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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, April 26, 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, April 26, 2012

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

Prayers.

meantime, let us continue to lend encouragement to ensure that all men, women and children with cancer know that they are not alone.

[*Translation*]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

DAFFODIL DAY

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in recognition of Daffodil Day, which is held annually on April 27.

Throughout the Daffodil Month of April, and particularly on Daffodil Day, the Canadian Cancer Society asks that all Canadians wear a daffodil to draw attention to the fight against cancer. Support can be demonstrated in a variety of ways. Activities such as fundraising for cancer research and prevention, participating in walks or runs, or volunteering to transport cancer patients to appointments for checkups and treatment are but a few examples. A simple and meaningful expression of encouragement to someone currently fighting their own personal battle against cancer is another way to acknowledge individual challenges.

Last year, the Canadian Cancer Society estimated that approximately 177,000 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in Canada, almost 67,000 in my own home province of Ontario. Each person in this chamber has been touched by cancer, whether it be our family members, our friends or our associates. We know only too well that some honourable senators are cancer survivors themselves. I am certain, honourable senators, that each one of us can immediately think of a person in our lives who would appreciate special recognition today as they encounter one of the most challenging times they will ever have to face.

Daffodil Day is also a day of reflection to remember loved ones who have succumbed to this terrible disease. Today I think particularly of our dear late colleague the Honourable Fred Dickson, who passed away just this past February, and who, as we all know, conducted a courageous battle against cancer for many years. He was a respected and valued member of the Conservative caucus and of the Senate as a whole. We all, on both sides of the chamber, miss Senator Dickson and we will continue to keep him and his loving family in our thoughts.

Honourable senators, on Daffodil Day and every day let us offer our support to those living with cancer and to all families across the country who face such a diagnosis with resolve and determination. It is my hope that in the years ahead we will see cancer rates go down and survival rates continue to increase. There is encouragement, because they are increasing. In the

WOMEN'S HEALTH CONTRIBUTION PROGRAM

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, it is with immense sadness that I speak to deplore the end of the Women's Health Contribution Program.

The program supported community-academic partnerships in the development and dissemination of policy research and information for women's health. The program was managed by the Bureau of Women's Health and Gender Analysis.

Let us not forget that clinical drug trials are now done separately for men and women, which is something new that began a few years ago.

The program contributed approximately \$2.95 million annually to eligible recipients. It supported the Centres of Excellence for Women's Health, Canadian Women's Health Network, working groups and other initiatives that address specific policy issues in women's health.

The following organizations received support for their research: the Réseau québécois d'action pour la santé des femmes, the Canadian Women's Health Network, the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence, and the National Network on Environments and Women's Health, located across the country from Vancouver to Halifax.

The centres and networks funded by the program carried out research and provided policy input to federal government departments on a broad range of women's health issues, including: the women's health implications of the federal government's regulation of toxic chemicals; the hypersexualization of girls; the intergenerational legacy of residential schools for Aboriginal women and their families; the need for trauma-informed counselling for women with addictions; a working guide for conducting sex- and gender-based analysis in health research; and a critical analysis of funding for the HPV vaccine.

• (1340)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked to improve the health of Canadian women. I hope that other sources of funding will keep these organizations viable because they are key to one day achieving women's equality.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Suzanne Fortin-Duplessis: Honourable senators, Canada's economy relies heavily on exports. In recognition of that fact, and to promote trade, The Minister of International Trade, Edward Fast, recently wrapped up a four-country visit to the Americas by drawing the attention of participants at the first G20 trade ministers' meeting in Mexico to Canada's pro-trade plan.

The G20 trade ministers' meeting was a clear indication that Mexico and the other nations recognize that free and open trade is the best way to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for people around the world. With more than 60 per cent of our economy and the jobs of one in five Canadians generated by trade, the Government of Canada understands the importance of trade to Canada's economy. That is why we are currently undertaking the most ambitious trade expansion plan in our country's history.

Since the original Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement was implemented, bilateral trade between these nations has more than tripled, and investment has quadrupled.

In Colombia and Peru, Minister Fast highlighted how recently implemented free trade agreements between Canada and the two countries — Colombia in 2011, Peru in 2009 — have shown clearly how strengthening trade benefits workers, businesses and families.

Furthermore, I am also pleased with the momentum that is building in support of Canada's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, with both Chile and Peru signalling support for Canada's inclusion.

Seven of Canada's 10 free trade agreements are with countries in Latin America or the Caribbean. In less than six years, the Government of Canada has concluded trade agreements with Colombia and Peru, and an agreement with Panama is awaiting ratification. Canada has also concluded free trade negotiations with Honduras. In addition, Canada has nine foreign-investment promotion agreements and 31 air-transport agreements with countries in the Americas, as well as two science and technology cooperation agreements.

Honourable senators, by implementing these agreements, Canada has made international trade one of the pillars of its economic growth. The foundation laid will ensure strong economic performance and long-term prosperity.

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

AUDITOR GENERAL

LETTER PERTAINING TO RESULTS OF FRENCH LANGUAGE TRAINING ASSESSMENT TABLED

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Acting Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a letter from the Auditor General of

Canada to the Leader of the Government in the Senate regarding an assessment of the Auditor General of Canada's capacity to learn a second official language.

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE SERVICES AND TRAVEL—STUDY ON THE EVOLVING LEGAL AND POLITICAL RECOGNITION OF THE COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND RIGHTS OF THE MÉTIS—FIFTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Gerry St. Germain, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, presented the following report:

Thursday, April 26, 2012

The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples has the honour to present its

FIFTH REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2012, to examine and report on the evolving legal and political recognition of the collective identity and rights of the Métis in Canada, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013, 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,

GERRY ST. GERMAIN
Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix, p. 1196.)

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

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

[English]

INDUSTRIAL ALLIANCE PACIFIC INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES INC.

PRIVATE BILL—ELEVENTH REPORT OF LEGAL AND
CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Bob Runciman, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, presented the following report:

Thursday, April 26, 2012

The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs has the honour to present its

ELEVENTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-1003, An Act to authorize Industrial Alliance Pacific Insurance and Financial Services Inc. to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of Quebec, has, in obedience to the order of reference of Tuesday, April 24, 2012, examined the said Bill and now reports the same without amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

BOB RUNCIMAN
Chair

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

(On motion of Senator Comeau, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

NATIONAL FINANCE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE
TO STUDY TAX CONSEQUENCES OF VARIOUS PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN
BY CHARITABLE AND NON-CHARITABLE ENTITIES

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine and report on the tax consequences of various public and private advocacy activities undertaken by charitable and non-charitable entities in Canada and abroad;

That, in conducting such a study, the committee take particular note of:

- (a) Charitable entities that receive funding from foreign sources;

- (b) Corporate entities that claim business deductions against Canadian taxes owing for their advocacy activities, both in Canada and abroad; and

- (c) Educational entities that utilize their charitable status to advocate on behalf of the interests of private entities; and

That the Committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 30, 2013, and retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

• (1350)

QUESTION PERIOD

INDUSTRY

COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, the Community Access Program, commonly known as CAP, has been in operation since 1995. The program ensures that all Canadians have equal access to the Internet. It has been operating, that is, until a late-evening announcement the night before the Easter long weekend by the Harper government that eliminated their support for the program.

The Harper government claims that CAP was gutted because the vast majority of Canadians now have access to the Internet and the program is obsolete. This is in direct contradiction to Statistics Canada studies that show that only 54 per cent of low-income Canadians have Internet access and there are thousands of Canadians who use CAP sites each day.

Low-income Canadians are exactly the people who need convenient Internet access, as the government proudly boasts of providing most of their services online. This mixed messaging has Canadians confused.

How does this government plan to ensure that low-income Canadians, rural Canadians without high-speed Internet, and new Canadians and seniors who rely on the CAP sites for their Internet access will have access to the increasing number of government programs available online?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, this program — as are many programs, we find — was set up for a purpose at the time. It was launched in 1995 to help Canadians access the Internet at a time when few households could do so. Today, a vast majority of Canadian households are connected to the Internet and/or are on mobile devices.

As part of *Canada's Economic Action Plan 2009*, \$225 million was provided to extend broadband coverage to over 210,000 Canadian households. The honourable senator stated in her

preamble the reasons the government gave for ending this program, and those reasons are correct. There is no longer a need for this program.

Senator Cordy: Honourable senators, only 54 per cent of lower-income Canadians have access to the Internet. How will the rest access government programs?

Senator LeBreton: After careful consideration of all aspects of this program, and in view of the fact that in 2009 the government put significant funds into connecting Canadian households to the Internet, it was felt that, between the Internet and the mobile facilities to which most Canadians have access, this program had outlived its usefulness. That decision is final, honourable senators.

Senator Cordy: I say again that 54 per cent of lower-income Canadians have access to a computer; 46 per cent of lower-income Canadians do not have access to a computer. How are they supposed to access government programs?

Senator LeBreton: The fact of the matter, honourable senators, is that programs are set up to meet a need. This program was set up some 16 years ago. In 2009, the government put considerable resources into the broadband program in order to complete its work. They are completing this work and now it is time for the Community Access Program to be terminated.

Senator Cordy: The objective of the CAP program is to ensure that all Canadians have equal access to the Internet and technology and have the skills to use it to better their lives and their communities. Forty-six per cent of lower-income Canadians do not have access. Usage of CAP sites is still the same or greater than it was in 1995, and training sessions are constantly in demand. Industry Canada knows this.

This objective has not been met. CAP site coordinators and volunteers contribute about 630,000 volunteer hours each year in British Columbia, so the objective has not been met.

In Nova Scotia we have 209 CAP sites, operating mainly out of libraries and community centres, and they rely heavily on volunteers for their day-to-day operations. The funding provided by the federal and provincial governments covered the cost of the computers and the electricity bills. Without the federal funding, most of these CAP sites will no longer be able to operate.

This comes on top of recent announcements to close EI-processing Service Canada offices in many areas of Canada where high unemployment is a reality. Both Glace Bay and Sydney, in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, will see their Service Canada offices close, and those areas have the highest unemployment rates in Nova Scotia and likely one of the highest in the country. P.E.I. will have its only EI-processing Service Canada office in the province closed. What is the government's reasoning? Those Canadians have access to government programs online. Well, they do not.

What is the government's plan for those Canadians left without the CAP program or when a Service Canada office has been abandoned?

Senator LeBreton: We are moving into an era of modern technology. Again, there was a considerable amount of evidence that access to Service Canada sites was not being utilized; rather, people were accessing the information through the Internet. There is significant background information on this. If Senator Cordy does not mind, I will take her last question as notice and provide it by written response.

Hon. Sandra Lovelace Nicholas: Honourable senators, what about the First Nations people living in remote areas? In my own community there are 2,500 people, and half of them do not have access to the Internet.

Senator LeBreton: I would be happy to add the question by Senator Lovelace Nicholas to the information I will provide to the Senate following up on Senator Cordy's question.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Honourable senators, it seems to me that the government would be wise to read the report of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications entitled *Plan for a Digital Canada*. We were shocked to find out how poorly Canadians are served across the country. Forty-six per cent of low-income people do not have access.

The Leader of the Government in the Senate talks about them using hand-held devices, iPads, or whatever devices she may be referring to. The issue is that they may not even have those devices; and if they do, they may not be able to pay for the services.

The knuckle-dragging, Neanderthal, climate change-denying Luddites across the way should start thinking about that 46 per cent of low-income Canadians.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

Senator Mercer: When will the government sit back and think that maybe, just this one time, it has made a mistake and that it is time to say, "We will keep those sites open so we can service those people across the country who need this service the most of all"?

Senator LeBreton: I will refrain from referring to the honourable senator's ridiculous comments about people on this side and our government.

The fact of the matter is, honourable senators, that the government put significant resources into broadband to reach rural and remote areas. Overwhelmingly, Canadians are connected to the Internet, not only in our cities but also in our rural and remote communities. I will obtain additional information, as I promised Senator Cordy and Senator Lovelace Nicholas.

