



CANADA

Debates of the Senate

1st SESSION

•

40th PARLIAMENT

•

VOLUME 145

•

NUMBER 8

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, December 3, 2008



THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER

CONTENTS

(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

Wednesday, December 3, 2008

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Honourable senators, on November 15, I was among the 50,000 people across North America who celebrated the twenty-second anniversary of National Philanthropy Day, the day that reminds us about the importance of giving and volunteering.

We have a duty to pay tribute to those volunteers who help our world and contribute to the betterment of society. I am quite sure honourable senators will agree that charitable giving is needed now more than ever.

Honourable senators, as a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and as a certified fundraising executive, I have a keen awareness that during hard economic times the need for charities dramatically increases. Whether it is families who need help at a food bank or a hospital in need of extra funds to improve health care, we all need to recognize that a contribution of time, money or food by everyday citizens is a gift that is invaluable.

Honourable senators, the Association of Fundraising Professionals celebrated National Philanthropy Day through more than 100 events across North America, where local donors, foundations, businesses, volunteers — young and old alike — and many others were celebrated for what they do to make our society a better place. After all, the definition of philanthropy is “love of humankind.” Philanthropy is people helping people because it is the right thing to do, not because it is the required thing to do.

I know honourable senators will join me in thanking each and every person who gives of him or herself for the betterment of others. I encourage honourable senators to support Bill S-210 respecting National Philanthropy Day.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CONFLICT

Hon. Mobina S.B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, on August 13, Canada lost two courageous women when Jackie Kirk and Shirley Case were brutally killed in a cowardly attack when their car was ambushed in Afghanistan. They were returning from a meeting with a local community on a project to help children with disabilities. Jackie and Shirley had dedicated their lives to ensuring that children, especially little girls victimized by armed conflict, would have access to education.

I first met Jackie when I was the Special Advisor on Women, Peace and Security. Jackie had taken the bus from Montreal, as she often did, to participate in a meeting to address violence

against women and girls in conflict. What struck me more than her vast knowledge of the challenges in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan was the incredible warmth and passion she had for the issues.

• (1335)

Following her death, Jackie's husband commented that they used to joke that he had to compete with the millions of girls who go without school because of conflict. Jackie's work promoting education and the protection of rights for women and girls will be remembered not only by the ones she helped but by all former colleagues and friends. Her legacy carries on with the support she gave her students at McGill to do the same incredible work that she did. As violent and tragic as her death was, her life and heart were equally as beautiful.

While I did not know Shirley Case personally, it was clear that she was both loved and held in high esteem by her family, friends and fellow humanitarians. From domestic social issues in Canada, to her work in developing countries and her commitment to the natural environment that she so loved, it is clear that Ms. Case was driven by the desire to make this world a better place for all.

Shirley left her legacy in Canada with organizations such as Katimavik and Canada World Youth. Internationally, she served CARE in Chad and Bande Ache, Indonesia, and her last post was with the International Rescue Committee in Afghanistan.

Her energy was boundless, matched with the spirit of adventure and contribution that will serve as an inspiration to all young Canadians working for international peace and security. Shirley's impact as a great humanitarian and a passionate environmentalist will survive long after this tragedy. Those whose lives Shirley touched have committed to planting a tree in her honour every August 13.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security highlights the impact that conflict has on women and girls. Canada supports this resolution.

Honourable senators, we need to ensure that the rights of women and girls are incorporated into every aspect in our engagement in Afghanistan; in our defence, our diplomacy and our development.

Today's *Ottawa Citizen* reported that the Taliban are suspected of targeting Afghan women headed to a women's meeting that had been set up by the Canadian Forces. Five improvised explosive devices were discovered on the routes the women were taking to obtain information about their rights.

In the article, Master Corporal Helen Hawes, a Canadian soldier, stated:

I'm a bit of a feminist, so if I think that we could be sending young girls to school, my personal opinion is, let's make it happen. . . . That may not be the right cultural

answer, but being a woman, having been given every opportunity in my life in the western world, I hope that these girls don't grow up just cooking and cleaning. They want change.

Honourable senators, our troops and humanitarian workers are performing great work on our behalf in Afghanistan.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Lorna Milne: Honourable senators, I am pleased to remind you that today marks the seventh annual United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The theme this year is "Dignity and justice for all of us," a theme that the United Nations is also using to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Since its inception, the United Nations has recognized that the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family are the foundations of freedom, justice and peace in the world. These principles, along with equality and non-discrimination, have guided the work of the United Nations for the past 60 years. They are enshrined in various instruments such as the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in treaties such as the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Honourable senators, approximately 10 per cent of the world's population lives with disabilities, and there is a strong link between disability and poverty. In developing countries, 80 to 90 per cent of persons with disabilities of working age are underemployed. In industrialized countries, the number is estimated to be between 50 and 70 per cent.

The rights to education and health are also routinely denied. According to UNESCO, 90 per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend schools.

Canadians with disabilities face a number of challenges in order to become contributing members of our society. Unfortunately, there are still occasions where our governments present obstacles.

Where obstacles exist, there are over 5,000 organizations associated with the Canadian Abilities Foundation that are there to help. Organizations such as the War Amps, Arthritis Canada and the ALS Society of Canada provide physically and mentally challenged Canadians with the support they need to engage in healthy and active lives.

• (1340)

In 2006, many of those Canadians were under the impression that the Conservative Party would provide further assistance to people with disabilities when it committed in writing to introducing a national disability act to promote reasonable access to medical care, medical equipment, education, employment, transportation and housing for Canadians with disabilities.

Unfortunately, honourable senators, this did not happen. I am disappointed to report that this particular commitment did not appear in the document distributed during the most recent

campaign, entitled *The True North Strong and Free: Stephen Harper's Plan for Canadians*.

Honourable senators, perhaps on this day, when we observe the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, we should remind this Prime Minister that while Canadians who suffer from disabilities may not be the strongest of Canadians, they count among the most courageous. These Canadians deserve the legislation that the Conservative Party promised in 2006.

The challenges facing Canadians with disabilities need to be acknowledged, not ignored. I encourage all honourable senators to ask this Prime Minister to reconsider and fulfill this important promise to Canadians.

CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Hon. Art Eggleton: Honourable senators, today the Government of Canada signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is the most significant treaty of its kind since the ban on anti-personnel land mines was signed on this same day in 1997.

The treaty bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster bombs. It places obligations on countries to clear affected areas, assist victims and destroy stockpiles. It is a significant step toward the elimination of these devastating weapons and will hopefully lead to the alleviation of the human and economic consequences posed by cluster bombs.

Like the Ottawa treaty banning anti-personnel land mines, the Convention on Cluster Munitions will obligate Canada to be a part of the solution to the cluster bomb issue. It will commit Canada to ban the weapon, destroy its stockpiles and support humanitarian mine action around the world that demines affected land and helps victims.

Beyond the diplomatic similarities, clusters bombs and land mines are explicitly linked. Many of the over 70 land mine affected countries are also contaminated by cluster bombs.

