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The Honourable NOËL A. KINSELLA
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, June 9, 2011

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the chair.

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING

THE LATE KAZUYO IIDA

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, as many of you know, I was actively involved with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, or MADD as it is more commonly known, for quite a number of years. In the span of the more than 12 years when I held official positions with MADD, I met and commiserated with countless people whose lives were forever affected by the selfish and careless decision of one individual who chose to drink and drive. As devoted advocates, all have been committed to ending impaired driving while at the same time providing much needed support and networking for victims who have had their lives irreversibly changed and scarred forever.

I wish to pay tribute today to an inspirational activist who worked tirelessly on behalf of victims of impaired driving in her home country of Japan. Kazuyo Iida, founder and President of MADD Japan, lost a courageous battle with cancer this past Sunday, June 5. Kazuyo's daughter, Mizuho, was killed by a drunk driver in 1997. In honour of her daughter and to help cope with this unimaginable loss, she founded MADD Japan in 1998. Kazuyo modelled MADD Japan after similar organizations in Canada and the United States.

As a past National Chairperson of MADD Canada, I am proud that we were able to assist in the establishment of organizations like MADD Japan, which contribute so much to the education about and prevention of impaired driving in many countries around the world, including providing essential services to victims who are forced to deal with tremendous loss at the hands of drunk drivers.

In addition to being an integral part of MADD Japan, Kazuyo also contributed perspective and experience to my friends at MADD Canada. She will be greatly missed by her family, her many friends and her colleagues, not only for her courageous leadership but also for her infectious love of life.

To Kazuyo's family and friends here and abroad, I wish to share some kind words expressed to me by a dear friend: The sun will shine again.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about the gross human rights violation that continues to victimize women and girls in Canada and abroad.

Throughout history, roughly 114 million women and girls have undergone some form of female genital mutilation. This procedure is practised in 27 countries in Africa, 7 countries in the Middle East, as well as in several parts of Malaysia, India and Indonesia. Although many people are quick to dismiss this practice as an African issue or perhaps even an immigrant issue, female genital mutilation is in fact very much a Canadian issue and is one that demands our immediate attention.

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women claims that between 1986 and 1991, approximately 40,000 women who had arrived in Canada had been subjected to some form of female genital cutting. This does not include the thousands of women who arrived in Canada from Somalia after 1991, as statistics indicate that many of these women were also victims of female genital mutilation.

Honourable senators, as a woman who sought refuge in Canada, I am extremely grateful for the warm welcome that was extended to me by the Canadian government as well as the Canadian people. I am well aware of how fortunate I am to be able to call a country as great as Canada my home. However, I am also aware of the several obstacles that many newly arrived immigrants face in their day-to-day lives.

Although the federal government, through the implementation of Bill C-27, has made the practice of female genital mutilation a criminal offence that is punishable by law, that is simply not enough. We need to ensure that women who have immigrated to Canada having already experienced some form of genital cutting are provided with appropriate health and natal care.

In addition, we must ensure that these women are educated about the laws surrounding the practice and also the health complications that accompany it. By doing so, not only will we be making sure that the women who have already been victimized receive a standard of health care consistent with that which has been granted to all Canadians, we will also be ensuring that these women do not subject their daughters to this practice.

Honourable senators, I urge you all to recognize that the practice of female genital mutilation is in fact a Canadian issue. We must also remain mindful that it is the practice of female genital mutilation we wish to condemn, not those women who have already been victimized by it.

[Translation]

GLOBAL COMMISSION ON DRUG POLICY

Hon. Pierre Claude Nolin: Honourable senators, let us celebrate and welcome the release of a historic report by the Global Commission on Drug Policy on June 2, 2011.

The commission not only denounces the "war on drugs" as a failure, but also puts forth a series of major recommendations for political leaders worldwide to adopt evidence- and rights-based approaches to drug policy.

The commission is essentially telling us that we must cast aside our ideologies, our prejudices and our political rhetoric, and look at the scientific data.

[English]

The Global Commission on Drug Policy exists to bring to the international level an informed science-based discussion about humane and effective ways to reduce the harm caused by drugs to people and societies.

The current membership of the commission is comprised of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, César Gaviria, Ernesto Zedillo and Ruth Dreifuss, being the former Presidents of Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Switzerland; the current Prime Minister of Greece, George Papandreou; the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan; renowned entrepreneur and advocate Richard Branson; former U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz; former Chairman of the United States Federal Reserve and of the Economic Recovery Board Paul Volcker; and many other world leaders.

[Translation]

The commission represents the most renowned group of international political leaders ever to speak in a unified voice against the so-called war on drugs.

• (1410)

The authors recognize that it is ultimately a war on people, and especially on people with addictions.

The commission's report makes the case for alternatives to imprisonment for people who use and sell drugs and for a public-health approach to drug use and addiction.

As well, the commission's report also calls for a more profound "paradigm shift."

[English]

Specifically, the report calls for the government to: first, end the criminalization and stigmatization of people who use drugs but who do no harm to others; second, experiment with various models of the legal regulation of currently prohibited drugs, especially cannabis; and third, ensure the availability of a variety of treatment methods and harm-reduction measures that have proved successful in many European countries and also in Canada.

[Translation]

The commission's call reflects the arguments that we have made for many years for a humane and rational public policy regarding drugs in Canada.

Honourable senators, I see that my speaking time has expired. I will ask your permission to continue next week.

[Senator Nolin]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of a group of Grade 8 students from Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes school in Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes, Manitoba. They are guests of the Honourable Senator Chaput.

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

DEFORESTATION

Hon. Grant Mitchell: Honourable senators, I rise today to commend the DeforestAction learning initiative.

The DeforestAction initiative is a collaborative project that uses social media to engage students and teachers around the world regarding the important issue of deforestation. Since the project began last year, the initiative has worked with the Microsoft "TakingITGlobal" social network to connect over 100,000 students.

The goal of DeforestAction is to have one million young people involved in protecting vulnerable forests. A major success of the program was the construction of the Dome Tree, which will be a key feature of a new orangutan sanctuary in Borneo. Ten young people will be able to live there and monitor the local ecosystem. The project includes other interactive initiatives, among them one that will allow students to monitor forests remotely using satellite images.

The fundamental aim of the DeforestAction initiative is to empower and connect young people. It is clear, when we are looking for solutions to complex, intergenerational problems like climate change, that we need all the energy of and engagement of young people that can be harnessed.

I want especially to thank Abraham Almaouie for making me aware of this project. This high school leader is taking part in the program with 10 other students from the Queen Elizabeth Secondary School in Edmonton. The director of the Centre for Global Education at that school, Terry Godwaldt, also deserves a special mention for his boundless enthusiasm for his work as a teacher and for encouraging young people to take action.

[English]

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MARTIN BRIAN MULRONEY, C.C.

TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF ELECTION
AS LEADER OF PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Hon. Michael A. Meighen: Honourable senators, I would like to draw the attention of the chamber to the fact that this Saturday, June 11, will mark the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Right Honourable Martin Brian Mulroney's selection as Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada.

[Translation]

The convention that saw the election of Mr. Mulroney, held in the stiflingly hot Civic Centre in Ottawa, marked the beginning of an era of change in Canada's history. Mr. Mulroney was not one to take the easy route. He built on the mandate party members had given him, won two consecutive majority governments and put Canada on a path of positive change based on long-term, if not permanent, spinoffs for Canadians.

[English]

Where would we be without the signature economic initiatives for which Brian Mulroney's government fearlessly campaigned and implemented?

Consider the reform of the tax system, away from the old inefficient Manufacturers Sales Tax to the Goods and Services Tax, a tax on consumption rather than on production.

Consider the implementation of a more liberalized trade regime with other countries, notably the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and the North American Free Trade Agreement, a template toward trade liberalization that has been continued and actively pursued by all subsequent federal administrations since Mr. Mulroney left office.

