator shall

rise during the time provided for consideration of Senators' Statements for the purpose of giving oral notice of the question of privilege. Rule 43(7) states:

[Translation]

...for the purpose of giving oral notice of the question of privilege.

[English]

I suggest that the Senate has such detailed rules about notice so that senators may be properly prepared to discuss the question of privilege on the basis of some knowledge and reflection when it is ultimately brought in substance before the chamber, which will happen later this day.

Citation 115 of *Beauchesne's* states:

A question of privilege must be brought to the attention of the House at the first possible opportunity.

It does not say, "...notice that there will be sometime in the future a question of privilege," but rather, "a question," which I understand to mean the substance of the question.

• (1440)

I suggest that our rules are also referring to the substance of the question, that it is not enough to say to senators, "I will do a bit of a Dance of the Seven Veils here, and I am telling you now that I will do the dance later on."

Honourable senators, these are not games-playing matters; they are very serious matters. I have no knowledge at all of what Senator Stratton's question of privilege may be. I imagine that many senators in this chamber are in the same position, and for us to consider his question properly, when it is raised, we need to know. We have not been given that notice.

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): I am quite pleased that the honourable senator referred to rule 43(7). I will read the appropriate section:

A Senator having given a notice...shall be recognized during the time provided for the consideration of "Senators' Statements", for the purpose of giving oral notice of the question of privilege. In doing so, the Senator shall indicate that he or she is prepared to move a motion either calling upon the Senate to take action...

The rule does not in any way refer to the question of the substance of the motion. The rule states that a senator has orally given notice that he or she will move a motion.

It is well and good to want to know what the substance of the motion is — and I empathize with my colleague on that point. If the rules are not clear enough, or if we wish to have the rules made clearer, by all means, let us refer this to the Rules Committee and ask that the rules be modified. However, for the time being, as things stand now, the only requirement is that, having given written notice, the senator then moves the oral motion during Senators' Statements, without in any way having to provide the substance of the motion.

Getting back to the honourable senator's point — and I can empathize with where she is coming from on this — we might want to have the Rules Committee amplify this rule to read that the substance of the motion should be made part of the rules, but at the present time it is not part of the rules. Therefore, this is not a point of order, and I would ask that Your Honour view this as not being a point of order.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is there further help for the chair?

Hon. Anne C. Cools: Honourable senators, I did not hear most of Senator Fraser's intervention, but what I did hear is a suggestion that the rules may be insufficient because they are not specific enough in the meaning of notice. I should like to say that my understanding of "notice" means precisely that, that one is giving notice so that individual senators are given notice in order to be able to know what they are dealing with.

For example, if I were to rise in this place and give a notice of motion, for the most part, the notice of motion would contain the motion that I would be asking the Senate to consider. If I were to give a notice of inquiry, the notice would contain what I am asking the Senate to look at. Granted, some notices are pretty feeble, but that is a different matter for another day.

If one were to look at a court of law when lawyers engage in a notice of motion, one would find an extremely detailed account of what the court is being asked to examine and to wrap their minds around. Notice in a court of law does not differ from notice in our situation at hand.

I shudder every time I hear people talk about re-doing and re-making the rules. Dear Lord, when I came to this place 20 years ago, the rule book was 10 per cent the size of what it is now. I do not understand this business of every day we wake up, someone takes a bottle of instant rules, removes a teaspoon, and more rules grow.

I am holding the rule book in my hand. These rules are beyond the reach and knowledge of most senators, so I shudder at the thought of creating more. Currently there are simply too many rules.

The problem is not the insufficiency in the rules. The problem may be the insufficiency in some people's minds and their understanding of the principles of debate, or perhaps in the insufficiency in their understanding of the meaning of "notice." Notice means that senators and members of the House of Commons are not to be caught or taken by total surprise. Notice means that there should be no mystery, for example, as to whether this question of privilege occurred in the chamber or outside of the chamber.

One must be respectful and understand that any individual senator should not have to give his or her entire hand away, but there should be at least enough information in the notice to direct senators who may want to speak to it to know where to go and look, whether the breach of privilege was in a newspaper article of today or in a Senate committee this morning or in the proceedings of the Senate yesterday or wherever.

I am sorry to disagree with Senator Fraser, but it is wrong to suggest that the rules are insufficient about the meaning of notice of a question of privilege.

I do not know how much more the rules have to be spelled out so that people can understand that debate is a precious thing and should proceed in accordance with widely held principles. The first principle of justice and of the rule of law is that persons who are impugned have a right to respond and have a right to notice that they are being impugned.

This used to be called natural justice. I see many statements coming through that demonstrate no concern that there is a world outside of our own or that there are other people here who would like to speak. Perhaps what we need today is for someone to consult the dictionary to find out what the word “notice” really means. Perhaps we are becoming that elementary.

I wanted to say to Your Honour that honourable senators are owed some description of what happened that should be judged a breach of privilege. In the interests of circumspection, astuteness and political wisdom, perhaps senators giving the notice should be guarded and sagacious in how they articulate it, but it cannot be denied that information is required. Neither can it be asserted that the rules are insufficient and that they do not require information in the “notice.” There is a body of law, which we are bound to, which is not all recorded in these rules, and there is a body of principles that we have some duty to uphold, even though they may not be in the rule book.

For example, is there a rule in the Senate rule book that says we should act in a principled way? I do not know. However, it would be a breach of the rules to say that there is no rule that says senators must act in accordance with the principles.

In any event, Your Honour, notice means notice. It means that senators receive notice of what they are being asked to consider and debate. It does not mean keeping senators in total suspense. As a matter of fact, I would argue that it does not mean keeping them in any suspense at all.