The victims of these weapons suffer debilitating physical and psychological injuries. Victims' families and communities are plagued by economic burdens, and the environmental impact of these weapons on their surroundings is significant. They also impede long-term reconstruction of war-torn societies, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes, and political reconciliation and peace.

For many years, Canadian and international humanitarian mine action organizations have been clearing both land mines and cluster bombs to provide safety, security and prosperity to communities affected by these terrible weapons. I believe it is necessary for the government to detail an action plan that would allow Canada to fulfill its commitment on cluster munitions and land mines.

For the past 10 years, the Canadian Landmine Fund has managed Canada's financial support to mine action around the world. It provided predictable funding to humanitarian organizations that were demining affected areas and helping

victims of land mines and cluster bombs. In March 2008, that fund ended and no long-term policy has been put in its place to continue Canada's support for mine action.

Honourable senators, an action plan is needed to ensure that another farmer, mother or child does not become a victim of a land mine or a cluster bomb.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

REPORT TABLED

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Report to Parliament on Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan, September 2008.

• (1345)

CANADA-FRANCE INTERPARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL MEETING—SEPTEMBER 8-15, 2008— REPORT TABLED

Hon. Lise Bacon: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association on its participation in the thirty-fifth annual meeting, held in Quebec City, from September 8 to 15, 2008.

[English]

CANADIAN NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

VISIT OF ECONOMICS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRANSATLANTIC ECONOMIC RELATIONS, APRIL 23-25, 2008—REPORT TABLED

Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, which represented Canada at the visit of the Economics and Security Committee Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Economic Relations, held in London, United Kingdom, from April 23 to 25, 2008.

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, MARCH 31 TO APRIL 4, 2008—REPORT TABLED

Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, which represented Canada at the Political Committee Meeting, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from March 31 to April 4, 2008.

RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

SYSTEMATIC APPLICATION OF THE CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS—NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Senate refer to the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament the issue of developing a systematic process for the application of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as it applies to the Senate of Canada.

STATE OF POLITICS IN CANADA

CONFIDENCE MOTION—NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 57(2), I give notice that, two days hence:

I will draw the attention of the Senate to the regrettable state of politics in Canada, where Canadians are becoming increasingly embarrassed that they have a Prime Minister who is afraid to seek the confidence of the elected House of Parliament, because he knows that the members of that House have no confidence in him or his inept government.

[Translation]

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT— NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 57(2), I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the regrettable state of politics in Canada, where Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned that they have a Prime Minister who refuses to honour longstanding parliamentary traditions by not recognizing the role of members of the other place, who were democratically elected by Canadians in every region of the country, to hold the government to account, and bring forward the best government for all Canadians.

[English]

• (1350)

INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION—NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 57(2), I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the regrettable state of politics in Canada, where Canadians are dismayed that the Prime Minister is damaging Canada's international reputation by insulting so many of our NATO allies who have long and honourable traditions of coalition governments.

[Translation]

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF CANADIANS—
NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Joan Fraser: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 57(2), I give notice that, two days hence:

I shall call the attention of the Senate to the regrettable state of politics in Canada, where Canadians are distressed by the fact that the current government displays consistent contempt for the fundamental rights of Canadians.

ECONOMIC STATEMENT—NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Grant Mitchell: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 57(2), I give notice that, two days hence:

I shall call the attention of the Senate to the regrettable state of politics in Canada, where Canadians are frightened by the recent economic statement by the current government, which will put the country into deficit for the first time in over 10 years, after many years of balanced budgets and responsible economic actions by the two governments that preceded it.

[English]

PRIME MINISTER—NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Tommy Banks: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 57(2), I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the regrettable state of politics in Canada, where Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned that they might have a Prime Minister whose words they cannot trust or believe.

Some Hon. Senators: More! More!

QUESTION PERIOD

HOUSE OF COMMONS

CONFIDENCE MOTION—
PROPOSED COALITION GOVERNMENT

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, yesterday the Leader of the Government in the Senate refused to confirm to me that the Prime Minister would keep his promise to allow the elected members of Parliament to vote confidence or non-confidence in his government next Monday night. There is only one conclusion that I can draw: This is just one more in a long list of promises that Mr. Harper intends to break. So much for trust and integrity.

How can this Prime Minister justify hiding from Parliament — the House of the people — for almost two months in the midst of the most serious economic crisis facing Canada in decades?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, my answer is very simple. How can the Leader of the Official Opposition in the other place justify, in the midst of a worldwide economic crisis, forming a separatist coalition, to —

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh.

Senator LeBreton: I have not finished my answer.

Senator Cowan: I was waiting for an answer.

Senator LeBreton: I was waiting for the noise to die down.

The Prime Minister indicated many times that he will use every legal means available to restore confidence —

The Hon. the Speaker: Order. Honourable senators, the Speaker has to hear what is going on. The honourable senator posing the question must be heard and the honourable senator responding to the question must be heard.

Senator Robichaud: We want to hear answers.

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, the Prime Minister and our government were elected in the middle of October. Canadians voted for our government, fully aware of the economic situation in the world. They voted for our government to lead the country through this difficult economic time.

• (1355)

I think it is incumbent on all Liberal senators, especially those senators appointed by Mr. Trudeau, to convince Mr. Dion, who I acknowledge is a federalist Liberal, of this error in judgment. I am looking at you, Senator Stollery. Not you, Senator Corbin. You were appointed by Mr. Turner on Mr. Trudeau's instructions.

Senator Stratton: Do you remember that?

Senator LeBreton: Mr. Dion is obviously a federalist. He has made an egregious and enormous error in judgment in forming a separatist coalition. It is incumbent upon all Canadians, all parliamentarians, particularly in the Liberal Senate, to do everything in their power, in the interests of the country, to get him to change his mind.

Senator Cowan: The Prime Minister can run, but he cannot hide. Does the leader or does she not agree with Mr. Harper's own words in 2005, when he condemned a move to delay confidence votes to be "a violation of the fundamental constitutional principles of our democracy." Does the minister agree with that statement or does she not?

Senator LeBreton: That is an entirely different situation.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh.

Senator LeBreton: The fact is that Mr. Harper, who was the Leader of the Opposition at the time, did not sign on the dotted line with the separatists and the NDP to form a separatist coalition government.

Senator Cowan: As a further supplementary question, is the Leader of the Government in the Senate saying that her leader, the then opposition leader, the present Prime Minister, did not sign that letter in 2004 that we have been talking about yesterday and today? That is to say, is the minister denying that Mr. Harper signed that letter?

Senator LeBreton: I am not denying that at all. I am simply saying that if the honourable senator would go back to that time, we were in the midst of the Gomery scandal and of money being stolen from the taxpayer. That was the situation in Parliament, and the opposition parties were trying to deal with that issue.

I am simply saying to Senator Cowan that the Prime Minister would never, ever have sat down and signed, on the dotted line, a deal with the separatists.

To make my point, on January 19, 1991, there was an article in *Le Soleil* that was quoting a certain gentleman by the name of Mr. Jacques Parizeau. In 1991, Mr. Parizeau said that, "A weaker government in Ottawa is eminently satisfying. The image must be one of a weak, disoriented government, which will become weaker and more disoriented in the future. This is perfect."