As with everything in our country, we progress and time moves on. I used to type on a typewriter. People now do not even know what a typewriter is. Technology changes and there are new technologies. Canadians overwhelmingly use these technologies. We are simply keeping pace with the modern-day technology and modern-day needs in Canada.

With regard to Canadians who live in poverty, no government in the history of this country has done more to assist people living in poverty and taking people off the tax rolls than this government.

• (1400)

Senator Cordy: Honourable senators, in her answer Senator LeBreton said this program has outlived its usefulness. When she is looking for information to bring back to the chamber, would she also look at the Statistics Canada study that shows that 54 per cent of low-income Canadians have Internet access? Would she also please look at the recent studies by Industry Canada which say that such CAP sites are used by a wide variety of Canadians: those without high-speed Internet access, low-income Canadian families, seniors, older workers, new Canadians, Canadians needing to connect with online government services, workers who travel and work in rural areas, job seekers and youth in need of first-time employment? Would Senator LeBreton look at the studies by Industry Canada and by Statistics Canada?

Senator LeBreton: It was nice of the honourable senator to put all that on the record, but I already said I would provide that information to her.

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

CANADA PERIODICAL FUND

Hon. Maria Chaput: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. On March 16, 2010, I asked a question about the Department of Canadian Heritage's Canada Periodical Fund and the support this fund provides to French-language newspapers for minority communities. At that time the leader took note of my concerns and, in the response provided on April 14, 2010, told me that this fund would continue to provide financial support to French-language periodicals in minority communities.

Today, I am once again asking the leader to intervene. I hope the response will be as positive as it was in April 2010.

Here is the situation. *La Liberté*, the French-language weekly in Manitoba has just learned that it will no longer be able to obtain financial support from the Canada Periodical Fund. Without that support, *La Liberté*, which is the only newspaper serving Manitoba's francophone community, and which will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2013, will have to make major cuts to its staff and may even have to close its doors, since subscriptions and the sale of advertising are not enough to keep the minority community's newspaper afloat.

My question is this: could the minister see if it is possible to once again ensure that the Canada Periodical Fund will continue to support newspapers for francophone minority communities? Would it be possible to obtain another exemption for the newspapers of official language minority communities? These newspapers are small and they will disappear without this assistance.

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, questions such as the one asked by Senator Chaput deal specifically with subject matter that is often better

resolved by putting the question on the order paper. However, I will take her question as notice and provide a written response.

[Translation]

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is related to that of my colleague, Senator Chaput. The only newspaper serving the Franco-Albertan community, *Le Franco*, is affected by the change in the funding formula for the aid to publishers component of the Canada Periodical Fund. Under the new formula, subsidies are based on circulation. Thus, larger amounts will go to the larger players, while funding for publications serving francophone minority communities, such as *Le Franco*, will be decreased or eliminated because the readership of these publications is so specific and is scattered across the province.

In the case of *Le Franco*, because of the size of the decrease in the subsidy, the newspaper is considering reducing its staff, number of pages and circulation.

Madam Leader, does Canadian Heritage not have a certain duty to review its funding formula in order to take into account the particular reality facing small newspapers, especially those that serve the official language minority communities?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I believe that Senator Chaput also mentioned the newspaper in Alberta. I will certainly make inquiries about the Canada Periodical Fund as it relates to Alberta and Manitoba and provide a written response.

[Translation]

Senator Tardif: I thank the minister for her reply. Honourable senators, I would simply like to quote an excerpt from a letter sent by the director of *Le Franco* to Minister Moore:

Franco-Albertans are scattered over a vast geographical area. *Le Franco* newspaper is a key player and irrefutable linchpin in the development of its community and the many organizations that count on the newspaper to inform the population of their issues. If *Le Franco* is forced to reduce its services, there is no other newspaper to take its place, and the development and enrichment of the Franco-Albertan community will suffer the consequences.

As you know, honourable senators, this is an extremely important issue and I believe that, under Part VII of the Official Languages Act, which refers to positive measures, it is crucial that Canadian Heritage bring in measures to enable these communities to thrive.

[English]

Senator LeBreton: I thank the honourable senator for the additional information. I will refer it to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

FOREIGN AID FOR MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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

The government has already cut funding to organizations that promoted women's health and family planning in developing countries through CIDA, especially countries that cannot fund clinics where a woman could possibly have access to abortion.

Faced with such negative decisions and budget cuts to organizations working in the area of women's health, how will the leader, as a senator and a woman, ensure that the policies of her government regarding the status of women will not eventually lead to the abolition of the department responsible for women's issues?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, Canada's child and maternal health program has been applauded by the United Nations Secretary-General and other partners in the world for taking leadership on maternal, newborn and child health, including on the United Nations Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health, co-chaired by our Prime Minister, as we know.

Since this initiative was launched, Canada has taken decisive action with its maternal, newborn and child health partners to launch projects that will achieve meaningful results for mothers and children in developing countries. We have invested significant new resources — \$1.1 billion, to be exact — to improve maternal, newborn and child health, with 80 per cent of these efforts focused on the sub-Saharan countries of Africa.

For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 48,000 pregnant women now have access to health care facilities. In Ghana, 10,000 people have improved access to neonatal care and malaria prevention. In Uganda, 30 new health centres and 120 new staff are being set up to provide access to health services. The government's commitment to child and maternal health is unprecedented, and we are very proud of our record in this area.

[Translation]

HEALTH

WOMEN'S HEALTH CONTRIBUTION PROGRAM

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: My question for the leader was about Canada in particular, but we have also seen that the government's commitment to women's health outside the country has limits and that a Conservative rather than a Liberal approach is being taken to women's health.

The Prime Minister has always talked about open federalism. We are wondering what has happened to this openness because, after the conference of health ministers, he announced the new formula without undertaking any consultations. When will the Prime Minister hold a real federal-provincial health conference, focussed on health and especially on developing best practices for the health sector, instead of making threats every week about reduced accessibility and tolerating private sector involvement in the public sector, knowing that the number of health workers is limited and that, together with the provinces, we must devise new models that will be accessible to all Canadians?

When will the Prime Minister of Canada and the provincial ministers of health meet to discuss health?

• (1410)

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): The government did announce that the Women's Health Contribution Program will terminate in March 2013. This particular function does not and never did deliver front-line health services. We will continue to invest significant funds through CIHR to women's health, and of course since 2006 we have invested \$300 million in one program alone — the HPV prevention program.

I dispute the claim of the honourable senator that there are diminishing services. However, it is well known that our government has provided stable funding to the provinces and territories, which are ultimately responsible for the delivery of health, and this is the commitment the government has made far beyond the previous mandate. The provinces now have secure, stable funding. We have great evidence that provinces are working now on best practices as to how to deliver their health services in a timely, cognizant way. In the case of Ontario, even though they have been given a 6 per cent increase per year, they are actually spending only 3 per cent a year increasing their health care services. I would think that with stable funding the provinces and territories are well equipped now to make their own decisions with regard to their own health needs.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: I was not questioning the amount of money that was agreed to but rather the planning done by the federal and provincial governments that are involved, those paying a good part of it, because the provinces too are paying a lot of it. We have to examine the costs. We have to look at the aging population. We have to see what the best mechanisms are to keep people healthy and also to provide the services that are affordable and to ensure there is money left for education.

When will the governments meet, sit down and ensure we have a new model that will ensure that Canadians have good health services but also that the federal government, who is sending a cheque, is responsible for this amount of money?

Senator LeBreton: I suppose the honourable senator does not follow the activities of Minister of Health Leona Aglukkaq very closely, but that is exactly what she does. She is the federal Minister of Health. There are regular federal-provincial meetings

on health care, and so to suggest that somehow or other the federal government, now that we have provided stable funding, has taken a hands-off approach is of course incorrect.

Having said that, this government believes that the provinces and the territories are the primary deliverers of health services, and stable funding is what they require, and we actually trust the provinces. We do not believe there has to be a big brother overseeing every step of the way. We think they are perfectly capable of delivering their own health care services.

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

COAST GUARD—RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRES

Hon. Pierre De Bané: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The report by the Commissioner of Official Languages gets right to the point. The closure of the marine search and rescue centre in Quebec City will have a major impact on the availability of rescue services for French-speaking people in distress.

It is difficult to see how the Coast Guard will be able to resolve the problems set out in the commissioner's report. The language of work of the staff in Trenton and Halifax will still be English. Bilingual employees will have to translate from French to English for their unilingual anglophone colleagues.

What is more, in a rescue situation when every second counts, it is not enough for staff to be bilingual; they must be able to speak French well enough to understand people when they are in a state of panic. Why is the government prepared to jeopardize people's safety by failing to guarantee appropriate services in French for francophones in distress?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the government is not playing with the lives of people. That is an irresponsible statement.

As stated by Minister Ashfield, under whose responsibility the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centres in St. John's and Quebec City fall, the Coast Guard ships and Coast Guard auxiliary will continue to respond to emergencies as they have previously with the Joint Rescue Coordination Centres maintaining the current levels of service provided by the Coast Guard. The provision of bilingual services is critical, necessary and continuing. The Coast Guard will continue to provide the same level of bilingual services to Canadians following this consolidation, but as the honourable senator pointed out, we do have the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

The Canadian Coast Guard has already identified some of the issues raised in this report and is implementing a plan to address the concerns of the Official Languages Commissioner, and we of course as a government, as always, appreciate the work of the Official Languages Commissioner and will respond to all the concerns he has raised in an effort to ensure no one's safety is compromised, whether they be francophone, anglophone or bilingual.

[Senator LeBreton]

Senator De Bané: I urge the Leader of the Government to read the report done not by a member of the opposition but by an officer of Parliament, the Commissioner of Official Languages. He states very clearly his concern about this new policy.

[Translation]

The decision to close the rescue coordination centre in Quebec City has elicited strong reactions in Quebec's maritime communities since last year, particularly because the transfer of the centre to other provinces does not take into account the importance of language and knowledge of local geography in rescue operations.

[English]

People in Halifax and Trenton do not have 7-days-a-week, 24-hours-a-day bilingual services. This is the thing that has brought the concern of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

[Translation]

The number of bilingual staff will not be sufficient to cover the many distress calls received in French. Will the government abandon its plan to close this centre and will it respect the Official Languages Act in order to ensure the safety of all Canadians?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, the joint rescue coordination activities have not been compromised. The work of the Canadian Coast Guard continues as was the case in the past. Safety has not been compromised. The provision of bilingual services is critical, and no one is suggesting for a moment that this service be compromised or changed. It has not been.

The Coast Guard will continue to provide the same level of bilingual service to Canadians following the consolidation of the call centres. As you point out, the Commissioner of Official Languages raised some concerns. The Coast Guard is working with the Official Languages Commissioner to address some of these concerns, and we look forward to the follow-up from the Official Languages Commissioner as to the results of his deliberations with the Coast Guard.

• (1420)

No one's safety is compromised. The Coast Guard is still the Coast Guard. The Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centres are still operating in both of Canada's official languages. This government recognizes the linguistic duality of this country, as I said many times. Nothing has changed other than consolidating the work of the centre. Nothing has changed in terms of service available to people in need, whether it is in English, French or bilingual.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Runciman, seconded by the Honourable Senator Eaton, for the second reading of Bill S-209, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (prize fights).

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on Bill S-209, an act to amend the Criminal Code with respect to prizefights. If passed, this bill will provide an updated definition of prizefighting, which would be truly representative of what that means today.

The Criminal Code currently defines prizefighting as an “an encounter or fight with fists or hands between two persons.” We are somewhat familiar with that in this place from a few weeks ago.

