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THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, November 25, 2009

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

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE MARCEL PRUD'HOMME, P.C.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Leader of the Government, 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 Marcel Prud'homme, who will be retiring from the Senate on November 30, 2009.

I would remind honourable senators that, pursuant to our rules, each senator will be allowed three minutes and may speak only once.

Is it agreed, honourable senators, that Senators' Statements will continue with tributes to Senator Prud'homme, P.C., and that Senator Prud'homme will reserve his comments until the end of the time provided for consideration of Senators' Statements?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: We will therefore have 30 minutes, not including the time allotted for Senator Prud'homme's response.

Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

[*English*]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, over four and a half decades after his first election to the House of Commons and sixteen and a half years after he was summoned to the Senate, today we bid farewell to the dean of Parliament, our esteemed colleague, Senator Marcel Prud'homme.

Senator Prud'homme's many contributions to Parliament over the course of his distinguished career are too numerous to list in the few moments allotted. At home and abroad, he has been rightfully recognized for his commitment to dialogue and friendship between people and to fostering cooperative relations between Canada and other countries. In everything he has done in Parliament and beyond, Senator Prud'homme has demonstrated deep devotion to his province and to our country, and he has been unafraid to speak out on behalf of the issues and interests dearest to his heart, no matter what the personal cost. I am absolutely certain that retirement from this chamber will not diminish those passionate beliefs in the slightest.

I have been fortunate to know Senator Prud'homme for a long time. I have fond memories of our conversations over the prospect and then the reality of his appointment to the Senate by his good friend and admirer, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney. The headline of a newspaper article earlier this year stated that the senator is "his own man." Honourable senators, who could argue with that assessment? Marcel Prud'homme is a delightful, intelligent and charming man, who is fiercely proud and protective of his independence. He truly does have a formidable intellect and a light heart. For all of these qualities and many more, he will be greatly missed.

Honourable senators, it is impossible to imagine anyone as active as Senator Prud'homme settling into a quiet, uneventful retirement. Would any of us be surprised to learn at some future date that Senator Prud'homme has announced his intentions to run again for a seat in the other place — or, perhaps, this one? Perhaps he might take on a new challenge in political life and jump into provincial or municipal affairs, or maybe there will be a completely different path awaiting him. With Senator Prud'homme, any of these scenarios is entirely possible. Simply put, there is no one else quite like Senator Marcel Prud'homme. This chamber and the Parliament of Canada as a whole will not be the same without him.

On behalf of all your friends and Conservative friends here in the Senate of Canada, I wish you good health, great happiness and many more adventures.

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, we have all watched in awe in recent years as Senator Prud'homme celebrated one after another extraordinary milestone in his political life. Nine months ago, we saluted his forty-fifth anniversary as a Canadian parliamentarian. He is one of the longest-serving parliamentarians in our nation's history, elected nine times by the people of Saint-Denis to serve in the other place as a Liberal member of Parliament and then serving over 16 years here in the Senate. It is a remarkable achievement and a profound contribution to Canada.

It is difficult to believe that today we are rising to wish him well on his retirement.

Senator Prud'homme, you have brought to this place a depth of knowledge acquired over a lifetime of public service — knowledge of the sometimes arcane-seeming rules and procedures not just of the Senate but of the other place as well, and a deep knowledge of Canada — our history and the integral part Parliament plays within that history — and Canadian values and principles. You have dedicated your life to upholding those values and principles here at home and internationally, raising questions that have not always been comfortable or welcomed, to which you simply responded, "Well, that makes the raising of them all the more important."

Many of us believe that the independence of the Senate and its members represent probably the highest virtue of this institution and the wisdom of the Fathers of Confederation. Senator Prud'homme, you exemplify that independence.

You were the only Liberal summoned by Prime Minister Mulroney to the Senate. Mr. Mulroney made 56 other appointments to this chamber — 55 sat as Progressive Conservatives, and Senator Waters came here as an elected member of the Reform Party. You alone chose to sit as an independent, which takes some courage and is not without its difficulties.

More than where you have sat in this chamber, it has been by your actions and statements that you have most upheld that principle of independence.

You have not walked without provoking controversy and disagreement at times, but that goes with the territory of speaking your convictions. You and I have not always agreed on everything, but I have invariably learned and gained from our discussions and your interventions.

When we marked your forty-fourth anniversary as a parliamentarian, Senator Jaffer quoted the words of Martin Luther King: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

Senator Prud'homme, you have lived your life according to those wise words. I hope you never stay silent.

Parliament Hill truly will not be the same without you. You may be retiring from the Senate, but I refuse to believe that you are leaving your political life behind. For the benefit of Canadians, I hope you will continue to engage in the many critical issues on which you have so much knowledge and so much more to contribute.

My very best wishes for a long, happy and fulfilling "next stage" of your life.

• (1340)

[Translation]

Hon. Terry Stratton: Honourable senators, it is my great honour to pay tribute to Senator Marcel Prud'homme. Senator Prud'homme began his career when he was first elected in Saint-Denis on February 10, 1964, at the age of 29. Now, after nearly 46 years of service to our country, as his career is about to come to a close next week on his birthday, we bid farewell to a tireless colleague and a friend.

Marcel was a popular member of Parliament, winning nine consecutive general elections. In 1993, after 29 years in the House of Commons, he was appointed to the Senate on the recommendation of the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney.

The Prime Minister made a good choice. Senator Prud'homme sat as an independent, expressing his opinions unconstrained by partisan politics and making a positive contribution to our debates. During his time in the Senate, he was a perfect gentleman.

[Senator Cowan]

Marcel Prud'homme is a long-time defender of the Arab community, both here in Canada and abroad. His many awards and honours include an honorary doctorate from Algiers University that, according to the Embassy of Algeria,

... will consecrate ... his work of rapprochement and dialogue among people, and his defence of human rights.

In 1992, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney honoured Senator Prud'homme's parliamentary career by appointing him to the Privy Council. Recently, he was awarded Russia's highest civilian honour, the Order of Friendship, in recognition of his efforts to bring our two countries together.

He reached out to many communities and offered them his experience, which was always appreciated.

But the strongest evidence of just how much he means to people came from his own community in Montreal, where he was recently the subject of articles in *Le Progrès Villeray*, *Nouvelles Parc-Extension* and *The Métropolitain*. Today, he is, as he has always been, highly respected and much admired.

It is hard to imagine this chamber, or indeed Canada's Parliament, without Marcel Prud'homme. He will truly be missed.

To your health, Marcel!

[English]

Hon. David P. Smith: Honourable senators, it is an honour for me to rise and pay tribute to my friend Senator Marcel Prud'homme as he nears his retirement. I can truly say that I have known him since before he was an MP, and that was over 45 years ago. I have regarded him as a friend ever since.

In those early days we were all members of the Young Liberals of Canada. There were all these characters. Jim Coutts was the national president and Michel Robert was Chief Justice of Quebec. Marcel was also very involved. I remember a conference in Montreal when even Senator Grafstein was on the executive. Those days were long ago, but we bond in our youth and we establish friendships that last a lifetime.

Marcel and I also served in caucus together in the House of Commons. He was there much longer than I, but I was there with Mr. Trudeau for a while.

I have always regarded Marcel as a small-l social liberal. Although he arrived in the Senate as an independent, I know that deep in his soul a good old Liberal still exists.

I will always think of you that way, Marcel, and I know you do not mind that.

When I think of Marcel, I think of him as warm, friendly and smiling 98 per cent of the time. I will not talk about the 2 per cent. To me, Marcel personifies old Montreal. I always loved the description Maurice Chevalier used to have of himself when he called himself a boulevardier. Marcel is a boulevardier. He is outgoing, jovial and gives out good vibes.

I know that Marcel flirts with running for office again. There could be a third, fourth or fifth chapter. Who knows?

I could speak extensively about the time that Senator Kinsella, Senator Prud'homme, Senator Nancy Ruth and I were in Libya together two or three years ago, but I will resist. Can you picture the four of us out there in the middle of a desert, in a tent, with a bonfire, in front of Kadhafi's tent, with camels in the background? It just does not get any better than that. There are stories there, but I will not go down that road.

Quite apart from the fact that Marcel is a fun person to be with, he is also a very hard worker. Senator Stratton already referred to his work on human rights. Marcel has a tremendous track record there. When I would sometimes leave my office at ten o'clock at night, I cannot tell you how many times the lights in his office would still be on. I am sure Marcel was working hard, although the odd time he might have been having a late nightcap with his friends.

Marcel, you will be missed. I know that we will still see you around, and I want you to know that the door to my office is always open. There is an empty desk if you need a telephone. We might sample a little fruit of the vineyard from time to time.

All the best to my favourite Montreal boulevardier, a great parliamentarian, the dean. We will miss you, but you just keep coming back.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Claude Nolin: Honourable senators, it is with great respect and no end of humility that I join my colleagues in paying tribute to my friend, Senator Marcel Prud'homme.

Time inevitably marches on, and we have no choice but to face the fact that, yes indeed, the time has come for our friend to retire. You may have noticed that I deliberately avoided saying, "he is leaving us to retire." I have a hard time imagining the two houses of Parliament without him in one of them.

Indeed, for nearly half a century, he has literally inhabited Parliament Hill; or should I say, Parliament Hill has inhabited Senator Prud'homme. He knows everything about it; the history, large and small, of this place, this focal point of Canadian politics. Nothing has ever escaped him.

It is only his seat that he is leaving. I am sure he will remain a fixture in the halls of Parliament.

Being a man of conviction, he has faced more than his share of opposition from people who found it easier to remain silent and settle for compromise. Some such people will be pleased that it is time for him to retire. Once again, Marcel, they are wrong.

Marcel adores controversy, especially when he instigates it. Controversy stimulates and invigorates him. It energizes him. In fact, he cannot live without it.

• (1350)

A man of the people, he listened to them and understood their dreams, all the while respecting the core values that his father, Hector, instilled in him at a very young age.

The people of La Petite-Patrie considered him one of their own and they never hesitated to place their fate in his hands.

In spite of the hordes of political invaders of all stripes who on occasion eyed an illusory victory in his riding — and I can personally attest to that — his people, capably rallied by "his women," renewed their support for what has been one of the longest and most fruitful parliamentary adventures in the annals of Canada.

A family man, Marcel has outlived all his brothers and sisters, but remains the guide, I would even say the confidant, certainly the patriarch of the survivors and descendants of one of Montreal's oldest families.

He is a man who is proud of his French-Canadian heritage and who never acquiesced, let alone submitted, to those who opposed what made him unique and different.

Last of all, he is a man of love and friendship. His circle of friends is so large that that must be how, despite himself, he avoided the vagaries of married life.

