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(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 16, 2012

The Honourable NOËL A. KINSELLA
Speaker

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

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THE SENATE

Thursday, February 16, 2012

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF PRIVATE KENNETH BRYANT JONES

Hon. Yonah Martin: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize the month in which we celebrate Canadian Black history. In particular, I wish to call attention to the sixtieth anniversary of the death of one of our Canadian soldiers who was killed in action during the Korean War.

[Translation]

Private Kenneth Bryant Jones died in combat in Korea on January 8, 1952. While serving with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, he was shot and died instantly.

[English]

This proud Black soldier from Windsor, Ontario, had also served our country on active service for three years during the Second World War. He first enlisted in the Canadian Army in September 1942, at age 20. He served in campaigns in Italy, France and Germany. At the outbreak of the Korean War, he re-enlisted to serve in the Canadian Army Special Force. Having already sacrificed so much for Canada during World War II, when he fell in Korea, he was only 30 years old.

[Translation]

This proud Canadian's story is one not only of sadness, but also of courage, inspiration and family love.

In 1920, when he was just two years old, he and his brothers and sisters were orphaned. He grew up in an extended, loving family, raised by his uncle and aunt, George and Evelyn Jones, of Windsor. He was very close to his nieces and nephews, especially one very young nephew, Ronald Jones. Today, Ronald Jones is a long-serving City of Windsor councillor. Every year, Councillor Jones lays flowers at the Korean War memorial and the Windsor war memorial in memory of his kind uncle.

[English]

Yet, Kenneth Jones is but one of our wonderful Canadians of colour who fell in the Korean War, as well as in other wars and theatres of operations. It is an accolade to our Canadian traditions and heritage that in our Canadian Forces all who served were treated equally, with no distinction made based on one's racial, religious or cultural uniqueness. Moreover, all

Canadian soldiers, of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, gave their all, wholeheartedly, to our wonderful country. They will all attest to how proud they were to wear the Canadian uniform and to serve under our nation's flag.

[Translation]

Although 60 years have passed since his death, every generation of his family knows the story of this exemplary Canadian soldier. They revere him as an ancestor deserving of their pride. They all know that this great soldier served Canada in two wars and that he gave his life for us and for the people of the Republic of Korea. His actions have been woven into Canada's flag and have written a chapter in Canada's history.

We will remember them.

COPTIC CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, I would like to talk about the alarming events affecting our Christian brothers in Egypt. I am referring to the Copts who have been in Egypt since the dawn of time, at least since the birth of Christianity.

According to the information I have received from friends living in Canada and around the world, since the Arab Spring, Salafists have continuously tortured Copts, sometimes to the point of death. The number of cases is staggering. Although Christians have always experienced persecution in that part of the world, never has it been as horrific as in the past year or so.

One of the first incidents I heard about had to do with a Salafist who cut off a Christian's ear because the Christian had supposedly rented an apartment to a morally corrupt woman. The incident ended with what is called a "reconciliation meeting" that takes place under the auspices of state security, in front of members of the majority community, during which the victim was forced to forgive his aggressor. No trial, no justice. With this kind of community justice system, the aggressor — supported by the majority — becomes the judge, imposes conditions and pronounces the verdict.

This first incident served as an example and we could list dozens more of the same nature, with the same outcome, all over Upper Egypt, in Cairo and now in Alexandria.

Thus, the Assyrian International News Agency reported recently that a series of so-called mediation meetings had been organized by radical Muslims to decide the fate of some Coptic Christians in a village near Alexandria. It was decided that the entire Coptic population — 62 families in that small village — be expelled because of one unfounded accusation against one, individual Coptic Christian.

In the village of Kobry-el-Sharbat in the El-Amerya region near Alexandria, the news agency also reported that Copts were attacked on January 27 by a crowd of some 3,000 Muslims, led by

Salafist leaders, who pillaged and set fire to the houses and shops owned by Copts. The violence was sparked by allegations that a Coptic man had photos of a Muslim woman on his cell phone. That man is now in prison and of course the photos were never found.

Are we about to witness an ethnic cleansing on religious grounds?

• (1340)

Honourable senators, we who enjoy watching democracy appear in that country, via Facebook and other social media, know what will happen if nothing is done to prevent this.

We in the West can no longer close our eyes to such inhumane behaviour. I urge everyone here and every Canadian to join your voices to mine to call on the Government of Canada to intervene to put an end to these persecutions so that Egypt, a country we admire for its culture, can be a country with real legal rights and a free and independent justice system that serves all its citizens, and so that the hope for democracy can finally see the light of day with the support and protection of a new Egyptian government whose elected members will be called upon to draft a constitution.