Some of my friends opposite are fond of trumpeting the deficit-reduction efforts of Mr. Chrétien's government. Unfortunately, all too often they give short shrift to the fact that the principal reason for the turnaround in federal and provincial treasuries in the 1990s was because Canada was so well positioned to benefit from the global economic resurgence of the time due to the trade and tax regimes that Brian Mulroney implemented.

As has often been said — principally, I suppose, by Mr. Mulroney — Michael Wilson planted the garden and Paul Martin got to cut the flowers.

Indeed, our neighbours to the south have validated Mr. Mulroney's approach. Former President Bill Clinton, upon replacing his free trading predecessor, George Bush, Sr., moved quickly to tame the traditionally protectionist impulses of his Democratic Party so as to embrace more liberalized trade. Moreover, some American economists have advocated the idea that the U.S. should consider a national value-added sales tax, similar to our own, as a way of solving its current, seemingly intractable, fiscal challenges.

Detractors of Brian Mulroney like to say that the finances of this country and our federal government deteriorated under his watch. It is true that our national debt did increase, but these detractors often ignore the significant measures to streamline government that he achieved during his tenure, even in the face of a brutal recession. They also ignore, as Professor Tom Flanagan thoughtfully pointed out in a review of Pierre Trudeau's memoirs in the 1990s, that almost all of the growth of Canada's national debt under the Mulroney government was due to interest-servicing costs on the debt left by the previous Liberal government.

Brian Mulroney's enlightened approach was also ahead of its time in many other areas, including the environment — think Canada's greenest Prime Minister — and international diplomacy — think ending apartheid in South Africa — and, yes, national unity.

[Translation]

Brian Mulroney's open federalism and constructive approach to the Canadian provinces have been echoed by other governments to promote the advancement of a variety of issues, including health, the fiscal imbalance between the federal government and the provinces, or the promotion of regional development. Consider for a moment, honourable senators, former opponents of the Meech Lake Accord who now want to go back in time to change their vote or who have since supported a motion in the House of Commons recognizing Quebec as a nation within a united Canada.

[English]

No minimalist or incrementalist was he in his governing style. He dreamt big dreams for the country he loves so dearly and had the courage and determination to put them into practice. We need more of that, honourable senators.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I would like to call your attention to the presence in the Prime Minister's gallery of Rick Thorpe, a former honourable minister in the Government of British Columbia and resident of Penticton, British Columbia, who is a guest of the Honourable Senator Neufeld.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

EDUCATION FOR FIRST NATIONS

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, for most Canadians, success in today's modern world is built upon a solid educational foundation. I was very pleased to hear in last Friday's Speech from the Throne that the government will address the long-standing issue of First Nations education.

• (1420)

To quote directly from the speech, His Excellency said:

Building on the work of the National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education, our government will engage with partners to make concrete, positive changes to give First Nations children a better education so that they can realize their dreams.

These words are a long time coming. The government's promise of providing education to First Nations dates back to the numbered treaties of the 1800s. Successive governments have failed to live up to the spirit and intent of the treaty promise.

A few years ago, our government acknowledged Canada's failure in its apology to the students of Indian residential schools. Our government continues to do what is right to reconcile Canada's relationship with First Nation peoples of Canada.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government has clearly committed itself to the education obligation, and to realize the spirit and intent of treaty. This commitment in the Speech from the Throne must be backed up with tangible results. The government would be well served to partner with First Nations-centred organizations such as the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation and the Assembly of First Nations, when seeking advice about the right and necessary steps to take to fulfill this plan.

The government may draw on the successes of provinces like British Columbia and Nova Scotia. Both have taken measures to address First Nations education locally, and it is paying off.

I believe that the positive change that is so desperately needed is for a First Nations education delivery system to be as accessible as, and equal to, the education system afforded to non-First Nations students.

The Senate's Aboriginal Peoples Committee has been studying this very topic for some time now, and the absence of equal and accessible education for First Nations students is top of mind for those witnesses who have appeared before us.

Honourable senators, the economic and social benefits of a good education must never be overlooked. Education is about self and community sustainability. Economic development goes lockstep with education. An educated population has the means to provide for their individual and community needs.

Education provides a sense of self worth, a chance to learn about what our ancestors have done to make Canada a better place to live. Education also allows one to preserve one's cultural identity.

Honourable senators, there is not a better investment a country can make than investing in its people. When individuals succeed, they will change for the better themselves, their families, their communities and Canada as a whole.

[Translation]

ORDER OF CANADA

CONGRATULATIONS TO 2011
INDUCTEES—MR. GEORGES ARÈS AND
THE HONOURABLE ANNE MCLELLAN

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, on Friday, May 27, I had the great honour and pleasure of attending the Order of Canada investiture ceremony at Rideau Hall.

The Order of Canada is the cornerstone of our honours system. This award pays tribute to Canadians who exemplify the highest civic virtues and who contribute to the development of their contemporaries.

As a proud Albertan, I would like to mention here in this chamber the appointment of two individuals from my birth province to the Order of Canada.

[Senator St. Germain]

First, let me highlight the appointment of M. Georges Arès, a great champion of the French language in the province of Alberta and in Canada, as a Member of the Order of Canada. Having held leadership positions within various organizations, he notably served as president of the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta. As president, he helped to establish the first publicly funded francophone school and played a major role in securing the right for Franco-Albertans to manage their own schools.

Mr. Arès was also a strong voice for francophones in Western Canada during the review of the Official Languages Act. Moreover, as president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, he worked to strengthen ties between francophone and Acadian communities and other segments of our society, including First Nations, Quebecers and ethnocultural communities.

[English]

I would also like to offer my most heartfelt congratulations to the Honourable Anne McLellan, who was appointed to the rank of Officer of the Order of Canada. Anne McLellan is recognized nationally for her policy, scholarly, parliamentary and community work. She has held senior federal cabinet positions in the areas of justice, natural resources, health and public safety. As Minister of Health, she oversaw the creation of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and the Health Council of Canada. She is currently the distinguished scholar-in-residence at the Institute for United States Policy Studies at the University of Alberta, and also volunteers with and serves on the boards of numerous organizations throughout the province of Alberta.

Honourable senators, these two Albertans have made significant contributions toward the betterment of our society and of our country. I congratulate them for this well-deserved recognition. Félicitations!

MR. NICK NOORANI

Hon. Yonah Martin: Honourable senators, in honour of Asian Heritage Month, in May of each year, I rise to pay tribute to a distinguished Canadian who — like our colleague, the founder and godmother of Asian Heritage Month in Canada, the Honourable Vivienne Poy — is a recipient of the annual “Top 25 Immigrant Awards.” Nick Noorani, President and CEO of Destination Canada Information Inc., is indeed deserving of this distinction.

When Nick Noorani talks, people listen. It is not just that he is an engaging motivational speaker; he inspires his audience of Canadian immigrants into action. He is able to do so because he has been in their shoes. Like the newcomers who listen to his marquee speeches, Nick came to Canada in 1998 with hopes for a better life for himself and his family.

Born in Mumbai, India, Nick arrived in Canada with a wealth of international experience in the advertising business, having worked with some of the world's leading advertising agencies in Dubai, Muscat, Abu Dhabi and Mumbai, handling global brands like BMW, Coca-Cola and EMI, but he faced many professional and settlement challenges in his new Canadian home and he noticed that many other immigrants were also struggling.

This savvy marketer recognized an opportunity, not to mention an important social cause, and in 2000 Nick co-authored the hugely successful book *Arrival Survival Canada*. This book, subsequently published by Oxford University Press, became a bestseller in Canada in its first year. The idea for spinning the book into a monthly magazine, *Canadian Immigrant*, came to Nick in a dream. He launched Canada's first national magazine for all immigrants in 2004 and later sold the magazine to the Star Media Group in Toronto in 2007.