It is sometimes very difficult to watch us distort our own system. I was raised to believe that this system of Parliament was the jewel not only of British constitutionalism but of universal constitutionalism, and I shudder when I hear statements that, because certain concepts are not spelled out here in elementary language, that somehow or other they do not exist.

• (1450)

I submit to you that we have a command: We are under oath to Her Majesty to treat each other and to treat the institution with a very high degree of respect. The first duty that we have is to treat debate — both our right to debate and our ability to debate — with a very certain and a very high level of dignity.

Hon. Jack Austin: Honourable senators, I would argue in the same direction taken by Senator Cools. The issue really depends on rule 43(1) and the reference in that rule to a putative question of privilege. If I understand the meaning of “putative,” it relates to the phrase that deals with “priority over every other matter before the Senate.” In order to determine whether the question of privilege should take priority, we need to interpret the meaning of the word “putative,” which I would argue requires a disclosure of a general nature. The chamber can then decide as a matter of process, or in the circumstances, Your Honour can rule whether there is a putative question.

[Senator Cools]

Hon. Tommy Banks: While Your Honour is looking at this question, which I am sure you will, I would address your attention to rule 59(10) and ask if there is, in fact, a conflict between that provision on the one hand and rule 43(7) on the other. I do not know very much about these things, but I think there might be such a conflict.

Senator Cools: I have one small point, Your Honour. I was not planning to speak in this debate, but I heard this particular exchange as I walked into the chamber. One of the reasons that sufficient information must be disclosed in the notice of a question of privilege is that the rule presupposes that Your Honour is being asked to make a ruling that there is a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege. In other words, Your Honour is not being asked to rule on the substantive matter, but rather if there is sufficient evidence to be able to allow the question to take priority over all others and consequently to allow the senator to move a motion for debate on the substantive motion.

In point of fact, the rules anticipate that the real debate should take place on that motion. Recently, it has become a habit; in fact, we have adopted an inferior practice wherein that motion is not debated at all. I would suggest that when a senator raises a question of privilege asking Your Honour for a *prima facie* ruling contained in that senator’s speech, there should also be a notice of the motion that he or she intends to put before the house.

This is a very serious matter that goes to the unity of thought between our rules on what I would call the entire body of the law of Parliament, the common law, the laws of equity and the totality of what I would call the entire constitutional system.

The Hon. the Speaker: Let me thank the Honourable Senator Fraser for raising the point of order. If all honourable senators would look at their rules, they would see that there is a bit of a contradiction there in the wording, and so the honourable senator’s point is well made on that first part.

I would like to take some time to study the issue because, as Senator Austin has pointed out, and as all honourable senators have indicated, this is an important matter. I want it to be the agreement and the understanding of the house that, should the Speaker take this matter under advisement, everything would be frozen in time.

As to the timeliness of Senator Stratton’s notice on the issue, it would be understood that he has met the test of time, and that we must deal only with the issue as to the fullness and adequacy of the notice.

With that, honourable senators, the chair will do its duty to the house and take the matter under advisement.

Hon. Terry Stratton: Your Honour has taken it under advisement. Does that mean for a week, a day or an hour?

The Hon. the Speaker: I will move with the fullness of dispatch and we will try to have something for honourable senators next week when we return.

On a point of order on a different matter, we will hear from the Honourable Senator Murray.

Hon. Lowell Murray: Honourable senators, my point of order is on an entirely different matter. It also is not urgent, but it is a matter that Your Honour may wish to take under advisement.

I would draw the attention of honourable senators to rule 24(1), Oral Questions, which states:

24(1) When the Speaker calls the Question Period, a Senator may, without notice, address an oral question to:

(a) the Leader of the Government in the Senate, if it is a question relating to public affairs.

— and it is this next paragraph to which I draw your particular attention:

(b) a Senator who is a Minister of the Crown, if it is a question relating to his ministerial responsibility, ...

Honourable senators, some time ago I heard an honourable senator ask a question of one or the other of the ministers who were in this chamber in her or his capacity as a member of the Treasury Board, which, as we know, is a committee of the cabinet.

On several occasions, and most recently today, an honourable senator rose and put a question to Senator Fortier, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, in his capacity as minister for Montreal. Senator Fortier is Minister of Public Works and Government Services. That is his constitutional responsibility, and my contention is that that is the only role in which he is obliged to or may reply to questions during the oral Question Period. I am aware that the rule refers to “ministerial responsibility.” However, honourable senators, the fact that Senator Fortier may have some responsibilities for the Island of Montreal, or that Senator LeBreton may have responsibilities for eastern Ontario, or that someone may be a chairman of a cabinet committee, does not come under their portfolio responsibilities.

We are all aware of the circumstances under which Senator Fortier came into the cabinet. It was so that the Island of Montreal would have a voice at the cabinet table. However, he is not, I think, authorized to reply to questions in that capacity any more than Mr. Thompson, the Minister of Veterans Affairs who is minister for New Brunswick, is authorized to answer questions about New Brunswick. These are matters within the Prime Minister’s purview. Senator Fortier is responsible to the Prime Minister for his activities in respect of the Island of Montreal; not to Parliament.

We have had this sort of thing happen in the past. There is plenty of precedent for appointing senators as cabinet ministers because of a lack of elected representation from particular areas. Senator Austin was Minister of State for Social Development in the Trudeau government. It was also understood that he was there because he is a British Columbia senator. The same is true for the late Senator Olson from Alberta, who was Minister of State for Economic Development, and the late Senator Argue from Saskatchewan, who was Minister of State for the Wheat Board, both provinces not having elected any Liberal members.