Under the Criminal Code, the only combative activities legally allowed are boxing matches held under the jurisdiction of a provincial athletic board. If the bill is passed, the definition of prizefighting would include encounters with fists, hands or feet. Additionally, the bill would add the following exemptions under the Criminal Code: amateur combative sports which are included on the program of the International Olympic Committee; other amateur sports designated by the province; and boxing matches and/or mixed martial arts contests held under the jurisdiction of a provincial athletic board or similar body.

Essentially, this would mean that sports such as judo, karate and mixed martial arts would be exempted from prosecution. These are all legitimate sports that are enjoyed by thousands of Canadians across the country.

Mixed martial arts especially have become extremely popular in recent years. The Ultimate Fighting Championship, the largest organization for professional mixed martial arts, has already hosted a number of events in Canada and has plans for more. Previous events drew over 200,000 fans. These events generate a lot of revenue and are good for our tourism industry. This bill will ensure that our provincial governments no longer have to turn a blind eye to organized sporting events for these kinds of martial arts.

The previous version of this bill, Bill C-31, which died on the Order Paper when the second session of the Fortieth Parliament was prorogued, received all-party support in the other place.

Honourable senators, this is a straightforward piece of legislation that would ensure this particular definition is relevant and up to date. I support its speedy passage.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Are honourable senators ready for the question?

Some Hon. Senators: Question!

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Runciman, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.)

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY (CCSVI) BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Cordy, seconded by the Honourable Senator Peterson, for the second reading of Bill S-204, An Act to establish a national strategy for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI).

Hon. Betty Unger: Honourable senators, I rise today to talk to you about Bill S-204, a strategy for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, or CCSVI, and the federal role in the investigation of CCSVI.

An estimated 55,000 to 75,000 Canadians live with multiple sclerosis. We are all familiar with this number. It tells us that far too many Canadians and their families are struggling with this frustrating and often debilitating disease. Honourable senators share their frustration. We also share their hope and determination that effective treatments and, ultimately, a cure will be found for this disease.

That is why our government is determined to support the investigation of chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency and the Zamboni procedure that has caused so much excitement for MS patients.

I agree with the honourable senator from Sydney, as does the government, that Canadians with MS deserve to know whether the hope and promise of the proposed new procedure rests on solid scientific foundation.

That said, I do not support this bill. The consensus among researchers from around the world is that more research is required.

One key element of Bill S-204 is a requirement that clinical trials on CCSVI be initiated. As honourable senators know, our government committed to supporting a clinical trial last June. About a month ago, the Minister of Health, Minister Aglukkaq, along with Dr. Alain Beaudet, president of the Canadian

Institutes of Health Research, CIHR, announced that CIHR was ready to accept proposals for the Phase I/II for clinical trials on CCSVI. Based on the advice of the Scientific Expert Working Group on CCSVI concerning the terms of reference for this research, CIHR formally opened the request for proposals on November 30, 2011.

Honourable senators will be pleased to note that this research is a collaborative initiative between CIHR and the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. The MS Society has told us they support further investigation of CCSVI and are co-funding the study.

Rigorous investigation is the only appropriate response with any new medical procedure. This is difficult for many, particularly with a disease like MS. However, patient safety must not be compromised. Nevertheless, the principles of disciplined scientific investigation cannot be cast aside despite how much we and MS patients might like to see the Zamboni procedure endorsed today. That would not be sound medical practice, nor would it be fair to MS patients. We must be certain that the benefits outweigh the risks. A clinical trial is the first step.

Clinical trials seek evidence on patient outcomes. The main objective of the forthcoming Phase I/II trial will be to determine whether the angioplasty procedure on veins is safe and effective.

It is important to note that venous angioplasty, unlike arterial angioplasty, is not common practice and there is, as yet, no unequivocal scientific evidence that the Zamboni procedure is safe and effective. Phase I will determine whether it is safe. Phase II will determine whether it is effective.

First and foremost, we need to ensure patient safety. In pursuing this trial through CIHR, the government is following the advice provided by the Scientific Expert Working Group.

• (1430)

Bill S-204 also calls for the establishment of an expert advisory panel to advise the minister on the CCSVI treatment, identify criteria for clinical trial research proposals, and advise on the standards for diagnosing and treating CCSVI.

This scientific expert working group reviewed the studies of CCSVI published between 2009 and 2011. These scientific experts recommended the launch of a request for applications — RFA — for a clinical trial and provided terms of reference to guide that research.

Bill S-204 also speaks of the expert advisory group advising the government on CCSVI treatment standards. The scientific expert working group and Imaging Working Group have already been doing some of this work. The Imaging Working Group met last fall to determine the best procedures to standardize imaging of veins in the neck and brain. These standardized ultrasound methods will ensure consistent assessments of the presence of CCSVI in clinical trial participants.

In brief, honourable senators, CIHR's scientific expert working group is already advising the federal government on how best to proceed with regard to CCSVI and MS patients. Why legislate

this process when a CIHR scientific expert working group has already been reviewing evidence on CCSVI from around the world for some time now?

I would also point out that these MS initiatives have been supported by a wide range of stakeholders besides the MS Society of Canada. The MS Society has applauded the spirit of collaboration between the federal, provincial and territorial governments and continues to support work in this area.

As we continue to look at this bill, we see that it would require that the government track individuals who have received the Zamboni treatment for CCSVI. Here again, honourable senators, the government has been out front on this issue.

In March of this year, the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health, announced the creation of a Canadian multiple sclerosis monitoring system. This system will gather and share new knowledge around the use of MS treatments across Canada and on their long-term outcomes. This information will prove to be useful for Canadians living with MS, for the health care professionals who manage their care, and for the researchers who are tirelessly working toward a better understanding of this debilitating disease.

The system, which will measure the benefits and monitor the risks, will be developed by the Canadian Institute for Health Information in collaboration with the Canadian Network of Multiple Sclerosis Clinics and the MS Society of Canada.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information, or CIHI, is an independent organization that analyzes information on the health system and the health of Canadians. This partnership with the Canadian Network of Multiple Sclerosis Clinics will allow for the collection of information from Canadians with MS on a voluntary basis.

It is estimated that the 22 member clinics of the Canadian Network of MS Clinics reach approximately 80 per cent of Canadians living with MS. Imagine the power of this tool to help patients, caregivers and researchers.

With information collected by the monitoring system, CIHI will produce reports on the status of MS and its treatment in Canada. I would like to point out that these initiatives are taking place at the national, pan-Canadian level and in close collaboration with provinces, territories and stakeholders. This speaks volumes about Canadians and how Canada works.

The bill before the chamber also calls for a conference of provincial and territorial ministers to develop a national strategy. Collaboration and dialogue have been at the centre of the government's approach on this issue from the outset. For example, the clinical trial announcement was made by Minister Aglukkaq at the federal, provincial and territorial health ministers meeting in Halifax on November 26, 2011.

Honourable senators, CIHR is committed to working with the provinces and territories as it moves forward with the trial.

The Deputy Minister of Health for Manitoba participates in the scientific expert working group as the provincial-territorial observer. We see similar collaboration within the emerging monitoring system.

CIHI is consulting with provincial and territorial governments, clinicians, technical experts and those with MS from across Canada to ensure the monitoring system's effectiveness and efficiency.

The Minister of Health has shown leadership every step of the way on this file, honourable senators. She has reached out to the MS Society of Canada and consulted with her provincial and territorial counterparts. Like us, and her fellow ministers of health in the provinces and territories, the minister is working to find the best way of moving forward and responding to the needs of those Canadians living with MS.

The government has already acted on the key elements of this bill. We have proceeded with prudence and caution. We have and are relying on the best available scientific evidence. The safety of Canadians is our foremost concern.

As it stands today, the research evidence on CCSVI is mixed. We have put in place the steps to support ethical research, grounded in international standards of excellence. The researchers will need to receive ethics approval from relevant institutional research ethics boards before conducting the trial. The funds will be released and the study will begin if and when ethics approval is granted.

Like all Canadians, we are seeking to better understand the impact this procedure might have on the quality of life of MS patients. We have taken these steps in open dialogue with the provinces and territories. That is why Bill S-204 is unnecessary; it would legislate a scientific and medical issue for which we already have a collaborative system in place.

To quote Dr. Beaudet: "Parliament cannot legislate science."

We in this Senate need to consider the implications of such legislation. Do we want to begin legislating when extensive action is already well under way? We need to use our legislative power prudently or risk diluting its value.

In brief, the government has a plan of action and through federal leadership, funding and collaboration, it is moving that plan forward. Canada is the only country to take on such a trial, demonstrating the government will do everything it can to give MS patients the answers they need and deserve regarding CCSVI.

Unfortunately, this bill would neither contribute to those answers nor improve the processes already under way to further our understanding of MS and CCSVI.

Therefore, while I understand the goodwill and intentions behind Bill S-204, I cannot support it. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Are there questions or further debate?

Honourable senators, this matter had been standing in the name of Honourable Senator Carignan, who is not here. Is it with your permission, honourable senators, that this matter be adjourned in the name of Honourable Senator Carignan?

Some Hon. Senators: Question.

• (1440)

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Are honourable senators ready for the question?

Hon. Senators: Question!

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: It is moved by Honourable Senator Cordy, seconded by Honourable Senator Peterson, that Bill S-204, An Act to establish a national strategy for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVE), be read a second time.

Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator Cordy, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.)

PURPLE DAY BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Mercer, seconded by the Honourable Senator Day, for the second reading of Bill C-278, An Act respecting a day to increase public awareness about epilepsy.

Hon. Judith Seidman: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-278, concerned with the promotion of public awareness about epilepsy. This bill was introduced in the other place by the member for Halifax West and in the Senate by the Honourable Senator Mercer. I would like to thank them both for bringing it forward.

The speed with which this bill has progressed in the other place and obtained unanimous support throughout is a testament to its importance. It calls on the federal government to officially establish a day every year on which Canadians can show their support for people living with epilepsy. This day for epilepsy awareness, Purple Day, will fall on March 26 of each year.

To begin my remarks today, I would like to recount the history of this bill and describe the origins of Purple Day as we know it.

The inspiration for Purple Day came from the personal experiences of a young Canadian named Cassidy Megan. Cassidy lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She was very young when she had her first epilepsy episode, which would be a frightening experience for anyone. Dealing with her epilepsy led Cassidy to

ask questions about the struggles she faced and how they could be better addressed. This experience motivated her to create the idea of Purple Day in 2008, with the goal of getting people to talk about epilepsy.

For Cassidy and many others, it is an effort to dispel myths and to inform those with epilepsy that they are not alone. This turned into an initiative to launch Purple Day internationally so that everyone would better understand the challenges of living with this disorder. Since the beginning of this initiative, Cassidy's story has had a remarkable impact. Her efforts to have this day established should be applauded.

Cassidy and all Canadians living with epilepsy deserve our support. As parliamentarians, we can set an example for the rest of the world to follow. This year, Purple Day events and other awareness-raising activities were promoted on a national and international scale. Schools, businesses, celebrities and organizations helped recognize the day through events and activities worldwide. In Canada, members of Parliament wore purple ribbons to show their support.

This bill will lend further support to these events by truly making Purple Day official. On this day, Canadians will be encouraged to wear purple to show their support for people living with epilepsy and draw public attention to the cause. Purple Day coincides with the time of year when spring is just under way and a sense of hope and renewal is in the air. Fittingly, the colour purple is associated with lavender, a flower which is internationally recognized as a symbol for epilepsy. Lavender represents feelings of isolation and reminds us of the solitude and stigma many people affected by epilepsy and seizure disorders often experience.

By establishing Purple Day, Bill C-278 gives epilepsy a public face. It helps us, as a society, to better understand this disorder and its impact on the lives of Canadians. Therefore, in the spirit of awareness and understanding, I would like to take some time to speak about epilepsy itself.

Honourable senators, epilepsy is a common and diverse set of chronic neurological disorders characterized by seizures. Epilepsy affects more than 50 million worldwide. In Canada, epilepsy is far more common than most of us realize, affecting about 0.6 per cent of the population, with more than 15,000 people diagnosed each year. Currently, about 300,000 Canadians live with epilepsy.