Senator Fox: That is the Harper government.

Senator LeBreton: Yesterday, a former Quebec premier, Jacques Parizeau, applauded without reservation Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Québécois' recent "impressive victory" in forming a coalition government in Ottawa. That is from *Le Journal de Montréal*, December 3, 2008.

Senator Comeau: No shame.

Senator Tkachuk: No shame.

Senator Cowan: On a serious note, yesterday, when I quoted from the letter that the minister's leader signed in 2004, along with Mr. Layton and Mr. Duceppe, I asked her about the options to which she referred. She said that a coalition government was not referred to at that time. The minister then agreed to check to see what options he was referring to. Has she had an opportunity to do that? If so, could she share with this house what she found?

• (1400)

Senator LeBreton: What was written in a letter in 2004 has absolutely nothing to do with current events. The other side is using this tactic to divert attention from the deal that Mr. Dion signed with Mr. Layton and Mr. Duceppe to form a coalition separatist government.

An Hon. Senator: There is no longer a democracy.

Senator LeBreton: If the honourable senator were to pay attention to what is happening in Canada right now, he would know that the public is enraged.

Senator Comeau: This is the real world.

Senator LeBreton: There is no way to justify this. The public is enraged, and the more they hear about this, the more enraged they get.

Senator Comeau: Sell this in Nova Scotia, Jim.

Senator Cowan: I would be happy to do it.

INDUSTRY

ECONOMIC DOWNTURN—JOB LOSSES

Hon. Jane Cordy: In reference to the previous question, honourable senators, the only difference is that one letter was signed in 2004 and one letter was signed in 2008. The big question is, when is a signature not a signature.

My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Magna International Inc. announced plans yesterday to shut its auto parts plant in Cape Breton, throwing 260 people out of work. I was in Cape Breton on Friday and Saturday of last week, and people are concerned about their futures; they are concerned about their jobs.

How will prorogation help people like Harold, who works for Magna and cares for his mother, who is in her 80s, and who is losing his job?

Canadians deserve a Prime Minister who cares more about Canadians' jobs than his own job.

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, depending on what the Prime Minister decides and what may transpire, if the government prorogues Parliament, it would not stop the government from continuing to govern. That would not stop the government from continuing to consult and work with the various industry stakeholders.

Honourable senators are aware that Minister Clement has been working very hard with the auto sector. Minister Clement and Michael Bryant, Ontario's Minister of Economic Development, appointed Jim Arnett, the Chair of Hydro One and former Special Adviser to the Premier of Ontario on the steel industry, as Special Adviser on Auto Restructuring.

There is no question that the auto sector is in great difficulty, but the coalition does not have a plan for the auto sector. However, I wish to point out that one of the honourable senator's own stars, one of the leadership candidates, Mr. Bob Rae, in talking about this separatist coalition, admitted to the CBC on Tuesday that the coalition has no plan for the auto sector.

... we have to sit down with the Americans and assess what they're planning on doing, we have to sit down with the automotive countries and assess exactly what their situation is.

Well, guess what? That is what we are doing. That is what Minister Clement and the government have been doing and will continue to do.

Senator Cordy: If the Prime Minister prorogues Parliament, he is saying that he has no plan. As a former teacher, I cannot help but think about the student who goes to the school and rings the fire bell because there is an exam that day that he knows he will fail.

This Prime Minister has no plan to help the people of Nova Scotia who are losing their jobs at the Minas Basin Pulp and Power plant. He has no plan to help the people at Fundy Gypsum who are losing their jobs. He has no plan to help the people at the Magna plant and he has no plans to help the people at the Bowater plant who are losing their jobs.

• (1405)

Will this Prime Minister, who has no plan and places partisan politics above the well-being of Nova Scotians and Canadians, allow a vote of confidence in the House of Commons on Monday?

Senator LeBreton: As I mentioned earlier, honourable senators, the government was re-elected on October 14. The Canadian public placed its confidence in the hands of the Prime Minister and our government. The fact is that this three-headed monster, the separatist coalition, is causing great concern to people in this country over how it will affect the economy.

As honourable senators know, the government has already announced the date of the budget. There are planned budget consultations and meetings with the auto sector and the premiers. Minister Baird is meeting with municipal officials and his provincial counterparts on infrastructure.

There are many plans, Senator Cordy, and your party should get beyond its desire and lust to get its hands back on power and start worrying about the country. Let the government govern and implement its plans.

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PROPOSED COALITION GOVERNMENT— PARTICIPATION OF THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Hon. Jean-Claude Rivest: Honourable senators, I do not wish to enter into a debate on whether the Prime Minister or the coalition is right. The only thing that worries me as a Quebecer and a Canadian is the discourse used by the Prime Minister, those around him and the Conservative Party against the sovereignists or separatists, as well as the echoes of this rhetoric across Canada. This places all Quebecers in a difficult situation, in the sense that many Canadians blame this very serious political crisis facing Canada on Quebecers, generally speaking — and we have seen this in phone-ins, especially in Western Canada.

I wonder if the Leader of the Government can let all her colleagues know that there are Quebec federalists and Quebec sovereignists, and that the Quebec sovereignists who elected members to the House of Commons are also full citizens of Canada. Of course, those members could argue to defend the government's position, and this is completely legitimate.

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, I could not agree more. This situation is the unfortunate consequence of these actions

[Senator Cordy]

and, of course, the government has no control over the hysteria that has developed on the open-line shows across the country. We were not the ones who created this situation.

Honourable senators, the present state of affairs is of great concern to the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, and members and colleagues from Quebec. We know full well that a great many people in Quebec support the federalist option. We also acknowledge that the members of the Bloc Québécois who were elected are completely within their rights and completely democratic.

What we are quarrelling with here is that the Leader of the Liberal Party would team up with the Leader of the Bloc Québécois and the Leader of the NDP in an attempt to form a coalition government that was not voted for by Canadians. Even the people who voted for the members of the Bloc Québécois did not vote for them thinking that they would be part of a Liberal-Bloc-NDP coalition. This is a great concern, which is why it is important that Mr. Dion recognize it — especially Mr. Dion, who came to Ottawa to fight for Canadian unity.

• (1410)

It is especially important for federalists in Quebec, both francophones and anglophones. What on earth must these people be thinking? They supported either one of the federalist options only to have the government, and the control of the government, turned over to their opponents.

Honourable senators, we fully understand the reaction in the country and the danger to the country. Therefore, it is important that cooler heads prevail. The government was recently elected on a mandate to govern and that is exactly what we intend to keep doing.

CONFIDENCE MOTION

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I am somewhat confused because the Leader of the Government in the Senate said many times yesterday, and again today, that Canadians voted overwhelmingly for this Conservative government. I am not an economist, I am not an accountant — I am married to one, but I am not an accountant — I am not a mathematician, but for me the figure of 37.5 per cent is not overwhelming. Therefore, I will ask my question again because the leader did not answer it: Will this Prime Minister allow a vote of confidence in the House of Commons this Monday?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, I must check the record because I do not think I said the word “overwhelming,” but there is no question that the Canadian public voted in the last election and the Conservative Party won 143 seats with 38 per cent of the popular vote. The Liberal Party won 77 seats with 25 per cent of the popular vote and the NDP won 37 seats for a total of 114 seats.