[English]

**THE LATE BISHOP JOHN R. SPERRY, C.M.
THE LATE DR. ROBERT G. WILLIAMSON, C.M.**

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Honourable senators, two dear friends of the North and the Inuit passed away this past weekend. They were both in their eighties and both had a long history in the North. Retired Bishop John Sperry and Bob Williamson gave their lives to help Inuit in a multitude of ways. As Mary Simon, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, ITK, said in tribute to both men this past week:

They were both skilled in the Inuit language. Bishop Sperry mastered Inuinnaqtun, while Professor Williamson spoke Inuktitut. The bishop gave Inuit the Bible translated into our language, while Bob Williamson founded Inuktitut magazine, which ITK still publishes today.

Bishop Sperry served in the Royal Navy, on destroyers and escorts, in the Second World War and was Bishop of the Arctic from 1973 to 1990. He served in Coppermine, now Kugluktuk, where his many services to Inuit included pulling teeth. Bishop Sperry wrote *Igloo Dwellers Were My Church*, a memoir of his over 60 years in the North.

Professor Williamson taught at the University of Saskatchewan, where he helped create the Institute of Northern Studies and the Arctic Research and Training Centre. He also worked for the federal Department of Northern Affairs where he established their Eskimology section. He first lived in Pangnirtung, in 1953, and then in Rankin Inlet. Dr. Williamson, an anthropologist, teacher and advocate, vigorously represented the Keewatin region for two terms between 1966 and 1970 as an elected member of the Northwest Territories territorial council. He was fondly known to the Inuit as Quniguapik or Bobbyaluk, and a lake in Rankin Inlet bears his name.

[Senator Hervieux-Payette]

Tributes have been pouring in for both men. Canon Mike Gardner said of Bishop Sperry:

He had an amazing knowledge of life in the North and was always available with his uplifting advice, humour and prayer. He truly loved and knew the people of the North.

Both men, whom I was privileged to know, were honoured with the Order of Canada.

As Mary Simon said:

Both men will be greatly missed, but their contributions will live on, and Inuit, who still live by an oral culture, will pass on stories about Jack and Bob for years to come.

THE LATE DR. GEOFFREY L. PAWSON, C.M.

Hon. Robert W. Peterson: Honourable senators, Saskatchewan has lost a great citizen with the untimely passing of Dr. Geoff Pawson last week. He was, as founder and CEO of Ranch Ehrlo, a pioneer in developing a care facility for troubled youth. He started with a vision and six youth in 1966. Today, Ranch Ehrlo enables 250 young people to achieve a higher potential in their lives. The ranch has been recognized as one of the top 10 employers for 2012.

Dr. Pawson was a trailblazer in developing new programs and procedures to streamline effective outputs. He was recognized internationally and was sought after as a guest speaker at seminars. He believed everyone should be given the chance to flourish. All they need are the tools and support.

Dr. Pawson leaves a legacy that will continue on because of his foresight in developing a superb governance structure and talented and dedicated staff. The motto of Ranch Ehrlo, "Go forward with pride," will resonate for years to come.

To his wife, Barbara, and the family, we offer our profound sympathies and love.

BOREAL WOODLAND CARIBOU

Hon. Janis G. Johnson: Honourable senators, I would like to speak to you today about the iconic national symbol, the boreal woodland caribou. It is in a troubling state. The boreal population of woodland caribou is listed as nationally threatened under the federal Species at Risk Act, and many local populations of this animal that grace our 25-cent coin are in steep decline from Yukon to Labrador. Most Canadians are likely unaware that caribou were once found as far south as Algonquin Park in Ontario. They ranged through Southern Alberta, B.C. and Idaho, and they lived in the Maritime provinces until the 1920s. Over the past 100 years, the woodland caribou have disappeared from almost half of their historic range.

The science is clear that habitat loss from human activity is the primary reason that our boreal woodland caribou are in such serious decline. As intact forests are fragmented by logging, mining roads, seismic lines and transmission corridors, the

caribou populations slowly disappear. These activities are continuing to expand northward, putting more and more of the caribou at risk.

This trend should be of great concern to all Canadians. While we want a safe future for this iconic symbol of our country, the decline also signals a bigger problem. Scientists tell us that the presence of caribou in our forests is an indicator of the health of the forest. If caribou are in trouble, it is a sign that the boreal forest is declining.

This situation matters far beyond our borders. The boreal forest is of global significance. It is the world's largest source of fresh water and the northern lungs of the planet. It is one of the largest intact forest ecosystems left on earth, and it contains the world's highest concentration of large wetlands, lakes and undammed rivers. Its peatlands and soils store the largest amount of soil carbon of any ecosystem on the planet, helping to stabilize the climate. It is the nesting ground for millions of songbirds and waterfowl. Ensuring the future health of Canada's boreal forest is important to the entire world community. Unlike most jurisdictions in the world, Canada still has the opportunity for the large-scale conservation required to maintain fully functioning ecosystems.

