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Wednesday, October 18, 2017

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, October 18, 2017

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

Prayers.

[Translation]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that the following communication had been received:

RIDEAU HALL

October 18th, 2017

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that Ms. Patricia Jaton, Deputy Secretary to the Governor General, in her capacity as Deputy of the Governor General, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 18th day of October, 2017, at 1:00 p.m..

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace
Secretary to the Governor General

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

Bills Assented to Wednesday, October 18, 2017:

An Act to provide for the taking of restrictive measures in respect of foreign nationals responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights and to make related amendments to the Special Economic Measures Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (*Bill S-226, Chapter 21, 2017*)

An Act to amend the Canada Evidence Act and the Criminal Code (protection of journalistic sources) (*Bill S-231, Chapter 22, 2017*)

[English]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

THE LATE GORDON (GORD) EDGAR DOWNIE, C.M.

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise to pay tribute to a Canadian icon who left this world far too soon. Last night, at the age of 53, the Tragically Hip's lead singer, Gord Downie, died in Kingston. He was surrounded by his children and family.

The Hip rose to fame in the 1980s and 1990s and sold more than 9 million copies of their music.

They won 16 Juno awards and received the Order of Canada. They have been inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame, and they received a Governor General's Performing Arts Award, an honorary fellowship with the Royal Conservatory of Music and a star on Canada's Walk of Fame. The band has its own postage stamp and a street named after it, Tragically Hip Way, in Kingston, Ontario.

Gord was the face and the lyricist of the Hip. But he was also a solo artist who released several albums and a book of poetry.

Through words and music, he was a poet for all Canadians. He taught us about ourselves and the land and history that have shaped us. His words were authentic and truthful. They exposed both ugliness and beauty.

Gord devoted his last artistic efforts to the cause of reconciliation with Canada's First Nations. He was a great artist and, by extension, a great healer.

After his diagnosis, a little over a year ago in December 2015, of glioblastoma, a particularly aggressive and incurable form of brain cancer, Gord not only continued to perform but embarked on a Canada-wide tour with his high school buddies that ended in his hometown of Kingston on August 20. Kingstonians, I'm told, have always been very possessive of Gord, as he has been of Kingston, and the Hip and his music were obviously warmly received last August. Nearly 7,000 people crowded into the K-Rock Centre with another 2,000 singing and dancing in Kingston's Market Square while watching the concert on live big screens. Twelve million more Canadians tuned in as Robbie Baker, Gord Sinclair, Johnny Fay, Paul Langlois, and Downie from out front, played and sang for three hours.

Tributes and memories are being posted all over social media today, a compliment to Gord and his impact on Canada's music industry and our life itself.

Many are also paying testament to his courage over the past year and the inspiration he has provided for so many in the face of this inevitable disease.

I quote from a statement released by his family this morning:

Gord said he had lived many lives. As a musician, he lived "the life" for over 30 years, lucky to do most of it with his high school buddies. At home, he worked just as tirelessly at being a good father, son, brother, husband and friend. No one worked harder on every part of their life than Gord. No one.

I extend my personal condolences and those of the Senate of Canada to Gord's children, family and friends.

In closing I quote the tweet from the Prime Minister this morning, who said, “There will never be another one like you, Gord.”

Rest in peace.

• (1410)

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of participants of the Fourteenth Canadian Parliamentary Seminar organized by the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

JOSEPH (JOE) ROBERTS

Hon. Gwen Boniface: Honourable senators, “Youth homelessness is predictable, and if it’s predictable, it is preventable.” I’m quoting the words of Joe Roberts, a former homeless youth, who turned his life around after living on the streets as a teenager, having battled alcoholism, drug addiction and suicide attempts. With the help of his loving mother and a very compassionate O.P.P. officer, Scott McLeod, he was able to get sober, get educated and get off the streets. Joe is now a bestselling author, a CEO and a sought-after motivational speaker.

In those dark days of his time on the street as a teenager, Joe vowed that if he was ever to get clean and turn his life around he would find a way to pay it forward. Together with Dr. Sean Richardson they founded a Push for Change, a national awareness and youth empowerment campaign to prevent and ultimately eradicate youth homelessness.