In 50 to 60 per cent of cases, the cause of epilepsy is unknown. In the remainder, the most common causes are malformations during brain development, a head injury that causes scarring to the brain tissue, high fever and prolonged convulsions during early childhood, trauma at birth, a stroke or tumour. Epilepsy can occur at any age. However, 30 per cent of all new cases every year are in children. For about half of those diagnosed with epilepsy as children, their seizures will simply disappear over time. It is also important to note that the number of new cases per year is higher in people over the age of 65.

The word "epilepsy" is derived from the Greek word meaning "a condition of being overcome, seized or attacked." Epilepsy is characterized by sudden, brief, recurring seizures that range from

mild to severe and which may cause loss of consciousness. These seizures are brief disturbances in the normal electrical functions of the brain.

There are social and personal challenges associated with epilepsy. These include physical hazards related to unpredictable seizures, social exclusion and other forms of stigma. Social stigma may also affect a person's decision to report seizures or to seek treatment, and because of this, the number of people affected with epilepsy may even be higher than reported.

We know that there is no cure for epilepsy. However, there are medications and other treatments, including surgical intervention, that can help manage seizures. Successfully managing these seizures can have a significant impact on quality of life, including participation in community, school, employment and leisure activities. Treatment support systems are also critical. Many national and provincial organizations provide information and support for Canadians living with epilepsy, their families and their caregivers.

With increased awareness, we can improve the lives of Canadians living with epilepsy. Raising awareness about this disorder is an important component in confronting its challenges. I am pleased to note that there is considerable momentum on this front. The Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia joined the Purple Day campaign in 2008, and since then, support has been growing. In fact, all initiatives we are seeing are in line with global action on this issue.

For instance, the Canadian Epilepsy Association is now working to have Purple Day endorsed by the World Health Organization and the United Nations. Last year, the Minister of Health recognized March as National Epilepsy Month. Communities across the country are also taking action. They are raising awareness, not only about the disorder, but about preventing injuries that can cause epilepsy. These gestures are important steps towards raising awareness and improving the quality of life for Canadians living with epilepsy.

Purple Day encourages people to talk about epilepsy and to understand the challenges faced by people living with this disorder. By supporting this bill and by officially recognizing Purple Day, we help to further this understanding.

Honourable senators, Bill C-278 builds on a number of federal initiatives in Canada. Research is providing hope and helping us to better understand this disorder and its treatments. Neurological Health Charities Canada is a coalition of 25 organizations supporting education and research related to brain health. In partnership with the charities, the Government of Canada has invested \$15 million over four years in the National Population Study of Neurological Conditions. This partnership has undertaken important work to help us best understand the needs of those living with neurological diseases and disorders, including epilepsy.

Among the coalition's member organizations is the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance. This alliance is a Canada-wide network of community organizations that promote independence and quality of life for people with epilepsy and their families. In partnership with the federal government, these charities are sharing

experiences about the impact of neurological diseases and disorders so we can begin to understand, for example, common risk factors.

• (1450)

The National Population Health Study is actually composed of a suite of separate studies. The information obtained will help fill knowledge gaps on disorders such as epilepsy and will help us better understand how these disorders impact everyday experience. This National Population Health Study also includes information about how neurological disorders like epilepsy impact Canadians in their homes. This focus on daily living will help us identify the needs of families and caregivers.

Teams of researchers across the country are working together to conduct these studies. We know that research partnerships like this one have the potential to address real challenges and inform future decisions and preventive actions while providing comprehensive information.

In addition, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, CIHR, is also working to fill knowledge gaps regarding epilepsy. Through CIHR, the Government of Canada has invested more than \$46 million in epilepsy research since 2006. In 2009-10 alone, spending on epilepsy research was \$7.8 million.

CIHR also supports a range of partners in promoting the development of innovative research at leading post-secondary institutions in Canada. For example, they are supporting McGill University's Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital in its research examining the link between brain disorders and epilepsy. It was the founder of the Montreal Neurological Institute, MNI, Dr. Wilder Penfield, who in the 1950s developed a surgical treatment for epilepsy known as "the Montreal procedure" that is now a worldwide standard. This procedure and all the surrounding techniques in epilepsy surgery were later perfected at the MNI by Doctors William Feindel and André Olivier, among others.

I worked at the Montreal Neurological Institute as a research fellow for many years in my previous professional life. It was at the MNI that I discovered first-hand the challenges that many chronic neurological diseases and disorders such as epilepsy present in the daily living experience, as well as the burdens placed on families and caregivers. It was there that I first saw the truly remarkable epilepsy surgery that would provide so much hope for those living with epilepsy. It was also there some years ago where I developed one of my first research projects to evaluate psychosocial outcomes, scientifically; in this case, surgical intervention for seizures.

In addition to the research being done at McGill University's Montreal Neurological Institute, CIHR is also supporting other important work that examines the role of genes in epilepsy at the University of Toronto's Centre for Research in Neurodegenerative Diseases. Both these research initiatives at McGill and the University of Toronto aim to improve diagnosis and to further the development of better treatments.

In June 2011, CIHR provided funding for the Brain Connectivity Workshop in Montreal. This workshop brought together leading international experts on brain development,

epilepsy and neuroscience to exchange knowledge and contribute to a shared understanding of disorders such as epilepsy.

Honourable senators, partnerships and initiatives such as these will strengthen Canadian research in neurology. Strong research will make valuable inroads toward a better understanding of epilepsy, its causes and possible interventions to improve the quality of life of those living with epilepsy. Working hand in hand with all our partners, the Government of Canada is already raising awareness while contributing to research.

I would like to focus on one more topic of great importance in this discussion: the role of prevention in injury and safety, an area where the federal government has chosen to place an increased emphasis. The federal government and its partners know that unintentional injuries are, in fact, the leading cause of death for children and youth. Many head injuries that in severe cases could result in seizures and epilepsy arise from sport and recreation activities. There is much we can do to reduce these risks.

The Government of Canada has developed an initiative called "Active and Safe" to address injuries among children and youth. This is an important investment in prevention. Through it, the government has provided \$5 million to enable community-level action on sports and recreation safety awareness. This funding will support activities to prevent concussions, drowning and severe fractures.

Honourable senators, I believe the initiatives and support I have described are steps in the right direction. However, we still have much to learn about neurological diseases and disorders like epilepsy. The Government of Canada will continue to work with partners to build understanding and raise awareness. Many organizations and volunteers are working to improve the quality of life for those living with epilepsy and their families right across the country.

Yet we all have a role to play. Now, I hope that every one of us here in this chamber will support this bill.

In closing, I would like to repeat the words of Cassidy Megan about the importance of Purple Day:

I started Purple Day because when I first found out that I had epilepsy, I was afraid and embarrassed of what other people would think. I also thought I was the only kid in the world with epilepsy. I wanted to have one day where everyone in the world could show support for people with epilepsy and teach people about it. Educating people about epilepsy is so important because people need to know what to do if they see someone having a seizure. They need to know that there are different types of seizures, and that they don't have to be afraid of epilepsy or the people who have it. Education also helps people with epilepsy know they aren't alone. Since I started Purple Day, I feel special in a way, because I am helping people around the world. I don't feel alone, scared or embarrassed anymore.

Honourable senators, let us give a clear sign of our support to Cassidy Megan and those living with epilepsy by unanimously supporting Bill C-278 to establish March 26 as Purple Day.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Further debate? Are honourable senators ready for the question?

Hon. Senators: Question!

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: It was moved by the Honourable Senator Mercer, seconded by the Honourable Senator Day, that Bill C-278, An Act respecting a day to increase public awareness regarding epilepsy, be read a second time.

Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator Mercer, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.)

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Runciman, seconded by the Honourable Senator Di Nino, for the second reading of Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting).

Hon. George Baker: Honourable senators, I will not delay the proceedings today at all. I have been asked to say a few words concerning this bill.

I certainly support the previous bill introduced in the name of Senator Runciman as it relates to the prizefighting bill. I support Senator Campbell in his remarks and the way he put it to the chamber: to correct “antiquated rules” in our law. This particular bill now under discussion, which hopefully will go to committee following this proceeding, is similarly named.

Senator Mahovlich is famous in the world. Even today when you go anywhere internationally, people ask if you know Senator Mahovlich. The same is true for Senator Demers. I was recently in China with him, and we were at a restaurant with the Deputy Minister of Economic Development, as I recall. A lady approached me and asked if that was Mr. Demers — right out of the blue. That is how well known he is. Of course, Senator Larry Smith is a great football player — a running back that all Canadians respect for his athletic ability. They will be interested in this bill which is before the Senate.

• (1500)

Honourable senators, in my brief remarks, let me say that this will change the entire picture of sports in Canada forever. Honourable senators know that it is against the law to bet on a

game everywhere in North America, except in the State of Nevada. One cannot bet on a hockey game or a football game unless one does it illegally in Canada and the United States. The one legal alternative is to go to Las Vegas in the State of Nevada. However, it is estimated that \$10 billion to \$30 billion a year is spent betting on players and outcomes of games in Canada. Therefore, the movers of this bill hope that, by legalizing it in Canada, money will come back to the organizations running those sports in Canada under the auspices and regulatory authority of the provincial governments.

To illustrate how huge this is, honourable senators, there is but one place you can go in North America to bet on a football game taking place in New York. Yes, people go to New York to see a football game, but where do they go to bet on it? They go to the west coast of the United States to Las Vegas, Nevada, and walk into a casino. Every casino in Las Vegas has a sign that says “Sports books.” When one walks through that casino door, one sees 100 television screens, very plush chairs and free booze and food. People go there to bet on a sporting event, and not necessarily a professional event. This past month, \$1 billion was the take for those organizations in Las Vegas, not only in the casinos but also in bars, clubs and so on.

Today, it is illegal in the United States and Canada to bet on individual sporting events, although \$10 billion in Canada is spent illegally on the Internet betting on those various events.

Honourable senators, Bill C-290 is the creation of Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP Member of Parliament. It passed in the House of Commons, apparently with the unanimous consent of all parties. However, it is strange that certain members on this side of the chamber in the Senate have received letters from MPs who say they do not agree with the bill. Yet, they did not speak to the bill in the House of Commons and they did not vote against it. They are hoping, however, that the Senate will somehow reflect their feelings on the bill. I would suggest to the steering committee that we should call these members of Parliament as witnesses before the Senate committee, if they so desire. We do not want to embarrass them or get them into trouble with their leadership, but simply to give them the opportunity to appear before the committee.

Bill C-290 has only two clauses. It removes section 207(4)(b) of the Criminal Code, which says one cannot bet on a single sporting event. The penalty is an indictable offence, carrying a mandatory minimum sentence. The provision that we are dealing with today dates back to the turn of the previous century, to about 1892 when the Criminal Code of Canada came into play and Sir John Abbott was the Prime Minister.

Senator LeBreton will be interested to know that Mr. Abbott was a member of the Senate and the house leader in the Senate. He was not elected, but he was the Prime Minister. In fact, he was the first of a couple of prime ministers of Canada who were house leaders in the Senate. I think Senator LeBreton would make a great prime minister for Canada in the event that the Prime Minister wished to step down. As some honourable senators are aware, Sir John A. Macdonald, who was in office at the time, had passed away and Senator Abbott assumed that position for at least two years.

The Criminal Code of Canada came into being then and the first mandatory minimums were brought in by the previous government, which was a Liberal administration. As honourable senators are aware, these are the very sections that we propose to change today.

I read the short debate on this bill in the other place. Mr. Comartin, who was the mover of the bill, is a man of great knowledge with a great legal mind. However, he was unable to answer this question: Why does the bill propose removing only a part of this so-called antiquated section of the law? The other part of the law says that it is illegal to conduct three-card monte, punch board, dice games — which is craps — or a single sporting event. The question was asked of Mr. Comartin why he was not proposing to remove three-card monte. He did not know what it was.