There is some good news because Environment Canada recently released a proposed recovery strategy for the boreal woodland caribou, as required under the Species at Risk Act. Until February 2012 — this month — the department is consulting Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians on their proposed strategy. I recently met with the representatives of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, a respected, national, non-profit conservation organization that has been working to protect caribou in the boreal forest for many years. They have reviewed the draft recovery strategy and are very pleased that it recognizes the strong scientific evidence that habitat loss is the main threat to the boreal woodland caribou. However, they are very concerned about certain problems in the strategy that could allow the caribou's critical habitat to continue to be destroyed. They note that the recovery strategy has only a 60 per cent chance of long-term success and that this is the benchmark that determines how much critical habitat should be protected.

Honourable senators, I firmly believe that we must err on the side of caution when setting recovery targets for caribou and that we need to give them a much better shot at long-term survival than the 60 per cent proposed in this recovery strategy. As Canadians, we are so fortunate to still have an opportunity to conserve one of the last great forests and to secure its future well-being for the benefit of all life, including that of humans. Working with our Aboriginal communities and our provincial, territorial and federal government, our conservation organizations and industry need to grasp this opportunity, starting by strengthening the recovery strategy for the boreal woodland caribou to ensure enough habitat is protected to sustain healthy populations of caribou, healthy forests, and healthy communities into the future.

Thank you.

DR. SHAHEEN SHARIFF

CONGRATULATIONS ON FACEBOOK'S DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP RESEARCH GRANT

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I rise today to congratulate Dr. Shaheen Shariff and her team at McGill University for being named as one of the four recipients worldwide and the only Canadian recipient of Facebook's Digital Citizenship Research Grant, a \$50,000 award.

Out of nearly 100 grant applications from more than 10 countries, Dr. Shariff's Define the Line project, based on her pioneering research in media and technology, is designed to help reduce cyberbullying and promote responsible digital citizenship. The website www.definetheline.ca aims to help youth conceptualize the risks and responsibilities of using social media. It also helps parents, teachers and policymakers navigate a "balance between online free expression, safety, supervision and regulation." The Define the Line project truly embodies the spirit of socially responsible digital citizenship.

• (1350)

The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights is similarly committed to studying cyberbullying as an issue of child protection. While we recognize that the social and educational opportunities that come with social media are momentous, as more children become active in social media at younger ages, the onus is on us to teach them the responsibility of digital citizenship.

I commend Facebook as a leader in social media for taking the responsibility upon itself in supporting world-class research to understand the challenges and opportunities our children are facing while growing up surrounded by media and technology.

I offer my sincere congratulations to Dr. Shariff and her team of education and law students at McGill University. I am proud that you are upholding our nation's vision of rights and responsibilities in the digital world.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

BUDGET—STUDY ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION EFFORTS IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR—FIFTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Percy Mockler, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, presented the following report:

Thursday, February 16, 2012

The Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry has the honour to present its

FIFTH REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Thursday, June 16, 2011 to examine and report on research and innovation efforts in the agricultural sector, respectfully requests supplementary funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:06, section 2(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the supplementary budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

PERCY MOCKLER
Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix A, p. 876.)

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

Senator Mockler: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 58(1)(g), I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration later this day.

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

[English]

Hon. Joseph A. Day: Could honourable senators have an explanation as to why?

[Translation]

Senator Mockler: Honourable senators, we are seeking authorization for the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to redistribute funds previously approved by the Senate in its adoption of the committee's third report on November 2, 2011.

More specifically, honourable senators, in our initial budget request, the committee wanted to take a full week to go to the Maritimes and Quebec, but unfortunately, we could not find the time for that trip. That being said, I am not trying to make excuses, honourable senators, but the fact that the funds were not authorized until November and the fact that we could not travel while the Senate was in session limited our options. The cost of the trip can now be halved, saving approximately \$8,000 of the initial budget.

Senator Day: I think I understand.

[Senator Mockler]

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Is the report on the budget or on the policy studied by the committee? You did produce a report following work carried out in Ottawa. What is the nature of the report? Is it related solely to your budget? Why table it today ahead of the deadline?

Senator Mockler: It is about the budget. We will save \$8,000 by reorganizing two trips instead of one, and the senators will be able to go.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

[English]

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

SIXTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. David Tkachuk: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, which deals with reports on international travel.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE SERVICE AND TRAVEL—STUDY ON MANAGEMENT OF GREY SEAL POPULATION OFF CANADA'S EAST COAST—FIFTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Fabian Manning, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, presented the following report:

Thursday, February 16, 2012

The Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has the honour to present its

FIFTH REPORT

Your Committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Thursday, October 20, 2011 to examine and report on the management of the grey seal population off Canada's East Coast, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered:

- (a) to engage the services of such counsel, technical, clerical and other personnel as may be necessary;
- (b) to adjourn from place to place within Canada; and
- (c) to travel inside Canada.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:06, section 2(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

FABIAN MANNING
Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix B, p. 884.)