With a mission of inspiring a nation to believe that anything is possible, they came up with the idea of pushing a shopping cart across Canada, the cart being a symbol of homelessness. Joe began his 9,000-kilometre trek across Canada in May 2016 in St. John’s, Newfoundland. On September 29, 2017, he completed the journey, arriving in Vancouver, B.C., the streets where he once lived as a teenager.

Throughout his epic 517-day journey, Joe attended over 400 community and school events across 10 provinces, joining forces with various police and community organizations to shine a light on youth homelessness. He challenged Canadians to join him in making a difference in the lives of at-risk youth.

The funds raised from the Push for Change are being directed to the Upstream Project, a school-based youth homelessness prevention model administered by Raise the Roof.

I recently had the pleasure of contacting Joe on the final day of his journey to advise him that he would be the recipient of a Senate 150 Commemorative Medal. Please join me in saluting

Joe and his Push for Change team on their successful campaign and his continuing efforts to eradicate youth homelessness in Canada.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Amal Elsana Alhjoor, Anwar Alhjoor, Abed Alkarim Alsana, Haijar Alsana and Naama Elsana. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Gold.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CANADIAN AMERICAN BUSINESS COUNCIL

Hon. Terry M. Mercer (Deputy Leader of the Senate Liberals): Honourable senators, I had the opportunity to attend an event this past October 4 while travelling with the Agriculture Committee in Montreal.

Former President Bill Clinton and former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien sat down for a discussion organized by the Canadian American Business Council. To say it was a pleasure to be there would not do it justice, colleagues.

The discussion touched on many topics, from NAFTA to the Canadian Confederation. It was absolutely clear that these two former leaders have remained friends, and I was reminded of just how important that relationship was in those days and indeed now.

The two leaders reminded us all how NAFTA has been good for both of our countries, and that the Canadian-U.S. relationship is one of the most important in the world. I remain hopeful, as I’m sure we all do, that this relationship will continue to endure and will only improve for the future.

Honourable senators, I would like to congratulate President Clinton on the honorary degree he received from St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, which was awarded to him at a special ceremony in Toronto last week.

I would also like to thank Prime Minister Chrétien, as I have in the past, for the opportunity he afforded me and many others in this place to be here in the Senate to advocate on behalf of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

[Translation]

SENATE APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Percy Mockler: Honourable senators, as Prime Minister Trudeau begins selecting his next appointee to the upper chamber of Parliament, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that Nova Scotia is currently without Acadian representation here in the Senate.

By way of background, Nova Scotia's Acadian population is second in size only to New Brunswick's. Four other Canadian minorities are also represented in the Senate, New Brunswick Acadians, Franco-Manitobans, Franco-Albertans and Franco-Ontarians, but Nova Scotia Acadians are not represented.

There is a 110-year-old tradition of Nova Scotia Acadians' interests being represented in the Senate by a member of their own community. Ever since Sir Wilfrid Laurier appointed Ambroise-Hilaire Comeau to the Senate in 1907, Nova Scotia Acadians have almost always been represented in the Senate by one of their own. Nova Scotian Acadia must not be ignored or forgotten in the upcoming appointment process. As I am sure you know, honourable senators, the Senate website clearly states that our role is to stand up for Canadian minorities.

Since he was elected in 2015, Prime Minister Trudeau has appointed two senators from Nova Scotia. Although both are top-notch appointees, neither is Acadian; they represent Nova Scotia's black and indigenous communities, two important Canadian minorities. This raises a question: might it be time the province's Acadians were represented in the Senate, too?

A few weeks from now, there will be three vacant seats for Nova Scotia. One is currently occupied by our friend, Senator Ogilvie, who will be retiring, and another belonged to former Senator Gerald Comeau, the most recent Nova Scotia Acadian to sit in this house.

Honourable senators, I want to take this opportunity to invite the government representative, our friend Senator Harder, to ask the Prime Minister to respect the wishes of the Fathers of Confederation and appoint an Acadian from Nova Scotia to the upper chamber.