For Nick, the magazine had always been just one part of a journey that earned him the sobriquet "social entrepreneur and immigrant advocate." In 2005, he became the host of his own weekly radio show called "Ask Nick" on Radio Canada International. In 2008, Nick launched an online networking site called ImmigrantNetworks.ca to help immigrants connect and learn from each other.

In August 2010, he launched Destination Canada, a company dedicated to helping immigrants before they arrive in Canada. He continues to speak to thousands of immigrants through his seminars and keynote addresses, inspiring them to go after success.

Today I honour my friend and one of Canada's 2011 top 25 immigrants, Nick Noorani, and all past and present distinguished honourees like Nick who are integral to the rich and diverse mosaic that is our Canada.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

AUDITOR GENERAL

SPRING 2011 REPORT, ADDENDUM TO REPORT AND 2011 STATUS REPORT TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, the 2011 Spring and Status Reports and an addendum that contains copies of environmental petitions received under the Auditor General Act between July 1 to December 31, 2010.

[Translation]

THE ESTIMATES, 2011-12

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A) TABLED

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Supplementary Estimates (A) for 2011-12.

[English]

COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Elizabeth (Beth) Marshall, Chair of the Committee of Selection, presented the following report:

Thursday, June 9, 2011

The Committee of Selection has the honour to present its

FIRST REPORT

Pursuant to rules 85(1)(a) and 85(2) of the *Rules of the Senate*, your committee wishes to inform the Senate that it nominates the Honourable Senator Oliver as Speaker *pro tempore*.

Respectfully submitted,

ELIZABETH MARSHALL
Chair

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

• (1430)

Senator Marshall: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 58(1)(g), I move that the report be considered later this day.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(On motion of Senator Marshall, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration later this day.)

SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Elizabeth (Beth) Marshall, Chair of the Committee of Selection, presented the following report:

Thursday, June 9, 2011

The Committee of Selection has the honour to present its

SECOND REPORT

Pursuant to Rule 85(1)(b) of the *Rules of the Senate*, your committee submits herewith the list of senators nominated by it to serve on the following committees:

Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples

The Honourable Senators Ataullahjan, Brazeau, Campbell, Dallaire, Demers, Dyck, Lovelace Nicholas, Meredith, Patterson, Raine, Sibbeston and St. Germain, P.C.

Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

The Honourable Senators Callbeck, Duffy, Eaton, Fairbairn, P.C., Mahovlich, Mercer, Mockler, Ogilvie, Plett, Rivard, Robichaud, P.C. and Segal.

**Standing Senate Committee
on Banking, Trade and Commerce**

The Honourable Senators Gerstein, Greene, Harb, Hervieux-Payette, P.C., Massicotte, Meighen, Moore, Oliver, Ringuette, Smith (*Saurel*), Stewart Olsen and Tkachuk.

**Standing Senate Committee on Energy,
the Environment and Natural Resources**

The Honourable Senators Angus, Banks, Brown, Dickson, Johnson, Massicotte, Mitchell, Neufeld, Peterson, Seidman, Sibbeston and Wallace.

Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

The Honourable Senators Cochrane, Hubley, Losier-Cool, Lovelace Nicholas, MacDonald, Manning, Oliver, Patterson, Poirier, Poy, Raine and Watt.

**Standing Senate Committee on
Foreign Affairs and International Trade**

The Honourable Senators Andreychuk, De Bané, P.C., Downe, Finley, Fortin-Duplessis, Johnson, Mahovlich, Nolin, Robichaud, P.C., Segal, Smith, P.C. (*Cobourg*) and Wallin.

Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights

The Honourable Senators Andreychuk, Ataullahjan, Baker, P.C., Brazeau, Hubley, Jaffer, Kochhar, Nancy Ruth and Zimmer.

**Standing Committee on Internal Economy,
Budgets and Administration**

The Honourable Senators Campbell, Carignan, Comeau, Cordy, Di Nino, Downe, Furey, Kinsella, Marshall, Munson, Poulin, Smith (*Saurel*), Stewart Olsen, Stratton and Tkachuk.

**Standing Senate Committee on Legal
and Constitutional Affairs**

The Honourable Senators Angus, Baker, P.C., Boisvenu, Chaput, Fraser, Frum, Joyal, P.C., Lang, Meredith, Runciman, Wallace and Watt.

Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament

The Honourable Senators Ataullahjan, Carstairs, P.C., Eaton, Poy and Rivard.

Standing Senate Committee on National Finance

The Honourable Senators Callbeck, Day, Dickson, Eggleton, P.C., Finley, Gerstein, Marshall, Murray, P.C., Nancy Ruth, Neufeld, Ringuette and Runciman.

**Standing Senate Committee
on National Security and Defence**

The Honourable Senators Dallaire, Day, Lang, Manning, Mitchell, Nolin, Peterson, Plett and Wallin.

Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages

The Honourable Senators Champagne, P.C., Chaput, De Bané, P.C., Eaton, Fortin-Duplessis, Losier-Cool, Mockler, Poirier and Tardif.

**Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures
and the Rights of Parliament**

The Honourable Senators Braley, Brown, Carignan, Comeau, Duffy, Fraser, Furey, Housakos, Joyal, P.C., McCoy, Smith, P.C. (*Cobourg*) and Stratton.

Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations

The Honourable Senators Boisvenu, Braley, Harb, Hervieux-Payette, P.C., Housakos, Marshall, Moore and Runciman.

**Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs,
Science and Technology**

The Honourable Senators Braley, Callbeck, Champagne, P.C., Cordy, Demers, Dyck, Eggleton, P.C., Marshall, Martin, Merchant, Ogilvie and Seidman.

**Standing Senate Committee
on Transport and Communications**

The Honourable Senators Boisvenu, Cochrane, Dawson, Fox, P.C., Frum, Greene, MacDonald, Marshall, Martin, Mercer, Merchant and Zimmer.

Pursuant to Rule 87 of the *Rules of the Senate*, the Honourable Senator LeBreton, P.C. (or Carignan) and the Honourable Senator Cowan (or Tardif) are members ex officio of each select committee.

Respectfully submitted,

ELIZABETH MARSHALL
Chair

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

Senator Marshall: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 58(1)(g), I move that the report be considered later this day.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(On motion of Senator Marshall, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration later this day.)

[Translation]

THE ESTIMATES, 2011-12

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE TO STUDY SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A)

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 58(1)(i), I give notice that later today, I shall move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine and report upon the expenditures set out in the Supplementary Estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

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

That when the Senate adjourns today, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, June 14, 2011, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO RECOGNIZE DECEMBER 10 OF EACH YEAR AS HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Hon. Mobina S.B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Senate of Canada recognize the 10th of December of each year as Human Rights Day as has been established by the United Nations General Assembly on the 4th of December, 1950.

BAHA'I PEOPLE IN IRAN

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Mobina S.B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the deteriorating human rights situation of the Baha'i people in Iran.

• (1440)

QUESTION PERIOD

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SECURITY COSTS AT G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

A few days ago, I heard a French news report indicating that the total cost for the G8 summit held in Deauville cost French taxpayers just under C\$30 million. Compared to the numbers listed in the Auditor General's report on the G8 and G20 summits that we received this morning, our figures seem to defy both logic and a key Conservative value, which is prudent fiscal management.

Let me put the numbers of both summits into perspective. First, according to the Auditor General's report, the projected cost of security at the G8/G20 summits was \$509.9 million. This number is 17 times as much as the total cost of hosting the recent G8 summit in Deauville.

Furthermore, the cost of hiring an extra 700 police officers, mainly from Quebec, cost the federal government \$7 million. This number represents close to 25 per cent of the total costs of the G8 summit in Deauville.

Third, the Canadian G8/G20 summits hired a total of 20,000 security personnel to ensure the safety of all those in attendance. Compare this to the French who, under the orders of the Minister of the Interior, requested the use of 12,000 military and police officers to protect dignitaries from the increased threat of terrorism due to the killing of Osama Bin Laden and the suicide bombings in Marrakech. Who or what, besides black flies, poses such a serious threat to our national security?