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

(On motion of Senator Manning, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

CRIMINAL CODE FIREARMS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

• (1400)

QUESTION PERIOD

ENVIRONMENT

OZONE LAYER MONITORING

Hon. Nick G. Sibbeston: Honourable senators, my question today to the Leader of the Government in the Senate deals with monitoring of the ozone layer in the Northwest Territories by Environment Canada. Canada has long been a world leader when it comes to monitoring the ozone layer and measuring soot and pollution that come to the Arctic from around the world.

A recent publication in a newsletter of the American Geophysical Union stated that government cuts to monitoring stations in the North and data reporting will jeopardize this capability. Soot monitoring is particularly important given Canada's commitment at Cancun to deal with the impact of

this substance on Arctic warming. These cuts could affect Canada's contribution to four major international agreements, including the 1987 Montreal Protocol to reduce ozone depletion.

When he was in the North last summer, the Prime Minister indicated his sensitivity to the environment of the North when it was revealed to him that cuts were being made to reduce water monitoring north of 60, and I believe he reversed the department's decision in this matter. However, in this case, Environment Canada and the Minister of the Environment have been less than transparent when it comes to revealing which stations have been closed and which programs have been cut.

Can the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell me which monitoring stations have been closed, why the website that distributes data on Arctic pollution measurements has been taken down, and how this will impact Canada's international obligations?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I will take as notice the portion of the honourable senator's question with regard to the precise sites. I assure the honourable senator that Environment Canada's ability to monitor ozone levels has not been negatively affected by any changes that have been made, and the department continues to provide world-class analysis on this issue. As I mentioned, with regard to the specifics, I will be happy to provide the honourable senator with a written response.

PUBLIC SAFETY

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM INTERNET PREDATORS

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Last year, the government told Canadians that the mandatory long-form census had to be abolished because it was a terrible invasion of Canadians' privacy. The gun registry, which simply told the police where guns could be found, had to be abolished because it was a terrible intrusion into Canadians' lives and suggested that they were all criminals.

However, now the government has turned around and wants to introduce Big Brother into Canadians' surfing of the Internet. Police, without even having to ask a court or a Justice of the Peace for a warrant, are to be allowed to snoop into Canadians' Internet accounts.

Help me here: How is it more acceptable to intrude into Canadians' use of the Internet without their knowledge than to ask them to fill out a census form or to register a long gun?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with respect to Bill C-19, the long-gun registry is being dismantled because it targeted law-abiding hunters and farmers. Clearly, when that law was brought in, it targeted innocent, law-abiding citizens. Bill C-30, which we are proposing, targets serious Internet predators, and our children suffer.

I will put on the record something that is known. All provincial attorneys general, including Liberals and NDP, unanimously supported moving forward with Bill C-30, the protecting children

from Internet Predators Act, as soon as possible. As technology has evolved — and we all know how technologies have evolved even in the past five years — many criminal activities have developed that have given Internet predators access to a serious criminal offence at the expense of our children.

However, as Minister Toews indicated in the other place, we will be sending this legislation directly to a committee for a full and wide-ranging examination. Hopefully, through the deliberations of that committee, the recommendations that will come back will provide, in the best way possible, the opportunity going forward to protect our children from Internet predators.

Senator Cowan: Protection of our children from Internet predators is something we would all like to see strengthened as far as possible, but there are privacy rights that Canadians have.

I want to quote several comments that have been made by Jennifer Stoddart, the Privacy Commissioner. She said that this amounts to “circumventing the courts to obtain personal information.” She sent a letter to Minister Toews in which she said: “Only prior court authorization provides the rigorous privacy protection that Canadians expect.”

She goes on to say:

... if the concern of law enforcement agencies is that it is difficult to obtain warrants or judicial authorization in a timely way, these administrative challenges should be addressed by administrative solutions rather than by weakening long-standing legal principles that uphold Canadians' fundamental freedoms.

We have the advice from an officer of Parliament, the Privacy Commissioner. The leader indicated that the minister would be open to strengthening the act and assuring a proper balance. Will that include allowing amendments or perhaps promoting amendments that will ensure that Canadians' fundamental right to privacy will be adequately protected, not at the expense of appropriate action to trap or to catch Internet predators but to get an appropriate balance between that very legitimate need to which the leader refers and the equally legitimate need to protect the privacy of Canadian citizens?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I am quite certain the Privacy Commissioner, Jennifer Stoddart, will be called before the committee in the other place. That is what I said, what the minister said and what the Prime Minister said, that this bill will be sent directly to committee for a full and wide-ranging discussion. Hopefully, out of that review, everyone on all sides can put their heads together and come up with the best piece of legislation, legislation that will do as we intend it to do, and that is to protect our children.