I will also be sending a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Trudeau, explaining the importance of such an appointment so that he may come to appreciate it, as did the eight prime ministers of Canada that preceded him.

Thank you, honourable senators.

[English]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Andrew Taylor and Dawn Curran. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Wells.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Senator Mockler]

VENEZUELA

DEMOCRATIC CRISIS

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, I rise in the chamber today to talk about the meeting that was convened by the President of the Congress of Peru on August 18, 2017, with regard to the democratic crisis in Venezuela.

The country of Venezuela has seen mounting democratic and economic turmoil since the death of former President Hugo Chavez. The peak of the crisis this summer included violent protests and clashes between government and military. Following an illegitimate vote, current President Nicolás Maduro transferred the power from the democratically elected National Assembly to the new illegitimate Constituent Assembly.

On August 18, the presidents and vice-presidents of Congress of Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Spain gathered in Lima to strongly condemn the action of the Venezuelan president. With the approval of our dear Speaker of the Senate of Canada, I attended the meeting as a representative for Canada. I reiterated Canada's commitment to democratic values in the Americas and called for a negotiated return to democratic order in Venezuela. The declaration that was adopted in Lima condemns the rupture of democratic order in Venezuela and demands a return to the rule of law. The meeting also highlighted human rights violations and demanded the release of political prisoners.

• (1420)

The Americas hold a collective commitment to democracy, enshrined in the Inter-American Democratic Charter. As the Venezuelan government abandoned this commitment, some participants called for strict sanctions on the Venezuelan government; however, the declaration stopped short of making any sanction recommendations.

Fellow senators, I invite you to follow the current situation in Venezuela very closely. We must constantly reaffirm our democratic values here and abroad. Latin America is an important ally to Canada, and we must not let the abuse of power diminish these values. Thank you very much.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Hon. Victor Oh: Honourable colleagues, the week of October 9 to 15 marked Citizenship Week, an annual event that provides Canadians across the country with an opportunity to reflect on the rights, responsibilities and privileges we all share.

The Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946 separated Canadian citizenship from British nationality. It also allowed residents to naturalize, regardless of their country of origin. However, it was not until 1967 that individuals from around the world were actually given equal opportunity for admission to Canada.

Today, Canadians recognize that aside from indigenous peoples, who were the first inhabitants of this land, immigrants and their descendants have played an important role in shaping Canada into the country it is today. Our laws reflect that we are a

welcoming and generous country that values diversity. In fact, last week, on October 11, various legislative changes brought forward by Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, finally came into effect. As a result, many permanent residents will be able to apply for citizenship.

But we cannot ignore the multiple barriers that continue to disenfranchise significant segments of the population. Our onerous language and knowledge requirements, for example, will continue to prevent many permanent residents from successfully naturalizing until they are over the age of 55. This, to me, is a clear injustice.

Colleagues, the diversity of our population is our greatest strength. We need to ensure that all permanent residents within our borders are given a fair opportunity to join our Canadian family. This, to me, exemplifies what it means to be a Canadian citizen and is why I remain committed to ensuring that this status becomes more accessible. Thank you.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

THE GOVERNOR GENERAL

COMMISSIONS APPOINTING STEPHEN WALLACE AND PATRICIA JATON AS DEPUTIES—DOCUMENTS TABLED

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the commissions appointing Stephen Wallace and Patricia Jatton as deputies of the Governor General.

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AFFECT QUESTION PERIOD ON
OCTOBER 24, 2017

Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, in order to allow the Senate to receive a Minister of the Crown during Question Period as authorized by the Senate on December 10, 2015, and notwithstanding rule 4-7, when the Senate sits on Tuesday, October 24, 2017, Question Period shall begin at 3:30 p.m., with any proceedings then before the Senate being interrupted until the end of Question Period, which shall last a maximum of 40 minutes;

That, if a standing vote would conflict with the holding of Question Period at 3:30 p.m. on that day, the vote be postponed until immediately after the conclusion of Question Period;

That, if the bells are ringing for a vote at 3:30 p.m. on that day, they be interrupted for Question Period at that time, and resume thereafter for the balance of any time remaining; and

That, if the Senate concludes its business before 3:30 p.m. on that day, the sitting be suspended until that time for the purpose of holding Question Period.