The honourable senator's argument does not hold water. Mr. Chrétien formed a Liberal majority government with the same percentage of the vote. Furthermore, honourable senators, I believe that Canadians want an effective federal government that will govern in the interests of all Canadians. The honourable

senator cannot say that a separatist coalition led by Mr. Dion, with his party's 25 per cent of the vote, would be effective in running a government in the interests of all Canadians.

Stéphane Dion made a clear choice. If senators are listening to public opinion, or listening to people in their own regions, they will know that there is an extremely angry backlash against this coalition in the country. The backlash started with the picture that was printed in the newspapers and shown on television on Monday night of the three leaders signing this agreement.

Senator Cordy: That was not my question.

Senator LeBreton: In answer to the question, the Prime Minister and this government will do everything we can —

Senator Cordy: — to hang on to power.

Senator LeBreton: — to establish stability in this country and to restore the confidence of the Canadian public in the ability of the government to govern.

• (1415)

[Translation]

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, after the last election, the Prime Minister indicated that he would listen more carefully to those who voted for him. Now, unlike what is happening in the United States, where President-elect Barack Obama has stated that he will be the president of all Americans, we have a prime minister of only the Conservatives.

The lesson to be learned from this situation is as follows: Had the Prime Minister said the same thing in the Throne Speech, that he would listen to the other parties, he would not find himself in this situation. The Prime Minister created a problem and must now face the consequences. He has lost the confidence of his colleagues in the House of Commons. His party only obtained a minority of seats, and our Constitution is clear on that matter.

Would the Leader of the Government in the Senate remind the Prime Minister that he only has legitimacy when he has the support of his colleagues in the House of Commons?

The Prime Minister was elected thanks to the 38,000 votes he received in his riding. He did not receive the support of all Canadians, only those in his riding. The person best suited to govern Canada is the one who has the support of his colleagues in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister has lost this support, and this fact has now been put down on paper.

Some individuals are denying today's situation, thus hurting Canada and the future of Canadians and are making jobs disappear across the country. The situation is urgent — even critical. All Western countries have taken action. The government is now threatening to wait 60 days before acting. In my opinion, this behaviour is irresponsible.

Consequently, I urge the Leader of the Government in the Senate to convey the message to the Prime Minister that it is time for him to speak truthfully to Quebecers and all Canadians.

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I am not sure whether I was listening to a debate or a question.

The Prime Minister met with leaders of all the parties. The Minister of Finance sought the advice of parties, and will still do so in the budget preparation process. However, the only party that responded to the invitation of the Minister of Finance was the Bloc Québécois. They, at least, responded.

Let us put this matter in perspective. The Prime Minister and our party won the election. We came back with a strengthened mandate. We represent every region of the country, including the North. We increased the number of women we elected; we increased the number of people we elected from ethnic communities; we increased our popular support in Quebec; and we elected the same number of MPs in Quebec as we did in the previous election.

Honourable senators can gild this lily any way they want. However, Jack Layton clearly admitted that his plan to meet with the Bloc Québécois and join a coalition was started many weeks ago. This coalition had nothing to do with the economic update. Jack Layton and the Bloc Québécois were planning to form this coalition and it would not have mattered what we did. Honourable senators can disavow themselves of any notion that this coalition happened after last Thursday.

In answer to the honourable senator's question, we have the confidence of the House because even after the economic statement the government won a confidence motion on the Speech from the Throne. Disavow yourselves of the notion that any of this coalition had anything to do with the economic statement. It had everything to do with Jack Layton and his plan to defeat the government.

By the way, in the middle of the election campaign, Jack Layton let the cat out of the bag by admitting that coalition talks were under way. Mr. Dion was so concerned about that coalition that he said he would never form a coalition with the NDP because it would be bad for the economy.

• (1420)

THE SENATE

INTRODUCTION OF NEW PAGES

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, before proceeding to Orders of the Day, I am pleased to introduce two new Senate Pages who will be working with us.

Jonathan Williams grew up in Halifax and St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia. Jonathan has a passion for languages and recently spent several months working as an English teacher in Peru. He is in his second year of studies in the International Development and Globalization program at the University of Ottawa. Welcome, Jonathan.

Jonathan Yantzi was born and raised in Burlington, Ontario. A passionate believer in the difference that a group of empowered people can make, he has contributed to a number of first-time initiatives: the Ontario Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform, Burlington Central School's Youth in Action and Burlington's International Youth Leadership Conference, among others. Jonathan is in his first year of studies working toward a degree in Honours Political Science in French Immersion at the University of Ottawa. Welcome, Jonathan. I must add, honourable senators, that he has an absolutely wonderful singing voice.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADOPTION OF ADDRESS IN REPLY— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Meighen, seconded by the Honourable Senator Champagne, P.C.:

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

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

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

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

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, I rise to speak in response to the Speech from the Throne, entitled *Protecting Canada's Future*. The Throne Speech lays out the government's plan to help to protect Canada's economic security by reforming global finance, ensuring sound budgeting, securing jobs for families and communities, expanding investment and trade, and making government more effective.

The Throne Speech also builds on the work of the previous mandate focusing on priorities that make a difference for Canadians such as securing our energy future, tackling climate change and preserving Canada's environment, expanding opportunities for Canadians, keeping Canadians safe, contributing to global security, and building stronger institutions.

At a time of extraordinary global economic challenges, government must continue to work with Canada's partners and allies to put the international financial system on a sound footing. Without sound financial institutions, loans would not be available for home ownership, and businesses would be cut off from the credit they need to expand and hire new workers.

Clearly, the top priority of this Conservative government is the economy; protecting Canadians in difficult times, supporting workers and businesses and working to secure future prosperity.

The government's economic agenda is important, but I would like to take my time here today to address a matter of great concern. Honourable senators, I would like to talk to you about the government's plan to help all Canadians to participate in the Canadian dream. Canada is built on a promise of opportunity; the chance that we can work hard, raise a family and create a better life for ourselves and for those we love. Today it is more important than ever to deliver on this promise and to ensure that all Canadians share in the promise of this great land, regardless of cultural background, gender, age, disability or official language.

As a Canadian of Metis origin, I take a special interest in the well-being of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. All political parties and all governments can share in the blame for not working hard enough to ensure that Aboriginal Canadians share equitably in the promise of Canada. To realize that promise, a quality education system must be available and individuals must graduate.

Education is the key for First Nations communities to improve their social and economic conditions. I have said that many times in this place. Education is central to the success of individuals, families and communities. Aboriginal children need to acquire at least as much education as non-Aboriginal children if they are to have any chance of succeeding in the modern economy.

A decade ago, the 1996 Census reported that 60 per cent of on-reserve First Nations citizens between the ages of 20 to 24 had not completed their high school education or obtained an alternative diploma or certificate. The 2001 Census reported the same results. The 2006 Census statistics tell us that there has been no improvement in completion rates. In fact, school enrolment numbers have increased but the percentage graduating of those enrolled in grade 12 is decreasing. Educational outcomes are actually becoming worse in relative terms.