I know there is a lot of hysteria in the media, some of it unfounded. What we are proposing is similar to what is done in the United States, Australia and Great Britain. They are far ahead of us in terms of protecting their children from Internet predators. That having been said, I have full confidence that when this

matter is sent to the committee in the other place, the views of the Privacy Commissioner and others will be taken into account. The end product will be something, as was intended by the government, to protect our children from this growing problem. We only have to listen to and read the news every day to know how serious this problem is, and it is growing. It is not diminishing.

• (1410)

Hon. Grant Mitchell: Honourable senators, the leader has said that it is very important that we protect our children from Internet predators. There is not a single person in this house, in the other house or across the country who does not want to protect our children from Internet predators.

My question is who will protect our children from Conservative privacy predators?

Senator LeBreton: That is truly brilliant, Senator Mitchell. As I think your leader indicated and as I indicated, surely it is in the interests of all of us to ensure that when we pass legislation in this regard — and I point out that this is similar to legislation that has been passed by most modern countries in the world and we are lagging way behind — we should take the matter seriously. The aim is to protect our children, not to make ridiculous statements like the honourable senator has just made.

[Translation]

LONG-GUN REGISTRY

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I am certain that she is very pleased that I still have a question to ask her, particularly since the economy is an issue that is extremely important to her. I am trying to make a connection between the firearms registry and economic growth and job creation.

We learned that, yesterday evening, a party was organized to celebrate a happy occasion. To me, a happy occasion is a birthday, a promotion, the birth of a child or a wedding, for example. The leader will understand why we have doubts about the nature of the happy occasion that was celebrated when she thinks about the incredible tragedies that have occurred in Canada, particularly in my province. Yesterday was not about victims' rights. The Conservatives simply use victims' rights as a pretext for introducing other bills.

In Quebec, the general impression was that the Conservatives' party was equivalent to dancing on the graves of Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maude Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte — all those who died during the Polytechnique massacre.

How can the leader's government celebrate such a bill when it was born from the killings at École Polytechnique?

[Senator LeBreton]

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): We all vividly remember the tragedy at École Polytechnique, and I remember exactly what I was doing when that terrible tragedy happened. For the honourable senator to equate that in any way with legislation that targets law-abiding citizens is shameful.

I am at a loss for words. As a victim myself, as others of us, of criminal acts, how could she stand up in this place and use the names of innocent victims to criticize a piece of government legislation? The honourable senator knows full well, as we all do, that the tragic events at École Polytechnique, which saw so many young women massacred, has nothing whatsoever to do with Bill C-19, which was an act to abolish the long-gun registry.

It is disgusting that the honourable senator would even equate the two. She always tries to confuse the issue of the long-gun registry with our serious efforts to control dangerous weapons. As I have pointed out in this place many times, these were brought in by Conservative governments. We have strong gun control laws in this country.

Back when this long-gun registry was brought into this place in the mid-1990s, I said at the time that the money would be far better spent on border security to keep illegal guns out of the country and on issues such as violence against women.

[Translation]

Senator Hervieux-Payette: I am sorry to say that I do not know which of the two would be more shocked by the leader's words. Suzanne Laplante-Edward, who lost her daughter in this tragedy, stated, "I am outraged. I cannot believe that my taxes are being used to pay for a party where the Conservatives are dancing on my daughter's grave."

Those are not my words, but those of a victim's mother.

The leader is claiming that the registry is being abolished to save money, but evidence was brought before committee showing that the firearm-related homicide rate has fallen since the registry was implemented. From the beginning, there has been a reduction in the number of lives lost and the number of court cases, as well as in the costs that the government must assume when such an incident occurs.

Finally, could the leader provide us with the exact amount of money spent on the party in question?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: First of all, I have the greatest sympathy for the mothers of the victims. I can totally understand her feelings. Anyone who has lost children is very emotional about it.

I remove the mothers of the victims from this because, obviously, anybody who has lived through a tragedy like that has great difficulty with any matters that they perceive to be directly related to the tragedies they have faced.

The fact of the matter is that the government — and before we formed the government, in every election since 2004, our party then and now as we ran for government — has made it very clear that it was our intention to scrap the long-gun registry. As I have mentioned many times, I was raised on a farm. We had shotguns and rifles, and my father was certainly not a criminal.

The purpose of the bill was not to target law-abiding citizens. Of course the government, at the same time, adheres to strict gun control laws brought in by Conservative governments, as I have pointed out.

Certain members of Parliament have worked many years on this issue, some of them for 15 or 17 years. The fact that they decided to have an event to mark the occasion is their own business. As far as I know, these are events that they decided to participate in, which is their right. I do not know what that has to do with the taxpayer or the government.

[Translation]

Senator Hervieux-Payette: I gather from the leader's response that we will not be told the amount paid for this party.