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, October 24, 2017, at 2 p.m.

[English]

PARLAMERICAS

BILATERAL VISIT, MARCH 13-15, 2017—GATHERING OF THE OPEN PARLIAMENT NETWORK, AND MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MARCH 15-18, 2017—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas respecting its bilateral visit to Havana, Cuba, from March 13 to 15, 2017, and its participation at the 2nd gathering of the Open Parliament Network and the 42nd meeting of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors, held in San Jose, Costa Rica, from March 15 to 18, 2017.

GATHERING OF THE GROUP OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS AND MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MAY 22-24, 2017—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation at the 9th gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians and the 43rd meeting of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from May 22 to 24, 2017.

REGULAR SESSION OF THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
JUNE 18-21, 2017—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation at the 47th regular session of the Organization of American States General Assembly, held in Cancun, Mexico, from June 18 to 21, 2017.

[Translation]

NATIONAL FINANCE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO EXTEND DATE OF FINAL REPORT ON THE STUDY OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE'S PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE INCOME TAX ACT RESPECTING THE TAXATION OF PRIVATE CORPORATIONS AND THE TAX PLANNING STRATEGIES INVOLVED

Hon. Percy Mockler: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Tuesday, September 26, 2017, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance in relation to its study on the proposed changes to the *Income Tax Act* be extended from November 30, 2017 to December 15, 2017.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD FINANCE

PRIVATE NUMBERED HOLDINGS

Hon. Larry W. Smith (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Just as a preface to it, I need your assistance; it's the purpose of the question.

Over the last several days, the Minister of Finance has not answered a very simple question: Has he sold his shares in his family corporation, Morneau Shepell? And if so, when did that take place?

Today, however, we've learned that not only have the stocks not been sold, but the minister still owns them through a private corporation. This is a very serious matter, and as the Minister of Finance of the Government of Canada must be transparent about his financial holdings, the question is deserving of an answer, not just for parliamentarians but for all Canadians. Likewise, everyone who comes into the Senate has to do a disclosure of their assets, so it's consistent with the way government works.

Could the Leader of the Government in the Senate please seek a definitive answer from the Minister of Finance and table it in this chamber? What is being held in the finance minister's private numbered corporation? Will the minister disclose its holdings?

• (1430)

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): I want to thank the honourable senator for his question. I want to assure this house that like all ministers, when he was first elected the Minister of Finance, he worked diligently with

the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure that her recommendations and compliance with the code of ethics was duly followed and completed.

As you would expect, an extensive review of the minister's file was done before she provided her recommendations, and the minister most recently sent a letter to the Ethics Commissioner to request a meeting to discuss further recommendations if needed.

The minister has full confidence in the Commissioner of Ethics and her recommendations and is willing to take any further steps to avoid the potential conflict that may or may not be evident. The objective of all of these compliance measures is to ensure full compliance with the code of ethics by all office-holders and that is what the minister has done.

Senator Smith: Thank you very much for that answer. If I could add a little caveat, each of us in this place has to have a reflex. The reflex is: Is this the right thing to do for Canadians in terms of judgments?

Minister Morneau's mandate letter from the Prime Minister states:

... you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law.

This is going to my point about the reflex.

Could the government leader also please make inquiries and tell us when the Prime Minister learned that the Minister of Finance did not follow this directive in his mandate letter?

Senator Harder: I thank the honourable senator for his question. I'm familiar with the mandate letter, and the mandate letter to all ministers was to ensure compliance with the letter and the spirit of the law. That spirit and letter is reflected in ensuring that you are compliant with the ethics guidelines as well as the Office of the Ethics Commissioner. The standards, by the way, for ministerial compliance with the Ethics Commissioner is a higher standard, as you would expect, than those of senators, and it is one which this minister has complied with.

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

SENATE APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate.

Senator Harder, your Liberal government continues to make a lot of noise about what you claim is a new Senate appointments process. Of course, we all know there is nothing truly new about it. Prime Minister Trudeau, like every Prime Minister before him, continues to be the person selecting those he wants to appoint.