We asked questions routinely of those senators in relation to their portfolio responsibilities, but there was never any suggestion

that we could put questions to them in their capacity as senators from a particular province.

• (1500)

This is a matter on which Your Honour may wish to hear other senators who may be able to cite precedents. I am not aware of any, but there may be some. I simply state that my contention is that Senator Fortier may answer questions in the oral Question Period only in respect of his duties as Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

Senator Fraser: The Honourable Senator Murray, as is always the case, raises an interesting point, but he will not be surprised if I do not quite agree.

I was not around when Senator Olson and other such persons were in office, and because I did not realize this procedural matter would be raised today, I do not have the quotations with me. However, we are all aware that when Senator Fortier was named to this place and to the cabinet, he was publicly and repeatedly identified as being the minister to represent Montreal. As a confirmation that this is indeed a serious part of his ministerial responsibility, I would note that he takes questions about Montreal. We know that Senator Fortier may not have had the time to study our rule book in great detail since he arrived. I also note that the Leader of the Government in the Senate has been properly prudent about which questions should go to Senator Fortier and which questions should not.

I can recall at least one occasion — I think it is more — when our side directed a question to Senator Fortier, and the government leader rose to take it because the question did not relate to either his ministerial responsibilities for PWGSC or to Montreal. I take that as confirmation that in this government it is formally the case that the Minister of Public Works is also the minister for Montreal, to whom questions in this place may properly be put on matters affecting Montreal.

Senator Comeau: Honourable senators, all we need to do is go back to the rules. The rules, again, are very explicit. Rule 24(1) states:

When the Speaker calls the Question Period, a Senator may, without notice, address an oral question to:

(a) the Leader of the Government in the Senate, if it is a question relating to public affairs,

(b) a Senator who is a Minister of the Crown, if it is a question relating to his ministerial responsibility...

We do not have ministers for Montreal. We do not have ministers for Nova Scotia. We have ministers with special duties. They may report to the Prime Minister on certain issues, but they are ministers and, in the case of our colleague, Senator Fortier is the Minister of Public Works and that is his portfolio.

Finally, a question may be asked to a chairman of a committee if it is a question relating to the activities of that committee. I recall sitting here one afternoon when the Leader of the Government in the Senate was not present. I sat through a number of questions that were asked of me and I refused to answer. I was summarily pilloried and darts were thrown.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

Senator Comeau: Go back to the Hansard and note the adjectives that were thrown my way on that afternoon. I was not allowed to respond to the questions because it is not provided for under the rules.

Honourable senators, all we need to do sometimes is go back to the rules and read them. If we do not like the rules, let us send them to the Rules Committee and change them to whatever we wish. However, as it stands now, these are the rules. Let us simply apply them. Again, if we do not like them, we will make adjustments.

For the time being, the Minister of Public Works is not the minister for Montreal. He may have special responsibilities to report to the Prime Minister concerning Montreal, but that is an entirely separate issue.

I would ask Your Honour, in his usual wise and reflective way, to reflect on these comments. You may wish to remind us all to stick to the rules.

Hon. Wilfred P. Moore: I have listened to the remarks. It may be useful and instructive for Your Honour to review the text of the official appointment of this individual so as to ascertain his responsibilities. It may well say that he is a minister responsible for the province. If that is the stated public responsibility given to him, then I would think that beyond a particular portfolio, he is a minister of whatever that responsibility may be.

Senator Murray: Various ministers of the Crown are also chairs of cabinet committees. May you ask a question of a minister in his capacity as chairman of the cabinet committee on social development or economics? You may not. You may ask a question of the President of the Treasury Board because that is a portfolio.

The idea is that ministers are responsible for their portfolios. When someone wants to ask a question about the clothing industry in Quebec, alluded to by Senator Fortier, those questions should be put to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, who will go to the Minister of Industry or the Minister of Trade, or the portfolio minister responsible — literally responsible — to Parliament.

The Hon. the Speaker: I wish to thank all honourable senators for participating in the debate on this point of order. We will study the question and issue a ruling.

• (1510)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STATE OF LITERACY

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Fairbairn, P.C., calling the attention of the Senate to the State of Literacy in Canada, which will give every

Senator in this Chamber the opportunity to speak out on an issue in our country that is often forgotten.—(*Honourable Senator Tkachuk*)

Hon. Jim Munson: Honourable senators, today, I wish to add my concerns about recent cuts in government funding in support of literacy.

To preface his budget cuts on September 25, Treasury Board Minister Baird, in a joint announcement with Finance Minister Flaherty, said:

We are trimming the fat and refocusing spending on the priorities of Canadians.

After we saw what was cut, we have an idea of the image of Canada that this government has. This government thinks programs that help the most vulnerable in our society are fat that needs to be trimmed. What kind of crazy starvation diet is this?

I know that I am not alone in my outrage and shame. How can programs that support literacy in adults in Canada be considered fat by this government?

The Conservative government defends itself by saying that it will support national or federal programs in support of literacy but will not support regional or local groups working across the country to help millions of Canadians who have trouble with reading and writing tasks. In essence, the government is saying, "That is not my department. Go somewhere else if you need help." That is the response of this government to a problem that has far-reaching consequences on the lives of individuals, on the welfare of families and on the future of our country.

[*Translation*]

How can we tolerate this government abandoning the most vulnerable Canadians, people who are the least equipped to succeed and to participate in society?