For several months now, Quebec's public safety minister, Robert Dutil, has been urging the government to transfer the firearms registry, which was paid for by all Canadian taxpayers, in the event that Bill C-19 was passed. The government's idea of saving money is strange to say the least, given that it continues to ignore a request that would allow a province to continue to use the registry and benefit from the investment that has already been made.

How does the leader justify her government's decision and how can Prime Minister Harper say that he respects taxpayers when 70 per cent of Quebecers are in favour of keeping the registry?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: The bill is very clear, as was our commitment. We brought in Bill C-19 to scrap the long-gun registry. It is a registry. A registry has names. When we said we were going to scrap the long-gun registry, we are doing exactly what we said we would do.

• (1420)

We have the bill before us now, and if individual provinces want to embark on their own registries, they are free to do so. However, we will not participate in a back-door effort with data, by the way, which is now incomplete and not useful.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: How many other registries in other departments does the government intend to erase and to make disappear in order to imply their policy?

Senator LeBreton: That is in line with the honourable senator's usual ridiculous questions. We are talking about the long-gun registry, and the bill before us is to scrap it.

I must say, at this point, I was delighted to see two NDP members of the Official Opposition have the courage to get up and vote for this measure. For the honourable senator to ask me some question about how many registries, it actually is a ridiculous question and I should not even be trying to answer it.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: I have every right to talk to the leader and to ask her questions. That is my role as a member of the opposition.

The leader also has the duty to answer politely. I have never qualified her as ridiculous, and I have never used words describing her as an idiot, so I do not see why she would talk to me this way. I ask her to withdraw those words.

Senator LeBreton: I do not think I have ever called anyone an idiot, unless I have done so to their face, which of course is in private.

When Senator Hervieux-Payette reads her preambles and the vicious attacks that she unleashes on our government every time she gets up, which is her right, I have a right to defend my government. I will do so, and I will absolutely not apologize for it.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Claude Rivest: Honourable senators, I would like to ask the minister for a clarification. She mentioned the fact that if provincial governments wanted to continue having a registry, they could do so. As you know, honourable senators, the Government of Quebec, particularly the Quebec Minister of Justice and Attorney General, publicly announced that, as soon as this bill passes and receives Royal Assent, the Government of Quebec will take the matter to court immediately to protect the existing data, to ensure that the Canadian government does not destroy those data.

Given that the data — even if they are not perfect — could be very useful to a government — for instance, to the Quebec government and perhaps other provincial governments across Canada — that wants to have and use such a registry, why do the government and the minister responsible want to destroy the data? The Government of Canada must realize that if it goes through with its plans, the Quebec justice minister and Quebec taxpayers will have no choice but to take the matter to court and spend more money to get an injunction.

It seems to me that, in the spirit of federalism and federal-provincial cooperation, there would be a way for two intelligent people, the federal Minister of Justice and Quebec's minister, to find and agree on a reasonable solution to this aspect of the gun control issue.

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I do not know the status of the Quebec government's intentions or whether this is before the courts. I do not comment on things before the courts.

I will say one thing: We have never, ever supported making law-abiding hunters, farmers, sports and target shooters a target. These are lawful citizens.

[Senator LeBreton]

We made a commitment to get rid of the long-gun registry after many years and many times in Parliament. It is finally before us here in the Senate. This is the federal long-gun registry, which we are eliminating with Bill C-19. Any province can do what it wishes, but this information, which is now incomplete, is part of the registry that we committed to abolishing. We are going to abolish it. If people want to set up their own registries, they will not do so through the back door on incomplete information we may have.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

PROCUREMENT POLICIES—HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hon. Joseph A. Day: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. It relates to national defence procurement policies.

The Department of National Defence manages \$3.5 billion annually in capital expenditures and annually spends \$2.6 billion for maintenance and upgrades. They also oversee \$22 billion of existing inventory on major systems and assets. Therefore, there is a huge amount of money being spent by National Defence in relation to materiel.

Former Auditor General Sheila Fraser looked into the practices at DND and stated not long ago that the current system, if followed, can provide the openness, fairness and accountability that is essential to ensure National Defence gets the equipment it needs and that it achieves best value.

Honourable senators will be aware, and the government I am sure is aware, that recently the Union of National Defence Employees gave the Defence Committee in the other place a report that suggests the Canadian taxpayer is paying above and beyond what they should for the allegedly shoddy work at the Defence Department buildings. The work is being done by private contractors who are hired through defence construction. The report included invoices and photographs that show crumbling foundations in new buildings.

I have waited a few days to ask this question to determine what steps the government will be taking. The first line of oversight is obviously within the department, and then parliamentarians, once we know what the department is doing, can perform the necessary oversight that we deem advisable.

What steps at this stage is the government taking since receiving this report to ensure that Canadians are getting the best value for their tax dollars?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I did see that union report in the newspaper. Of course, we always appreciated the good advice that we received from former Auditor General Sheila Fraser.