As for your advisory panel, again this is not a new concept. Each Prime Minister has sought advice in one form or another on their appointments, but your government does seem particularly proud of this panel. You took the opportunity, again a few weeks

ago when I asked you about it, to tell us how wonderful you thought this independent vetting panel was. Yet when an Ontario resident, who was very interested in applying for one of the vacancies, called your advisory panel a couple of weeks ago, this individual told me that he was told that they were not accepting new applications and hadn't accepted new applications since January of this year.

When do we get new Senate appointments? Will they be coming from those people who managed to get their applications in prior to last Christmas? Are you opening it up for new applicants, or have you abandoned this wonderful vetting independent panel and now are appointing senators on the Prime Minister's whim?

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank the honourable senator for his series of questions and assertions. Let me respond to a number of them.

First of all, the Constitution of Canada requires, as he will well know, that the Prime Minister make those appointments to the Senate, and that is in compliance with the Supreme Court decision of 2014. The Prime Minister has unusually put in place an arm's-length appointments process to make recommendations to the Prime Minister with respect to candidates. That arm's-length process is chaired by Huguette Labelle, a distinguished Canadian, and is joined by appointments both by the Government of Canada as well as by provinces for the jurisdictions in which provinces are participating.

That process continues, but as you would expect, there is a period in which requests for applications is open and then there's a period in which they're closed, in which nominations are before or in the process of coming before the Prime Minister. That is the period in which we are.

Like the honourable senator, I await anxiously the appointment of 10 additional senators. I'm sure he will want to welcome them because I know that they will add to the lustre of this place as have those who have come here in the last while.

But I want to assure him and all senators that this Prime Minister has made appointments only during this period. Of course, they add to the lustre already here, and I am not at all being sarcastic.

I want to reassure the honourable senator that the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada remains committed to a more independent, less partisan Senate and one that is a complimentary body to the House of Commons. That is what we are all here to achieve.

Senator Housakos: Thank you for that answer. The government leader has already made some progress because he finally recognizes what we've been saying all along. Of course, the Senate appointments are the prerogative of the Prime Minister as recognized by the Supreme Court and, as I highlighted, by our Constitution. No one has disagreed that it's the Prime Minister's prerogative. This Prime Minister has exercised that same prerogative as previous ones have, except from time to time he gives the impression that his prerogative happens to be more merit-based than former Prime Ministers. We've taken exception to that.

You've also pointed out correctly that we are anxiously waiting for a bunch of new senators to come and embrace us and contribute to our work. Of course, based on your comments and the process that your government has put into place, you have an open vetting process where citizens can send in their application. You said that the government is in the process of doing that, when I'm telling you a citizen tried to reach that vetting committee and for all intents and purposes was told that that committee has been inactive since January.

I want a clarification. Are you saying to us that there is some kind of process in place right now in addition to or aside from the one that the Prime Minister announced when he was elected? And if it is, what is that process? We'd like to know.

Senator Harder: Let me repeat for the honourable senator's benefit. The committees, by province, have periods in which they are open for receiving nominations. There are periods in which those nominations are closed, as the committee considers and then makes its recommendations. The case that you bring before us in Ontario is captured in that period of nominations being closed, so the period of reflection and proposals is under way. I would anticipate that once those nominations are made and further vacancies occur, there will be an opening for a nomination. I would hope that he encourages the person with whom he spoke to apply.

Second, with respect to whether or not the Prime Minister has from time to time exercised his prerogative, he has continuously exercised his prerogative. He has constrained his prerogative to the recommendations from an arm's-length independent advisory committee, and that is unique.

Hon. Percy E. Downe: I have a supplementary question. Are we to understand — and I think I heard you correctly — that for the 10 current vacancies, there is no opportunity for new applicants to apply? If so, when did that close?

Like Senator Housakos, I've had contact from people who are interested in applying. When they called the number, they were told they will be open later. They weren't advised they were closed. When do they close? Are they going to open?