I cannot conclude this brief tribute without mentioning that Marcel likes to recall historical events in which he participated along with the distinguished men and women who influenced him and altered the course of Canadian and international history.

You do not spend almost fifty years in political life without crossing paths with very remarkable people.

Marcel, I know that retirement was never something you sought. For that reason I prefer to wish you continued good health so that you may finish what you started. To your continued good health in your future endeavours.

Until we meet again!

[*English*]

Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein: Honourable senators, I rise to pay homage to my old friend, Marcel Prud'homme. When I look around this chamber, I see two senators who have known me the longest, David Smith and Marcel Prud'homme, although I have known Senator Smith longer.

I first met Marcel in 1961 in Montreal when I was President of the Toronto District Young Liberals Association and English-speaking Vice-President of the National Liberal Federation. I met Marcel when we came from Toronto to ask: What does Quebec want? That was the subject matter. Marcel then came to Toronto.

We were the first to ask what Quebec wanted and that question has reverberated through this chamber and Parliament ever since. I still do not know what Quebec wants, but I think I can sum it up in one word — more. I learned that from Marcel.

I made a careful investigation of Marcel after I met him. He was quite an interesting character. He was a military officer as I was; he was a Liberal as I was; he was a strong federalist as I was. I think when it came to social policy, I was to the left of Marcel. However, Marcel became my greatest fan. Whenever I made a speech after I came to the Senate — Marcel was in the other place — he would come to listen.

I will miss you, Marcel. I will miss your surveillance, your monitoring, your debate, your interference, your delays — all the great things that an independent senator has. I will miss that.

Having said all that, Marcel, this life is full of strange ups and downs. The other day, Marcel came to me, put his arm around me and he said, “You know, Jerry, you and I aren’t so different after all.” I appreciate that because I now believe that I am a member of the distinctive society of Quebec if I am no different than Marcel. I believe that I am as distinctive as he is and I accept the fact that he and I have had visceral and deep differences of opinion.

However, the beauty of this chamber, as others have said, is that this is a place for people to be heard and to use their independence to speak aloud. I have tried to use that while I have been here and Marcel has done the same. He has been truly an independent and contributed to the independence of this chamber. Democracy depends on independence. In that sense, I commend him for his efforts over the years.

Hon. Lowell Murray: Honourable senators, it is too bad Senator Prud’homme spent so great a part of his parliamentary career in the House of Commons. He is one of those rare people who was made for the Senate and the Senate for him. He is, in the words of Shakespeare, “to the manner born.” One can easily imagine him in the days of ancient Rome clad in a toga dispensing wisdom to his peers.

Our late colleague, Senator Maurice Riel, and I had the pleasure of introducing him to the Senate in May 1993. This is not something we or Brian Mulroney, the Prime Minister who caused him to be summoned, have ever had cause to regret.

He well understands that parliamentary activity is, in the words of a former colleague, “a team sport.” The system could not function with 105 independent senators. Still, there is room for a limited number of non-aligned senators and Senator Prud’homme has amply demonstrated the “value-added” such a person can bring to the Senate. At the same time — and this is one of his most admirable qualities — our friend’s instinct for collegiality and generosity emerges even when defending, passionately as he does, his most cherished causes or his most improbable strategies.

[Translation]

We are all grateful for his tremendous contribution to Parliament and to Canada since 1964. He is leaving with our utmost admiration and respect.

Hon. Lucie Pépin: Honourable senators, the dean of Canada’s Parliament, the Honourable Senator Prud’homme, is leaving us next week. We are losing a colleague, but more importantly, we are saying farewell to a friend.

[Senator Grafstein]

I will not speak at length about the exceptional political career of this institution of Canada’s Parliament. However, I would be remiss if I did not thank him for his contribution to creating a world that is more tolerant and more committed to dialogue for peace.

Both inside and outside this Parliament, Marcel always fought for the rights and freedoms of multicultural communities, especially Arab communities.

He used parliamentary diplomacy to invite people to spend time together, to get to know one another and to listen to one another in order to better understand each other.

Senator Prud’homme worked at bringing people together by reaching out, establishing parliamentary associations or taking a firm stand that left no one indifferent.

Our distinguished colleague does not like conformity or doublespeak. To our great delight, he chose to use his way with words in order to act on his convictions.

He has the spontaneity of a good and generous person. Although he is a passionate man, there is never a hint of ill will in his words or actions.

He is always up for a chat or a serious discussion and has always been committed to building bridges. Senator Prud’homme speaks with ease to politicians of all political stripes and even tries to bring them together around the same table.

He has legendary people skills, and no one is too humble to merit his attention. In fact, the senator has all the qualities of a good confessor. Nothing much could stop him; he always got to the bottom of things. I am speaking from experience, since I sat with him on the same benches in 1984.

My dear colleague, at 75, you are still young and full of energy. You are still just as passionate as ever about the causes that are so dear to you. I am certain that will not change any time soon.

My dear friend, after 29 years as a member of Parliament and 16 years as a senator, you are entitled to a well-deserved rest.

• (1400)

But I know you well enough that I would not be shocked or too surprised to see you run for a seat in the House of Commons again. You really did touch the hearts of your former constituents, who adore you. But once we reach a certain age, we are not as lively as we once were. I know that you will continue to be involved, so I advise you to take it easy and to transition into volunteer work.

Good luck. I wish you well.

Hon. Jean-Claude Rivest: Honourable senators, I was tempted to start my speech with our friend Marcel Prud’homme’s famous expression, “I will be brief.” Naturally, Marcel sometimes got carried away and broke that promise. I would like to echo what all the honourable senators have said about the extraordinary career of our friend Marcel.

I want to speak about only two or three important points. I want to point out above all that as we watched his career in politics, me from Quebec City and my colleagues from here in Ottawa, it was clear that Marcel Prud'homme had unshakable faith in Parliament, in the voice of the people, and in limiting and exercising control over executive power. This is very important to the evolution of our institutions. I think that through his actions in Parliament, Marcel Prud'homme showed how important this was. Parliamentary institutions are subject to criticism, and rightly so, and Marcel Prud'homme made a remarkable contribution to enhancing our institution. That is certainly one of the greatest achievements of his career, and everyone should be grateful to him for that.

A second thing, which everyone has more or less alluded to, is that I always had great admiration for Marcel Prud'homme's courage — as a senator and as a member of Parliament — in bringing the hopes, the suffering and the ambitions of the Palestinian people to the attention of our Parliament. I know that in some respects, this created some enemies and certainly closed some doors for him. But I think he always acted with a great deal of dignity, and with this terrible conflict still ongoing, it was very important for a parliamentarian of Marcel Prud'homme's stature to bring this issue to the attention of our institutions. It was one point of view, but it needed to be heard, and Marcel Prud'homme had the courage to speak up throughout his career, and I thank him for that.

Lastly I would like to point out — as other honourable senators have mentioned — since he is from Montreal, one simply has to travel around the city of Montreal to realize that Marcel Prud'homme, member of Parliament and senator, understood one thing very clearly: that he was serving his fellow citizens. He must have dealt with dozens, thousands, tens of thousands of cases, and for him, each case, no matter how small, every concern expressed by his fellow citizens was the most important thing in the world. Go to Montreal, go visit his constituents, and you will see how appreciative they are.

Marcel, I wish you continued success and good health. You have our heartfelt admiration.

[English]

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, I would like to join today in paying tribute to our colleague, Senator Marcel Prud'homme, who will soon be retiring after 16 years in the Senate.

Senator Prud'homme was brought up in a family of 12 children, the son of a prominent doctor in Montreal. Both his parents were involved politically. His father was elected as a municipal councillor and active in the multicultural community. His mother was also politically active. I am told that, sometimes, she was active in causes that ran counter to his father. Senator, we can certainly understand your independent streak.

Before his time in this chamber, Senator Prud'homme distinguished himself as a member of Parliament. As has been said, he was first elected in 1964 and re-elected eight more

times. That he was sent to Ottawa for almost three decades is certainly a mark of the respect and esteem in which he was held by his constituents.

Many senators have already spoken about his contribution to the many committees in the other place and in the Senate, and the honours he has received.

I want to say, Senator Prud'homme, that your presence in this chamber has brought even more thoughtfulness to our debates. You have always spoken your mind with knowledge and great skill.

I had the opportunity to serve with Senator Prud'homme on the executive of the Canada-Cuba Parliamentary Friendship Group. I was impressed with his knowledge of the country and other countries around the world.

Senator Prud'homme has been a parliamentarian for 16,726 days. That is a long while. It is a tremendous record of service to his home province of Quebec and to his country.

At the end of this month, you will be leaving us, but I am sure that you will not be idle. Senator, I know you always speak very fondly about your last trip to Prince Edward Island. Therefore, I want you to know that you are welcome to come again, and I wish you all the best in the future.

[Translation]

Hon. Andrée Champagne: Dear Marcel, when I arrived on Parliament Hill in September 1984, I knew very few people. Of course there were some people who, because of their continued presence for such a long time, seemed to be veritable fixtures, people whom I had seen on television or in the newspaper, and whom I watched with my rookie eyes, hoping to learn a lot and quickly.

I used to see a tall man on the other side of the hall, the honourable member for Saint-Denis, always calm, composed and incredibly polite. Whenever I met him in the hall, his manner of greeting left me with the impression that, had we lived in earlier times, he would have kissed my hand. Strangely, he always seemed a little out of place, next to the members of the so-called "rat pack," who were always loudly disagreeable.

The years passed and I became Deputy Speaker of the green chamber, located at the other end of the hall. If my memory serves, Marcel Prud'homme is one of the rare individuals who did not call me "Mister." I was always "Madam Speaker" or, when he was speaking French, simply "Madame."

On several occasions, I was in the Speaker's chair during the last day of a session and I soon learned that Marcel Prud'homme would be there all day. He might leave for a while, but he always came back and that has not changed. He still does that. But at the end of the day, he was there. I also learned that at some point in the afternoon, he would approach the chair and ask me to check the list of speakers.

"Madam Speaker, do you suppose there might be enough time for me to have the floor?" More often than not, I was able to give him the pleasure of being the last speaker of the session. Then he

would rise and begin a long and eloquent speech with a kind of grandiloquence that he alone has mastered. On such occasions, he found a way to create a dilemma for me. Regardless of the subject at hand, he found a way to talk, most expressively, about Lebanon, his land of milk and honey. Of course, he was always off-topic with that.

Late one afternoon in June, when I could rightfully have called him on the relevance of his remarks, I let him talk until it was time to leave. At least one person was happy that day: Marcel Prud'homme.

When I first came to the Senate, I found that he was always true to form, and now he is concluding 45 years of parliamentary life seated to my left, on the side of my heart. Marcel, without you, Parliament Hill as we know it will no longer be quite the same. Without you, who will make us smile and feel rejuvenated?