From a place of sober second thought, honourable senators, allow me indirectly to inform him that in three-card monte a person comes up to the table and has to guess which card is the ace or other designated card as the person who is trying to take one's money quickly moves them around. Otherwise, the game can include a shell with a marble underneath.

The Criminal Code of Canada defines “three-card monte.” Six sections between sections 201 and 207 of the Criminal Code deal with only three-card monte. Honourable senators, this interested me, being somewhat a student of case law. I recall a case from many years ago, *R. v. Rosen*.

In 1920 the superior court in Quebec was called the Quebec Court of King's Bench, and they had to adjudicate on whether three-card monte was a game of chance, a game of mixed chance and skill, or a game of skill.

• (1510)

In those years judges did not provide an English and French version of their decisions. Each judge declared their opinion in whichever language they so wished. There were five judges in that case, three French and two English, and they came to the unanimous decision that three-card monte, or *bonneteau*, which is the French name for the game, was in fact a game of skill, not a game of chance at all and not against the law at all. In France, under French law, it is considered to be a game of chance. However, they were dealing with the English criminal law and they determined that *bonneteau* was a matter of the quickness of the eye versus the rapidity of the hand and was therefore not a game of chance at all.

Yet, we see in the Criminal Code that three-card monte is a game of chance and that if you play it you will be subjected to punishment for an indictable offence with a minimum sentence of 14 days in jail for the first offence and 30 days in jail for the second offence. That is three-card monte. Why did the mover of this motion not just remove this antiquated section about three-card monte?

The game of craps, of throwing dice, is also an indictable offence in Canada, as is punch board. Some of you may not be aware of the game of punch board. I did not grow up in Canada; I was in Newfoundland. I am that old. I remember that practically every corner store had a punch board. You paid your money and

took your chance at what was punched out. It was illegal in Canada at that time. It was an indictable offence and it remains an indictable offence today.

Much time was spent years ago determining whether the so-called game of the stock market, bonds and debentures, was in fact a game of chance and whether it should be illegal. I believe that for people who play the stock market for the long run it is a game of skill. If you are a day trader and you sold short on Apple stock three weeks ago, then you took your chances and you lost. However, people who look at the Fed, at the European crisis or at the IMF are playing for the long run, and to me that is a game of skill.

I raise that because we took care of that in the Criminal Code. In the concluding paragraph of section 206, which deals with games of chance, we made an exception for the trading of stocks, debentures, bonds and other securities.

For the ordinary poor guys who play craps, three-card monte or a shell game on the street corner, that is an indictable offence, while the stock market is excluded from that section of the Criminal Code.

The bottom line, honourable senators, is that a massive change is about to take place in betting in Canada. The provinces will decide, upon the passage of this bill, how this will operate. A person will be able to bet legally on a game that is taking place, on how many goals or touchdowns a player will get. The world will change in that area.

Also, people in the United States who wish to do distance betting will be able to take advantage of the system that will be in effect in Canada. They will not have to go all the way to Las Vegas to bet on a game.

I leave it to the committee to examine the bill with sober second thought. With those few words, I thank honourable senators very much.

(On motion of Senator Doyle, debate adjourned.)

NATIONAL FLAG OF CANADA BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Pamela Wallin moved second reading of Bill C-288, An Act respecting the National Flag of Canada.

She said: Honourable senators, it is a pleasure to rise today at second reading to speak in support of Bill C-288, an act respecting the national flag of Canada, and this is true in every sense of the world.

This bill was introduced in the other place by my friend and honourable colleague John Carmichael, the member of Parliament for Don Valley West in the great Ontario city of Toronto, a city that is, I might mention, some 2,900 kilometres east of Wadena, Saskatchewan.

Regardless of where we call home, this bill matters to us all. Its purpose is to encourage all Canadians to proudly display the national flag of Canada in accordance with flag protocol. You

might ask why such legislation is needed. Surely one would assume that Canadians can hoist their flag and fly it without legislation enabling them to do so. Honourable senators, if only that were true. It seems that some of our laws did not keep up with modern times.

The fact is that a great many Canadians, an ever-increasing number of Canadians, live in apartment buildings, condominiums or other divided co-ownership or multiple residence buildings or in so-called gated communities, and often those in control of these residential buildings or communities impose rules that limit external displays of any kind, including the flying of our national flag.

Perhaps it is the law of unintended consequences because, while we can understand the need to ensure that displays are tasteful and considerate of the views of others, surely there was no intent to limit simple displays of patriotism. However, it seems that some have interpreted the rules that way, and people were asked to take down their flags. This has actually happened. It has even happened to Canadian war veterans, who, perhaps more than most of us, appreciate what our flag stands for. It is, after all, the flag under which they have fought and for which they have volunteered to put their lives on the line.

Honourable senators, this is why I support this bill. Canadians should be able to fly their country's most powerful symbol and to do so on Canadian soil anywhere, particularly at their homes. As amended at committee in the other place, this legislation simply means no one can be prohibited from flying Canada's flag at home.

• (1520)

What it does is explicitly encourage those who own or manage shared or joint property to allow residents and property owners in buildings under their control to display our national flag — so long as it is in accordance with flag protocol — and this is an important caveat.

With this legislation in place, residents wanting to display the flag will at least be able to show that the Parliament of Canada supports the flag of this country being flown. It may, one hopes, actually encourage a change of rules to permit flag flying, and that might happen sooner rather than later. This is a hopeful, not a coercive approach. That is why I hope all honourable senators will support this bill, as a way to promote a change in attitudes among those who, at present, prevent other Canadians from flying their flag.

Honourable senators, this bill is an important step in the right direction, and I humbly ask for and encourage your support, because it will mean a lot to the hundreds of thousands, indeed, millions of Canadians living in apartments, condos and other such places where rules are preventing them from flying the flag.

As I mentioned, our flag is a powerful symbol. I was quite young during the great flag debate of 1964, but I remember it because it sparked debates at supper tables right across the country, including my own. There were many competing designs at the time, including the venerable Red Ensign, which had been

the de facto Canadian flag for such a long time. For weeks on end, passions flared in Ottawa and everyone with an opinion was a proud Canadian. Indeed, although the opinions differed greatly and the debate was heated, those holding these differing views were united in one way: they were all showing their passion for Canada and its symbols.

In the end, one flag design was chosen: the red maple leaf flag. This was the flag that was raised over the Peace Tower and elsewhere across Canada on the freezing and overcast morning of February 15, 1965. It is the flag that still flies over this building and across Canada today — our familiar red maple leaf, which proudly and unequivocally says “Canada” no matter where it is seen in the world or by whom.

As honourable senators can imagine, I went back and did some reading on this. If you allow me just a moment, it was fun to take a look through the debates of the time and some of the reportage to recount a bit of the history. The following words were spoken on the momentous day when the new flag was raised by the Speaker of the Senate. It added further symbolic meaning. This was the statement:

The flag is the symbol of the nation's unity, for it, beyond any doubt, represents all the citizens of Canada without distinction of race, language, belief or opinion.

The search for the new flag had actually begun in earnest in 1925 when a committee of the Privy Council began to research possible designs, but that work was never completed. Later, in 1946, a select parliamentary committee was appointed with a similar mandate. It called for submissions and received more than 2,600 designs. Still, the Parliament of Canada was never called upon to formally vote on a design.

Early in 1964, Prime Minister Pearson informed the House of Commons that the government wished to adopt a distinctive national flag. The 1967 centennial celebration of Confederation was approaching and so a Senate and House of Commons committee was formed and submissions were called for once again.

The committee eventually decided to recommend the single leaf design, which was approved by a resolution of the House of Commons on December 15, followed by the Senate on December 17, 1964, and proclaimed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, to take effect on February 15. However, on the afternoon of a Friday in the late autumn of 1964, there was an urgent request from the Prime Minister's office to the desk of Ken Donovan. Mr. Donovan was then an assistant purchasing director with the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission, which later became the Department of Supply and Services.

The Prime Minister wanted prototypes of the new flag to take to his new residence at Harrington Lake the next morning. The proposals included the single maple leaf design. The only design samples were on paper and there was a bit of a panic. Mr. Donovan and his team of designers were called upon to do the impossible. No seamstress could be found and so the flags were stitched together eventually by young Joan O'Malley,

daughter of Ken Donovan. During the ceremony celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the flag, she recounted her experience, saying:

I really didn't realize what I was getting into when I got that phone call from my father in 1964. I was just doing my father a favour; not participating in history. Let me tell you, I don't think of myself as the Betsy Ross type.

Some of these bits of history were quite interesting and it was a quite a time in our nation's history.

Indeed, by the early 1970s, it was already the case and a given that some American college students travelling the world were beginning to sew the Canadian flag on their back packs, because it would make them more welcome than if they showed up with the Stars and Stripes.

Each and every year thousands of people from around the world choose our country, our values and our way of life, and they choose the flag that represents all that.

I recently attended a citizenship ceremony with a friend of mine and her young daughter. It was a potent reminder of what citizenship means. The tears do, indeed, well up when one watches a room full of new Canadians sing our national anthem and pledge their allegiance to this country while clutching these small Canadian flags in their hands. It is something that every Canadian fortunate enough to be born here should do — to attend such a ceremony — to be reminded of how fortunate we are and, for a brief moment, to see ourselves through other people's eyes.

I have had the great good fortune — raised as the daughter of a vet — to be part of many a November 11 ceremony and to hear the stories of the power of these iconic symbols to a fighting force huddled in the trenches in a foreign land. Then, over the last several years, I have had the chance to witness first-hand that flag flying with our Canadian Forces in Afghanistan and to learn what that means to a new generation of fighting forces. These brave men and women at work are fighting terrorism, fighting insurgency, fighting to build and repair the schools and the dams, fighting poverty and despair by helping Afghanistan build and rebuild its institutions, and fighting for Afghans to help them rebuild their sense of hope; and, of course, as we do today so effectively, working to train Afghan soldiers and police to defend their own country under their own flag.

Canadian flags also bring tears to the eyes of many at more joyful events like hockey games, baseball games or curling matches. We have all been proud to see this flag represent our athletes at the Olympics and at other prestigious and elite competitions around the world, including at international hockey series.

Honourable senators, we on this side of the Senate support this legislation and we believe that those on the other side support it, too, as did your colleagues in the other place. I ask you for your support that we might pass this bill as soon as possible.

I know that Your Honour has a great interest in protocol issues and I would welcome your insight and input on this discussion.

This bill is aspirational — there is no enforcement intended. We just want to help establish the right of Canadians to fly their flag. If this chamber can in any way encourage more flying of the Canadian flag, and if we raise the spirits of Canadians by encouraging a change of the rules to permit them to do so, it will be a just and worthy act.

[Translation]

Hon. Roméo Antonius Dallaire: Will the honourable senator take a question?

[English]

Senator Wallin: Absolutely.

[Translation]

Senator Dallaire: Honourable senators, there are two components. The first is the history of the flag, which the honourable senator recounted and which I was delighted to hear. It can also be found in the book *Canada's Flag*, which was written by Judge Matheson, who is also a veteran. He was a gunner and was injured during World War II. He is still alive today and is certain to feel honoured by her words.

• (1530)

I will be sure to tell him.

If I recall correctly, it was Sheila Copps, the minister sat the time, who required all federal buildings, every park, every building, every parking lot across the country to fly the Canadian flag. Flags were hung everywhere. Tons of flags were handed out across the country to show that the federal government was there.

This bill encourages Canadians to display the national flag on their home, their personal property and their buildings, and I must say I think that it is a great idea.

However, while this bill encourages the federal government and individuals to fly the flag, the provincial governments are being excluded. It would be nice to see schools across Canada flying the Canadian flag next to the provincial flag, since education is a provincial jurisdiction.

I would like to know whether the members of Senator Wallin's party have discussed the possibility of displaying the Canadian flag at provincial public institutions.