Senator Mockler spoke earlier about a lack of Acadians from Nova Scotia. I've raised the concern that we're lacking any farmers, fishers or veterans who have worn the uniform of the Canadian Armed Forces in service of our country. Will any of those people get to apply, or is this next time?

Senator Harder: Again, for those vacancies that were vacant at the time in which the committee was open for receiving nominations, those nominations have been received and closed.

There are vacancies, and the honourable senator has referenced at least one, where the nominations process has not yet been opened. That will be opened at an appropriate time once the provincial body, together with the federal nominees, are seized of the process. I would anticipate that will happen soon. The vacancy in the province of P.E.I. is very recent, and the replacement for that vacancy has not yet been announced.

• (1440)

But that process will be open, as it has been in the past in your province when a vacancy occurred.

FINANCE

REGULATIONS GOVERNING CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Before I ask Senator Harder my question, I want to wish him and everyone else in the chamber a Happy Diwali. May your year be full of joy and light.

For right now, I hope that Senator Harder will shed light on my question, which relates to the mandate that the federal government has given itself, in particular Minister Lebouthillier, the Minister of National Revenue, and Minister Morneau, the Minister of Finance, to modernize the Income Tax Act with respect to charities and their non-partisan public-policy engagement.

The minister's advisory panel tabled a report earlier this year in which they recommended that the government should proceed as soon as possible to modernize the rules governing the charitable sector through the development of a new legislative framework.

We have heard nothing since then. Can you shed some light on what the government is thinking and planning to do?

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank the honourable senator for her question and for her wish that light be shed on all of the proceedings here, I guess. Let me reiterate that the report to which the honourable senator refers is being examined by the ministers responsible. They are looking to come forward with a response and measures that the government will initiate in the near future, and I, like the senator, look forward to those measures being announced.

Senator Omidvar: I refer Senator Harder to a particular line in their report. The panel felt that an interim legislative step was necessary in relation to political activities, and they found that present limits on political activities are confusing, which is true, costly to quantify and track — also true — and do not address the substantive issues of ensuring that charities are operating within recognized charitable purposes.

They recommend that legislative changes be introduced no later than April 1, 2018. Can we expect the government to comply with or respond to this timeline?

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): Again, I thank the honourable senator for her question. Let me simply say that I cannot commit the government to the timeline that you reference, but I will certainly bring that timeline, as a reminder, to the attention of the ministers responsible. I know that they are diligently reviewing the recommendations, and I look forward, as all senators do, to their announcements.

[Senator Harder]

PUBLIC SAFETY

RCMP VACANCIES

Hon. Pamela Wallin: A question for the Government Representative. I don't expect that you would have all of the answers at this moment, but I would appreciate a response at a later date.

We all know that life as an RCMP officer has always presented great risks, and we must do everything possible to reduce those risks, both for the police and for the people that they are obligated to protect.

Right now, the RCMP has more than 12 per cent of its positions unfilled, though everybody acknowledges that the number is really a lot higher. This is leading to burnout, according to the National Police Federation, particularly in small, rural detachments in Western and Northern Canada.

In my home area, we currently have six officers staffing a nine-person detachment, often fewer. This is due to moves, maternity leave, paternity leave, long-term disability. So six out of nine at a time when rural and property crime is rising. This leads to serious concerns. Front-line officers in rural Saskatchewan often patrol hundreds of square kilometres, responding to calls alone or, in some cases, not at all. This raises concerns about officer and public safety.

Can you tell us what the government is doing to address this shortage of front line officers? They have said that a five-person so-called relief team will be put together for the province. That has not yet appeared, but it does not come close to addressing the problem.

Let me just add, while I can, my follow up. I'll do it here. The province signalled its intention to commandeer conservation officers and highway traffic officers to become first responders when RCMP are not available. It's not what these people signed up for nor what they want to do, and we do really think it's the RCMP's issue.