[*English*]

Despite a \$13-billion surplus, this Conservative government is saying to the adult Canadians who have low literacy skills that they do not matter. If they were not already excluded from much of society because of their lack of literacy skills, these people would be outraged. The fact is that the people who need literacy programs are the least likely to be aware of these cuts and call Stephen Harper's government to account. Many people with low literacy are on the edges of society, on the outside looking in, wanting to be active participants in Canada's economy and society. They are less likely to have well-paying jobs. They are less likely to vote. That is why these cuts are not only mean-spirited but also cynical and calculated. That is why we honourable senators need to speak out.

We here in Ottawa need to remember that Canadians do not care what level of government provides which service. What they expect is a government that meets the pressing economic, health and social needs of its citizens. That is what literacy is.

[Translation]

Here, in Canada, we have built a society based on values such as mutual help and support. We believe that the government has to be a force for good and show leadership in helping people get training and find good jobs. With these cuts to literacy programs, this government is betraying the values that we hold dear.

[English]

Literacy is an economic issue because in today's labour market people change jobs frequently and need to acquire new skills throughout their working lives. Do not just take my word for it. Let me quote our Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, the Honourable Diane Finley. On September 8, International Literacy Day, Minister Finley said the following:

Strong literacy skills are more important than ever in today's knowledge-based society. Literacy and other essential skills provide a foundation for skills development and lifelong learning, and can help all Canadians participate in our economic prosperity and improve their quality of life.

Statistics Canada says that a 1 per cent rise in literacy scores is associated with an eventual 2.5 per cent relative rise in labour productivity and a 1.4 per cent rise in our GDP. By boosting adult literacy levels by just 1 per cent, Canada could generate \$18 billion per year. Thus, if we boost support for literacy, we could more than cover the cost of the cuts the Harper government just made.

We know that Canada's economy depends on immigration. Literacy skills are one of the ways we help new arrivals to this country boost their language skills and assimilate into their new society. Lack of literacy is one of the barriers that prevent many Aboriginal people from getting better jobs and living healthier lives.

[Translation]

Literacy programs are important to help immigrants and newcomers settle in their new country. These programs help Aboriginal people seeking training to find better jobs and lead healthier and happier lives.

[English]

Yet, on September 25, this government decided not to continue funding programs across Canada that were reaching out and providing literacy training in support of the thousands of adults who need help.

We know that there is a strong link between literacy and success on the job. The better an individual's literacy skills, the more likely that person is to have a good, well-paying job. The weaker an individual's literacy skills, the more likely that person is to have a poor-paying job or no job at all. In fact, people with low literacy have only two thirds of the incomes of other adults.

The inevitable consequence of this situation is poverty. There is a connection between literacy and poverty. If we want to tackle poverty, we have to tackle literacy.

Honourable senators know there is a connection between poverty and poor health, just as there is a connection between poverty and literacy. Is there a connection, then, between health and literacy?

People with low literacy skills are more likely to live and work in places that are unsafe. They are more likely to be under stress. They are more likely to have long-term health problems. Yet, they are less likely to understand the complex information that accompanies medication and treatment for such health problems. They are less likely to have access to information about eating well, exercising and not smoking. If we want to improve the health of Canadians, we must improve literacy rates. If we want to promote health, we must promote literacy.

It is clear that literacy is linked to many issues that affect the welfare of our citizens and the future prosperity of our nation. Any cuts to literacy programs, from my perspective, are incredibly short-sighted.

There is a clear link between literacy levels of parents and their children. Parents with strong literacy skills are more involved in the education of their children. Parents with strong literacy skills are more likely to read to their children and to provide opportunities for them to strengthen their literacy skills. Those parents are partners in education.

Ms. Harper knows the importance of literacy for children. She and Minister Baird were volunteering with CanWest in a promotion called "Raise a Reader." To Ms. Harper and Mr. Baird, I say this: To raise a reader, it certainly helps to be a reader.

If we want to tackle literacy in children, we have to tackle literacy in adults. If we want a strong future, we have to tackle literacy. Our job, honourable senators, is to hold this government to account and question such mean-spirited, short-sighted budget cuts.

[Translation]

If we want to build a strong Canada, we have to train our people and ensure that all Canadians have the tools they need to succeed. It is incumbent upon us, honourable senators, to insist that the government reconsider these cutbacks and provide its most vulnerable citizens with the necessary programs. With a \$13-billion surplus, it has no excuse.

[English]

We have a \$13-billion surplus. The people of Canada have needs that must be addressed. They are not the fat to be trimmed off a surplus budget. If we are not using this money for those who need help, what is it good for, honourable senators?

Government is not always about value for money; it is about value for people.

• (1520)

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: The Honourable Senator Munson has put literacy in question. There is political literacy as well. As a new member of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, and as a result of e-mails I have been receiving, I would like it on the record that I was assigned to this

committee in early September by my leadership and was advised at the time that there was a trip being planned to Europe, Dubai, and possibly Afghanistan. I made certain inquiries at the time regarding the Afghanistan portion of the trip, because I had commitments that conflicted with the earlier portion of the trip. The information I received regarding travel in Afghanistan and my past experience as a military officer resulted in my decision against participating in this travel.

I believe this committee has done good work in the past and I look forward to working with the members of it in the future. I am sure that my past actions in this place indicate that I always attempt to do what my personal judgment dictates, and I will continue to be guided by these instincts in all of my decisions, regardless of from whence requests or direction may come.

On motion of Senator Tkachuk, debate adjourned.

ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO REGIONS OF ALBERTA

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Mitchell, calling the attention of the Senate to issues of importance to the regions in Alberta, with particular emphasis on Grand Prairie.—(*Honourable Senator St. Germain, P.C.*)

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, I wish to speak on the inquiry raised by Senator Mitchell last Tuesday concerning Grande Prairie, Alberta. I welcome every opportunity to join in any debate about Aboriginal conditions in Canada, the subject about which the honourable senator spoke.

It is important to monitor the progress of Canada's new government as it works to improve the well-being of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. In collaboration with Aboriginal, provincial and territorial partners, the government is producing real solutions to the issues facing Aboriginal people in Canada. Honourable senators, the Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Metis and Non-Status Indians, has taken swift, decisive action on several fronts to help Aboriginal people attain a better quality of life, both on and off reserves.

The government's approach has focused on enhancing Aboriginal people's self-reliance through targeted efforts in four areas: First, Canada's government is directing investments toward housing and education to empower individuals to take greater control of their lives and futures; second, Canada's government is working to accelerate land claim settlements; third, Canada's government is promoting economic development, job training, skills development and entrepreneurship to open opportunities for people; fourth, Canada's government is laying the groundwork for responsible self-government by moving towards modern and accountable government structures.

The federal budget of April 26, 2006 made abundantly clear this government's commitment to finding real solutions to the challenges facing so many Aboriginal communities. In total, the

budget confirms funding of \$3.7 billion for investments in support of Aboriginal peoples.

Honourable senators will also remember that it was this new government that approved the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement in May and launched the agreement's Advance Payment program.

Among other achievements to date, the government has directly addressed the very pressing matter of drinking water concerns in First Nations communities. This comprehensive plan, launched last March, includes a complete remedial plan for First Nations communities with serious water issues, starting with the 21 communities most at risk. The plan implements a protocol for use by First Nations community water systems staff with standards for design, construction, operation, maintenance and monitoring of drinking water systems. In addition, a three-member panel of experts has conducted Canada-wide public hearings on the options for establishing a regulatory framework to ensure that safe drinking water exists. First Nations have been waiting for this kind of decisive action for a very long time.

Senator Grafstein has been a great advocate of making water safe across this nation, and I congratulate him for that.

The government has provided a clear commitment to report regularly on progress. The water situation has been addressed. It is a shame that we let the situation get to this stage. Administrations in the past were responsible, but this is now being done, and I must compliment the minister and the government for this initiative.

In partnership with the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Province of British Columbia — my province — and Canada's government have also made a major breakthrough for First Nations education in Canada. Under an historic agreement signed in July, Canada and B.C. will strengthen First Nations' capacity to exercise control over their education systems and institutions. This agreement will create better learning opportunities for First Nations students in British Columbia.

The Government of Canada will also continue to focus on accelerating specific land claims settlements, each of which clears the path to new economic and social opportunities for Aboriginal people and opens the way to strengthen governments. Honourable senators, let me be crystal clear: This Minister of Indian Affairs is acutely aware that land claims settlements are about justice, respect and reconciliation, and about building a better future for our Aboriginal peoples.

Honourable senators will also be interested to know about an issue very much concerned with justice and building a better future for Aboriginal women and their children. I refer to the longstanding problem of matrimonial real property on reserves and the lack of legal protection for Aboriginal women living on reserve when a marriage breaks down. This highly complex issue has deprived Aboriginal women of the basic human rights that other Canadians take for granted.

In response to this pressing problem, the Government of Canada, together with the Assembly of First Nations and the Native Women's Association of Canada, launched a national consultation process aimed at finding a shared solution to this issue. Consultations and dialogue sessions are being held in

Aboriginal communities right across the country. In dealing with issues as pressing as water quality, education, housing and the rights and well-being of Aboriginal women and children, the government and the Minister of Indian Affairs refused to make vague promises and gestures. To improve the quality of life of Aboriginal people in Canada, the government must show tangible results and clear accountability. That is the course that the Government of Canada will continue to pursue with the utmost dedication, working with Aboriginal partners to develop effective, sustainable approaches to tackling the critical challenges of Aboriginal communities.

On the matter of the Asia Pacific Gateway and the corridor initiative that was raised by our colleague in his inquiry, I will reiterate what was said by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister announced federal contributions totalling \$591 million over a dozen Pacific Gateway projects. The goal is to help Canada capture a larger share of the west coast shipping market. This is not a B.C. initiative; this is a Canadian initiative. A total of \$321 million will be immediately committed to a variety of infrastructure, transportation, technology and border security projects in Western Canada which are scheduled to be completed within four years. This is a massive undertaking, and it is a collaborative effort involving all levels of government and the private sector. The private sector firms have committed over \$3 billion in related capital investment to the Asia Pacific Gateway and corridor-related projects between 2004 and 2010.

• (1530)

Container traffic at British Columbia's major commercial ports is expected to rise to 7 million units annually by 2020, boosting Canada's share of west coast container traffic from 9 to 14 per cent. Improving our international transportation and trade links will lead to more business opportunities and jobs for British Columbians and all Canadians.

Honourable senators, when the Harper government makes a commitment to do something, Canadians can expect action. The new government does not believe in making empty promises. The honourable senator from Alberta was unfortunately misguided in some of his assertions on what has been done on Aboriginal issues, as well as on the Pacific Gateway project. I am proud to stand here today and tell you that our government may not be all things to all people, but what we say is what we do. We deliver on promises, and that is what this whole system is about. It is about looking after our Aboriginal peoples.