We will miss you so much, Marcel. Thank you.

• (1410)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I regret to inform you that the allotted time for tributes has expired. However, I have the great honour of calling on the Honourable Marcel Prud'homme, P.C.

Hon. Marcel Prud'homme: Honourable senators, I am so much more comfortable with attacks than compliments that I hardly know what to say. First, I wish to thank the senators who kindly spoke so flatteringly about me, undoubtedly out of the friendship and respect we have for one another.

I have something to say to each of you before I begin my speech.

[English]

Senator LeBreton, please allow me to say “Marjory”; it is not the rule, but for today, I will do so. We have so many secrets, and you will probably carry them to the end of your days.

There was the famous day that, after presiding at the Quebec Liberal caucus at 8 o'clock in the morning, I entered Brian Mulroney's office to end up in the Senate at four o'clock in the afternoon as an independent. What could have happened that day? I rejoice always, and I thank you for your friendship that dates back before that famous day.

[Translation]

Senator Cowan is a fine example of what my father used to call the perfect gentleman. When my father used to say, “that's a gentleman” or “that's a lady,” that said it all. Thank you for honouring me with your friendship.

[English]

Senator Stratton, I hope I have not been too difficult on you as the whip responsible for the nonaligned. I always tried to behave well in that office.

[Senator Champagne]

Senator Smith, yes, it is true that we have lots of secrets together, dating back to 1961 and even before. The person I will speak about in a minute forgot one person who was also immensely active at that time. Her name was Sharon Sholzberg, who became Mrs. Herb Gray. We were together in this group of young Liberals. We were very dynamic — not always agreeing, but those were the days.

As for Senator Nolin, there are so many memories that I could bring to his attention. We met the first time around the table; I cannot ask him this in English but I will say it in French, slowly — visualize 1980, at a long table —

[Translation]

. . . the federalist forces for the first referendum . . .

[English]

Mr. Claude Ryan on one side; Jean Chrétien, Jean Marchand and myself for the Liberal federalists; Senator Nolin on the other side, representing the Conservatives; and Camille Samson — I always have difficulty pronouncing his name. This was an unbelievable team, and we got to know each other that day.

I think that is the day that Senator Nolin discovered the famous secret of the famous Liberal machine. He discovered that there was some sand in the machine that day. I think he used it very well thereafter.

As for Senator Grafstein, I always said that he and I do not agree on only one matter. I do not like to talk about things where we do not agree because it is not necessary. However, he raised it. He asked: What does Quebec want? Well, I will tell him later; but if he thinks the Senate will miss me, imagine what the Orders of the Day will be when he leaves very soon. We will keep in touch.

Senator Murray, I want to thank you again for having had the courtesy of introducing me to the Senate. It was a big, tough day. Some people wanted to stay away from me but I succeeded in getting Senator Riel, a very pleasant ex-Speaker of this chamber, to accompany Senator Murray, as I thought it was the only way to come into this honourable chamber.

I was offered this nice flower by Senator Pépin when I entered today. Thank you very much. We sat together in the House of Commons and we are now here.

Senator Callbeck, there are so many memories that we have. You have been a lady. You knew my sister Rita, who was in your province, and you treated her very well. I thank you for that.

[Translation]

Senator Champagne, my loyal seat mate who is so patient, it is true that I am seated close to your heart, and when I finish the speech I have to give, I will give you my flower.

Senator Champagne: And I will sing *Carmen* to you.

Senator Prud'homme: To paraphrase Voltaire, I am sorry if my speech is too long. I have not got the time to write a shorter one.

[English]

Honourable senators, as you have heard in the very kind remarks made earlier, I have been a proud parliamentarian for close to 46 years. That experience was amazing, there is no doubt. I loved every minute of it and I remember it all. However, I would like to begin by sharing with you some thoughts, not about the past but about the future.

I will start with this because Parliament is all about the future. It is about trying to make Canada a better place for those who follow. It is about seeing what we are and, more importantly, what we can be.

[Translation]

People who know me well expect that I will be talking about the past, about my life as an activist in student movements, at both the University of Ottawa and the University of Montreal. Some people expect me to talk about peak moments in my long time in this Parliament, where I have sat with the Right Honourable Prime Ministers, from Mr. Diefenbaker to Mr. Harper.

But I am going to be perverse, and surprise you. I do not intend to relive past glories. The past is the past. If I were to go back in time, I would undoubtedly, as the French writer Saint-Simon did, pen a few volumes of keenly felt memories. And rest assured that I am not ruling that out.

What I am going to talk to you about today is the future, the role of our country in the world, the role that Canada can and must play to help quell political crises and alleviate the suffering of too many of our fellow human beings. As you know, these have been my concerns throughout my life in politics. I have always been convinced of the special, unique, singular, original and positive role that Canada must play in the world.

In the 21st century, it is important that we not underestimate our influence. In fact, when I seem to see a certain withdrawing from international affairs, I do not understand this.

• (1420)

And so I will ask, in fact I will urge, parliamentarians to devote more time and effort to international issues. There is no point in telling you how thrilled I am today that the Prime Minister decided to go to China, India and South Korea. I also hope he will continue the start he has made and will do a similar tour of the Middle East in the very near future. And I would be very honoured to accompany him.

Parliamentarians should never hesitate to make contacts with foreign leaders, with their colleagues, to gain a better understanding of the hugely complex realities in the world we live in. That is why we have interparliamentary associations. You have to use them wisely. This is essential if you are to do your job well. It is essential to the future of Canada.

We have a reputation, a way of doing things, that focuses firmly on respect for human rights, and we are known as a middle power that is respected and well regarded in all regions of the world.

It is all very well to keep increasing the defence budget, but there has to be a clear idea of the role we want to play in the world. Once we have decided that, we will be better able to decide our priorities. Let me add here that I encourage all my colleagues to participate in the discussion around the motion of Senators Eaton and Gerstein that is currently on the Order Paper.

You know that for all these years, Canada's foreign policy has been the central focus of my political career. Unfortunately, I have seen Canada's influence in the world decline. I am deeply saddened by this.

There are many examples. To illustrate my concerns, I will give you just a few examples. There is the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Ten years ago, Canada was the central player in the ratification of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We should do the same about the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which has not been ratified yet.

The other major issues I have worked on include nuclear disarmament. In spite of the years that have passed, my memory of the dark events at Hiroshima and Nagasaki has never dimmed.

We do not have 56 possible solutions to the nuclear problem. Ridding the world of nuclear weapons means eliminating the nuclear weapons in the hands of all powers, be they large, medium or small. This problem will never be solved if we do not call, first, for Pakistan, India, North Korea and Israel to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

I will also tell you that we will never make progress in this area by threatening certain countries with sanctions. On the contrary, sanctions and military strikes will do nothing except give those countries additional incentive to engage in an ever more furious arms race.

My esteemed father, Dr. Hector Prud'homme, always told me that there could be no justice on this earth if it was not the same for everyone. If justice is grounded in a genuine vision of human rights, it must be universal.

That is why, and I will say this again, the only way for Canada to play a leading role in the world on this issue is to promote and practise extreme dialogue, to never give up when met with refusal or rejection. As the poet said, we must keep doing it until we get it right. You have to talk to your enemies until ultimately they are moved by your tenacity. While many of my colleagues in politics were tangled in confrontation strategies during the Cold War and other crises, I persevered, throughout my career, on the path of building bridges with people that some treated like the wretched of the earth, despite the gulfs between us. It is not rare for yesterday's enemies to become today's allies.

[English]

On March 22, 1775, just a year before the United States decided upon independence, noted British politician, author, statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke was one who

promoted conciliation saying: "... every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue and every prudent act, is founded on compromise . . ." Compromise is a concept that has deep roots in parliamentary democracy.

Many people in other countries do not understand our Canadian ability to find solutions based on compromise. Some find the entire concept of compromise confusing. Although I feel sorry for them, I hope they will see the example that Canada provides and consider the alternatives.

As we go forward, it is important to remember that dialogue has been the key to our success. People need to talk to one another. They need to understand one another. It is only when we understand one another that we find solutions.

What we have achieved through the process of dialogue and compromise exceeds the wildest dreams of a vast part of the population of the world. It is through our ability to find common ground, to find solutions and to find compromise that Canada will continue to grow and prosper. We need to continue along this path and we need to share our success with others.

[Translation]

It was President Lincoln who said that we build too many walls and not enough bridges.

I myself have often said, to give just one example, that if we want to forestall a new wave of nuclear armament proliferation on this planet, particularly with countries like Iran or North Korea joining the company, there was only one intelligent, sensible way of broaching the question. And that is, we must start thinking of Iran and North Korea not as part of the problem, but as part of the solution.

Do you imagine if the Soviets and Americans had not been talking to each other during the Euromissile crisis of the 1980s we would still be here today talking about the future of the world? Those two powers, undoubtedly also motivated by the fear of irremediable accidents, had the wisdom to see the imminent danger lying in wait for humanity; they realized that one of the risks they were facing was that some slight provocation by a third party could have led to the destruction of the human species.

The rule in politics and diplomacy is a simple one. When enemies talk, there is a reduction in the intolerance they feel toward each other.

[English]

Dialogue will reduce the tension and will allow each of us to understand the other's position a little better; to refine our understanding of complex issues, to better explain our own position; to understand our counterparts' reactions, and, perhaps, to see how we could use trade to dispel some of that tension, for example. On the other hand, an approach based on coercion and sanctions plays into the hands of the fringe elements in some regimes — the extremists, not to say the lunatics and the fanatics.

[Translation]

It is my fervent hope that Canada will fill the unique role that has fallen to it in the world, by unfailingly taking the healthy and essential approach of engaging in the dialogue that is needed to guarantee that humanity will have a future.

[Senator Prud'homme]

• (1430)

Remember that to me, dialogue is not an admission of weakness, it is the complete opposite.

Take the situation in the Middle East; that cancer that has gnawed at the world for half century, as in fact I predicted it would early in my career. As I speak, nothing has been resolved, and it seems that nothing will be resolved; is this not evidence that we have been going down the wrong path?

But the solution to the conflict can be found in the very international agreements that Canada not only contributed to getting adopted, but drafted. Why have we not been consistent with our own actions? Why have we not made Resolution 181, which was inspired by and in large part drafted by Canadian Ivan Rand, a justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, and argued for by Lester B. Pearson, who was then Secretary of State for External Affairs, the beacon and banner of our foreign policy?

The Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau always told me: "Marcel, the spirit of Resolution 181 is the foundation of Canada's foreign policy on this issue, and never deviate from it."