To be fair, honourable senators, governments have been investing and continue to invest in delivering Aboriginal education. I will give honourable senators a broad overview of what the federal government is doing in partnership with the provinces and Aboriginal communities to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Canadians. We must acknowledge that governments, communities, educators, families and students have a shared responsibility in achieving real results.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government committed to taking steps to ensure that Aboriginal Canadians fully share in economic opportunities, putting particular emphasis on improving education for First Nations in partnership with the provinces and First Nations communities.

I firmly believe that the best way to continue to make progress, in particular during the current economic climate, is through strong, productive partnerships. We need only to look back at what has been accomplished already for evidence that this approach works.

The first education partnership was achieved in 1999 when, after major discussions and negotiations between the Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotia and the federal government, the Mi'kmaq Education Act was proclaimed federal law. Through this agreement, the Mi'kmaq communities became responsible for the education of their children for the first time in over 100 years, enabling them to respond to their unique educational and cultural needs and to ensure that their culture — language, identity, customs and history — is taught and learned.

Renewed in 2005, the agreement keeps Mi'kmaq education in the hands of the Mi'kmaq. This responsibility allows these citizens to continue to ensure that the next generation of Mi'kmaq will be able to contribute both professionally and culturally to their communities and to the rest of the world.

The increase in the number of graduates and the number of Mi'kmaq children who can now speak their language are only two examples of how this agreement has brought marked results to Mi'kmaq communities.

The Government of Canada continued to build stronger tripartite relationships, which led to the signing of tripartite agreements in New Brunswick and in my home province, British Columbia. Last April, the government signed a memorandum of understanding with the New Brunswick First Nations and the Province of New Brunswick to improve educational outcomes of First Nations students in both band-operated and public schools in that province. Currently, the Province of New Brunswick and First Nations are negotiating new programs and services tuition agreements whereby the province will reinvest one half of First Nations tuition fees in First Nation-specific provincial education programming. As well, partners are developing new joint initiatives for First Nations schools in areas such as kindergarten readiness and school improvement planning.

In December 2006, the First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education in British Columbia Act came into effect, enabling First Nations to assume meaningful control over education in their communities. This act was made possible through a British Columbia First Nations tripartite education jurisdiction framework agreement that was signed in July 2006 between the Government of British Columbia, the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the Government of Canada. Thirteen First Nations are actively negotiating education jurisdiction agreements to enhance the quality of education for their children.

To further advance these partnerships and to invest in new partnerships in other provinces, the Government of Canada is investing \$18 million over four years for a new education partnership program. These partnerships will support better collaboration between First Nations schools and provincial education systems, contributing to First Nations student success and labour market readiness.

This program is part of the new Reforming First Nations Education Initiative, which lays the foundation for long-term improvement in First Nations education. In Budget 2008, this

initiative invests \$268 million over four years, with ongoing funding of \$75 million in the subsequent years.

• (1430)

Many provinces and First Nations have already expressed an interest in tripartite education partnerships, and the Government of Canada expects to develop new tripartite agreements in 2009 through new education investments. Particularly in the Prairie provinces, better education and training will enable First Nations to be prepared for labour market opportunities.

Honourable senators will also know that the government funds band councils and First Nations education authorities for the education of children from kindergarten to grade 12 who attend schools on reserves or provincially run schools off reserve. The government provides \$1.7 billion per year to the Elementary/Secondary Education Program, which supports approximately 120,000 students and 515 schools.

Acceptable education is more than a high school diploma, a post-secondary diploma or a degree. It could also mean a trade certificate. To that end, the present government has invested \$105 million over five years for the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership Initiative to ensure Aboriginal Canadians develop skills and receive training that will help them to take advantage of opportunities created by economic development projects across Canada.

Honourable senators, these are important steps the government is taking to help all Canadians make the most of the opportunities of this great country.

I have outlined what the government is doing, but I believe the machinery of government is not working hard enough to ensure that Aboriginal Canadians share equitably in the promise of Canada. The words of the Royal Commission continue to echo in my ears.

It asked,

Why, with so many sincere efforts to change the quality of Aboriginal education, have the overall results been so disappointing?

Honourable senators, on October 14 past, Canadians renewed their confidence in the government with a second mandate — and let us not forget that. Canadians said in a 2004 INAC study that education is the number one issue on which government should concentrate its efforts on behalf of Aboriginal youth.

In 2007, the then Minister of INAC, Jim Prentice, said:

The biggest challenge with the education system is not the dollars per se; it is rather the absence of an overall school system that individual schools are a part of.

As I said at the outset of my remarks, I am concerned that Aboriginal education may have been slightly overlooked in the past, particularly the overarching priority of government to press forward, even in times of great financial stress, to develop across Canada an Aboriginal educational system, along with corresponding Aboriginal education legislation. The government

must make the structural changes and it must deal with the funding issues. To do so supports the “colour” in the Speech from the Throne of the government’s commitment to Canada’s continued success at this time of global economic instability.

Clearly, the government has to put the economic health of our country at the top of its list of priorities, and I am pleased to see it is taking action to support those who need support. I believe those two goals go hand in hand. By improving First Nation education outcomes and by assisting students and apprentices, Canada is training the skilled workers, business owners and leaders of tomorrow.

Honourable senators, I am pleased to support any effort that would protect Canada’s future. I have spoken to the Prime Minister about this particular issue that is so pressing in our nation. He responded in the Speech from the Throne, and I am sure he will respond fully to the needs of Aboriginal children right across this great country.

I hope all honourable senators will park their partisanship so that we can deal with this very crucial portion of our economy, dealing with social justice in Canada.

[Translation]

Hon. Lise Bacon: Honourable senators, it has now been nearly a month and a half since Canadians went to the polls to elect the 308 members who represent them in the House of Commons. And even though the Prime Minister violated his own fixed date election legislation, he did not get the result he wanted so badly.

However, on reading the Speech from the Throne, I wonder whether he is even aware that he has a minority government. It would seem that the Prime Minister wants to act as though he has a majority government. He therefore did not understand the message the Canadian people sent him in the recent election.

The November 19, 2008, Throne Speech, *Protecting Canada’s Future*, is written in a radically different style from the two previous Throne Speeches and amounts to a torrent of words. It is a very wordy text that contains no specific commitments, no plan of action, no deadlines; in fact, nothing really new.

Yet during the election campaign, the Prime Minister hammered the message home that he was the best choice to lead Canada during a global economic crisis. Under his leadership, there would be no deficit, no recession. The recent economic picture is quite different. Could it be that the leader of the Conservative Party misread the global economic situation during the election? It appears so.

In Washington and Lima in November, the Prime Minister said that the global economic situation was comparable to the situation during the 1930s. And given that statement, we had every reason to hope he would waste no time proposing solutions to stimulate the economy.

Unfortunately, there is no clear intention in the Speech from the Throne and not much substance in the recent economic update. I find that disappointing.