[English]

Senator Wallin: To my knowledge, going through the discussion at committee and reading some of the testimony, it was not a big issue. I think everyone realized that those are decisions provinces would have to make regarding how they would want to behave. They do all fly their flags over their own provincial buildings, and they do so in conjunction, in most cases, with the federal flag.

In this particular kind of bill, what we are trying to do is encourage people to allow others to do what they think is the right thing. This does not just apply to building owners or condo

managers or whatever it would mean. It would also signal our intent to others, including the provinces, as the honourable senator suggests, that we think it is a good thing to fly these flags, whether in tandem or however they choose to display their provincial flags alongside the federal.

Senator Dallaire: My question is exactly along that line. Since it is not coercive and we will not throw them in jail if they do not do it, nor are we planning to throw in jail anyone who prevents that from happening, it might have been an opportunity to nudge the provincial institutions to show that same example that we are asking of our citizens, at their level, to take on that responsibility.

Is the honourable senator confirming that that dimension was never in the debate at the introduction of this bill?

Senator Wallin: As I understand it, the inspiration for this bill really came from the requests of Canadian citizens. Several veterans came forward to members of Parliament, Mr. Carmichael in particular, and said they had been asked to take down the flags on their homes, homes they own, even though it might be in a condo setting or a gated community. The inspiration came from individuals. I think it would be fair to assume that provincial governments, much like the federal government, of course, want to fly their flags as a show of patriotism and pride.

Senator Dallaire: The reason I bring this to the honourable senator's attention is that Quebec City, when I was commanding the garrison, got into quite a row with the mayor, who was of a nationalist position. Of the flags on the three masts outside City Hall, the Canadian flag was taken down when he took over. Every day veterans went to City Hall, raised the Canadian flag and stood there all day, for weeks on end, because of this position taken at the municipal level.

Perhaps an opportunity has been lost to nudge those who actually do not want that to happen, and to perhaps encourage them. I very much support the bill. However, coming from a province where this issue is significant in a debate, I feel that we have missed the opportunity to break that code.

Senator Wallin: The honourable senator has quite eloquently made the case that for this particular bill we do not want to take that coercive approach. If you have to get into that, you will be going down a different road. This bill would be to signal our belief and our intention, in support of those very veterans who stood there, that this is the right thing to do.

Hon. Joseph A. Day: Honourable senators, I have a question of the honourable senator. First, I would like to thank Senator Wallin for her speech and her words, which I accept and support in relation to the importance of the flag as a symbol for Canadians.

I have had an opportunity to look at the bill, which has only three clauses. I would like to talk about those clauses. First, permit me to provide a bit more historical background to the 1964 decision to adopt the current Canadian flag.

I had known very well now-deceased Dr. George Stanley, who was Dean of Arts at the Royal Military College at the time. He was the individual who made the submission. In fact, what had

happened is that the committee was looking for submissions on different designs for the Canadian flag, and John Matheson, subsequently Judge Matheson, was chosen by Prime Minister Lester Pearson to be the chair of the committee that led the debate. Judge Matheson, as Senator Dallaire indicated, continues to live in the Kingston area and would tell you this story.

Judge Matheson and George Stanley were walking across the parade square at the Royal Military College. They looked up at the Royal Military College flag and said, "There is the inspiration for your Canadian flag."

That, in fact, was the inspiration. Honourable senators can see that what has changed between the Royal Military College flag and the flag of Canada is the symbol in the white part in the centre. The crest of the Royal Military College is removed and the red maple leaf appears. I think that is important to have on the record when we are providing historical significance to the Canadian flag.

With respect to this bill in particular, my question arises from the honourable senator's description of this bill as "aspirational." I am thinking back to Senator Banks and the very good work he did in having us look through the books and the records of acts and regulations of Canada that have become irrelevant and that really do not achieve anything. The inspiration for this particular bill, as I understand it from the honourable senator's submission, was that certain veterans and individuals in Canada were not able to display the flag when they felt they would like to.

My question is, first, does this bill achieve that objective?

• (1540)

The first paragraph of this bill indicates the name of it shall be cited as the "National Flag of Canada Act." Paragraph 2 talks about how all Canadians are "encouraged" to display. Paragraph 3 says the owners of gated communities and multi-residential buildings are "encouraged" to allow individuals to display the flag.

Is that the kind of statement that we should have in a bill of the Government of Canada that will be in the books of the statutes of Canada? Should this rather be more in the form of a motion that we would encourage?

When we are talking about bills that are intended to become statutes of Canada, is it appropriate to use language like "encourage" and only "encourage" to display?

Senator Wallin: Not being privy directly to the debates on the other side but reading the testimony that came from them, it is my understanding, and I think it was the agreement of all members in the other place, that they did not want to make this a legal requirement, that it would be against the law, that there would be charges against those who might have in some way prohibited this.

I think they felt initially that there was some tougher language, and then I think, in terms of examining this further and talking to people about it, that in many cases it was just simply a misunderstanding. In these shared living arrangements, condos and gated communities, what they did not want was gross

displays hanging somewhere, such as palm trees or cowboys riding horses or who knows what sitting out on the decks. The flag had somehow inadvertently, in many cases, been brought into this prohibition that there could be no outside displays, such as Christmas lights, and so on.

I think it was the belief of those on the other side who debated this in the other place — and they debated it quite thoroughly — that what they wanted to do when it comes to our flags, our national symbols, to acts of patriotism, to that sense of what it is to be a Canadian, is that we did not want that to be a legal obligation. We wanted that to be something that people came to through belief and understanding and from their heart, and that it would be counterproductive in some ways and not achieving the spirit of this particular bill if we tried to do it with the heavy hand and the legal hammer.

Senator Day: I thank the honourable senator for her explanation, but that makes me feel more strongly that what we should be having here is a motion of encouragement rather than a law that encourages.

The second point that I would like to ask Senator Wallin about is whether there has been any debate with respect to these two paragraphs, paragraph 2(1) and 2(2). There are only two paragraphs, and paragraph 2 has two parts in it. It is the encouragement in both part 2(1) for the individual and part 2(2) for the owner of gated communities or multi-residential buildings. Both of these encouragements are for displaying the flag in accordance with flag protocol: not capital F, not capital P, not defined. Is this something that has been debated and should we all know this is something formal that is in some other regulation, or does the honourable senator anticipate a regulation would follow?

Senator Wallin: I think there are others in this chamber, including the Speaker, who can speak more directly to the question of flag protocol. I think it is not capitalized because I do not think there is a book entitled just that, although I stand to be corrected because the Speaker might inform me of that.

I think the importance of having this as a bill as opposed to just a motion or a statement is that it would give it the weight, the moral authority and the weight of a law of this land, and that would represent the intent, I think, of both houses in this Parliament, that we want to in the strongest possible terms say how important we think this is and encourage people in the strongest possible terms to allow, in a respectful and appropriate way, the flying of the flag, but to not do that through some legal means.

I sort of have the opposite response to what Senator Day is saying: I want this to have the power of a bill because I think it sends a signal, but I think we have stepped back from trying to force patriotism onto people by having some kind of penalty imposed for those who do not oblige.

Senator Day: I thank the honourable senator for that answer. I am not convinced that with the way the wording appears here, with the small f and small p, “flag protocol,” we know what people are being encouraged to do. That is my difficulty.

Senator Dallaire: If I may, I have just one more supplemental, because of the points raised by Senator Day with regard to the origins of the flag and the indication that the origin and the colour red comes from the Royal Military College.

The three colleges that were created are the Royal Military College in Kingston, which was supported and based by the army; Royal Roads in Victoria was supported by the navy; and the one in Saint-Jean was supported by the air force. Each one of those colleges carried the colours of those services. The Royal Canadian Navy’s navy blue was on Royal Roads and the Royal Canadian Air Force’s light blue was on RMC Saint-Jean.

The red that is in our flag is in fact the army red serge colour. Therefore, for those who have served and for those who continue to serve, it adds an even more in-depth value to the fact that Canadian people have used the army colour to be part of the symbol of this nation, for which many have fought and will continue to fight and die and be injured under that flag.

I wanted to raise that for the record.

Senator Wallin: Regarding the comment on flag protocol, again, I think the reason it is probably not spelled out — I am speculating on this — is that there are different protocols in different situations, depending on what other flags are present and what other people are present. Of course, if it is displayed on someone’s house it cannot be upside down or any of those things. I think one just has to say that as a general category. We want everyone to play by the rules and respect the flag in their flying of it and that the appropriate rules would apply depending on the circumstance, whether it is in the chamber or on someone’s front porch.

(On motion of Senator Tardif, debate adjourned.)

• (1550)

RECREATIONAL ATLANTIC SALMON FISHING

ECONOMIC BENEFITS—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. John D. Wallace: Honourable senators, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Senator Meighen’s inquiry into the economic benefits of the recreational salmon fishery in Canada.

A recent study that is highly relevant to Senator Meighen’s inquiry was conducted by the Halifax firm Gardner Pinfold and sponsored by the Atlantic Salmon Federation, which I will be referring to as the ASF. This ASF study provides a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the significance and substantial value of the Atlantic salmon fishery to Atlantic Canada.

In one of his final speeches before this chamber, Senator Meighen spoke passionately and extensively to this inquiry and in particular to the research and economic analysis that is contained in the ASF study. Rather than repeat all of the details of this analysis, I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the study's key conclusions. First, the study determined that the actual value of wild Atlantic salmon spending in Canada in 2010 was approximately \$255 million, with recreational fishing contributing \$128.5 million to that amount. Also, the Atlantic salmon fishery created 3,873 full-time jobs in Canada, many of which are in rural areas where employment alternatives are limited.

These findings of the study are a significant indicator of the substantial value and importance of the recreational salmon industry in Atlantic Canada and the province of Quebec.

My honourable New Brunswick colleague across the floor, Senator Robichaud, has also spoken of the ASF study and in doing so outlined the various conservation efforts currently being undertaken by organizations in New Brunswick for the express purpose of protecting, preserving and enhancing the existing wild Atlantic salmon stocks.

Being a senator from Atlantic Canada, and more particularly from the province of New Brunswick, where the fishing industry plays such a significant role in the lives of so many, I am strongly of the belief that we must continue to do everything we possibly can to ensure that this truly iconic species, the wild Atlantic salmon, is properly and effectively protected. It is also imperative that our wild Atlantic salmon stocks be restored and, in this regard, that all required resources be made available to ensure that the Atlantic salmon population is able to recover to appropriate levels that are strong, stable and sustainable.

As Canadians, we share a natural affinity and connection with the land and waters we inhabit. We are part of our environment. From coast to coast to coast, our lands, waterways and oceans have shaped our very existence and in many ways have moulded the distinctiveness and identity we have as Canadians.

Our lands continue to be rich with wildlife and natural resources. Regrettably, however, over the years many of our natural species have been subjected to exploitation, pollution, development and careless harvesting. Indeed, and in this regard, the story of the Atlantic salmon is truly an unfortunate one. Our rivers were once so plentiful with wild salmon that they served as a vital source of livelihood throughout Atlantic Canada. For decades, however, the wild salmon have been returning to our rivers in decreasing numbers. In fact, it is estimated that during the course of the last three centuries, wild salmon stocks have decreased by approximately 90 per cent.

Honourable senators, at this point I do want to acknowledge and applaud the recent action that has been taken by the federal government in the 2012 Budget, which proposes to provide \$50 million over two years to protect wild species at risk. This is truly another step, a very positive step, in the right direction.

Within the inner harbour of the Bay of Fundy region, for example, the Atlantic salmon is one of the species considered at risk and as such remains listed as endangered under the Species at Risk Act.

The life cycle of the wild Atlantic salmon is indeed a complex and in many ways mystifying process. It is without doubt a life cycle of nature that we have a responsibility to protect.