All my life, I have defended the foreign policy of my country on that question. I repeat, all my life, I have defended the foreign policy of Canada on that question. All my life there have been people who have criticized me for that.

I call on you to be courageous, so that you can do what is necessary to put an end to one of the greatest injustices of our time. I say to you: government and parliamentarians should get involved without fear. All the players in this conflict have to see reason. We cannot remain silent.

Since I have been talking about dialogue, I would like to offer an aside to express my disappointment, here in Parliament, at the absence of dialogue among parliamentarians. Here we are, parliamentarians, seeing each other virtually every day, but we too often seem to be allergic to making the effort, in a spirit of collaboration and friendship, to initiate discussions with our political counterparts.

In fact, I brought up that very thing in my first speech in the House of Commons on March 2, 1964.

Forty-five years later, I still call on members and senators to set aside their partisan differences so they can talk to each other more often and know each other better.

A word also about Senate reform, a word is not enough but I will be brief. On this I have always said that I favoured intelligent, thoughtful reform of the Senate, a job that will take much time and much effort.

Do we want an elected Senate, without considering the exorbitant cost of such an exercise — hundreds of millions? Do we want to make that change without examining the profound and fundamental effects it would have on the exercise of

legislative power in this country? Do we want change without considering what the consequences would be for the House of Commons? Do we want extensive reform, but we don't want to reopen the Constitution?

I do believe, on the other hand, my dear colleagues, that the House of Commons, that pinnacle of partisanship, needs reforms. I believe it with passion and I say it with a great deal of humility and respect as a former member of that chamber.

There is another reform needed in the Senate, this one essential and vastly more important than an elected Senate. You know what it is; it is another of my chief interests: to make the Senate an example of equality between men and women. I will say it again, as I have said before in this chamber: the underrepresentation of women in politics is unacceptable in our society as we move into the 21st century.

I would remind honourable senators that since 1930, when women won the right to be appointed to the Senate, there have been only 82 female senators in this chamber. I have known 80 of them. Mackenzie King appointed the first woman to the Senate in 1930. He stopped there. Bennett appointed only one, Saint-Laurent four, Diefenbaker a mere two, Pearson one, Mr. Clark one, and Mr. Trudeau appointed twelve. Mr. Turner, none — he hardly had time —, Mr. Mulroney 13, Ms. Campbell, none and Mr. Chrétien — who did something meaningful in this regard and I applaud him here — took the innovative and audacious step of appointing 33 women to the Senate. Mr. Martin appointed six women to the Senate, and Mr. Harper, who is on the right track, eight. And I hope he will top the list.

And yet all that is needed from the Prime Minister is a gesture — a gesture that would in fact be hugely popular — to ensure that gradually, as senators retire, this chamber might have as many women as men: 53 women and 52 men. As you know, we have 35 women sitting among us today.

I am not telling you anything new when I say that equality between men and women is a dearly held value in our society and a very strong expression of our democratic values. It is more difficult to achieve parity between men and women in the House of Commons, given that the make-up of the House depends on the popular vote. In order for that to happen there must be some sort of attitude shift. Since 1921, only 216 women have been elected to the Commons. I am not that old, and I have known 209 of those women.

The way to give the women of this country the place they deserve is to start with the Senate. Some will say that I am dreaming. To them I say: I hope not, for the future of this country. When we stop dreaming, we cease to exist. And if that dream comes true, we will have a critical mass of women in this Parliament who will be of enormous help in finding women all across Canada who could stand for election to the House of Commons.

[English]

On another subject, I will tell you that in recent years I have not been insensitive to the huge question of the environment. This is becoming one of the main issues in politics today. I would not forgive myself if, before I leave, I did not appeal for unity in this country on this issue.

Winston Churchill once said, "National unity does not mean national unanimity." The economic torch has, in many ways, been passed to the West. Alberta, in particular, will lead the country forward for the next decade based on fossil fuel. Such prosperity calls for Albertans to be generous beyond Alberta's borders, to undertake a deliberate and compassionate act of will — call it nation-building.

• (1440)

At the same time, we in the rest of Canada must also be generous in our sympathetic understanding of the environmental costs associated with fossil fuel prosperity. We must also not forget the environmental cost of our own resource industries. As an example, a major hydroelectricity dam causes many adverse effects on the natural order.

I call on Canadians from all parts of Canada to engage with one another day by day, agreement by agreement, sympathetic understanding by sympathetic understanding.

I have always said that Canada is a country in the making every day. It takes a lot of sensitivity to do so, to understand each other, from coast to coast to coast. We are a unique country.

We have struggled with many issues over the years. We struggled and decided to be a bilingual country. We struggled and decided to be a multicultural country. What will tomorrow be?

I remember well the flag debate. I voted for it in December 1964. I also remember the national anthem debate. Those were the great days of Lester B. Pearson.

What was required was the ability to reason with one another intelligently, to enter into vigorous, open debate, to be prepared to fully investigate complex and potentially divisive issues. After all that, we found ways to meet one another at the halfway point. We found ways to satisfy everyone, at least in part. We found the way to compromise.

[Translation]

To live together in this country, I think we have to get back to what was the primary motivation for the founding fathers, when they imagined and gave birth to our federation.

Before I leave you, I want to tell you that I sincerely believe that the Victoria accords in 1971 under the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the Meech Lake Accord under the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney were a step toward greater understanding on each of our parts, of all of the rest of us, rising above our differences and distinctive natures. I am thinking of the alliance that Brian Mulroney so ably built between Alberta and Quebec, between Conservatives of different stripes.

[English]

Honourable senators, Canada is a human experience. That Canadian experience, the experience that is talked about everywhere in the world, has to be a real experience. Honourable senators have all travelled around the globe and

know what people think of us; but let me ask this today: Do we really deserve to be thought of as we are? Do we really deserve it? Do we really live up to other people's image of us?

Imagine if this human experience did not work out. How then could other countries, less advantaged and more riddled by internal political strife than we, have a chance of working it out?

[Translation]

Imagine if this human experience did not work out. How then could other countries, less advantaged than us, have a chance of working it out?

So we have a responsibility to make this federation work, a responsibility not just to Canadians, but to the other nations on this globe.

[English]

We have to find a common denominator in this country, so that no province feels excluded and so that no Canadian feels excluded. To help advance the discussion, allow me humbly to submit a question for which I will not give an answer. That will be up to honourable senators.

Do people from Quebec who come to Ottawa — and I am thinking specifically of parliamentarians — feel comfortable? In their heart of hearts, do they really feel comfortable?

[Translation]

Do they feel at home, here in Ottawa? I am asking you only one thing, think about it!

I could not conclude this farewell speech, Your Honour, without talking about my concerns for our youth today. What are we passing on to our youth? What legacy are we preparing for the people who will be replacing us tomorrow? It seems to me that we could be doing more to prepare our young people to face this complex world. Three weeks ago, I had the pleasure of meeting with a delegation of young Ukrainians in my office, as part of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program. This program enables those young people to become familiar with the Canadian parliamentary system.

I see no reason why Canada would not put this kind of initiative in place for young Canadians, to go to other places, to other parliaments, and learn about how they work, and perhaps to humbly share the human experience, the Canadian experience.

And last, there are a lot of people to whom I would like to offer my thanks. That is always the toughest part, because one always runs the risk of forgetting someone.

I would, of course, be remiss if I did not extend special thanks to all of the people in the administration who provide anonymously such excellent support to us as senators on a daily basis.

There are the guards who greet us so warmly when we come into the buildings. Incidentally, I am an honorary member of the Senate Protective Service and House of Commons Security Services, and I greatly appreciate that honour.

[Senator Prud'homme]

My thanks to the clerk of the Senate and the table officers, who provide such excellent, but discreet, service here in the Senate, as well as to committee clerks. Thank you also to the Senate ethics counsellor.

Then we have the Director General of the Parliamentary Precinct, the Black Rod and the pages, who have a great future ahead of them. Look at the table; perhaps one day you will end up working there like the former page who became the clerk of the Senate. I am referring to Mr. Paul Bélisle. Thank you to all these people who make everything run smoothly here. And let us not forget the interpreters, who are able to understand and translate in a moment everything we say, and the parliamentary stenographers.

And I could go on — finance, human resources, maintenance staff, Library researchers . . . Where should I stop? Every one of these people plays an essential part in ensuring that the Senate, indeed all of Parliament, functions smoothly. If I go on mentioning specifics, I am concerned that I could miss someone, and thereby offend them. That is the last thing I wish, since I have always been so thankful and aware of this support.

I also thank all the people in charge of the interparliamentary groups that have given me tremendous support. Proof of that, Your Honour, is our last mission to Albania, Malta and the Vatican, accompanied by your lovely wife, and please give her my best.

• (1450)

I also cannot forget the people who made it possible for me to be elected as the Member of Parliament for Saint-Denis for near 30 years without interruption. Many are here today in the gallery. If I begin naming names, I could risk offending many others. I salute all of them.

I also want to thank my family, who represent the next generation of Prud'hommes, and tell them how thrilled I am to finally be with them again. We are one of the oldest families in Montreal. One of the first marriages in Montreal was between Louis Prud'homme and Roberte Gadoys, on November 30, 1650, which, strangely, is my birthday. Their witnesses were Jeanne-Mance, Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve and Lambert Closse.

[English]

One asks, what does Quebec want?

[Translation]

What Quebec wants is to be itself, to remember its past and to participate in Canada as an equal. That is what Quebec seeks, what Quebec wants. We, who have been here so long, are proof of that. We want to remain who we are, while at the same time being part of this great country. That is what is important to understand.

And there are my staff, to whom I want to say thank you, particularly those who have been with me in recent years. If I may mention my last assistant in Montreal, Anita Richard, who is in attendance.

[English]

In Ottawa, there is Mohamad Barakat, my tireless and dedicated executive assistant, known to everyone in the Senate and appreciated by them all, as well as in the House of Commons, not to mention the diplomatic corps.

[Translation]

A special thanks to Dr. André Gauthier, from Montfort Hospital, and to the staff of the Ottawa Heart Institute.

I would like to express special thanks to the last whip for non-aligned senators, Senator Terry Stratton. I thank and congratulate from the bottom of my heart everyone who works to make this Parliament work, you in particular, Your Honour, and all your close associates, among them Ms. Janelle Feldstein. If the current trend continues, as Bernard Derome would say, I think that you will be the Speaker of this place for a long time to come.

I could not conclude without extending heartfelt thanks to Speaker Milliken of the House of Commons and all the Commons staff.

My dear friends, do not think that I am disappearing from view forever. What I have talked to you about today are merely a few of the subjects that will build a bridge between Senator Marcel Prud'homme and citizen Marcel Prud'homme. I will never be far away; I will be always available, and will never cease to follow and take an interest in politics, which is so dear to my heart and to which I am so deeply committed. I will be with you. You must know that.