[Senator St. Germain]

There is one positive note, however: the recognition of the robustness of the Canadian banking system. I am very glad to see that the Prime Minister, who used to call for American-style deregulation, has finally changed his position. He now recognizes the wisdom of the decisions the Chrétien and Martin governments made on this issue.

However, the Conservative government is still determined to impose a Canada-wide securities commission. Does that meet a real need in this time of crisis, or is it a long-held dream of Bay Street? To raise the appropriateness of this proposal is to answer the question in part.

Quebec does not want it. Will the government listen? Governing does not mean planning cheap revenge because of the last election. I would also like my Conservative colleagues to be conscious that the state of the government’s finances is largely linked to the choices they have made since 2006.

We have gone from Liberal budget surpluses of close to \$12 billion to possible deficits in the coming years. Who will foot the bill? Civil servants? The regions? Families? Artists? Seniors? The provincial governments or the Canadian people?

According to the Prime Minister, since we are in a technical recession, the onus is on parliamentarians to get us through these difficult times. So why did he inflame the other place with purely ideological proposals? Why did he not present other solutions with the details of their impact? Why did he not show willingness to work with the opposition parties? The Conservatives have abandoned their executive role, preferring confrontation instead.

But some interesting proposals do exist, such as the suggestion to accelerate investment in infrastructure. Building Canada could yield results if the projects being studied by the departments were approved in order to begin construction in the spring.

I hope that the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities will cooperate and put aside the overly partisan attitude he so often displays. It would be unbelievable to see major projects shelved for political reasons. A great number of jobs are on the line from coast to coast to coast.

If he is interested in some non-partisan proposals, I would invite the minister to read the Senate report on the movement of goods entitled *Time for a New National Vision*.

• (1440)

He might find inspiration in its recommendations, such as the creation of a National Gateway Council.

I also want to point out that supporting our economy means more than investing in infrastructure. Other programs could be implemented to support businesses in a very competitive economy, especially now that markets are shrinking. Manufacturing and forestry are good examples of sectors that deserve a lot more attention from the federal government right now. Among other things, we could improve tax credits for the purchase of machinery, support new product research and development, and provide funding to hire experts to create new business plans. That would enable many businesses to emerge from this period of uncertainty in better shape than if they received no support from the government.

I would also urge the Minister of Finance to be more creative with the solutions he puts forward in January, or whenever that happens. He should not make savage cuts to departmental budgets. Cutting their budgets would interfere with their ability to serve Canadians, and that could cause our society to stagnate.

We must not forget that government investments in various sectors contribute leverage that must be taken into account. For example, recording companies and artists invest millions of dollars every year thanks to support for French-language recording. Unfortunately, I fear that the cultural sector will be among those paying the heaviest price. The Minister of Canadian Heritage has not shown much fighting spirit when it comes to protecting his portfolio. I would like to remind him that he is not just responsible for the Olympic Games; he is also supposed to be fighting for our culture.

The Throne Speech touched on our energy future and, to my great surprise, the government said that nuclear energy is a proven, reliable technology that will help combat climate change. True, nuclear power plants do not produce greenhouse gases, but the government failed to point out that Quebec has prioritized solutions involving hydroelectricity, wind energy and energy efficiency projects, solutions that contribute to our energy security without warming the planet.

If the government wants to support nuclear energy, can it assure Canadians that the impact of new nuclear power plants will be comparable to that of other means of generating electricity? Can it also promise that the cost of nuclear waste disposal will not be passed on to future generations? This is about fairness.

Another issue on which I question the government's approach is young offenders. We all agree that they should be punished for their crimes, but we must not lock them up and throw away the key. Why rely on an ideological proposal that will increase the prison population? This repressive approach is still not producing any results in the United States, so why copy it? Why not encourage the provinces to learn from the work being done with young offenders in Quebec? Over the years, Quebec's approach, which is based on rehabilitation, has proven effective. Offenders receive support during their sentence, which they serve in a youth centre, to help them rejoin society once they are released. A study comparing various approaches should be conducted before a bill is introduced.

The Throne Speech also touches on the future of the Senate. Although the provisions that apply to this chamber are entrenched in the country's Constitution, the Prime Minister is continuing down this path. But rather than re-introducing new bills that seek to tear down our institutions, would it not be better to appoint some new colleagues? They could continue carrying out our work, would lighten the workload of the members of the government party and would ensure that Canadians from different communities are represented. By the end of 2009, there will be more than 30 vacant seats in this chamber. How will it be possible to carry out the mandate of the Senate? Will we be able to continue examining bills? Does the Prime Minister wish to eliminate our chamber through attrition?

We will see in the next few weeks, perhaps the next few days, if the November 19, 2008, Speech from the Throne is indicative of the type of government that will guide Canada in these difficult times.

Let us hope that the hope currently spreading among our neighbours to the south will inspire the government. It must realize that the government's role is both to oversee the development of our economy and to defend social justice.

The government must defend Canadian values for the well-being of families, seniors, youth, Aboriginal peoples and other minorities.

It must ensure the prosperity of our entire country with an inclusive vision, and not an exclusive one. The opposition in the Senate will remind the governing party of this, defend the interests of Canadians and promote the role of our institutions.

[English]

Hon. Mobina S.B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I am pleased to have this opportunity today to reply to certain aspects of the government's Throne Speech. I would like to address the issues of diversity, accreditation, global security and homelessness. Due to time constraints, I will not be able to address these issues as fully as I would have liked.

I found the Government of Canada's commitment to help all Canadians heartening. Outlined in the Throne Speech, it reads:

Canada is built on a promise of opportunity, the chance to work hard, raise a family and make a better life. Today, it is more important than ever to deliver on this promise and ensure that all Canadians share in the promise of this land, regardless of cultural background, gender, age, disability or official language. This Government will break down barriers that prevent Canadians from reaching their potential.

I agree that Canada is built on a promise of opportunity and I further agree that the time to deliver on that promise is now. Therefore, I strongly urge our government to address the plight of Canada's forgotten urban youth. This sector of our population requires the government's help to reach its full potential.

In this regard, I request the federal government review Ontario's McMurtry-Curling Report on the Roots of Youth Violence. This report recommends that government resources be focused on Ontario's most disadvantaged communities and describes how poverty, racism, the lack of decent housing, culturally insensitive education systems and limited job prospects combine to create hopelessness, alienation and low self-esteem. This in turn creates a situation where youth too often explode into violence.

The McMurtry-Curling report recommends measures to improve social conditions, address poverty and racism, generate employment opportunities, establish a comprehensive youth policy framework, as well as advocates for better cooperation amongst different government ministries and agencies.

It also outlines the role that governments can play and clearly sets out what can be done for the most vulnerable communities. By providing training, education and access to recreation, it is hoped that these young people will have a real chance to live productive lives that are free from violence.

Honourable senators, in our multicultural society, youth who, for many reasons, have not reached their full potential, are finding themselves disenfranchised. We must act now, as the government has said, to ensure that all Canadians share in the promise of this great land.

The second issue I wish to address today is that of credential recognition in Canada. In the Throne Speech, our government committed to:

... work with the provinces to make the recognition of foreign credentials a priority, attract top international students to Canada and increase the uptake of immigrant settlement programs.