We are fully committed to getting the best equipment for Canadian Forces at the best price for Canadians, with the best benefits for Canadian companies and workers. The Canada First Defence Strategy sets out a well-established funding framework that the honourable senator is familiar with, with a vision for the forces.

Since 2006, our government has reduced the average time required for military procurement from 7 years to 48 months, a very big improvement in procurement, or three full years faster than was the case under the previous government.

With regard to the specific comments of the union, I can assure the honourable senator that the government and the minister are fully committed to always seeking the best equipment, the best work, at the best price for Canadian taxpayers.

Senator Day: The Auditor General, in conducting that particular study, pointed out very clearly that the Department of National Defence or indeed any government department's responsibility of oversight is not over when it has decided to contract the work out rather than having the work done from within the department.

My understanding is that a lot of this work is to deal with existing assets and maintenance of over \$22 billion worth of assets that DND manages.

Could the minister assure us that in looking into this matter we will be informed in an appropriate time, hopefully soon, whether this contracting out is resulting in health and safety considerations and concerns for our citizens?

• (1430)

Senator LeBreton: I thank the honourable senator. It should be pointed out that the report from the unions that he referred to has not been received by the Minister of Public Works.

The Minister of Public Works, who is involved in a procurement of this nature, did indicate that when she receives this report from the union she will turn it over to the Auditor General.

Senator Day: From the reports that I have seen, the report was given to the Defence Committee in the other place, presumably chaired by a Conservative parliamentarian. Could we expedite this by having the minister check with her colleague and get a copy of the report in that way?

Senator LeBreton: I will certainly make that suggestion to her.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

HERITAGE LIGHTHOUSE PROTECTION

Hon. Elizabeth Hubley: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Last spring, the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans tabled its report on the implementation of the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act. In this report, the committee made several recommendations to the government about how best to go about preserving our heritage lighthouses as important cultural, historic and economically valuable assets in partnership with local community groups.

From evidence the committee heard, in order for these community organizations to take over responsibility for the maintenance of these lighthouses, they needed help with funding. Consequently, the committee recommended that the Government

of Canada provide seed money to the Heritage Canada Foundation to help them establish a fundraising campaign dedicated to raising money for the restoration and preservation of these heritage lighthouses.

Will the government reassure Canadians that it supports the protection of heritage lighthouses by including seed money for a Heritage Canada Foundation fundraising campaign in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I will simply make note of the honourable senator's comments. I will ascertain whether there are any updates on these recommendations. I will simply take note of her comments with regard to the budget. I will, if I have further information, provide a written response.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

BUDGET—STUDY ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION EFFORTS IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR— FIFTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the fifth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (*supplementary budget—study on research and innovation efforts in the agricultural sector*) presented earlier this day.

Hon. Percy Mockler moved the adoption of the report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Frum, calling the attention of the Senate to egregious human rights abuses in Iran, particularly the use of torture and the cruel and inhuman treatment of unlawfully incarcerated political prisoners.

Hon. Maria Chaput: Honourable senators, I want to sincerely thank Senator Frum for using an inquiry to raise the subject of human rights in Iran. This is a very good example of the purpose of the Senate of Canada, in other words, to protect minorities and the most vulnerable.

Today I want to commend the resilience of the Baha'i community in Iran and to denounce the way they are treated in their country. The Baha'i community has no political allegiance and is not linked in any way to any opposition movement. The very principles of their faith call for them to obey the laws of their country and to abstain from any political involvement. The community is simply asking for the right to life, liberty and security of the person, and the right to education and employment.

This peaceful community has been persecuted since its earliest days in Iran; lately, however, the persecution looks more like an official state-orchestrated policy. In fact, a government memorandum, which dates back to 1993 and is still in effect today, sets out the key elements of this persecution policy. The memorandum provides explicit instructions designed to impede the progress and development of the Baha'i community. This includes officially prohibiting all members of this community from accessing higher education and certain types of employment. People are therefore being denied admission to university simply because they belong to a specific community. This discriminatory policy is systematically applied by the Iranian authorities.

Honourable senators, standing up for Canada's official language minority communities is the foundation of my political commitment, and I fully understand the importance of working to promote the growth and development of one's community and trying to gain access to high-quality education for the young members of that community.

The Baha'i community is caught in circumstances where any effort it makes could lead to imprisonment or violent attacks orchestrated by the government — the very government that is responsible for protecting these people.

Honourable senators, I would like to once again recognize the courage of this community and speak out against the deliberate violation of their fundamental rights.

(On motion of Senator Tardif, for Senator Fraser, debate adjourned.)

RECREATIONAL ATLANTIC SALMON FISHING

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Meighen, calling the attention of the Senate to the economic benefits of recreational Atlantic salmon fishing in Canada.