Long live my people, the French Canadians of Quebec!

Long live Quebec!

Long live my country, Canada!

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

THE ESTIMATES, 2009-10

VOTE 10B OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B)— FOURTH REPORT OF STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT TABLED

Hon. Terry Stratton: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament concerning Vote 10b under Parliament in the Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

[Translation]

HONOURABLE MARCEL PRUD'HOMME, P.C.

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

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rules 57(2) and 58(1)(a), I move:

That the following inquiry be placed on the Notice Paper for later this day:

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

That, notwithstanding rule 37(4), during proceedings on this inquiry no senator shall speak for more than three minutes.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

POVERTY STATISTICS

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, yesterday in Question Period in the other place, the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, when dealing with the issue of child poverty, said this:

... The child poverty rate in this country is half what it was under the Liberals.

The data from Statistics Canada that I have seen indicates that when the Liberals came to power in 1993, the pre-tax child poverty rate was 21.3 per cent. By the end of the Liberal time in office,

that figure had dropped to 15.8 per cent. The last statistics available from Statistics Canada for 2007 indicate that the rate in that year was 15 per cent.

Where did Minister Finley get her figures, and how does one square that information with the information she gave to the house yesterday?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): I thank the honourable senator for the question. I am not aware of the questions asked of my colleague yesterday. I am quite certain that if she used data, the data was accurate. In order to ascertain and provide the information she was working with, I will take the question as notice.

• (1500)

INDUSTRY

STATISTICS CANADA DATA ON POVERTY AND HOUSING

Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein: Honourable senators, I raised this issue yesterday as well. Could the Leader of the Government in the Senate clarify the number of children that were below the poverty line in Canada in 2007 and the number of children that are below the poverty line today? These numbers are crucial in terms of public policy.

Today, in the *National Post* — a favourite of the government's — a letter respecting homelessness said, "Whether or not you define it as a crisis, more than one in 10 households cannot afford suitable housing."

Could the Leader of the Government in the Senate advise us how many new, subsidized, affordable housing units will be available this year compared to 2007?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): I thank the honourable senator for that question. In answer to the question yesterday, I put on the record that substantial funds have been committed to affordable housing not only for low-income Canadians but also for the homeless. I very much doubt that data for this year would be available just yet. I do not have precise figures with regard to the money that has been allocated for public housing and how many units that would translate into. However, the amount of money was significant, as I reported yesterday.

I would be happy to provide honourable senators with all of the background information and the government forecasts regarding these funds.

Concerning child poverty, as I said yesterday, the economic conditions that we are currently experiencing no doubt have put extra pressure on the system. As I also pointed out, the government is providing predictable and increasing amounts of funds to the provinces through the Canada Social Transfer to deal with this serious issue. The figure will be \$10.9 billion this year, and it grows each year. This is fixed funding, increasing 3 per cent a year and is in stark contrast to the situation in the mid-1990s when these funds were drastically slashed.

Senator Mockler: Absolutely.

HEALTH

FIRST NATIONS UNIVERSITY OF CANADA NATIONAL SCHOOL OF DENTAL THERAPY

Hon. Robert W. Peterson: Honourable senators, the condition of Aboriginal health services and higher education in Canada continues to lag far behind the national average. One can imagine my surprise when I became aware of the government's plan to cut funding to the First Nations University of Canada's National School of Dental Therapy in northern Saskatchewan at the end of the current academic year. Honourable senators, this program provides much needed training for Aboriginal Canadians in Saskatchewan and other provinces and territories and ensures that dental health professionals are present in some of our country's most remote regions.

My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. At the very moment that the government should be investing in technical programs to develop skills and better health services for First Nations people, why is the government doing just the opposite?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, I would argue strenuously that we are doing much more than has ever been done before. Minister Aglukkaq, an Aboriginal herself and a former territorial minister of health, knows the challenges facing Aboriginal communities and is committed to strengthening First Nations and Inuit health. Budget 2008 invested \$147 million in this area, and the Economic Action Plan building on this with \$305 million that was invested over two years.

As the honourable senator probably knows, on September 19, Minister Aglukkaq, Minister Strahl and the Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn Atleo signed a communications protocol specifically dealing with the H1N1 pandemic planning. This is an excellent initiative of agreement between the Minister of Health, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, and the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations to work together to deal with the serious and ongoing issues with regard to ensuring that health care services are provided to our Aboriginal communities, no matter where they live.

Senator Peterson: Honourable senators, it appears the minister is failing the First Nations people of this country. Could the leader tell me how much money will be saved by cancelling this program?

Senator LeBreton: Senator Peterson, I argue that we are not failing. Again, just because the honourable senator or anyone makes a statement like that, it does not mean it is actually factual, because it is quite incorrect.

With regard to the specific program that the honourable senator mentioned, various programs are available through Health Canada and through Indian and Northern Affairs. I will make a specific inquiry to ascertain the status of the particular program to which the senator refers.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Francis Fox: Honourable senators, I have a question for the minister. I am interested to know, in a purely non-partisan way, as is my usual fashion, what positive spin the minister might put on the fact that there are now 800,000 people on Employment Insurance in Canada, which is an increase of over 63 per cent from last year.

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, no government, no matter the political stripe — so I am answering the question in a non-partisan way — could put a positive spin on high unemployment numbers. All I can say is that the government has taken many measures, of which the honourable senator is well aware, to deal with the worldwide economic downturn. We have been commended for launching the stimulus program in order to maintain and secure jobs. We have extended EI benefits twice. We have embarked on training programs for older workers. We have embarked on a successful job-sharing program. The government has embarked upon and is delivering a host of programs in order to assist those Canadians who, through no fault of their own and because of the worldwide economic downturn, find themselves unemployed.

FINANCE

STATE OF ECONOMY

Hon. Francis Fox: Honourable senators, I have unending and boundless admiration for the minister's capacity to put a positive spin on the most disastrous economic data. Perhaps the minister can give me the positive economic spin on the fact that our national debt has risen above \$500 billion for the first time in many years.

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): As the honourable senator well knows, the Prime Minister met with other world leaders at the G20 meeting on November 15 last year. At that meeting, they all agreed on the way for all governments to help ride out this most serious economic downturn to occur in our lifetime. As a result of that meeting, the government embarked upon these programs. As the OECD and other bodies have reported, Canada is well positioned to become one of the first G20 countries to come out of this situation.

Honourable senators, the government embarked on these programs precisely because that is what was needed. As the OECD also said in their *Employment Outlook, 2009*, "Canada's fiscal stimulus package should have a relatively large effect in stemming job losses."

• (1510)

This is not a matter of political spin. This is a matter of a government facing a worldwide situation that, by all fair analysis, has been well managed. You can throw out a figure, but our debt-to-GDP ratio positions Canada well. In order to embark on a stimulus package, the government was in a position to borrow money at a relatively low interest rate. The reason it was done, as the honourable senator knows, was to help all Canadians to weather this worldwide economic downturn.

When organizations like the OECD are complimenting Canada as being the country best positioned to deal with the economic downturn, it is not political spin. It is the unvarnished opinion of a body that has no reason to make a statement unless they truly believe it.

Senator Fox: Honourable senators, I want to compliment the minister on being the champion spinner in the country. I know she has had much experience doing that.

Senator Mockler: She is giving the facts.

Senator Fox: I would like to ask the minister —

Senator Mockler: Another "iffy" question.

Senator Fox: Given the fact that the number of people on Employment Insurance has gone up — 63 per cent is a dramatic increase — given the fact that this shows the economic stimulus program brought forward by the government is not having any effect on unemployment —

Senator Oliver: That is not the case.

Senator Fox: — given the fact that unemployment will continue to rise over the next few months, would the government consider extending the infrastructure program for a few more years, instead of offering a short-term infrastructure program when this country needs a 20-year infrastructure program?

Senator LeBreton: Is this not a typical question? The opposition has been demanding every week and every month since January for us to spend more and more. The government took serious action to deal with the economic downturn. The honourable senator asks me in one breath about jobs and debt and then in the next breath to spend more.

Senator Fox: Because of the minister's spin. Even Senator Mockler agrees.

Senator LeBreton: The honourable senator is obviously —

Senator Meighen: Confused!

Senator LeBreton: — predicting very high unemployment levels.

Senator Fox: The government did not know last November either, did it now?

Senator LeBreton: No one really knows. In the whole decade of the 1990s, unemployment only fell below 9 per cent once. Who was the government then?

Senator Fox: What about last November? Was it about protecting the surplus? Senator Mockler knows that.

Senator LeBreton: This is not a condition unique to Canada. We are witnessing economic difficulties in the United States and other parts of the world. We know, unfortunately, that a result of an economic downturn such as we went through is that job recovery numbers lag behind. That has always been the case even when the honourable senator was in the government.

The government put out a two-year stimulus package. It is our intention to deliver on that package. As the Minister of Finance reported last Friday in a speech in Toronto, we are sticking to our two-year plan. When it is clear that the economy is recovering, we will then turn our attention to getting the country back in the black as quickly as possible.

Senator Mockler: Canadians are satisfied; 60 per cent, plus.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

COMMENTS OF MR. GERALD KEDDY

Hon. Elizabeth Hubley: Honourable senators, the troubling attitude of some members of the Conservative Party was revealed recently by the appalling remarks of Mr. Gerald Keddy, M.P. He attacked and derided the unemployed as being “no good.” He further implied that they were lazy and unwilling to work. He later apologized, not to unemployed persons, but only to people who were offended by his remarks.

Can the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell the Senate whether the government shares the views expressed by Mr. Keddy when he forgot himself and said what was really on his mind? Was he speaking for the government?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, the member of Parliament, Mr. Keddy, has apologized for these remarks. He stood in his place in the House of Commons and did so directly. I think it is incumbent upon all of us to accept his apology as sincere. Certainly, I did.

Senator Hubley: Mr. Keddy, from the other place, made an apology to those people who were offended by his remarks. I was offended; Atlantic Canadians were offended; all of Canada should be offended.

The leader has said that Mr. Keddy has apologized and that should be the end of the matter. However, his apology was sorely lacking. He failed to acknowledge that his statement was wrong. He did not apologize for what he said, but for offending people. The implication is that he stands by his statement. Worse, he compounded the original attack by focusing his apology only on people who lost their jobs due to the recession.

Does the government stand by Mr. Keddy when his so-called “apology” implies that his attack on the unemployed was justified and that the only thing he did wrong was create negative media attention for the government?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I saw the member of Parliament’s apology last night when watching CPAC.

Obviously, the honourable senator was offended. Mr. Keddy’s apology was intended not only for people directly affected but also for people who were offended. That is something I am sure he regrets, as he said he did. In the spirit in which his apology was offered, we should be equally generous in our acceptance of his apology.