Based on these numbers, can the leader explain how the Conservative government defines and applies the concept of accountability — a bill that is so dear to them — and what justifies these excessive costs and why they differ significantly from those of our close G8 partners?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I wish to thank Senator Hervieux-Payette for that question. The honourable senator is relying on media reports and only a portion —

Senator Mitchell: No, we are not — the Auditor General.

Senator LeBreton: — of those reports because, as honourable senators know, the G8 was held in Deauville, France, but the second element of these summits is still to take place, the G20, which will be held later this year in France. The honourable senator is comparing a portion of the cost as reported in the newspaper to the actual event that we hosted last year where we held the combined meetings of the G8 and G20 back to back.

As the honourable senator will recall, when the decision was made to add the meeting of the G20, the government relied on the advice of security experts. It was very important that we protected all participants at the G8 and the G20 and all of their guests, which numbered in the several thousands. There were estimates done at the time. I remember questions in this place based on the estimated cost, which as the Auditor General has reported is significantly less than the budgeted amount. That was understandable because of the speed with which the departments had to work up budgets in order to accommodate the two summits. The RCMP oversaw the security expenses and has publicly stated that the final cost will come in well under budget.

[Translation]

Senator Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, I would like to get back to the subject of security. As honourable senators are aware, hundreds of students, including many from Montreal, were arrested. They were probably the only ones capable of threatening the security of dignitaries attending the G20 summit.

Now that time has passed, could the Leader of the Government in the Senate indicate how many of these terrible protesters who were arrested were convicted of a criminal offence, and what was the cost of the court proceedings?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I cannot answer definitively with regard to the actual charges. However, I will get that information for the honourable senator.

Again, it is hindsight where one can say only the protestors created the problem. We live in a dangerous world. As the host country, we had a lot of responsibility not only for the leaders of the G8 but then the expanded G20 and their delegations, which involved many high-profile public and business leaders representing the various countries.

As we know, the majority of the costs for the G8 and G20 were for security. As I have indicated, it will be coming in under budget, as the RCMP has reported.

With regard to the honourable senator's specific question respecting charges and follow-up, I will take that question as notice.

[Translation]

Senator Hervieux-Payette: By way of comparison, the government can refer to the figures for the Olympic Games, an event that lasted three weeks, attracted a record number of visitors and cost only one-fifth the amount.

I read in the Auditor General's report that we must ask some serious questions about the government's transparency and its ministers' accountability. We are talking about the riding of the former industry minister, Tony Clement, which benefitted from generous investments of close to \$50 million for which the Auditor General is still trying to find the link to the G8 and the G20. The conclusion of the Auditor General's report clearly summarizes the multiple issues related to this summit. It states:

In our view, the manner in which the G8 Legacy Infrastructure Fund was presented did not make clear to Parliament the full nature of the request.

If this does not constitute obfuscation, then I do not know what does. It continues:

By including the request under the item "Funding for the Border Infrastructure Fund relating to investments in infrastructure to reduce border congestion," the government did not clearly or transparently identify the nature of the request for funding — that is, G8 infrastructure project spending.

In paragraph 2.23 it states:

We could not conclude on project selection because documentation was not available to show how projects were chosen. We found that Infrastructure Canada set up mechanisms to administer the contribution agreements to provide funding for the 32 approved projects. The Department examined the 32 projects to ensure that they met the terms and conditions of the G8 Legacy Infrastructure Fund and that agreements were made in accordance with government policy. Infrastructure Canada maintained project records and established project management frameworks.

What measures will the government take to improve transparency? When will Tony Clement be held accountable? In reality, he should resign as President of the Treasury Board since he clearly showed that he is managing taxpayers' money in a non-transparent, ineffective and partisan manner, and that he is a risk to our country's economic future.

[English]

Senator LeBreton: The honourable senator was not doing badly until her last comments.

We fully accept the recommendations in the report of the G8 Legacy Infrastructure Fund, which is a different question from the one concerning security at the G8 and the G20. There is no doubt that the report identifies areas for improvement, and the government will strive to respond to these areas.

It is important to note that the projects that received funding through the legacy fund ultimately reflected the priorities of the municipalities. These projects were put forward by the municipalities and approved by our government. Every dollar that was spent on these projects was appropriate and every penny has been accounted for.

• (1450)

Hon. Joan Fraser: The fact remains, minister, that the Government of Canada submitted estimates to Parliament that were — I must be careful not to use unparliamentary language — designed to obscure the truth and hide the true purpose of the money that Parliament was being asked to authorize. Why? What on earth did the government think could possibly justify that kind of conduct before Parliament?

Senator LeBreton: First, I do not accept the premise of the remarks of the Honourable Senator Fraser. The estimates were not designed as the honourable senator states.

By the way, we thank the Auditor General for 10 years of outstanding service to the people of Canada.

The report recommends areas of improvement, as was pointed out earlier today. Similar methods have been followed in the past, but that does not justify not improving the whole program. As I stated, the report identifies areas where the government needs to improve the system.

It is important to note that the projects that received funding through the legacy fund ultimately reflected the priorities of the municipalities involved. There were quite a number of projects. I did see one of the local mayors confirm this some time ago. They sat down and decided which projects the municipalities would put forward. The municipalities put these projects forward, and they were then approved by the government. Every dollar was spent on appropriate projects, and every penny has been accounted for.

Senator Fraser: Minister, I am not the one who said that the government's conduct was neither clear nor transparent with regard to Parliament; the Auditor General said that.

The Auditor General further said that after this group of local politicians, including the minister, decided how to divvy up the cash, senior civil servants who would normally be required to vet these kinds of proposals never got to determine whether it was an appropriate use of public funds to have, for example, gazebos, or to have public toilets hundreds of miles from the border and many miles from the G8.

I note also that while it is true that at previous summits sums were expended for the benefit of local communities, in Huntsville, the amount that was so cavalierly allocated was 10 times more. One would have thought there would have been 10 times more supervision and careful accounting for it ahead of the fact. Why? What on earth justified, first, this obscurantist, untrue method of reporting to Parliament and, second, this lack of normal judgment of projects that were being submitted?

Senator Mitchell: It is a Conservative value.

Senator LeBreton: The honourable senator has in some cases used the Auditor General's words and at other times used her own.

The facts are that the Auditor General brought forward concerns, which we accept and acknowledge. We will take these recommendations and, in the future, ensure that these processes

are even more robust than they have been in the past through many levels of government. The report identified areas for improvement. We accept the recommendations.

Unlike the way the honourable senator has characterized it, these projects were submitted by the municipalities. They were turned over to the minister responsible for infrastructure, who then turned them over to the public servants. These projects were deemed appropriate, and every penny that has been spent on them has been accounted for.

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, one could hardly blame the municipalities if they thought there was a pot of money that they could access. Why would they not do so? It is not the fault of the municipalities or the municipal leaders. They submitted proposals and, lo and behold, the money was spent.

The Auditor General is not saying that more rules are required. The Auditor General is saying that the rules and guidelines were there and they were not complied with. We do not need more guidelines or rules; we need a government that respects the rules and guidelines.

Will the minister's government acknowledge that it failed to respect the existing rules and guidelines?

Senator LeBreton: I do not believe the Auditor General said that the rules were there. I think the Auditor General pointed out a process whereby adequate rules and procedures were not in place. We agree with the Auditor General. We fully accept the recommendations in her report, and we will take steps to ensure that these processes are corrected in the future.

The municipalities, as I believe it was reported earlier today, had hundreds of projects and were told that they would have to get together under the G8 Legacy Infrastructure Fund and prioritize the projects. They did that and ended up with 32 projects. They were submitted to the minister responsible, and he, in turn, passed them on to public servants for implementation. All of those projects were deemed appropriate, and every single penny that was spent on them has been fully accounted for.