I can assure you, working with Senator Sibbeston and others from this honourable place, that we will provide the results for our Aboriginal peoples. It will not be idle, shallow talk. It will be a delivery on our commitment, and we will make life better for Aboriginal women, Aboriginal children and Aboriginals as a whole.

Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein: I want to commend the senator for that wonderful speech. We have heard great talk before, but he has gone one step further; he has indicated that what this government says is what this government does. I welcome that, if that is the case, but I would ask the honourable senator just one question: In terms of measuring the water that will be created by this new program, will the standard that the Department of Indian Affairs intends to adopt be that of clean, healthy drinking water?

Senator St. Germain: Honourable senators, I am not current on what terms of references are drafted as far as the quality of standards that will be established, but I can assure the honourable senator of one thing: If there is any doubt as to whether or not the standards will be high enough, I will look into it; I will personally pursue this matter and get back to the honourable senator, in order to reassure him or advise him of my findings as to what the actual standards are. I have every belief, having spoken to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, that the highest standard will be set and our Aboriginal peoples will be treated like the rest of Canada, if not better.

Senator Grafstein: That is reassuring, and I appreciate the honourable senator undertaking to pursue this matter further. Let me conclude by saying something for his information. There was evidence given previously, and it was on the record for Senator Banks' committee when they looked at the question of water. We discovered, to our amazement, that the standard established under the food and drugs regime guidelines to establish the standards of water across the country was voluntary and not mandatory. I complained about it in my bill that I hope to resurrect, but the real issue was that even the voluntary standard was eight years out of date. I repeat: Eight years out of date. That is not my evidence; that is the evidence that was presented to the committee by the Auditor General.

We have heard all the wonderful statements that have been made, and I commend the honourable senator for his energy in re-examining this matter. I would hope that while he is pursuing it, he would come back and make a statement to this chamber, indicating exactly what the standard is. If it is a standard under the Food and Drugs Act, is that standard now up-to-date, because as of several months ago it was eight years behind. The other point is: Will that standard be enforced as soon as possible?

Senator St. Germain: Honourable senators, I will do my utmost to source out the information and get back to the honourable senator and the Senate as a whole.

Hon. Serge Joyal: Honourable senators, I listened to the honourable senator with great interest. I want to commend him for his passion and dedication in standing by the rights of the Aboriginal people of Canada.

The honourable senator has on the Order Paper a bill; it is Bill S-216, providing for the Crown's recognition of self-governing First Nations of Canada. Can he inform us of the progress he has been making in the promotion of that bill with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, in the context of the commitment that he just outlined to us in his speech, and of the commitment of the minister to promote the conditions and improvements to self-government of the Aboriginal people? Can the honourable senator tell us whether his bill is part of the overall objectives of the minister and the government, so that we can debate his bill in the proper forum in committee and quickly make the progress that the honourable senator hopes to make?

Senator St. Germain: Honourable senators, I would be presumptuous in saying that my bill would influence the government or be part of the government's initiatives, but I fervently hope, and have discussed with the minister and others, that the bill will be an influence, and that the contents of

the bill could become part of policy, by virtue of the fact that self-governance is an important initiative in the overall well-being of our Aboriginal peoples.

I do not think I am speaking out of turn here in saying that I have discussed this matter with the minister. The status of the bill is that the adjournment of the debate has been taken by Senator Austin. I have had conversations with Senator Austin as well with respect to moving the bill forward and, I hope, getting it to the committee stage. He has indicated to me, and I do not think it is any secret, that he would like to see more support from the Aboriginal community. There is huge support in that community, and I think Senator Joyal is aware of a great deal of the support that exists right across Canada with respect to this enabling legislation.

For, honourable senators, Bill S-216 is strictly enabling legislation. It is something that is being put forward that would enable Aboriginal communities with a land base, and seeking to proceed by way of self-government, to take control of their own destiny and improve their plight in life. It would mitigate the costs considerably, as well as the time factor, if this bill was enacted into legislation.

At the present stage, honourable senators, we are working on specific claims and an economic review study in the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples. These two issues, especially the economic development issue, tie right in with self-governance because there is a clear indication from our studies that economic prosperity and economic development is directly linked to the ability of our First Nations to take control of their own destiny by way of self-governance.

These recommendations are coming through. We are working on specific claims such as the unjust and fraudulent removal or theft of lands from our Aboriginal peoples. We are working on this issue at the moment because it will help our Aboriginal communities economically if these specific claims are resolved.

All of this is tied together. I would urge Senator Joyal and honourable senators on the other side to encourage Senator Austin to speak to the bill so that we can proceed with it and get it to committee. I would remind the honourable senator that the bill has only four days left on the Order Paper. I have said right from the very beginning that I do not care whose name is on this bill. I just want our Aboriginal people to be able to enter into a state of self-government at a reasonable cost and in a reasonable period of time.

• (1540)

This is not something that Aboriginal people are forced into. It is strictly an option they could enter into. I hope that answers the honourable senator's question.

I honestly believe that the present minister believes that self-government is an important factor. He was a member of the Indian Claims Commission for 10 years, so he brings with him a litany of experience in the Aboriginal file.

Since 1982, the Metis have been included in our Constitution, under section 35. The honourable senator was part of that, and I know his commitment is genuine. Any time I can answer a question for the honourable senator, and other senators, I am very appreciative.

[Senator St. Germain]

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I have a very quick comment.

The Hon. the Speaker: You are on Senator St. Germain's time, and his time has expired.

Senator Fraser: May I have 30 seconds leave?

Senator Prud'homme: I will count them.