Atlantic salmon hatch in fresh water and then spend much of their life at sea before undertaking the arduous journey back to our rivers, often to the very same rivers in which they were hatched, to begin the spawning process, a journey that can cover over 4,000 kilometres. Unlike the Pacific salmon that die after spawning, Atlantic salmon may repeat this incredible journey many times during their lifetime.

Honourable senators, although commercial salmon fishing has been closed in all Atlantic regions since the 1990s, the recreational salmon fishery certainly remains a significant economic factor as a substantial generator of employment and ecotourism in our region. While employment alternatives within many of our rural communities can at times be somewhat limited, tourism generated by the recreational salmon industry does create significant employment opportunities at fishing lodges and within the operations of equipment retailers and food suppliers. In short, this wild salmon industry has always been and must continue to remain a vital contributor to the economies and the standard of living within the rural areas of New Brunswick and throughout Atlantic Canada.

The ASF study clearly demonstrates the economic importance of the recreational salmon fishery to our region's rural economies, including those communities that border northern New Brunswick's world-famous Miramichi River.

Extending approximately 250 kilometres in length and with 37 major tributaries and over 7,700 individual streams, the Miramichi River is without doubt the perfect place to fish and experience first-hand the wonders of nature. The ASF study describes this wilderness beauty of the Miramichi River as a "sanctuary for anglers and wildlife alike."

Moreover, this truly magnificent river boasts the largest salmon runs in the world. Anglers from all over the world travel to fish the pristine rivers of northern New Brunswick and, in doing so, significantly impact our province's tourism and related employment.

The village of Doaktown, located along the banks of the Main Southwest Miramichi, is home to the Atlantic Salmon Museum, which each year welcomes over 4,000 visitors. This river region is also home to the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre as well as the longest-standing salmon hatchery in Canada.

Although over the years the wild Atlantic salmon population has seen a significant decline in much of the Atlantic region, the closure of commercial fisheries and the introduction of strict recreational fishing regulations, such as the catch and release program, have resulted in the Miramichi River salmon maintaining a relatively healthy and stable population. This is certainly a very encouraging sign for the recreational salmon fishery in northern New Brunswick.

The ASF study also included a specific case study of the Miramichi River and estimated the annual economic value of the recreational salmon fishing industry in the Miramichi region

to be approximately \$16 million in GDP and \$20 million in annual spending. This salmon industry also accounts for 637 full-time jobs and, to quote the study further, represents about 35 per cent or one in every three jobs for the food services and accommodations sector in this area.

The Restigouche River is located in the northwestern region of New Brunswick, bordering the province of Quebec, and is also world-renowned for its salmon runs and, most notably, the size of its salmon, which often spend more than two years at sea before returning to spawn. In 1998, the 55-kilometre stretch of the Upper Restigouche River was designated part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, which is mandated to oversee the conservation of the natural, cultural and recreational values of this magnificent river system.

Another of New Brunswick's majestic rivers, the Saint John River, expands approximately 673 kilometres from northern Maine to the shores of the Bay of Fundy located at the city of Saint John. Unlike the rivers of northern New Brunswick where salmon populations are now somewhat stable, the Saint John River and its neighbouring rivers of the inner and outer Bay of Fundy have experienced considerable declines in wild salmon stock resulting in the species' being designated as regionally endangered. As a consequence, recreational salmon fishing is no longer permitted within these areas.

The Miramichi, Restigouche and Saint John rivers are but a few examples of the many rivers and their bordering communities within New Brunswick and throughout Atlantic Canada that have been negatively impacted by decreasing Atlantic salmon stocks.

• (1600)

I am also reminded of the beautiful Hammond River that is located near my home in southern New Brunswick, and very close to Senator Day's home in Hampton, which, some years ago, also boasted of renowned salmon fishing. However, as I mentioned, all salmon fishing within the Saint John River system, including the Hammond River, has been suspended in support of Atlantic salmon restoration and conservation efforts.

In this regard, I do want to acknowledge and applaud the dedication and excellent efforts of the Hammond River Angling Association, a group of volunteer anglers and conservationists who, since 1977, have been working diligently to ensure that the Hammond River returns to its once proud Atlantic salmon run status.

Honourable senators, fishing has always been part of Atlantic Canada's identity. For many, it is still a critically important part of everyday life. It is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation, from fathers to sons and daughters. In this regard, Senator Meighen's inquiry into the recreational salmon fishery has provided a much-needed opportunity to cast light not only upon the importance of the economic value of salmon fishing, but also upon a long-standing Canadian tradition that is very much at risk.

Most importantly, and above all else, the wild salmon populations must be restored and sustained. They absolutely must. As confirmed by the Atlantic Salmon Federation study,

saving the Atlantic salmon will both protect and increase employment opportunities in Atlantic Canada; it will generate tourism and stimulate our economy; and it will uphold the truly unique experiences and traditions of our wild Atlantic salmon fishery.

In referring to these Atlantic salmon experiences and traditions, the ASF commented that dissolving the initial perception of salmon as food and making it a prized experience is the major influence that has created the industry that now exists.

Despite the decline in salmon stocks and the enactment of strict salmon fishing regulations, anglers from around the world continue to travel to Atlantic Canada to fish our beautiful rivers and waterways for the wild Atlantic salmon. This is an indisputable indicator that salmon fishing is about much more than harvesting.

In fact, I believe that harvesting has very little to do with the fishing experience. The ASF study describes this fishing experience as "seeking a retreat in the wilderness for the enjoyment of leisurely fishing has now become a coveted seasonal tradition for many individuals, as evidenced by the widespread participation and spending on recreational fishing in Canada . . . every one that carves out a few days or weeks each summer for salmon fishing, or creates a camp of their own, is also partaking in a piece of history, tradition and luxury in their own way."

As also evidenced by the ASF's study's public survey, Atlantic Canadians have demonstrated over 80 per cent support for continued public investment in salmon restoration initiatives. The study also concludes that return on this investment can be expected to occur within six years.

Honourable senators, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada has responsibility for the management and conservation of our wild Atlantic salmon stocks. There is no doubt in my mind, and in the minds of many others, that in order for our Atlantic salmon population to return to acceptable levels that are both sustainable and stable, it is absolutely necessary that the department continue to be provided, in a consistent manner, with the means and resources necessary to continue implementation of effective Atlantic salmon conservation strategies.

The wild Atlantic salmon has always been at the heart of Atlantic Canada's journey through history, and we must never forget that it is part of us.

Investing in the protection, preservation and growth of our Atlantic salmon stocks will provide direct benefits to employment and the economies of our region, and particularly within our rural communities. We must also appreciate, however, that the wild Atlantic salmon is more than solely a commodity. We must recognize and appreciate it for what it is, and that is a symbol of our heritage, our roots, our identity and our traditions. Protecting and enhancing this outstanding species is not only a wise economic investment; it is an investment in the protection of our Canadian heritage.

Honourable senators, having grown up fishing in New Brunswick from my earliest days with my father and my grandfather, I know that there is a very personal and spiritual nature to the fishing experience that is unparalleled. It ties us and grounds us to the tranquility and beauty of our natural environment. It connects us to what we are. It connects us to our ancestors.

Honourable senators, I strongly support Senator Meighen's inquiry. I believe that strong and effective action must continue to be taken to ensure that the stocks of wild Atlantic salmon are protected and restored for the benefit of our future generations so that they may also be able to share in this wonderful personal experience and carry with them this proud tradition and symbol of our Atlantic Canadian identity.

Hon. Joseph A. Day: Honourable senators, I would like to thank the honourable senator for his comments. I wholeheartedly embrace his comments.

I would add two or three other rivers in New Brunswick in the southern part of the province and one in particular. I remember as a young fellow seeing the salmon. You could almost walk across the river on the backs of salmon, and there are none coming back now. I am referring to the Big Salmon River flowing into the Bay of Fundy. The Bay of Fundy, itself, was very close to becoming one of the seven modern wonders of the world. The Bay of Fundy is an incredible ecosystem that I would like to maybe talk a little bit more about.

I fully support the inquiry of Senator Meighen. I note that he has referred not just to Atlantic Canada, but to Canada and the importance of the Atlantic fishery in Canada. I understand that there is some commercial growing of Atlantic salmon even in British Columbia because of the higher quality of the salmon from the Atlantic region.

Honourable senators, normally I would ask for the adjournment, but I do see that this matter was already adjourned in the name of Senator Moore, so I will have my opportunity in due course. I assume the normal protocol will be followed here and that it will go back to Senator Moore for his opportunity to speak on this matter.

The Hon. the Speaker: As long as honourable senators are agreeable, perhaps we can agree that Senator Wallace had asked and received permission for five more minutes, that we were into questions and comments and Senator Day had made his comments, and we had agreed the inquiry continued to stand in the name of Senator Moore. Is it agreed?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(On motion of Senator Moore, debate adjourned.)

[Senator Wallace]

• (1610)

[Translation]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Greene calling the attention of the Senate to the modernization of the practices and procedures of the Senate Chamber with a focus on private members' bills.

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Acting Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I note that this is the 14th day for this inquiry, and I know that Senator Carignan wants to talk about it some more, but he is still working on his research. Therefore, I would like to adjourn the debate for the rest of his time.

(On motion of Senator Comeau, for Senator Carignan, debate adjourned.)

FOOD BANKS

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Fernand Robichaud rose pursuant to notice of March 6, 2012:

That he will call the attention of the Senate to the importance of food banks to families and the working poor.

He said: Honourable senators, today I would like to talk about the important role that food banks play in the lives of the poor.

Food banks exist because the government's efforts do not meet people's needs. They exist for another reason, too: because there are still people in this country who deeply believe in sharing with their fellow human beings.

In most of our communities, food banks rely on volunteers for their survival and ongoing operation. Food and clothing banks enable many families and individuals to get through tough times. Since they first appeared in urban centres in Western Canada, food banks have opened up across the country.

There are now more than 800 food banks in Canada and over 3,000 food programs. Food Banks Canada's 2011 report — I believe all honourable senators have received a copy of this report — describes a vast network that offers a real helping hand to many families and individuals.

These are places where the less fortunate can go to get food for themselves and their children. Some food banks also distribute furniture and clothing. They sometimes even offer nutrition classes and organize collective or community kitchens. Volunteers sometimes get together to demonstrate to underprivileged families

how to cook healthy, balanced meals. Also, just across the river in Gatineau, for instance, there are volunteers who meet up to prepare meals that are then distributed.

Why does someone go to a food bank? Because poor people simply cannot survive on what they earn or what they receive in social assistance. More often than not, exceptional circumstances force people to turn to food banks for help.

Over the past year, nearly a million people — 851,000 including 322,000 children — have had to turn to food banks. That is 26 per cent more than before the 2008-09 recession.

What does that mean, you might ask? These numbers symbolize a sad reality: the economic recovery is not going as well as planned and more and more people are still having difficulty making ends meet.

I would also note that the recovery, if it is happening at all, is not happening equitably. Not only are more vulnerable people paying the price, but the gap between rich and poor continues to grow.

In New Brunswick in 2011, 18,539 people used the services of a food bank, and 34 per cent of those people were children under 18. This means that the parents of 5,302 children counted on food banks to feed their families. That is nearly 20 per cent more than before the recession. The numbers from New Brunswick are comparable to those in other Canadian provinces.

Who are these people who use food banks? The profiles are varied and there is not a single typical profile. There are families with children; there are the working poor, in other words, people who work, but do not earn enough money to pay for their basic needs. There are also individuals receiving social assistance and people on a fixed income, including people with disabilities and seniors. There are even people who had steady jobs, but whose lives, for a variety of reasons, unravelled and they ended up on the street.

I recently visited Vestiaire Saint-Joseph in Shediac, New Brunswick, and I witnessed the absolutely extraordinary work of the volunteers there. The directors of Vestiaire Saint-Joseph informed me that in 2010-2011, relief was given to 1,070 people, 405 of whom were children. This total number of people includes 470 families, a quarter of which are single parent families.