Senator Cowan: With respect, minister, I listened this morning to the Acting Auditor General and he was asked specifically: Do we need more rules? Do we need more guidelines? His answer was no; what we need is respect for those rules and those guidelines that were in place.

The fault is not the lack of rules and guidelines. The fault is the unwillingness of this government to follow the guidelines that were there, and then, as my colleague Senator Fraser has said, to misrepresent and to seek the authority of Parliament to spend monies in one place and then to spend them somewhere else. We are not questioning that the money was spent. God knows, it was spent. The questions are why was it spent, and why were the guidelines that surrounded the authority granted by Parliament not abided by? Those are the questions.

Senator LeBreton: I listened to the Acting Auditor General as well. He questioned the lack of public servants involved in the selection of projects. Therefore, he underlined a problem with this particular process, which we acknowledge and which we will take steps to correct.

The fact is that those projects were selected by the municipalities. I acknowledge, as the Acting Auditor General said, that that process should have involved other people. That is a given.

Having said that, when the municipalities finally came to a conclusion about the 32 projects out of the hundreds that they originally had suggested, they were then turned over to the minister responsible, who turned them over to the proper public servants and authorities. They deemed that the projects were worthy and that every single cent spent on them was spent appropriately and has been fully accounted for.

ENVIRONMENT

CARBON OFFSETS

Hon. Grant Mitchell: Honourable senators, the good news is that in February 2010, the Minister of the Environment announced, "Canada is proud to be the first host country in history to help offset the greenhouse gas emissions of its Olympic Games." The bad news is that 16 months later, nothing has been done about spending the \$150,000 to buy those offsets. It makes one wish that there were offset producers in Mr. Clement's riding because then one would bet that this money would have been spent.

• (1500)

How is it that this government can spend, for example, \$100,000 in the blink of an eye for a gazebo in Mr. Clement's riding without any oversight or accountability whatsoever, but simply will not live up to its commitment to support the greening of the Vancouver Olympics?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for the question and I will take it as notice.

Senator Mitchell: I know that was a tough question, because it is difficult to understand why you would not do the right thing and pay \$150,000 to fulfill an international commitment, but you would do the wrong thing and pay \$50 million to buy votes in Mr. Clement's riding.

Could the leader also ask her colleagues about the following: Many Alberta farmers and small businesses across the country are currently producing carbon offsets. Why could this government not tender a contract so those farmers and other businesses could apply to supply the \$150,000-worth of carbon offsets and the government could help the environment, fulfill an international commitment made by Canada to the entire world, and invest in small businesses and farmers in this country?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I will take Senator Mitchell's question as notice because he hardly ever asks a question but rather makes statements, assumptions and speeches. I must then speak to ministers to get an appropriate comment in order to counteract the honourable senator's misinformation.

Senator Mitchell: While she is doing that, could the leader also ask her colleagues the following question: Does the government understand the concepts of credibility and fulfilling obligations? Does it understand that when it makes an obligation, and an

international obligation in particular, it should follow through on it, and that in not doing so they erode Canada's credibility in the international sphere? This was an important international obligation. Why does she not get after them and get it fulfilled?

Senator LeBreton: The honourable senator should not be talking about credibility and about making international commitments when his government signed an agreement that they knew full well they would never implement.

FINANCE

BUDGET 2011

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, nearly 2 million Canadians have student loans, and many are forced to use other types of credit, such as credit cards, family loans and lines of credit, in order to make ends meet while finishing their post-secondary education.

In 2009 the average debt for university graduates was \$26,680. That number is set to grow as a large proportion of young Canadians struggle to find a permanent job. At a time when interest rates are at historic lows, the government is charging about 8 per cent on student loans. Budget 2011 fails to deliver affordable and accessible post-secondary education to all Canadians.

As the Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers stated on June 6:

You build a better society by investing in education, not in prisons.

How does the leader's government plan to ensure that post-secondary students have the necessary tools and resources to repay their loans and therefore be able to build their net worth?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for her question. The next phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan includes several measures to help students. Budget 2011 forgives a portion of the federal component of Canada Student Loans for new family physicians and nurses who work in under-served rural and remote communities. The budget increases the amount students can earn through work without their loans being affected, which will help about 100,000 students. It increases eligibility for loans and grants for part-time students, making post-secondary education more affordable to them. As well, part-time students will no longer have to pay interest on their student loans while they are studying, in line with the treatment of full-time students.

For skilled trades, the budget makes occupational, trade and professional examination fees eligible for the Tuition Tax Credit, to the benefit of another 30,000 Canadians.

When the government previous to ours came into office, it slashed transfers to the provinces. We provided an additional \$800 million per year through the Canada Social Transfer, an increase of 40 per cent, and we created the Canada Student Grant Program, which provides \$250 a month to low-income and \$100 a month to middle-income students. We made post-secondary

scholarships and bursaries tax free and introduced the textbook and tools tax credits. Our permanent increase to the Canada Summer Jobs Program will mean 3,500 additional jobs per year for a grand total of 40,000 jobs. As well, the budget provides \$20 million for the Canadian Youth Business Foundation.

Honourable senators, I dare say that the record of this government on the issue of students is exemplary.

[Translation]

Senator Tardif: Honourable senators, on October 20, 2010, I expressed the concerns of representatives of the Canadian Federation of Students regarding post-secondary education. The recommendations made in their report underscored, among other things, the importance of implementing a national plan for a high-quality and affordable system of post-secondary education and the need to reduce student debt by increasing the value and number of non-repayable grants available to students.

I realize that facilitating access to the Canada Student Loans Program and is a positive step. However, significantly increasing the number of non-repayable grants would help students even more and would make post-secondary education more affordable.

Can the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell us why the government did not take these recommendations into account when preparing Budget 2011?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I am glad that the honourable senator acknowledged that these are good programs. Like all organizations, the government is quite willing to receive recommendations.

Budget 2011 basically reflects the budget that was introduced in March. I will be happy to draw to the attention of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of State for Finance, who will soon begin the budget consultations for Budget 2012, the recommendations to which the honourable senator referred.

[Translation]

Senator Tardif: I want to thank the leader for her answer. I have another question, honourable senators. Budget 2011 allocates new resources to support research and development in the higher learning sector. Unfortunately, the government continues to distribute these resources selectively and at its own discretion, by giving funding to a limited number of research groups.

As the president of the Canadian Association of University Teachers states:

Canada's scientific community has been very critical of the Conservatives bypassing the granting councils and directly funding projects and institutes that meet their political objectives. This clearly threatens the integrity and independence of research in this country.

How does the leader explain her government's political interference in the choice of projects and research institutes that will receive funding this year?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, the government has done incredible work in the area of science and technology. One will always find someone who will disagree or criticize. However, I must point out that the budget invests an additional \$37 million per year to support the three federal research-granting councils, an additional \$65 million for Genome Canada, and up to \$100 million to establish a Canada brain research fund.

Since taking office, we have created programs such as the Canada Excellence Research Chairs, the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships and the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships. The budget establishes 10 new Canada Excellence Research Chairs, some of which will be active in the fields relevant to Canada's digital economy.

• (1510)

Our government is investing a record \$11.7 billion in science and technology this year to create jobs, improve Canadians' quality of life and to strengthen the economy for future generations. As I have said before, our science and technology strategy, which we established in 2007, caused us to be ranked number one in the G7 for government supported basic discovery oriented university research.

Honourable senators, despite all the efforts of the government, which are significant and which amount to a great deal of money assisting a great number of people as they come to this area, I can always count on Senator Tardif and her colleagues to find the one or two who are never satisfied with anything the government does.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

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

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

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

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

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, on behalf of the official opposition in the Senate, I want to begin by extending our very best wishes to His Excellency the Governor General on his inaugural Speech from the Throne.