I was pleased to see the government's commitment to this issue. The negative costs to our labour market, economy and skilled immigrants are substantial.

• (1450)

Canada has highly educated and experienced immigrant professionals and tradespeople who are unemployed or under-employed. We encourage skilled immigrants to come and make Canada their home but we fail them when we have a foreign-trained doctor driving a cab or a civil engineer working as a building inspector. Addressing this issue is long overdue, especially in light of the policy to fast-track immigrant applicants identified as necessary to our economy.

To find solutions, it is imperative that we understand the obstacles or barriers that newcomers face when they arrive in our country; what keeps immigrants from using their education in Canada's workforce and what prevents them from bettering their social and economic circumstances?

Foreign work experience and education is particularly discounted in the Canadian labour market, and is considered by far one of the largest setbacks by skilled immigrants. A vicious circle for new labour market entrants has many of them taking "survival jobs." As with any individual trained in a specific profession, time spent away from that work leads to loss of skill, which then affects prospects of entering the profession for which they immigrated to Canada for. The long result is a lower income for this individual, as well as downward social mobility.

On the issue of credential assessment, its sheer complexity makes it a daunting task for the federal government to address. An overwhelming number of players and jurisdictions are involved. Credential recognition is considered a provincial matter. The federal government is now in charge of immigration and providing money to the provinces. However, the federal government is not in charge or in control of the barriers that skilled immigrants face when attempting to have their credentials recognized in their province. These barriers occur with different regulatory bodies, as well as post-secondary educational institutions and credential assessment services.

I request of our government that, just as it brings the provinces to the table on issues such as health care, it must also bring the provinces together on the issue of accreditation. The federal government, in its capacity as the agent in charge of immigration, has a responsibility. It is the immigration department that initially

awards the points for education and experience that facilitates an immigrant's entry to our country. This approved education and skill set must be transferable to their new country.

I will suggest a few changes. Changes can be made at the federal level to encourage greater access to the labour market for skilled immigrants. At the federal level, many have advocated more cooperation between the two departments, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Human Resources and Social Development Canada, which deal with labour issues faced by immigrants. These departments function independently of one another. CIC has had a long-standing habit of not considering labour market issues facing skilled immigrants when developing departmental programming. As a result, these programs do not necessarily meet the needs of immigrants. For example, the department provides language training. However, this training is not to a standard acceptable to many work environments.

With respect to other possibilities, the federal government may also consider reviewing some of its current programming to see if those programs meet the needs of immigrants. In this regard, it would be useful to know if programming like the Foreign Credentials Referral Office helps skilled immigrants.

A criticism of this office has been that it merely collects information already available to skilled immigrants on the Internet. We need to find out if the office helps immigrants to obtain their credential recognition and gain employment. We need to educate ourselves as to the success of this initiative and whether there could be an expanded role for it.

I will now speak about relaxing regulation and certification. Another issue worth mentioning is the possibility of relaxing our demands. Perhaps the provinces should take note of comments made by the Alberta's Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry. Minister Iris Evans stressed a need for professional groups to loosen up their certification process. She said, "We need to try to get through some of the red tape, which is there for a good reason, but still in a way that ensures the safety of people and continues to build the workforce."

She may be on to something. The example she gave is 10,000 surplus doctors in the United Kingdom who cannot come to Canada because they have no obstetrics training. She said, "Let's bring them here and train them for a few months rather than reject them."

Minister Evans also talked about credential checks before entry to Canada. She advocates an ounce of prevention and thinks that Citizenship and Immigration Canada should check potential immigrant credentials on the other end before bringing people to Canada who are not qualified. Maybe this is the way to start the harmonization talks with provincial governments, regulatory bodies, universities and employers.

Honourable senators, some progress has been made on these issues. Progress has been made with the programming that targets issues dealing with Canadian work experience. Success stories include the one-stop facilities created in Mississauga, Brampton, Toronto and Vaughn, Ontario. These resource centres offer to help coordinate settlement services. The funding is provided through a partnership between the federal government and the

Province of Ontario. It offers access to about five agencies. Immigrants visiting these centres can find help with language training, employment assistance, translation, credential accreditation and settlement support — all under one roof. It goes a long way to helping immigrants access the assistance available to them.

I am pleased the government has made this commitment to help immigrants participate fully in our society and help them break down the barriers that prevent them from reaching their potential. Honourable senators, we must think outside the box to break these barriers down. This is our responsibility, and I look forward to working with our government to making a real change.

The third issue I wish to raise today is that of global security. In the Throne Speech, our government recognized that:

Our national security depends on global security. Our Government believes that Canada's aspirations for a better and more secure world must be matched by vigorous and concrete actions on the world stage.

Security ultimately depends upon a respect for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Where these values are imperilled, the safety and prosperity of all nations are imperilled. Canada must have the capacity and willingness to stand for what is right, and to contribute to a better and safer world.

I agree with this statement and believe that, when attacks occur, such as the attack in New York on September 11, they affect all Canadians. In response, our country acted. We introduced our terrorism legislation and we continue to improve on that bill to keep Canadians safe. We are also cognizant of the fact that any country that sacrifices human rights for security ends up with neither. We need to be vigilant about our human rights and also about our security.

Last week, there was another terrible attack in Mumbai, India. As all honourable senators are aware, this terrorist attack has stolen the heart from India. There is now great fear in the largest democracy in the world. Just as we stood shoulder to shoulder with the Americans in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11, we as Canadians must stand shoulder to shoulder with India now. I agree that we should stand up for what is right and contribute to a safe world, as set out in the Throne Speech.

Many lives were lost in Mumbai. Sadly, some were Canadian lives. Today, I commend the government on its aim to keep the world safe, and look forward to working with it to reach out to the people of India.

The final issue I wish to address today is that of homelessness. The government said it will help the homeless and help create affordable housing. The Speech from the Throne reads:

Some Canadians face other barriers to participation in the economy and society, whether in the form of homelessness or debilitating illness. Our Government will extend the Homelessness Partnering Strategy and help more Canadians find affordable housing.

In my city of Vancouver, I often walk at night with a Vancouver city housing advocate, Judy Graves. Honourable senators, I am troubled, frustrated and disheartened by the fact that I, as a B.C. senator, am not able to do more for the people in my province. I sit with young homeless girls to find out what has led them to their plight. Some have recently arrived from the reserves and have nowhere to go. Sadly, others have mental problems and illnesses and I believe we, collectively, have let them down. In a rich country such as ours, it is not acceptable to have Canadians sleeping on the street. I look forward to working with the government as it provides housing solutions for my city and other vulnerable sectors of our population.

In closing, I want to share my personal story with you. Over 30 years ago, when I arrived as a refugee in Canada, I faced a great dilemma. My family and I lost all of our wealth and, most importantly, our home. We came to these shores with the hopes that we would earn it back again; that we would be able to create a new home. Our dreams were shattered when we were told we could not practice our professions. That was our dilemma. There was little help from the government at that time. Eventually, I was able to find my way back and practice my profession. It was due to the largesse of one man, Supreme Court Justice Thomas Dohm. He helped me get recognition as a lawyer in Canada.