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Generally, honourable senators, I imagine that the Leader of the Opposition could speak on the subject and then adjourn. I imagine that would be one way of doing it. I give notice that next week I think both caucuses will be looking at the question of 15 minutes plus. The concept initially of 15 minutes was to have 15 minutes. We have taken the habit in the last two, three or four years that 15 minutes means a 15-minute speech plus five minutes of questions and answers. I am, at this point, giving notice that this matter will be looked at, and it should be looked at by both caucuses, to determine whether we want to change the rules again. We keep coming back to the rules not seeming to be adequate. If we want to change the rules so that speeches will be 20 minutes, let us look at it, but at least let us look at coming back to these 15-minute speeches.

Having said that, I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did want to have a minute or so to get a point across.

Hon. Marcel Prud'homme: Before Senator Fraser speaks, I know she will not mind a brief intervention. This might have escaped Senator Comeau, with whom I like to cooperate, but he said we may come to terms after consultation with the opposition. I know he is very sensitive to the fact that eight of us are not part of an official caucus. We may have to look at that, too, Senator Murray and I and others. In the meantime, I know he did not want to offend us when he said it was only after consultation with the opposition.

Senator Comeau: That is a good point.

Senator Fraser: I now have two quick comments. First, to Senator Prud'homme, there has not been any deal on this. The deputy leader and I meet every day to discuss house business.

Senator Prud'homme: It worried me.

Senator Fraser: We have noticed that it is becoming almost automatic for people to fill up the whole extra five minutes, and we agreed we would remind our colleagues that it is not an automatic thing. It is a privilege, and none of us should be abusing it.

My comment to Senator St. Germain is that Aboriginal people are fortunate to have such a passionate advocate of their interests in this chamber and in the government caucus. The honourable senator is not the only advocate, but he certainly is a very articulate and passionate advocate. I cannot make any commitments for Senator Austin, but I can undertake not to let this bill die on the Order Paper.

With that, I would move the adjournment of the debate.

On motion of Senator Fraser, debate adjourned.

[Translation]

THE SENATE

MOTION TO ACCOMMODATE SENATORS SPEAKING ANCESTRAL LANGUAGES— REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Corbin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Bryden:

That the Senate should recognize the inalienable right of the first inhabitants of the land now known as Canada to use their ancestral language to communicate for any purpose; and

That, to facilitate the expression of this right, the Senate should immediately take the necessary administrative and technical measures so that senators wishing to use their ancestral language in this House may do so.—(*Honourable Senator Comeau*)

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, to follow up on yesterday's discussion, I checked with my colleagues in Nova Scotia, and the first heavy snowfall has not yet arrived. However, I request the consent of the Senate to refer this matter to the Standing Senate Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament for further study.

Hon. Eymard G. Corbin: Honourable senators, since this is my motion, I would prefer that the Senate take a decision here in this chamber, rather than refer it to the Standing Senate Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament. I think it addressed this issue a number of times during the last session of the previous Parliament. Nevertheless, I would not object and I would be pleased to support the motion of Senator Comeau.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

On motion of Senator Comeau, motion referred to the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament.

[English]

BANKING, TRADE AND COMMERCE

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO EXTEND DATE OF FINAL REPORT ON STUDY OF ISSUES DEALING WITH INTERPROVINCIAL BARRIERS TO TRADE—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition), for Senator Grafstein, pursuant to notice of October 18, 2006, moved:

That, notwithstanding the Order of the Senate adopted on Tuesday, May 2, 2006, the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce, which was authorized to

examine and report on issues dealing with interprovincial barriers to trade, be empowered to extend the date of presenting its final report from October 31, 2006 to June 29, 2007; and

That the Committee retain until July 31, 2007 all powers necessary to publicize its findings.

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, this is one of those questions that I am quite sure the Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows that we from time to time ask. Will this cost us any more? Does this involve extra cost?

Senator Fraser: To the best of my knowledge, honourable senators, this does not involve any extra cost. This study has been authorized by the Senate and will not be completed on time. My understanding is that the committee actually does hope to conclude its study well before the date stated here of June 29, but, as a measure of prudence, it is asking for an extension to that time just in case. We never know. Parliamentary calendars sometimes run away with us.

Hon. Marcel Prud'homme: Honourable senators, I stand for one reason. I should like to ask a question of the honourable senator, who has been serving for a long time — since June 1984 — since this is his motion. I should like to adjourn the debate until next week.

On motion of Senator Prud'homme, debate adjourned.

• (1550)

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Terry Stratton: Honourable senators, I rise on a question of privilege. Rule 59(10) states that notice is not required for raising a question of privilege.

The Hon. the Speaker: The house has taken a decision on that matter.

Senator Stratton: I am following rule 59(10) that no notice is required for a question of privilege. I would like to place my motion.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Senator LeBreton, that the question of privilege in respect to the misuse of funds allocated by the Senate to the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence be referred to the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament for investigation and report.

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Your Honour, it is my understanding that the rule to which Senator Stratton has just referred is designed to refer to immediate matters. It is the only explanation I can find for the existence of that rule; that is, if a question of privilege were to arise in the course of proceedings as we speak, I could rise and say that I have a question of privilege. That is the only explanation I can find for the fact that rule 59(10) exists, but so do the detailed requirements for notice of questions of privilege, including written questions of privilege, set out in rule 43, which runs on through 12 subsections that have to do with timely but advance notice.

I gather from what Senator Stratton just gave a glimpse of in terms of the substance of his question of privilege that he is referring to a matter that did not arise immediately here and now. I would then assume that rule 43 applies, and as Your Honour has rightly observed, the Senate made a decision about that earlier this day.