I would also like to extend our warm congratulations to you, Your Honour, as you continue to serve as presiding officer of this chamber. One of the side benefits of occasions such as this is the opportunity to say publicly how much we appreciate your service to the chamber. Your knowledge and deep respect for the rules and proud traditions of this place are what we rely on — on both sides of this Chamber. As always, your patience and a good humour are welcome.

Our congratulations go to Senator LeBreton as well, who enters her sixth year as Leader of the Government in the Senate. I do not know whether she considers that to be a long or a short time.

I also want to express my thanks and those of my colleagues on this side to Senators Comeau and Di Nino for their service as Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate and as Government Whip. We have had our differences, of course — this is a political chamber, after all — but they were always addressed in the traditional spirit of this place, that is, with genuine respect for one another and for the Senate.

To Senators Carignan and Marshall, we extend our congratulations on your new leadership roles. We look forward to working with both of you in the best interests of the Senate.

On my own side, let me say publicly how delighted I am that Senator Tardif has agreed to continue to serve as our deputy leader, and Senators Munson and Hubley as Opposition Whip and Deputy Opposition Whip. As we well know, and those of you who have served in opposition will know, holding those positions of responsibility in the opposition is not always an easy task and I thank them for their service.

Finally, I want to commend the mover and seconder for their speeches in support of the Speech from the Throne.

Honourable senators, in the recent election the Prime Minister asked Canadians for a stable Conservative majority government. He got what he wanted. As a result, the government no longer has reason to fear an imminent election and, if it respects its own election date law, it has four years to advance its legislative agenda.

Canadians are looking to their government to provide strong leadership and take decisive action on the issues that are important to them. They are tired of wedge politics and endless debates about issues that are on the periphery of their lives or are, as some would say, phony issues for easy-sell “solutions” — politics dictating policy, instead of politics in service of good policy.

Churchill once said, “We shape our dwellings, and afterwards our dwellings shape us.”

That aptly sums up the opportunity and the challenge before this government — and indeed, before all parliamentarians. There are major, serious issues facing Canada. How we address them will shape this nation for years to come — not only the substantive policies that are put in place but also how those policies are developed.

I expect and indeed look forward to vigorous debate. That debate — the exchange of thoughtful arguments, parliamentarians each seeking to persuade each other of the merits of their position — along with serious committee study, where all the issues are thoroughly explored and interested Canadians heard — these are fundamental, time-tested parts of this “dwelling” called Parliament. The Canada it has shaped is strong, resilient, compassionate and just.

We are a minority in this House, and a smaller minority in the other place, but this chamber was established in part precisely to represent the minority view — the political minority. This founding role of the Senate is something colleagues may recall I discussed in my speech in the last session on my inquiry on parliamentary reform. This government has received its long-sought majority, and I respect that. Part of our job is to represent the views of the 60 per cent of Canadians who voted for a different result and we intend to do our best to discharge that responsibility.

Let me repeat words I have spoken in each of the several replies to a Speech from the Throne I have delivered since becoming Leader of the Opposition here.

We will do our best to fulfill our constitutional role as members of an active, thoughtful, dedicated opposition, exercising our mandated role of sober second thought.

We intend to carefully scrutinize the government's legislative program and will propose legislative measures of our own.

Where we find fault with legislation, we will propose amendments to improve it.

If on the other hand, we find favour with the government's proposals, we will support them.

Always, our guide will be the public good.

Let me begin today with some remarks about the government's plan as set out in last week's Speech from the Throne.

Honourable senators, there were only two references to the government providing leadership in the speech. The word “leadership” only appeared twice: Once was with respect to stewardship of northern lands and waters, and the other was with respect to democratic reform, especially reform of the Senate — a subject I will return to later in my address.

I was disappointed to see that the government did not stand up and take a leadership role with respect to poverty reduction or with respect to the future of health care.

The Health Accord negotiated by the government of Prime Minister Paul Martin in 2004 is coming up for renewal in 2014 — a very short time away. Canadians are worried about their health care system. Indeed, according to a recent poll, health care has now surpassed the economy in the ranking of national issues of concern.

There are Canadian families who do not fill prescriptions for medicines. They cannot afford to. Tommy Douglas, the father of medicare, used to say you should not have to sell your family farm to afford medical care. Well, today there are families who face the prospect of losing their family home to pay for critical drugs for their loved ones. More than 3.5 million Canadians have no prescription drug coverage or are under-insured. According to the Canadian Medical Association, a standard course of treatment for cancer can cost \$50,000 — and each of us has heard of Canadians who have been presented with even larger bills.

Cancer and other diseases do not discriminate. They strike without regard to whether or not the victim has a drug plan.

In many provinces, a patient who receives chemotherapy in a hospital has the cost covered, but the same patient, with the same cancer, who takes the same treatment at home, must pay from his own pocket. We all know about the overcrowding in our hospitals. Canadians know this does not make sense. There is a deep cruelty when a Canadian in one part of the country has no affordable access to medicines that another Canadian elsewhere in the country can obtain.

That is just one glaring example where we need to take a hard look at our system and find ways it can be improved. It was designed in a time when health care delivery typically involved a doctor and a hospital. Long-term care services were pretty much unheard of, so they were not even part of the Canada Health Act. Again, this does not make sense in the 21st century; not with the pressures on our hospitals, that cannot admit patients or are forced to set up beds in the hospital's Tim Hortons because there are too many long-term care patients occupying hospital beds.

This is an issue that calls for national leadership. So far, this government has been content to be a follower and has shied away from showing leadership on health care. This must change.

• (1520)

Let us be clear about this. This is not only a provincial and territorial issue. The federal government is actually the sixth-largest health care provider in this country.

I am concerned when I hear reports that the government may opt for a series of one-off deals with the provinces rather than a pan-Canadian accord. What does this say about Canadian values?

I worry when I hear reports that this government is backing off its tobacco control measures — an area in which we were once a world leader. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, quitting smoking is the single-best thing a Canadian can do for his or her health. It is estimated that smoking is responsible for 30 per cent of cancer deaths. In other words, our policies about tobacco impact directly on the health and well-being of Canadians, to say nothing of the costs and burdens on our health care system.

As I said before, I am happy to give the government credit where credit is due, and I wholeheartedly support its decision late in the last Parliament to ask our Social Affairs, Science and Technology Committee to conduct a review of the health care accords. That committee, under the leadership of our former colleagues Senator Kirby and Senator Keon, prepared what has become a landmark report on the health care system in Canada. However, that was almost 10 years ago. It is right and proper to ask this committee to return to this issue that is so critical to Canadians. I know that it will do an equally in-depth, thoughtful piece of work that will contribute significantly to shaping the health care system so that it can respond to Canadians' needs now and in the future. I assume and hope that this chamber will renew its request to this committee so it will be able to continue its work.

One area that requires urgent attention relates to the health and well-being of Aboriginal Canadians, a subject addressed earlier this afternoon by our colleague Senator St. Germain. A recent report by Statistics Canada found that First Nations adults are about two and a half times as likely as non-Aboriginal adults to die prematurely. Injuries and increasingly chronic diseases are the leading causes of this. The study confirmed what many of us suspected, namely, that socio-economic factors — education, income, housing and labour-force status — were important contributors to this shocking disparity.

Auditor General Sheila Fraser repeatedly drew attention to the deplorable situation of Aboriginal Canadians, including in her final statement as Auditor General. I am disappointed that Aboriginal Affairs Minister Duncan responded in the way that was typical of the last Harper government, namely, to blame the previous Liberal government. This is really getting tiresome. Prime Minister Harper has been in office for over five years. Regrettably, one of his first acts was to tear up the Kelowna Accord, a historic agreement reached by the federal government, provincial and territorial governments, and Aboriginal leaders. For the first time, all parties agreed on an action plan to take concrete steps to improve education, housing, economic development, health and water services. It was a five-year, \$5-billion plan. Imagine, honourable senators, how much could have been accomplished by now. Five years later, instead of looking to build on the accomplishments of that accord, this government says its plan is to “work with Aboriginal communities, provinces and territories” to meet the challenges of the barriers to social and economic participation that many Aboriginal Canadians face.