The 75 volunteers at this agency worked 12,431 hours over the past year. These volunteer workers are like the support beams of a wall that protects the most vulnerable. These volunteers are people who are devoted to collecting and handing out food; people who collect, repair and organize clothing and furniture for their clients; people who know how to welcome with respect and empathy those who come asking for help. These dedicated volunteers work hard serving others, with respect and compassion.

Honourable senators, allow me to add something here. In honour of National Volunteer Week, which was from April 15 to 21, 2012, I want to pay tribute to all our volunteers across the country who devote themselves with generosity, commitment and energy to making a difference in the lives of their fellow citizens. I commend them and encourage them to keep up the good work.

Large food banks raise funds and rely on community generosity to survive. Many socially responsible businesses in south-eastern New Brunswick donate to an umbrella organization, Food Dépôt Alimentaire, which supplies food banks in the region.

Turkey Farmers of Canada is another socially responsible organization. In cooperation with Food Banks Canada, it provided a turkey dinner to 6,000 families in need at Thanksgiving. Turkey Farmers of New Brunswick was proud to participate in the program.

Honourable senators, hunger impedes normal childhood development. For poor children, being hungry does not mean missing the occasional meal. Unfortunately, for poor children, being hungry is a way of life. It is what they face every day, along with the many negative consequences of malnutrition.

These children experience significant physical, social and cognitive developmental delays. Children suffering from hunger can be more hyperactive, aggressive, irritable and even anxious. Their school attendance is spotty, and their academic outcomes can be poor as a result. Unfortunately, poor children are more likely than others to be drawn into the world of crime.

When I visited the Vestiaire Saint-Joseph, I learned that over a quarter of the 470 families the organization helps are single-parent families.

• (1620)

Most single-parent families are headed by women. Those who manage to find work to support their families are often part of the working poor.

The working poor have to make many decisions every day: pay the rent or buy the groceries? Buy prescriptions or food for the children? Put gas in the car to seek health care or put food on the table? The working poor have so many heart-wrenching decisions to make. Food banks are there to help people and to give them hope that they will escape poverty.

Often, people are thrust into poverty from one day to the next for many different reasons. Car repairs, a rent increase, a sudden illness, the loss of employment or a work accident can wreak havoc on their modest budget, which is already very tight. Even delays in employment insurance cheques can force the working poor to go to a food bank. I was told about a poor worker and his family who ended up on the street because they could not pay their rent on time.

Marital separation also contributes to poverty. In some cases, there is no support being paid or, if there is, it may not be enough. Sometimes delays in receiving support payments force people to ask for help.

The food banks become lifesavers that prevent poor workers and their families from going under. The food banks provide food, toiletries, diapers and clothing for children and adults. And the money that poor workers save by using food banks can be used to pay for other basic needs, such as housing, utilities, heating and medicine.

Sometimes single women are also forced to turn to food banks to survive. I would like to share with you what one 53-year-old woman said about the support she receives from her local food bank:

I receive \$537 a month in social assistance. My rent is \$265 a month. After paying my bills, I have nothing left. So I have to come here [to the food bank] every lunch hour, because otherwise, I would not be able to eat every day. I also get my clothes here.

Honourable senators, how many of us could get by on \$537 a month or \$6,444 a year? Think about it. This is how much money poor families are supposed to survive on. And if you were single with a child, how could you possibly survive on \$809 a month or \$9,708 a year?

According to 2011 statistics gathered by Vestiaire Saint-Joseph, over 7 per cent of its users are seniors. Unfortunately, in Canada, too many seniors have to turn to food banks to survive: 4.4 per cent in urban settings and 5.7 per cent in rural areas. I will come back to poverty among seniors another time.

In conclusion, honourable senators, there is no doubt that food banks are on the front lines, trying to alleviate the problem of hunger. They were conceived as a temporary measure, but their necessity has caused to them to continue to exist and their numbers are only increasing.

Many people do not realize just how serious a problem hunger is in this country. These are the people and families we do not see. They are there, but we do not see them. We realize they exist only when we go to a food bank, where we see them coming for food.

Unfortunately, there is a popular belief that the people who use food banks do not really need them. To anyone who shares this belief, I would like to say: go and see for yourself. Most of the people at the food bank have been referred there and have real needs.

Honourable senators, I would like to move that further debate on this item be continued at the next sitting of the Senate, when I will finish my remarks.

(On motion of Senator Robichaud, debate adjourned.)

[English]

PREVENTION AND ELIMINATION OF MASS ATROCITIES

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Roméo Antonius Dallaire rose pursuant to notice of April 24, 2012:

That he will call the attention of the Senate to Canada's continued lack of commitment to the prevention and elimination of mass atrocity crimes, and further calling on

[Senator Robichaud]

the Senate to follow the recommendation of the United Nations Secretary General in making 2012 the year of prevention of mass atrocity crimes.

He said: Honourable senators, at this late hour I think a moment of levity might be of use before I say a few words on my inquiry and then ask that the rest be deferred to next week.

I return to my favourite book on Winston Churchill's wicked wit. I thought I would recount an anecdote for honourable senators. Newly elected in the House of Commons in the year 1900, young Winston Churchill thought that a moustache might add dignity and maturity to his youthful looks. I certainly believe in that.

Not long after, a woman came up to him and said forthrightly: "There are two things I don't like about you, Mr. Churchill — your politics and your moustache." Already then it would seem he was never at a loss for the satisfying retort. "My dear madam," he replied, "pray do not disturb yourself. You are not likely to come into contact with either."

The subject that I want to bring to your attention is no laughing matter, of course. This is the prevention of mass atrocities and particularly the United Nations Secretary-General's proposal that 2012 be the year of prevention of mass atrocity crimes. Today we have just learned that Charles Taylor has been found guilty of crimes against humanity with the Sierra Leone war.

I will present to you in my inquiry at the next sitting the details of how I believe Canada can and should play a significant role in advancing the prevention of mass atrocities, not just responding to catastrophic events but actually being engaged in the prevention thereof. In so doing, we can take a leadership role and be simpatico with our good neighbours to the south. That is not always the area where I look for leadership or necessarily an example, but certainly President Obama and his administration have moved significantly over the last days to bring forward some very deliberate policy positions and actions that will set the American government and its institutions well on the way to being able to respond in a proactive way to catastrophic scenarios that are still being played out in countries, for example Darfur, Syria, which we know so well, and the Congo, from where I have just returned.

I request, honourable senators, that I return to you at the next sitting for the rest of my time.

(On motion of Senator Dallaire, debate adjourned.)

• (1630)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO URGE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE SPORTING FACILITIES AVAILABLE ONE DAY ANNUALLY AT A REDUCED OR COMPLIMENTARY RATE—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Nancy Greene Raine, pursuant to notice April 4, 2012, moved:

That the Senate of Canada urge the Government of Canada to encourage local governments from coast to coast to coast to collaborate in choosing one day annually to

make their health, recreational sports, and fitness facilities available to citizens at a reduced or complimentary rate, with the goals of promoting the use of those facilities and improving the overall health and well-being of Canadians for the reasons that:

- (a) although Canada's mountains, oceans, lakes, forests, and parks offer abundant opportunities for physical activities outdoors, an equally effective alternative opportunity to take part in physical activities is offered by indoor health, recreational sports, and fitness facilities;
- (b) despite its capacity to be a healthy and fit nation, Canada is experiencing a decline in participation rates in physical activities, with this decline having a direct consequence to health and fitness;
- (c) local governments operate many public facilities that promote health and fitness, and those facilities could be better utilized by their citizenry;
- (d) there is a growing concern in Canada over the rise in chronic diseases, which are attributable, in part, to inactivity and in turn can cause other impediments to achieving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle;
- (e) health and fitness should be promoted and encouraged by all levels of government, to Canadians of all ages and abilities; and
- (f) we aspire to increase participation by Canadians in activities that promote health, recreational sports, and fitness.

She said: Honourable senators, before we broke for Easter, I gave notice of this motion to establish a national health and fitness day. My motivation was simple. We have a national epidemic of obesity in Canada, and it is especially a concern among children and youth.

Curbing obesity rates will not be easy as our lifestyle, replete with pop, junk food, too much screen time and a drive-everywhere transportation system makes it easy to get too many calories and not enough can exercise, especially for school children. The problem is compounded for disadvantaged families, when the cost of taking part in sports programs is beyond the family budget. Fitness tax credits have helped many families, but not those living in poverty.

It will take a multi-faceted approach to turn things around, just as it took in the campaign against smoking. We need to address everything from getting quality physical education back in the schools to teaching people how to prepare nutritious meals. We may need to regulate levels of sodium and sugar in prepared foods, and maybe we should think about taxing soft drinks. I do not for a minute think any of these actions will be easy as there are powerful interests lined up to fight against regulation. However, as long as the taxpayer is paying for health costs, the government does have a role to play in the prevention of poor health, but I digress.

Honourable senators, today I want to talk about one small step we can take which is why I am pleased to introduce the motion calling for a national health and fitness day. This concept has been initiated by John Weston, a member of Parliament from my province, and he has my full support. He will be introducing a similar motion in the House of Commons in the near future. I hope we can count on your support, too.

The motion calls for the national health and fitness day to occur annually and we are proposing the first Saturday in June. We are asking the federal government to call on local governments to collaborate in choosing this one day every year to make their sports and fitness facilities available to all citizens at a reduced or complimentary rate. The goal is to promote the use of these facilities and to get more people, especially families, using them on a regular basis.

I have spoken to mayors of communities in my region and all of them expressed support for the concept. Many of them told me that they were already concerned about a decline in the utilization of some of their facilities and that a national focus on a free-use day could well introduce new users to their existing programs and facilities.

I hope that a national health and fitness day will be supported and that it will achieve its objective of getting more Canadians to participate in fitness and sports activities.

Obesity rates are discouraging. The latest statistics I have seen show that approximately one in four adults are now obese and more than half of our population is overweight. Not only does this mean that many people are not living their life to the fullest, but the economic cost to Canadian taxpayers is staggering.

It was estimated at \$4.6 billion in 2008 and when one adds the costs of obesity related chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers, the costs rise to over \$7 billion. It is not surprising that health ministers from federal, provincial and territorial governments have joined together to tackle the issue. Simply put, if we cannot get rising health costs under control, we will be doomed to increasing deficits and debt, and we know where that leads.

I believe that municipal governments are also ready to tackle the issue and, as they operate most of their playing fields, gymnasiums, tennis courts and other recreational sports facilities, they are definitely in a position to help. A dedicated national health and fitness day, when their citizens are invited to come and play, is something tangible they can do to promote increased activity.

Honourable senators, I mentioned earlier the obesity rates for adults. Now I want to tell you how bad it is for our youth and children. Think back to when we were in school; there were few kids who were fat. In fact, they stood out they were so rare. Over the years things have really changed and 35 years ago, 15 per cent of children and youth aged 2 to 17 were either overweight or obese. By 2004 that rate had risen to 26 per cent including 8 per cent classed as obese. Canada has one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the developed world, ranking fifth out of the 34 OECD countries.

Honourable senators, my objective is not so much to shock you, but to get you to realize that we, as senators, can play a role in raising awareness of the obesity issue and urging action at the community level to promote healthy active living and sport in our communities. The more we can do to encourage Canadians to be physically active, the more we will help to prevent chronic disease and start to reduce the escalating health care costs.

Honourable senators, in a country like Canada with abundant opportunities for physical activity both indoors and out, we must do everything possible to get Canadians to be active. I call on honourable senators to support this motion to create a national health and fitness day in Canada.

On a personal level, honourable senators, I would like to remind you that on May 9 we will have a special bike day on Parliament Hill for all parliamentarians and on May 16 a national lifejacket and swim day on the Hill. Both days will be chances for all of us to get involved.

(On motion of Senator Munson, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Acting 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, May 1, 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, May 1, 2012 at 2 p.m.)

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