[Senator LeBreton]

Senator Comeau: The honourable senator will simply not accept an apology, will she?

Senator Hubley: Honourable senators, in recent weeks and months with various government responses to the economic situation, we have seen a pattern consistent with Mr. Keddy’s odious views. With its changes to Employment Insurance legislation, the government has divided the unemployed into two categories: those the government judges to be deserving and those they judge to be undeserving.

Was the government inspired to take this approach because it believes that most unemployed people are no good, as Mr. Keddy says? Do recent changes to the EI program that benefit only long-term contributors reflect the belief that most unemployed persons are lazy and unwilling to work, as Mr. Keddy implied?

Senator Comeau: Those are her words.

Senator Stratton: Now she should apologize.

Senator LeBreton: I have had ridiculous questions in this place, but that must be near the top of them.

Senator Comeau: Get a new researcher.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator LeBreton: The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development has expanded the Employment Insurance program and has allowed for job retraining for people in single industry towns. This program retrains older workers and permits job-sharing, which has protected 165,000 jobs. Recent increases in Employment Insurance were directed to those long-tenured people who lost their jobs because of the economic downturn who have probably never collected insurance in their life. Those are the people working in the manufacturing sector in industries that were especially hard hit.

That is not determining two-tier employment levels; it is extending benefits to people who, through no fault of their own, found themselves without jobs.

• (1520)

Honourable senators, that in no way penalized or took anything away from people who, through no fault of their own, must more regularly access the Employment Insurance fund. For that reason, the government has invested a great deal in job retraining and job sharing and in our trades so that people can retrain.

Many people have lost jobs that will never come back. That is why the government is putting so much emphasis on new skills training. When the economic recovery is assured, these people will have access to the new jobs and those emerging as a result of new technologies.

[Translation]

DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour of presenting delayed answers to three oral questions raised in the Senate by Senator Chaput on October 22, 2009, regarding the Canadian International Development Agency, distribution of funds; by Senator Carstairs on October 27, 2009, regarding Foreign Affairs, the rights of women and female parliamentarians in Afghanistan; and by Senator Grafstein on October 29, 2009, regarding Human Resources and Skills Development, employment statistics.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY—DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

(Response to question raised by Hon. Maria Chaput on October 22, 2009)

In 2005, Canada and other members of the G-8 committed to doubling their aid to Africa by 2010; Canada has met its commitment by contributing \$2.1B to Africa in 2008-2009, one year earlier. In support of its aid effectiveness agenda, the Government decided to strengthen the geographic focus of CIDA's bilateral development assistance programs by concentrating the bulk of its bilateral aid in 20 countries of focus.

CIDA's countries of focus were selected through an objective, principle-based approach. The purpose of selecting the 20 countries is to enhance focus, efficiency and accountability of Canadian long-term aid investments in a number of countries, including African countries. They were assessed based on the following criteria:

1. **Recipient needs (poverty/vulnerability)** were assessed in terms of:
 - Absolute poverty (percentage of people living on less than \$2 person/day);
 - Relative poverty (where inequality can undermine local and regional stability); and
 - Vulnerability (natural disasters, governance challenges of small economies, etc.).
2. **Canada's ability to make a difference** was assessed for each country, in three respects:
 - Recipient country performance and capacity to use aid effectively and to translate development dollars into concrete results. Stable, accountable regimes, basic governance capacity, a sound policy framework for poverty reduction and other signs of a healthy environment for development assistance were major considerations in selecting the countries.

- Canadian presence and capacity was assessed by looking at CIDA's current bilateral disbursements in a country as a measure of Canadian experience and as a basis of potential growth, as well as Canada's diplomatic capacity to engage with the country.

- Prospects for Canadian leadership: the potential for Canada to be a development leader in a given country.

3. **Alignment with Government of Canada priorities: Geographic priorities, democratic values and international commitments.**

- For example, development assistance is essential to Canada's leadership role in Afghanistan and Haiti and serves the whole-of-government approach in these countries. Consideration was given to countries that play a role in their regions as pathfinders for development in a stable framework of democracy and human rights. Other key considerations included the Government's strategy for re-engagement in the Americas and the G8 financial commitment to Africa.
- Other countries, including some members of La Francophonie, will continue to receive Canadian assistance at a more modest level. Funding channels, including partnership and multilateral programming will continue to provide support where needed.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MALALAI JOYA— RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND FEMALE PARLIAMENTARIANS

(Response to question raised by Hon. Sharon Carstairs on October 27, 2009)

Foreign Affairs response:

The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canadian foreign policy and is a core element of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan. Canada regularly raises issues such as freedom of expression, including media freedom, the death penalty, vulnerable groups and gender equality.

The protection of women's rights is one element of Canada's commitment to human rights. The Prime Minister has said, "we cannot state strongly enough our concern for the rights of women in Afghanistan."

Canada is actively implementing our obligations and commitments under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Canada's national implementation strategy addresses the four key themes of the Resolution

using four approaches, namely developing and advancing international norms and standards, conducting advocacy, ensuring compliance and implementation, and building capacity.

Canada has not wavered in its support of women and girls in Afghanistan. Canadian officials at all levels frequently engage the Afghan government to advocate on human rights issues.

This has included engaging with the Afghan government regarding numerous issues related to women's rights, including laws that protect women's rights, particularly with regard to violence and domestic abuse, and building capacity for women's participation in parliament and society, and laws that protect women's rights, particularly with regard to violence and domestic abuse.

Canada provides ongoing support to the Government of Afghanistan and to Afghan organizations to build up their own capacity to ensure respect for their constitution and international human rights obligations, including equality of men and women.

We continue to work with the Government of Afghanistan and groups who are committed to improving the rights and lives of women and girls in that country. Our Embassy in Kabul meets regularly and systematically with female parliamentarians. Canada continues to look for opportunities to partner with Afghan civil society and women's groups to raise the profile of human rights and gender equality issue.

CIDA Response:

Although challenges remain, measurable progress has been made for, and by, women and girls in Afghanistan since 2001.

Under the Taliban, women were banished from economic and political life. Only 700,000 children were attending school in 2001 — almost all of them boys. Today, approximately 6 million children are attending school, of which 2.1 million of them are girls. More than 290,000 women have accessed small loans and savings services across the country. Pregnant women's access to skilled antenatal care has increased to 32% (up from 5% in 2003). Women hold 27% of the seats in the Afghan Parliament. The Government of Afghanistan has developed a National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan.

These gains demonstrate that progress is possible, despite the continuing challenges faced by women and girls in Afghanistan. Exposed to violence, poverty and violations of their human rights, these women and girls are still among the most disadvantaged in the world. Improving their quality of life is a long-term process that will not happen overnight.

Canada has not wavered in its support of women and girls in Afghanistan. This is an integral part of our six priorities. We continue to work with the Government of Afghanistan and groups, who are committed to improving the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan.

CIDA supports a range of projects to improve maternal and infant health, girls' access to education, women's access to the labour market and their capacity for political participation. Our positive contribution to enhancing access to education, particularly for Afghan girls, is widely known. Some concrete examples include:

- Canada's \$6.45 million investment in a two-year UNICEF program to improve access to education for almost 18,000 girls and boys in Kandahar, as well as providing increased literacy training for Afghan women who cannot read or write.
- Canada's \$5 million project with Rights and Democracy that promotes legal and policy reforms to improve the status of women by working with opinion leaders, advocates and public authorities on a range of women's rights and family law issues.
- Canada is a strong supporter of the Afghan electoral process. As part of its contribution, Canada is working with Afghan and international partners to address the particular needs of women candidates and voters in Afghanistan, including gender-sensitive voter outreach and training for women candidates for office.
- Canada strongly supports opportunities for Afghan women to actively participate in their communities. In March 2009, Canada announced approximately \$2 million to support War Child Canada's Afghan Women's Community Support Project. As part of this project, Afghan women will receive basic literacy and numeracy education and training in marketable trades such as carpet weaving, beekeeping and agricultural farming.
- The Microfinance Investment Support Facility (MISFA) project has provided small loans and savings services to more than 445,000 impoverished people across 23 provinces in Afghanistan, of which almost 2/3 are women. From 2003 to 2009, Canada contributed more than \$100 million to MISFA.
- World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and CARE Canada's project contributes to increase the self-sufficiency of vulnerable women, including widows, and their families in Kabul through skills development and related employment and income generation support. Canada's contribution to this project is \$4.95 million from 2007-2011.
- The Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC) project for girls' basic education is currently providing primary education to over 80,000 students, 80% of them girls, and to date, has trained over 2,500 female community-based teachers. Canada's contribution totals \$14.5 million (2006-2010).

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

(Response to question raised by Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein on October 29, 2009)

Unemployment data:

For complete numbers on unemployment by province, refer to the latest *Labour Force Information* published November 6, 2009, by Statistics Canada. This information is available in the links below.

ENG: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=71-001-X&lang=eng>

FR: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=71-001-X&lang=fra>

Social Assistance (SA) or welfare is the social safety net of last resort in Canada. There are 13 different SA systems in Canada — one in each province and territory. As SA is not under federal jurisdiction, each province and territory releases data and information through its respective Social Service Ministry.

Exhausted Claims:

Over the past 10 years, between 28 and 32 percent of EI regular claimants exhausted their benefit entitlements.

Although we do not have definitive data on the exhaustion rate, data are currently being collected and will be published in the next Monitoring and Assessment Report expected to be released in April, 2010.

There is a delay between the time a claim begins and the time that it is completed and we can actually report on it (up to a year). In general, EI claims for regular benefits can last up to 50 weeks for regular benefits and up to year for special benefits.

While we do not have definitive data on the exhaustion rate, experience is showing that the number of claimants who exhaust their regular benefits is rising in line with the volume of claims.

HRSDC and Statistics Canada are working together to explore whether there may be a way to provide more timely information related to the number of EI claimants who exhaust their regular benefits. Discussions are still in the early stages.

[English]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I call your attention to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Ali Bin Fahad Al-Hajri, who is the distinguished Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Canada.

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

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I ask leave that we proceed immediately with the inquiry proposed earlier today in the Senate and that all remaining items on the Order Paper and Notice Paper stand in their place until the next sitting of the Senate.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

THE HONOURABLE MARCEL PRUD'HOMME, P.C.

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONCLUDED

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government) rose pursuant to notice of earlier this day:

That he will call the attention of the Senate to the career of the Honourable Marcel Prud'homme, P.C., in the Senate and his many contributions in service to Canadians.

He said: Honourable senators, the Honourable Senator Prud'homme is currently not present in the Senate chamber; let us hope he enters while speakers are paying tribute to him.