That is right. Five years later it is now beginning the process that the Liberal Government of Prime Minister Paul Martin had successfully completed, a comprehensive agreement to begin to address the problems in a systematic way. This government — perhaps out of hubris, perhaps because it preferred to attack anything from a previous Liberal government than to acknowledge its achievements — tore up those agreements. The problem is, honourable senators, the victims were Aboriginal Canadians.

Hubris — political vitriol — has no place when it comes to the development of serious public policy. Too much is at stake. I hope that now that this government has its long-sought majority, it can leave such behaviour behind. However, we have lost five years, and the time has come for real action and real leadership by this government.

The challenges faced by Aboriginal Canadians are serious. We all know the statistics. I quoted some discouraging ones on health and life expectancy. Safe, clean water is essential. Auditor General Fraser noted that more than half the drinking water systems on reserves pose a health threat. We need serious action, not the government's simplistic proposals to take power away from some groups and give it to others. Power grabs will not bring clean drinking water to First Nations communities. That is politics; that is not policy.

Education is listed by the Public Health Agency of Canada as one of the top determinants of health. Only 41 per cent of students on reserves graduate from high school, compared with 77 per cent of students in the rest of the country. Again, this was one of the issues addressed by the Kelowna Accord.

Another issue under Kelowna that the government did not mention in the Speech from the Throne is housing. Where is the government on this crucial issue, so critical to the health of Aboriginal Canadians? What is its plan? Is there a plan? Again, precious time has been lost. Instead of a plan, my leader, the Honourable Bob Rae, has pointed out that this government has actually cut funding for Aboriginal housing by \$127 million. Honourable senators, this is shameful. Do not just take my word for it. Read the scathing indictment contained in the Auditor General's report released earlier today.

This leads me directly to another issue, namely, the so-called law and order agenda.

Here are some facts. Aboriginal Canadians make up 3 per cent of Canada's population, but 21 per cent of the prison population. The statistics for Aboriginal women are even worse. Aboriginal women represent 32.6 per cent of all incarcerated women. That is one third of the women in prison in Canada. In Saskatchewan, Aboriginal Canadians comprise 11 per cent of the population but 81 per cent of new admissions to prison. Those are staggering facts.

According to statistics from Correctional Service Canada, Aboriginal offenders are much more likely to be incarcerated for an offence — 70 per cent — than non-Aboriginal offenders — 58.8 per cent — and they are more likely to be classified as medium security risk in prison than low risk.

One final statistic: The average age of Aboriginal offenders admitted to federal prison is lower than that of non-Aboriginal offenders. In other words, we have a population that is being locked up younger than the rest of the Canadian population and in vastly greater numbers. As Shawn Atleo said recently, right now, an Aboriginal person is more apt to end up in jail than to graduate from high school.

Honourable senators, I have real concern about a government that tears up the Kelowna Accord, that could have helped to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Canadians, and focuses instead on passing more and more laws with mandatory minimum penalties aimed at locking up more and more Canadians.

Mandatory minimums mean that our judges have no discretion. They cannot look at the individual standing in front of them and say that there are better ways than prison to get this man or this woman away from a life of crime.

In fact, colleagues, we know — and since the government is well-advised, they know it, too — that increasing the time someone spends in prison may actually heighten the threat to long-term public safety. As an RCMP chief superintendent told a committee in the other place in the last Parliament: "The threat to the community is eliminated through his lack of access," — that is, while he is in prison — "but he may be a greater threat upon his release. Prison allows him to learn his craft better and provides him the opportunity to increase his network."

Alex Himelfarb, the former Clerk of the Privy Council, spent a very significant part of his distinguished public service career in the justice sector, working in the Ministry of the Solicitor General, now Public Safety, the Justice Department and the National Parole Board. He said: "In all the time I worked on these issues, I never met an official, elected or unelected, who was 'soft on crime', not ever, not once."

With respect to the government's proposed omnibus bill, Mr. Himelfarb said, first, that unquestionably some offenders belong in prison. Justice demands it, and some people need to be there as they pose a continuing danger. However, he pointed out that Canada already uses prison as a punishment far more than, for example, our European counterparts.

• (1530)

He continued:

But we have also learned — from the evidence and from our experience — that prison can harden those who would have been better diverted from the system in the first instance and that overlong sentences can lose those who might otherwise have been successfully integrated into their communities as law-abiding citizens. We have learned that a preoccupation with punishment can easily divert us from doing what actually makes us safer.

I will repeat that:

We have learned that a preoccupation with punishment can easily divert us from doing what actually makes us safer.

Surely that ought to be our objective: making our communities safer.

He concludes:

And, in its way most troubling, these policies make for a meaner Canada.

As Churchill said:

We shape our dwellings and afterwards our dwellings shape us.

Mr. Himelfarb understands better than most that governing is about making choices. Particularly when a government has run up a large deficit, choices are necessary to bring our public finances back in control. He had this to say about the criminal justice policies:

... these policies cost money, lots of money. Imprisonment is expensive. And that means less money for those things that might have made us truly safer — prevention, education, rehabilitation.

Honourable senators, I was pleased to read recently that Public Safety Minister Toews said it is time to stop using prisons as a parallel health care system for the mentally ill. That is an issue I know that Senator Runciman also feels strongly about.

Some experts have suggested that close to 35 per cent of inmates in federal penitentiaries suffer from a mental illness that requires treatment. Among women in our prisons, the statistics are even worse: 40 to 45 per cent of female offenders apparently suffer from mental illness. Some would suggest that even that number is too low.

These are not people who belong in our prison system — they belong in health care.

I welcome Minister Toews' decision to do something about the large number of mentally ill people in our prison system. I look forward to the measures he will announce to deal with this and with the disproportionate representation of Aboriginals and poor Canadians in our prisons.

In the last Parliament I quoted Kim Pate of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, who pointed out that 82 per cent of women in prison are there for poverty-related offences. Is "tough on crime" the answer for those women? I think not.

As Mr. Himelfarb wrote:

Getting tough on crime often means getting tough on the poor, the troubled, and the excluded.

I was disappointed that the Speech from the Throne made no mention of those Canadians being left behind — those Canadians struggling in poverty. The words "poor" and "poverty" were not mentioned once in the entire speech.

The disparity between rich and poor is growing in Canada. Experience tells us that this is a problem that demands attention — both for the sake of those who are struggling and also, frankly, for the country as a whole.

I believe in evidence-based policy-making. I believe our role as parliamentarians is to dispassionately study an issue, to look at all the facts and as many implications as possible, to look at the experiences of other jurisdictions, to learn what has worked and — even more importantly — what has failed, to listen to experts who have themselves studied the issue in depth and then, together, craft the best legislation we can for the benefit of all Canadians.

That has not been the approach of this government on the crime issue. Statements by former senior advisers to Prime Minister Harper have confirmed what I suspected — that politics usually trumps evidence-based policy-making in this area.

My hope, honourable senators, is that we are now entering a new era. I know the seriousness with which many of my colleagues opposite take our role here. I know the commitment of all of us to try to do the best that we can for Canadians. I hope that we can work constructively and collaboratively on the bills brought before us, including the omnibus crime bill. That is what Canadians expect and that is what Canadians deserve.

I was not reassured to hear Justice Minister Nicholson say in an interview last weekend that Bill S-10, which dealt with drug offences, is, as he described it, "very specific — it targets drug traffickers." He then went on to say:

These are individuals who are involved with organized crime. And in fact, there is quite a bit of violence attached to it.