Hon. Fernand Robichaud: Honourable senators, I was pleased to hear the Honourable Michael A. Meighen speak about the Atlantic salmon, in particular about the economic impact that this type of recreational fishing has on Atlantic Canada and the need to continue investing in the protection and conservation of the wild Atlantic salmon.

A study conducted by Halifax's Gardner Pinfold and sponsored by the Atlantic Salmon Federation determined the actual value of Atlantic salmon to be a quarter of a billion dollars. Of this amount, \$128.5 million is directly attributable to the recreational Atlantic salmon fishery. Almost half this amount is spent in New Brunswick.

It goes without saying that restoring Atlantic salmon stocks will attract more salmon fishers to the region. As a result, increased spending will contribute further to the economic development of our regions, and this includes job creation.

In a region like ours, salmon fishing is part of our culture and our natural environment, so much so that one can feel the excitement in the air when the spring salmon fishing season arrives.

• (1440)

In the spring, the salmon return to the sea to resume their migration. People get very excited about spring salmon fishing. Conversations about the weather yield to speculation about whether the salmon will show up. It is a bit like opening day of lobster season. People get restless and feverish.

The Atlantic salmon sport fishery supports some 4,000 jobs. I understand what Senator Michael Meighen meant when he said, "Just imagine how many thousands more good jobs could be created if the wild Atlantic salmon resource was restored to its full potential."

For that to happen, the federal government must continue investing in the research and support programs administered through Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

In addition, individuals and community groups must continue to help the environment by cleaning and seeding waterways. They will have to redouble their efforts to educate people and youth with a view to preserving and regenerating the Atlantic salmon population and increasing upstream migration.

In the Saint-Louis-de-Kent region, the Friends of the Kouchibouguacis — as the Saint-Louis River is known locally — have been doing important work for the past 20 years.

This volunteer organization is committed to re-establishing and monitoring fish populations and restoring habitats. The group has undertaken many activities together with local schools to raise awareness among students and the general public concerning respect for the environment and the preservation of endangered species.

To educate residents of the surrounding area, the Friends of the Kouchibouguacis offers consultations with a professional landscaper who can offer technical advice about planting native shrubs along riverbanks, preventing erosion and stabilizing water temperature.

What is more, they recommend respecting the buffer zones along the shores, using natural fertilizers, and other simple measures to protect our environment and our rivers.

As far as activities for young people are concerned, the Friends of the Kouchibouguacis organize sessions with various groups of students. For example, last fall, grade 11 students in the environmental science class at l'Assomption high school in Rogersville cleaned up the banks of the Kouchibouguacis River. They were accompanied by their teachers, members of the N.B. Natural Resources staff and members of the Friends of the Kouchibouguacis. They collected some 200 kg of waste.

Not only are they protecting the river, but they are preventing the waste from polluting the estuary or the Northumberland Strait. Another educational activity includes the installation of an aquarium with salmon eggs at a school. The students learn more about the stages of development of the salmon, while taking care of maintaining the aquarium and feeding the smolt, and finally introducing the salmon into the Kouchibouguacis River at the end of the school year.

Another activity directly related to Atlantic salmon conservation is the guided visit of a grade 5 class from the Marée-Montante school in Saint-Louis-de-Kent to the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre. The young people are able to observe salmon from the Kouchibouguacis River spawning.

The Friends of the Kouchibouguacis River also make efforts to catch spawning salmon; last year, 21 salmon were caught. Three female salmon produced some 12,000 salmon eggs, which were then fertilized at the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre.

Once hatched, those fish are put into a pool at the edge of a brook that empties into the Kouchibouguacis River. When they reach an acceptable size, they are tagged and released into the river. These fish-stocking exercises began in the early 1990s. I have joined friends in taking part in these exercises a number of times by installing a pool fed by a brook that eventually empties into the Saint-Louis River.

The Province of New Brunswick is without a doubt the centre of the Atlantic salmon fishery in North America with over 50 rivers throughout the province. Among those rivers, the Miramichi and its tributaries are known as the most productive.

To stimulate the economy related to this recreational fishery, the province invests \$2 million every year. The study Senator

Meighen told us about confirms that if the Department of Fisheries and Oceans would invest \$15 million in wild Atlantic salmon, Canadians would receive a return on their investment in six years.

For the federal government, this would be a reasonable investment for the conservation, protection and restoration of wild Atlantic salmon stocks, thereby ensuring economic spinoffs and jobs for rural and shoreline communities in New Brunswick and the other Atlantic provinces.

Honourable senators, I think that the activities of the volunteers, combined with provincial and federal government investments, would ensure long-term conservation and regeneration of Atlantic salmon stocks and would also offer the residents of Atlantic Canada increased opportunities for economic development — all the while, protecting our natural heritage.

(On motion of Senator Hubley, debate adjourned.)

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Leave having been given to revert to Government Notices of Motions:

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, February 28, 2012, at 2 p.m.

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, February 28, 2012, at 2 p.m.)

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