• (1500)

My father was helped by Senator Gerry St. Germain. He helped him fight discrimination in the marketing boards. Today, my family is well integrated because of the help of such great Canadians as Thomas Dohm and Senator St. Germain.

Honourable senators, we would be better served if our government, rather than individuals, reached out and helped people reach their potential when they arrive on our shores. When we bring people to our country and do not commit to providing with them resources to thrive and integrate properly into Canadian life and society, all we have are broken dreams and the inability of newcomers to reach their full potential. These people are not able to contribute to our country fully, and as a result, we all suffer — our country is not as great as it could be.

Honourable senators, the Speech from the Throne is a very good blueprint. Now we all have to make it a reality.

[Translation]

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have not yet had an opportunity to prepare notes. I know that the members of this chamber are anxiously awaiting my wonderful comments about this excellent document. My understanding is that even the House of Commons has voted in favour of this document. And if I remember correctly, it was the first vote of confidence in the government's favour.

That being said, I will take my time to write an excellent document, and I believe that all honourable senators will support it and vote with me. I would therefore like to take the adjournment for the remainder of my time.

On motion of Senator Comeau, debate adjourned.

[English]

THE ESTIMATES, 2008-09

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B)—MOTION TO REFER TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE— DEBATE SUSPENDED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Comeau, seconded by the Honourable Senator Brown:

That the expenditures set out in Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009, be referred to a Committee of the Whole for examination on Wednesday, December 3, 2008, with the Senate resolving itself into said Committee at the conclusion of Question Period;

That television cameras be authorized in the Senate Chamber to broadcast the proceedings of the Committee of the Whole, with the least possible disruption of the proceedings; and that photographers be authorized in the Senate Chamber to photograph proceedings, with the least possible disruption of the proceedings; and

That, notwithstanding the Order adopted by the Senate on Tuesday, November 25, 2008, when the Senate sits on Wednesday, December 3, 2008, it continue its proceedings beyond 4 p.m. and follow the normal adjournment procedure according to Rule 6(1); and

That Rule 13(1) be suspended on Wednesday, December 3, 2008.

Hon. Terry Stratton: Honourable senators, I rise today in support of Senator Comeau's motion to have a Committee of the Whole study the expenditures set out in the supplementary estimates.

However, I notice that the motion called for us to resolve ourselves into a Committee of the Whole today immediately following Question Period. We are now well past Question Period, and due to inaction and delay on the other side, we are not now sitting as a Committee of the Whole.

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Terry Stratton: Honourable senators, to keep this excellent motion current, in amendment, I move:

That the motion be amended by replacing the words "December 3, 2008," wherever they appear in the motion, with the words "December 10, 2008."

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, is there further debate?

Are honourable senators ready for the question?

Honourable senators, I will put it very clearly.

All those in favour of the motion in amendment will please say "yea."

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

The Hon. the Speaker: All those opposed to the motion in amendment will please say "nay."

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

The Hon. the Speaker: In my opinion, the "nays" have it.

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker: Call in the senators. Do the whips have advice on the timing?

Senator Stratton: A one-hour bell.

The Hon. the Speaker: Therefore, the vote will be taking place at five minutes past four. The bells will ring at four o'clock.

May the Speaker leave the chair?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

• (1605)

Motion in amendment negated on the following division:

YEAS THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Andreychuk	Keon
Angus	LeBreton
Brown	Meighen
Champagne	Nolin
Cochrane	Oliver
Comeau	St. Germain
Di Nino	Stratton
Johnson	Tkachuk—16

NAYS THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Adams	Goldstein
Atkins	Harb
Bacon	Hervieux-Payette
Banks	Hubley
Biron	Jaffer
Bryden	Joyal
Callbeck	Losier-Cool
Campbell	Mahovlich
Carstairs	Mercer
Chaput	Merchant
Cook	Milne
Corbin	Mitchell
Cordy	Moore
Cowan	Munson
Dallaire	Pépin

Dawson
Day
Downe
Dyck
Eggleton
Fairbairn
Fox
Fraser
Furey

Phalen
Poulin
Poy
Ringuette
Robichaud
Smith
Stollery
Tardif
Zimmer—48

ABSTENTIONS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

The Senate adjourned until Thursday, December 4, 2008, at
1:30 p.m.

The First Session of the Fortieth Parliament was prorogued by proclamation on Thursday, December 4, 2008.

CONTENTS

Wednesday, December 3, 2008

	PAGE		PAGE
SENATORS' STATEMENTS		Prime Minister—Notice of Inquiry.	
National Philanthropy Day		Hon. Tommy Banks	114
Hon. Terry M. Mercer	111		
Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict		QUESTION PERIOD	
Hon. Mobina S.B. Jaffer	111	House of Commons	
International Day of Persons with Disabilities		Confidence Motion—Proposed Coalition Government.	
Hon. Lorna Milne	112	Hon. James S. Cowan	114
Convention on Cluster Munitions		Hon. Marjory LeBreton	114
Hon. Art Eggleton	112		
		Industry	
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Economic Downturn—Job Losses.	
Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan		Hon. Jane Cordy	115
Report Tabled.		Hon. Marjory LeBreton	115
Hon. Gerald J. Comeau	113		
Canada-France Interparliamentary Association		House of Commons	
Annual Meeting—September 8-15, 2008—Report Tabled.		Proposed Coalition Government—	
Hon. Lise Bacon	113	Participation of the Bloc Québécois.	
Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association		Hon. Jean-Claude Rivest	116
Visit of Economics and Security Committee Sub-Committee		Hon. Marjory LeBreton	116
on Transatlantic Economic Relations, April 23-25, 2008—		Confidence Motion.	
Report Tabled.		Hon. Jane Cordy	116
Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk	113	Hon. Marjory LeBreton	116
Political Committee Meeting, March 31 to April 4, 2008—		Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette	117
Report Tabled.			
Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk	113	The Senate	
Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament		Introduction of New Pages.	
Systematic Application of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—		The Hon. the Speaker	117
Notice of Motion.			
Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk	113	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
State of Politics in Canada		Speech from the Throne	
Confidence Motion—Notice of Inquiry.		Motion for Adoption of Address in Reply—Debate Continued.	
Hon. James S. Cowan	113	Hon. Gerry St. Germain	118
Representative Government—Notice of Inquiry.		Hon. Lise Bacon	120
Hon. Claudette Tardif	113	Hon. Mobina S.B. Jaffer	121
International Reputation—Notice of Inquiry.		Hon. Gerald J. Comeau	123
Hon. Jane Cordy	113		
Fundamental Rights of Canadians—Notice of Inquiry.		The Estimates, 2008-09	
Hon. Joan Fraser	114	Supplementary Estimates (B)—Motion to Refer to Committee	
Economic Statement—Notice of Inquiry.		of the Whole—Debate Suspended.	
Hon. Grant Mitchell	114	Hon. Terry Stratton	124
		Motion in Amendment.	
		Hon. Terry Stratton	124



If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Publishing and Depository Services
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5