That is certainly true of some drug traffickers, and I would welcome a bill that actually does target those criminals. The problem is that the definition of "trafficking" under the law is much, much broader. It includes, as we heard in the last Parliament, an 18-year-old student who offers to share a drug with a friend at a party. Simply offering — whether or not the person accepts and whether or not there was money involved — is swept up in the definition of "trafficking." Should the same mandatory minimum penalty apply to that teenager as would apply to a member of an organized crime gang who is actively selling large quantities of drugs?

We will, I hope, have an opportunity to debate these issues when the omnibus crime bill comes to us, but I hope the minister refrains from continuing to mislead Canadians as to the nature of his bills. If that is what he wants his bill to say, we would happily help by proposing amendments that will achieve what he says he is targeting. In fact, however, if he wants the bill's scope to be that broad, I would hope he will admit it to Canadians and stand and explain why he believes that this broad-brush approach is the right way to go.

Honourable senators, I noted with some surprise another glaring omission from the government's plan. The government has made much of its plans to celebrate milestones. The Speech from the Throne said:

Anniversaries are an important part of how a society marks its collective progress and defines its goals for the future.

I agree. This government plans to celebrate the bicentennial of the War of 1812, the one hundredth anniversary of the Calgary Stampede and the one hundredth anniversary of the Grey Cup, which are all excellent milestones. Even as it is planning significant cutbacks, the government is budgeting millions of taxpayer dollars for each celebration.

However, the government has been silent about the upcoming thirtieth anniversary of the signing of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Like health care, the Charter is a part of the Canadian identity. I hope that the government does not plan to allow this anniversary to pass unmarked. I hope that it does not reflect any reluctance by this government to celebrate this important milestone in Canada's history.

There is another area where Canadians expect the federal government to take decisive action, and sadly it was not even mentioned in the Speech from the Throne; that is, climate change. Does this government acknowledge that climate change is a serious issue? Many would say it is one of the most serious issues facing the world today. Judging from the Speech from the

Throne, it would appear the answer is no. There is no leadership role here, unless it is the leading head-in-the-sand role.

Recently, Canadians learned that the federal government deliberately excluded data from a 567-page report on climate change that it was required to submit to the United Nations. What data was excluded? Data indicating that in 2009 there was a 20-per-cent increase in annual pollution from Canada's oil sands industry.

These are critical numbers that the government did see fit to include in previous years. As a nation, we need to know this information. We also have a responsibility to the international community not to play fast and loose with our statistics, particularly on a global problem like climate change.

This is not a local problem or even a national one — it is already impacting the entire world. Last Sunday, *The New York Times* had a cover story entitled, "A Warming Planet Struggles to Feed Itself," in which it detailed the looming global food shortages — and political crises — attributable at least in part to human-induced climate change.

The Globe and Mail reported on Tuesday that 42 million people were forced to flee their homes last year because of natural disasters around the world — more than twice the number than in 2009.

Human-induced climate change is identified as one of the probable causes. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has called the issue of climate change displacements "the defining challenge of our times." He sharply criticized the international community for lacking the political will to reduce the pace of climate change.

Honourable senators, our international responsibility does not begin and end with sending troops to regions of the world that are in crisis. We have a responsibility to work to prevent crises from developing in the first place. Food shortages, water shortages, the devastation caused by "climate shocks" such as flash floods and drought — it is just not enough to send aid after the fact. As an oil-producing country, we have a particular responsibility to ourselves and to the world to take action to combat climate change. Instead of the leadership role Canada should be taking, our government refuses to even acknowledge that the issue exists and then admits to actually leaving out critical data in its reporting to the international community.

• (1540)

Let me read to you from the Postmedia News article on May 30:

Critics have suggested the Harper government is deliberately trying to delay international action to fight climate change, following revelations, reported last fall by Postmedia News, that it had set up a partnership with the Alberta government, industry and several federal departments to fight pollution-reduction policies from other countries that target the oilsands through lobbying and public relations.

Environment Minister Peter Kent has said the federal government is committed to reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions and will introduce its plan to regulate pollution from the oilsands within months. But he has also acknowledged that existing federal and provincial policies would still result in an increase in emissions over the next decade.

Although the report was due in April, during the last election campaign, Canada was the last country to file its submission. Environment Canada even filed its submission after earthquake-stricken Japan, and was unable to explain why its report was late.

This does not give me any confidence that this government plans to turn over a new leaf and begin to adopt evidence-based policies. How can it, when it actually omits critical data from the reports that form the basis of those policies?

Honourable senators, human-induced climate change is real. Fudging reports — deliberately omitting critical data — will not make the problem disappear. We need to act now. No more misleading reports, no more refusing to disclose critical information.

There are, of course, many issues that I could address, but in the interest of time I will only briefly touch on one more, and that is an issue dear to the heart of my friend Senator Brown: Senate reform.

As I mentioned early on, this was only one of two instances in the Speech from the Throne when the word "leadership" was used. I find it passing strange that on so many issues, this government refuses to take a leadership role, saying it must defer to the provinces; yet on this issue on which the provinces both should have a role and in large numbers have said they must have a role, the federal government insists on barreling forward, imposing its own desired result and refusing even to convene a first ministers' meeting on the subject.

Let us be clear about this: We on this side are not opposed to Senate reform. We welcome a proposal to improve the Senate, as we do to any institution of Parliament, but it must be serious and it must be done right; that is, in accordance with the Constitution.

It is simply not good enough to say it would be too difficult to open up the Constitution. You cannot amend the Constitution except in accordance with the Constitution. I appreciate that this Prime Minister has a certain vision for the Senate. However, under the Constitution, his provision does not prevail over all others. Contrary to his belief, the notwithstanding clause does not refer to the personal beliefs of the Prime Minister.

Back in June 2007, four years ago, this chamber decided not to proceed with the Senate term limits bill placed before it, saying either that the federal government should engage with the provinces or it should refer the bill to the Supreme Court of Canada to determine whether it could proceed unilaterally with its proposed term limits. The government, in its wisdom, chose to do neither and, instead, has retabled its proposals over and over, trying first one chamber and then the other. None passed either house.

Does the government now have the numbers to pass its legislation? Yes, it does. Is it the right thing to do? No, it is not. I cannot accept that one can enhance democracy by refusing to listen to dissenting voices. It is especially wrong here in the Senate, which was established precisely to represent regional interests. Constitutions are not meant to be circumvented.

Honourable senators, I look forward to this new Parliament. Do I wish that the election results had been different? Of course I do. However, I accept the results, and I believe that the real message that Canadians were sending was that they want this Parliament to work, not in the interests of one political party or another — they are tired of partisan politics — but, rather, in the best interests of all Canadians. We on this side intend to do our part to fulfill those expectations.

(On motion of Senator Carignan, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, given that we will be adopting motions that affect the organization and mandate of committees, particularly the National Finance Committee, I move that we proceed to the consideration of the two Committee of Selection reports.

[English]

COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the first report of the Committee of Selection (Speaker *pro tempore*), presented earlier this day.

Hon. Elizabeth (Beth) Marshall: Honourable senators, I move the adoption of this first report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the second report of the Committee of Selection (*membership of Senate committees*), presented earlier this day.

Hon. Elizabeth (Beth) Marshall: Honourable senators, I move the adoption of the second report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

[Translation]

THE ESTIMATES, 2011-12

NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY MAIN ESTIMATES, 2011-12

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government), pursuant to notice of June 7, 2011, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine and report upon the expenditures set out in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

MOTION MODIFIED

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I am asking leave of the Senate to amend the motion to read as follows:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine and report upon the expenditures set out in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

and to add:

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee on this subject during the third session of the fortieth Parliament be referred to the committee.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion as amended agreed to.)

NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A)

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government), pursuant to notice of June 9, 2011, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine and report upon the expenditures set out in the Supplementary Estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(The Senate adjourned until Tuesday, June 14, 2011, at 2 p.m.)

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