Senator Stratton: I would like to proceed with my motion, if I may. I will make the argument for it, and then Your Honour can make a judgment thereafter as to whether it is legitimate, realizing that one of the criteria for a question of privilege is that it be done immediately. That was done today right after what transpired with respect to the trip to Dubai by Senator Kenny.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I know the house wants to deal with this matter in an orderly manner. If a point of order is to be raised in order that the chair is not misunderstanding the rules, I would be happy to hear that point of order.

My understanding is that a point of order was raised about the notice that had been given on a question of privilege, and we heard the arguments. That matter is under consideration by the chair. The house agreed that everything is frozen in time. It is Senator Stratton's right to raise this question of privilege, in which all honourable senators are interested because privilege is something we all share, so that the timeliness of giving the notice of the question of privilege is maintained. It is maintained until the chair rules on the point of order.

As to where we are now, it would be out of order to raise this matter under any rule. It is the ruling of the chair that we will proceed as we had agreed earlier in the day. A ruling will come down on whether the notice of the question of privilege was in order. If it is found to be in order, Senator Stratton will be not at any disadvantage in the order of time in presenting the argument as to whether there is a prima facie case.

[Translation]

Hon. Fernand Robichaud: Honourable senators, if you find the ruling to be in accordance with the *Rules of the Senate*, we must proceed, but if not, we can ignore it.

[English]

Hon. Daniel Hays (Leader of the Opposition): I want to observe that His Honour has made a ruling, and the only step that can be taken is to challenge the ruling. I am not challenging the ruling; I am standing to say that we either respect the ruling or challenge it. I take my seat so as not to challenge.

[Translation]

Senator Robichaud: Honourable senators, I was not seeking to oppose the ruling; I was merely trying to get the information I lacked.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, that is the spirit in which I accepted the intervention. A decision has been made and will be maintained. That is the Speaker's decision.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, and notwithstanding rule 58(1)(h), I move:

That when the Senate adjourns today, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, October 24, 2006, at 2 p.m.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Senate adjourned until Tuesday, October 24, 2006, at 2 p.m.

THE SENATE OF CANADA PROGRESS OF LEGISLATION

(indicates the status of a bill by showing the date on which each stage has been **completed**)

(1st Session, 39th Parliament)

Thursday, October 19, 2006

(*Where royal assent is signified by written declaration, the Act is deemed to be assented to on the day on which the two Houses of Parliament have been notified of the declaration.)

GOVERNMENT BILLS (SENATE)

No.	Title	1 st	2 nd	Committee	Report	Amend	3 rd	R.A.	Chap.
S-2	An Act to amend the Hazardous Materials Information Review Act	06/04/25	06/05/04	Social Affairs, Science and Technology	06/05/18	0	06/05/30		
S-3	An Act to amend the National Defence Act, the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the Criminal Records Act	06/04/25	06/06/22	Legal and Constitutional Affairs					
S-4	An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (Senate tenure)	06/05/30		subject-matter 06/06/28 Special Committee on Senate Reform					
S-5	An Act to implement conventions and protocols concluded between Canada and Finland, Mexico and Korea for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income	06/10/03							

GOVERNMENT BILLS (HOUSE OF COMMONS)

No.	Title	1 st	2 nd	Committee	Report	Amend	3 rd	R.A.	Chap.
C-2	An Act providing for conflict of interest rules, restrictions on election financing and measures respecting administrative transparency, oversight and accountability	06/06/22	06/06/27	Legal and Constitutional Affairs					
C-3	An Act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act	06/06/22							
C-4	An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act	06/05/02	06/05/03	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	06/05/04	0	06/05/09	06/05/11	1/06
C-5	An Act respecting the establishment of the Public Health Agency of Canada and amending certain Acts	06/06/20	06/09/28	Social Affairs, Science and Technology					

No.	Title	1 st	2 nd	Committee	Report	Amend	3 rd	R.A.	Chap.
C-8	An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 2007 (<i>Appropriation Act No. 1, 2006-2007</i>)	06/05/04	06/05/09	—	—	—	06/05/10	06/05/11	2/06
C-13	An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006	06/06/06	06/06/13	National Finance	06/06/20	0	06/06/22	06/06/22*	4/06
C-15	An Act to amend the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act	06/06/06	06/06/13	Agriculture and Forestry	06/06/15	0	06/06/20	06/06/22*	3/06

COMMONS PUBLIC BILLS

No.	Title	1 st	2 nd	Committee	Report	Amend	3 rd	R.A.	Chap.

SENATE PUBLIC BILLS

No.	Title	1 st	2 nd	Committee	Report	Amend	3 rd	R.A.	Chap.
S-201	An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (elimination of bureaucratic patronage and geographic criteria in appointment processes) (Sen. Ringuette)	06/04/05	06/06/22	National Finance	06/10/03	1			
S-202	An Act to repeal legislation that has not come into force within ten years of receiving royal assent (Sen. Banks)	06/04/05	06/05/31	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	06/06/15	1	06/06/22		
S-203	An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (priority for appointment for veterans) (Sen. Downe)	06/04/05	Dropped from the Order Paper pursuant to Rule 27(3) 06/06/08						
S-204	An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day (Sen. Grafstein)	06/04/05							
S-205	An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (clean drinking water) (Sen. Grafstein)	06/04/05							
S-206	An Act to amend the Criminal Code (suicide bombings) (Sen. Grafstein)	06/04/05							
S-207	An Act to amend the Criminal Code (protection of children) (Sen. Hervieux-Payette, P.C.)	06/04/05							
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