Honourable senators, I want to thank Senator Prud'homme most sincerely for his friendship and for the generous and wise advice he has given me over the past 25 years. We had the opportunity of sitting together in the House of Commons and here in the Senate. I cannot think of one occasion when we did not come to an agreement. During all these years, I have had the distinct pleasure of knowing him.

This also gives me the opportunity to mention the many projects on which we worked together. I cannot list them all, but I would like to highlight the friendship projects we worked on: the Morocco project, the Canada-Cuba friendship project, the Canada-Russia friendship project and many others.

It was hard for me to say no to Senator Prud'homme when he would come to see me about working on the list of members of these associations.

My wife Aurore also asked me to pass along her best wishes. They became friends over the years. We wish you a wonderful well-deserved retirement, even though we know you will not necessarily be retired. We suspect it will not be a full retirement. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours. So long, and thank you, Marcel, for your friendship over all these years.

Hon. Francis Fox: Honourable senators, I would like to make a few remarks to my friend Marcel Prud'homme; we go back to the early 1960s.

First, I want to thank him for the remarkable speech he delivered this afternoon. It was the product of many years' reflection and infused with wisdom and promise.

Marcel, I feel like starting by singing, "C'est à ton tour, mon cher Marcel, de te laisser parler d'amour." It is time to tell you, my dear Marcel, how much respect and admiration we have for you on both sides of this chamber.

When I think of Marcel Prud'homme, the first adjectives that come to mind are "fiercely Liberal" because of his party affiliation, and "fiercely liberal" because he pledged even greater allegiance to liberal values and ideas. He was fiercely liberal and independent in choosing his causes, and fiercely committed to them.

Through it all, honourable senators, he was always elegant, always eloquent, and in both of our country's official languages, too.

On the subject of the word "liberal," Marcel has been a fighter his whole life. I knew him in the early 1960s. He did not want to tell his whole life story, and I will not do so either, but I just want to mention that Marcel was at the Université de Montréal's law faculty in the 1960s, and that he quickly became the president of the students' association in a faculty attended by the likes of Bernard Landry, Jean Rochon and Pierre Marois, as well as some people a little more like us, such as Simon Venne and Jacques Sylvestre. While he was there, he never hesitated to champion federalism and the Liberal Party within the faculty, whether at the university during the day or at Clairette's at night. Marcel was always there, a torch-bearer for us all.

Independent — fiercely independent — he chose and defended his causes regardless of the consequences. His causes were not always popular — he was a little ahead of his time — and they did not necessarily become popular, but he remained faithful and loyal to them. Through his loyalty and his work, he served Canada's interests well. We all know that he served the interests of his riding, Quebec and Canada, very well. As we heard in his speech, his work led him to become involved in causes that transcended our borders.

Marcel, although your voice will no longer be heard here, I know that you will continue to work for the causes that you have always served so admirably.

You have been and remain one of the greatest parliamentarians of our time. Hundreds of Liberals know you as "the great Marcel," and to me, you will always be "the great Marcel." Thank you, Marcel.

Hon. Suzanne Fortin-Duplessis: Honourable senators, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to pay tribute to my friend, Senator Marcel Prud'homme, the dean of Parliament.

For more than 45 years, including some 30 in the other place and 16 in this house, the Parliament of Canada has had the benefit of his wisdom, erudition, affability and dedication. He will be greatly missed. Elected for the first time on February 10, 1964, in Montreal as part of Lester B. Pearson's team, Marcel was regarded by his colleagues as a bona fide corporate memory of Canadian politics.

He has served under nine prime ministers and was appointed as a parliamentary secretary three times by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. He was also appointed Canada's parliamentary representative to the first and second United Nations General Assembly extraordinary sessions on disarmament.

From 1976 to 1984, he played a leading role as Chair of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence. In Geneva, he was elected chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's international Committee on Political Questions, International Security and Disarmament.

In fact, Marcel and I first became friends when we were each involved with the Inter-Parliamentary Union. I will never forget the big meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Ottawa in 1985. In his opening address, Marcel did us proud with his dignified speech, which he delivered very eloquently.

He was appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on May 26, 1993. His passion for international issues, his openness to the Third World and his deep desire for a fair and equitable world order have led him to forge ties with all countries, and parliamentarians from Arab and Muslim countries in particular.

• (1530)

In fact, from Cuba to China to Egypt, he has been criss-crossing the continents for over 40 years. Marcel is still known as the Canadian parliamentarian who is most open to the Arab cause, a reputation that he cherishes and actively nurtures.

Always true to his principles, this man of strong convictions serves as a link between Canada and many countries, having been instrumental in their rapprochement. He also founded a number of parliamentary associations. For many, he symbolizes the struggle for independence of the Palestinian people, a cause that he speaks out about and passionately defends to his colleagues in Parliament.

Marcel, all I can say is that you can take a man out of politics, but you cannot take the politics out of the man. Thank you for doing me the honour of introducing me for my swearing-in in this venerable house. Thank you for all of the important messages you passed on in your last speech.

I join all senators and my husband, Maurice, in wishing you a long life and a productive retirement! Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Mobina S.B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I rise today to join my colleagues in saluting an outstanding Canadian, a compassionate, caring and knowledgeable public servant, and one of our own, the Honourable Marcel Prud'homme, as he prepares to take his leave of this chamber.

When I was appointed to this chamber in 2001, I knew Senator Prud'homme through reputation only. On the day of my appointment, he welcomed me in this chamber. Not only did this please me, but it pleased my family as well.

Senator Prud'homme, you have taught me a lot of things. My colleague, my friend, I will never be as courageous as you have been in expressing your point of view, but I will try.

Today marks Senator Prud'homme's 16,726th day as a parliamentarian. He was first elected in a by-election in the Quebec riding of Saint-Denis in 1964. Senator Prud'homme was re-elected there eight times and served the people of his riding until his appointment to this chamber in 1993.

In those 45 years, 9 months and 17 days of service, Senator Prud'homme has become known as the dean of Parliament, a testament not only to his longevity of service and encyclopedic knowledge, but also to his unwavering commitment to the international causes that have shaped and continue to shape the world around us.

He has been a champion of international cooperation. Senator Prud'homme's tireless efforts to generate dialogue between people and nations have been tremendous. Before I had the opportunity to know him personally, I knew that he wore the badge of statesman proudly. Senator Prud'homme, you are a person who has immeasurable respect not only for building bridges between different groups, but also for daring each to cross those bridges and discover their common interests.

Senator Prud'homme, I have greatly enjoyed working with you over the past eight years. Your work has had a major impact, not only on us, but where you have travelled all around the world. I hope you continue to speak your mind on those important issues that will bring us together.

Your leaving will create a void in the areas that you have been working on. You have a great institutional memory of Parliament, and your contributions to the promotion of democratic values where they do not exist will not be forgotten.

We thank you for the great work you have done on behalf of all of us; and I thank you for the great work you have done in bringing various communities together to find common interests.

Hon. Wilbert J. Keon: Honourable senators, I rise today to join in the tributes to Senator Prud'homme. I have some prepared remarks here, which I will not use because everything in them has been said quite a number of times. However, I must say, Senator Prud'homme, you deserve the repetition.

I did not want to lose this opportunity, because I specifically wanted to thank you for the doors you opened for me and the Senate Subcommittee on Population Health in Cuba. I enjoyed seeing your picture with Mr. Castro on the same shelf as his picture with Prime Minister Trudeau. You are in very unique company down there.

In any event, there is a phenomenon known in health as the Cuban paradox. The Cuban paradox is the proof that we overestimated the impact of poverty on health in Canada for a number of years.

It is certainly true that one of the major determinants of health is poverty. This was confirmed just in the past week by Statistics Canada in a report that said a rich person in Canada will outlive a poor person by 11.4 years. That is quite a difference.

However, the Cuban paradox has illustrated, beyond a shadow of doubt, that one cannot change the outlook in health simply by eliminating poverty. One must do something much more. It is the way that poverty is eliminated that is of tremendous importance.

I must say I did not believe the Cuban figures for a number of years, because they have the same health outcomes as we have here in Canada. The average Cuban has an income of about one tenth or less of the average Canadian. Many of them live in quite impoverished conditions, but they still have the same health outcomes as in Canada.

I wanted to go down there and review the World Health Organization data and the UNICEF data. Several senators here, who were on the Population Health Subcommittee, were with me and we did just that.

Having reviewed the data, the data is correct. In fact, the Cuban paradox is a reality. They have the same health outcomes as we have; and, when we are looking at population health in Canada, we must use a much broader lens than poverty to correct it.

The health platform we suggested in the population health report for government to adopt looks at a dozen determinants, not just poverty. There are many people who say that we need to pour \$25 million into the correction of poverty, that we do not need anything else, and that this will correct the determinants of health.

I will not go on, but this is a tremendously important principle. We could not have gotten at the data the way we did without Senator Prud'homme. He knows everyone in Cuba and everyone in Cuba knows him. We were royally entertained by every level of government. We were able to look at every polyclinic, every institution and every bit of data we wanted to look at.

We did a report on Cuba when we came home. It is reflected in the final report on population health by the federal and provincial governments as well as by 57 governments in the European community.

• (1540)

Senator Prud'homme, we are deeply indebted to you. Some day, I hope I can repay you.

[Translation]

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, like Senator Keon, I will refer to my notes, because although many things have been said, there is still much to say or expand on.

It is often said that behind every great man there is a great woman. My dear Marcel, you mentioned your sister Rita several times, but like everyone who has known you throughout your political career — I have known you since 1977, both in the other place and here — you will be the first to admit that she played an important role in your career.

[English]

Behind every great man there is a great woman. In his case, it was not his wife, it was his sister. She did a lot for Marcel, and I assure you that Marcel would be the first to recognize that.

I was given advice by Marcel when I arrived here in 1977. I listened to some of it and much of it I did not listen to. I am looking at the President of the Inter-parliamentary Union of Canada, Senator Oliver. Senator Prud'homme said that if you want to practice parliamentary diplomacy, some organizations have influence in Parliament, the IPU being one of them. I had the honour to participate with Marcel in bringing the IPU conference to Ottawa in 1995, but by the time the conference convened I had moved on to private life, with the help of my friend Senator Fortin-Duplessis. She and I are very good examples of how Marcel can unite people. If we can say something nice about Marcel Prud'homme, it means that he must be a very nice guy.

Marcel, I did not make it to the IPU conference in 1995, but as Senator Oliver announced in the house last week, the next conference in Canada will be in 2012. I am sure that Senator Oliver and I will be happy to welcome you in Quebec City.

I want to thank you for something else. One of your pieces of advice that I did not listen to in 1977 but heeded when I came to this place was about the Canada-Arab World Parliamentary Association.

[Translation]

Marcel encouraged me to become active in the Canada-Arab World Parliamentary Association because he himself had been dedicated to that part of the world since his arrival here in Parliament, in both houses, and I was pleased to succeed him as co-chair of that committee. Marcel, I hope I can live up to what is expected of me, and with the help of your assistant, Mohamad, I hope I can make the Canada-Arab World Parliamentary Association a platform for dialogue between Canada and that part of the world.

Lastly, still on the topic of parliamentary diplomacy, my dear Marcel, you have shown us how important it is for us, as politicians, to remain active above and beyond governments, to ensure that we engage in dialogue with countries facing more difficult situations, so that, in the event of a crisis, we always have contacts, such as those that Senator Keon was able to take advantage of on the Senate Subcommittee on Population Health. However, I know that on many issues, in many meetings that have taken place in the parliamentary world, the doors you have opened for us have been extremely useful, and I thank you for that.

I wish you a happy retirement, my dear colleague.

Hon. W. David Angus: Honourable senators, I would like to add a few words to what has been said about my very good friend and colleague from Montreal, in the beautiful province of Quebec, the honourable Marcel Prud'homme.

[Senator Dawson]

First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Marcel, for your brilliant parliamentary career as the member for Saint-Denis, in Montreal, in the House of Commons and as member of this Red Chamber.

[English]

In addition to being a great parliamentarian in the tradition of John Diefenbaker, Marcel is a legend in his own time. He is a truly great Canadian who has been a wonderful inspiration to young people in this country for more than 50 years.

When I was involved in university politics at McGill in the 1950s, Marcel's name was synonymous with getting involved, with oratorical skills, with federal politics — *de la cote rouge* — and with serving Canada with passion. I owe much of my personal involvement and interest in politics to Marcel's fine example.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Marcel.

We were both appointed to the Senate in the same year, in 1993.

[English]

When I was sworn in on June 15, 1993, Hansard discloses that Marcel stood and welcomed me personally in a very generous way. More importantly, he said:

Senator Angus, I want to work in very close cooperation with you. Until Canadians in their wisdom decide democratically on a different role for the Senate, I offer my support to make this Senate a dignified chamber which can work closely on major projects for our Canadian society and go throughout our country to see people facing despair. I am thinking of Canadian youth. That was one reason and motivation for me to join the Senate . . .

[Translation]

Dear Marcel, I have very much enjoyed the years we have spent together. I hope we will keep in touch in the future so that we may work together on behalf of the good citizens of Montreal, especially the good citizens who we know so well in the riding of Saint-Denis.

[English]

I wish you Godspeed, Marcel, and good health and much happiness. May God bless you, sir.

Hon. Nancy Greene Raine: Honourable senators, it gives me great pleasure to say a few words about what knowing Senator Prud'homme has meant to me. As a new senator last January, and especially as someone who arrived with no experience in politics or the workings of Parliament, it was so special to be greeted warmly by Senator Prud'homme. His Gaelic charm and obvious love of the Senate made a great impression on me.

[Translation]

With kindness and patience, he explained to me that the Senate is a special place where it is possible to achieve many things, but that it was very important not to achieve things in haste; the most important thing is to think before you speak and then think some more.

[English]

I have so much respect for Senator Prud'homme — for the things he stands for and for his wonderful presence as the dean of the Senate. Marcel, I truly hope you will return often to this place. I encourage you to come and tell your wonderful stories to all new senators to help give them a perspective of this institution as well as your wise counsel. Thank you again for your kindness. I wish you a wonderful retirement.

Hon. Anne C. Cools: Honourable senators, I rise to join colleagues in tribute to my dear friend Senator Marcel Prud'homme who retires on November 30. Known for his charming and affable nature, Senator Prud'homme is well accomplished in politics. A parliamentarian of enormous strengths and many skills, he has touched the lives of many people at home and abroad — nationally and internationally. He has stood for peace and justice. He has stood against prejudice, racism, terrorism, oppression and suffering. He has always upheld the importance of debate, dialogue and discourse. He is an internationalist, who has made an inestimable contribution to world peace and to dialogue between nations and peoples. As with great men with princely attributes, Senator Prud'homme always takes a clear stand on the issues. Alfred Lord Tennyson, in his epic Arthurian tragedy, *Idylls of the King*, in its ninth book *Lancelot and Elaine* said: "He makes no friend who never made a foe." That is Senator Prud'homme.

Honourable senators, decades ago Senator Prud'homme promoted dialogue between Canada and Cuba, Canada and China and Canada and the Soviet Union and other countries. For as long, he upheld the cause of the Palestinian refugees, displaced from Palestine by Zionist arms in 1948. Millions, three generations of them live in numerous refugee camps in Palestine and in neighbouring countries. President Obama in his June 4, 2009, Cairo speech described them as:

They endure the daily humiliations, large and small, that come with occupation. So let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable.

• (1550)

The Israeli historian Dr. Ilan Pappé has documented their expulsion in his 2007 book entitled *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Senator Prud'homme is a faithful friend of the Arab peoples, the children of Abraham's son Ishmael.

Honourable senators, I fondly recall 1987 when Senator Prud'homme was elected Chairman of the Liberal Caucus of which I was then a most devoted member. I voted for him then, as many senators did. An able and dedicated Chairman, like a union shop steward, he spent endless hours on caucus human dynamics, intervening with caucus members to discern and resolve any and all human and political difficulties.

Honourable senators, Senator Prud'homme shared my proudest act of political loyalty. This was October 1, 1992, days before the Charlottetown Accord national referendum, when the late Mr. Pierre Elliot Trudeau spoke on the Accord at the Maison Egg Roll restaurant in Montreal. Mr. Trudeau condemned it, as the country soon did. Senator Prud'homme and I were two of the only four Liberal Caucus members who dared to attend. Mr. Trudeau's sense of abandonment by his own party was deep as was his appreciation of our attendance that evening.

Honourable senators, I close now with the Old Testament, Ecclesiasticus 6:16-17.

A faithful friend is the elixir of life,
and those who fear the Lord will find one.
Whoever fears the Lord makes true friends,
for as a man is, so is his friend.

I thank my dear friend, this great Canadian man, for his many acts of Christian love and universal brotherhood. I praise Senator Prud'homme, who, in the name of humanity, has always taken the road less travelled. He is a courageous man.

The Hon. the Speaker: Perhaps Senators St. Germain and Prud'homme can divide the remaining seven minutes.

Senator Prud'homme: Senator St. Germain can take a minute.

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, after having served with this brilliant man in the House of Commons, and now here, I think it is appropriate that I be given a minute or a minute and one-half.

[Translation]

Appointed by the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, Marcel Prud'homme was a fine appointment by the Prime Minister.

[English]

There has been no finer appointment, because we eventually brought him on this side. What a battle.

Marcel, I have watched you from day one. When I came into the House of Commons in 1983, you and Jean Gauthier coached me on La Francophonie and various other subjects. Your contribution has been described here today, but I want to add a few words.

[Translation]

Do not forget, my friend, that the sky is blue and hell is red! Remember who appointed Marcel Prud'homme to the Senate.

[English]

Hon. Marcel Prud'homme: I do not regret having given him one minute.

You may have noticed that in my sensitivity I did not mention a certain group of people. I omitted this group because I want to keep my words for them when we meet with the two Speakers. As you know, you all are invited to the reception.

I did that on purpose. I want Senator Brazeau and Senator St. Germain, people of the First Nations, to know that, far from being insensitive, I want to keep my remarks on this subject for the very few minutes I will have later.

I always bow to First Nations people. I will have time to pay more attention to these people in the future and to volunteer for them in many ways. I do not want to announce what I will do, but I want those who thought I forget to speak of them to know that I will say more about them in a few minutes.

I forget to speak of my good friend Senator Rivest. I was expecting more cruelty from him, because he is so witty that those who do not know him well do not know whether he is being nice. Those of us who know him know that Senator Rivest is unique. We heard a little bit of his wit today.

Senator Comeau, thank you very much.

[Translation]

We have been good friends along the way.

[English]

I am very happy with what you have said, as I am with what Senator Fox said.

Believe it or not, I gave Senator Cowan his first Liberal Party card at the University of Montreal. I could not believe that an Oxford man and a Rhodes Scholar could be anywhere other than the Liberal Club at the University of Montreal. I am sure that my colleagues on this side will not mind if I recall that. It was a great day when we enrolled him in the Liberal Club at the University of Montreal.

I know that you are expecting 1,500 people in Quebec City in the year 2012, when Senator Dawson will be the master of ceremonies, but Senator Fortin-Duplessis was an outstanding mistress of ceremonies at the most outstanding presentations in the history of the IPU. That show is on tape and I wish everyone would see it.

I want to thank Senator Jaffer. I hope she will not mind if I recall that as soon as she was appointed, I called her and said, "Madame, you will be the first lady of the Muslim faith to be appointed. Please, for history, make sure to bring a Holy Quran." She had two, one for her family and one that she gave to the Library and Archives of Canada.

I want to say a good word about Dr. Keon. People think that Dr. Bethune is well known in China. However, to the glory of the

Senate of Canada, after the mission upon which Senator Keon embarked in Cuba, Dr. Keon is as well known in medical circles there as Dr. Bethune was in China. For that accomplishment, I tip my hat to him.

Senator Raine, thank you very much. I have no sadness other than to leave before having the opportunity to know the 26 new senators better. I would like to get to know them as well as I have come to know all my colleagues and friends here today.

Senator Cools, thank you very much. I know that only very few here have passion equal to yours. While I am perceived as being a big champion of the Arab or the Palestinian cause, I am in fact a champion of human beings. There is nothing wrong with trying to be friends with a group of people who may have no friends. That does not mean that you are an enemy of people of Jewish faith. There is in the gallery a close friend of mine who is of the Jewish faith. She knows my heart and my emotion, and she knows that Marcel is equal.

I have had to carry the perception all my life that I am a one-sided story. I am not. I am for peace on earth. Where do you find peace? Peace is found where there are problems. Although Africa is poor, the problems are not found there, nor in Latin America, but in the Middle East, and we are all involved there.

That is why I pay so much attention to the Middle East and why I mention it. Now that I am going to start writing, I hope to be so clear that no one will misunderstand, that no parliamentarian will again say that Marcel is against this or against that. This is not true. This is not the Marcel you have known.

This is the Marcel I am happy to describe. I have no fear of describing myself as a good Marcel, and a good Marcel cannot be against anyone. Marcel is for the Senate. Marcel believes in this institution, in Parliament and in Canada.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: If no other senator wishes to speak, this inquiry is considered debated.

(Debate concluded.)

(The Senate adjourned until Thursday, November 26, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.)

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