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): As the premise to the question suggested, I don't have the immediate response, but I would be happy to make inquiries. I would also simply refer to the fact that the matter that is raised is often subject to provincial agreements in terms of service agreements that the RCMP signs and is committed to, and it would be part of my question, if I could respond in a fashion, to ensure that the federal-provincial agreement is being respected.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MYANMAR—SUPPORT FOR ROHINGYA REFUGEES

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Senator Harder, yesterday I participated in a press conference, held in the parliamentary media room, announcing a petition signed by 43,000 Canadians calling on the Prime Minister to take decisive action to help the Rohingya. Senator Harder, people are suffering. People are

dying. The time for words about atrocities taking place against the Rohingya at the hands of the Myanmar authorities is long over.

Have we so easily forgotten the horrors of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia? Make no mistake: History is on its way to repeating itself. Canada cannot wait another moment to act. What matters most is that we take action on an immediate basis to put an end to these gross violations of human rights.

My question, Senator Harder, is this: What action is the government going to take, if any?

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank the honourable senator for her question. She will know that the government has indeed taken action already, not only providing aid and assistance to those in the camps but also working in a concerted fashion with like-minded countries to condemn the actions being undertaken by the military in Myanmar. It has certainly participated in the United Nations in the coordination of effort, working with the former Secretary-General of the United Nations.

There is also a motion in this chamber, sponsored by the honourable senator, which I hope to speak to today because that, too, is an action of this chamber. Mind you, it's words, but it's an action of this chamber to exhort governments to do more. I look forward to participating in the debate on that motion and have further to say at that time on what actions the government has taken.

NATIONAL REVENUE

CANADA CHILD BENEFIT— ELIGIBILITY OF CHILDREN OF REFUGEES

Hon. Victor Oh: Senator Harder, it has been brought to my attention that officers at the Canada Revenue Agency have denied various applications for the Canada Child Benefit made by refugee claimants with Canadian-born children. It is unclear on what basis this decision has been made, given that visitors who come and leave the country without any problem are able to obtain this benefit for their Canadian-born children. In contrast, refugee claimants who are seeking protection in our country and are required to file and pay income tax are not receiving this monthly payment for their Canadian-born children.

Could the Leader of the Government in the Senate please make inquiries with the Minister of National Revenue as to why Canadian-born children of refugee claimants are not eligible for the Canada Child Benefit? This situation clearly endangers the welfare of some of our own underage citizens.

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): I would be happy to do so.

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

ICEBREAKER FLEET

Hon. Claude Carignan: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Two weeks ago, you answered my question about the icebreaker fleet by saying:

However, I want to repeat, as I have in the past, how important it is for Canada to have icebreaking capacity for our shipping industry.

However, the mandate letters given to various ministers, including the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, make no mention of replacing the icebreaker fleet. That is a surprising omission, because on top of the fact that it is important for Canada to have icebreakers, as you have acknowledged, every one of Canada's icebreakers will reach the end of its useful life within the next decade, the first one in 2020, just three years from now.

• (1450)

Can the Leader of the Government explain to this chamber why the ministers' mandate letters make no mention of the issue of replacing the icebreakers?

[English]

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank the honourable senator for his question. I will make inquiries with respect to the specificity of his question.

I simply want to say that letters of mandate do not reflect all of the priorities of a department as vast and large as those of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the other ministries that are attached to this issue, including ministries responsible for the Coast Guard and procurement.

This is a priority of the government, and it should be expected that ministers will act on priorities, not just those that are specially identified in letters of mandate, but letters of mandate do focus the attention.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Given that this is a priority, can the Leader of the Government outline the government's plan and timeline for the replacement of each of the Coast Guard's six medium and heavy icebreakers, despite the fact that they are nowhere to be found in the mandate letters?

[English]

Senator Harder: I would be happy to make inquiries with respect to what the existing plans are and what the time frames might be, recognizing that this is an evolving procurement process. I will be happy to report back to the honourable senator.

[Translation]

DELAYED ANSWER TO ORAL QUESTION

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table the response to the oral question of September 27, 2017, by the Honourable Senator Maltais, concerning support for dairy and cheese producers.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

SUPPORT FOR DAIRY AND CHEESE PRODUCERS

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Ghislain Maltais on September 27, 2017)

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (including the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency)

The dairy sector is an important contributor to Canada's economy. The Government of Canada wants the sector to prosper and continue to provide good jobs and quality products for Canadians.

The Dairy Farm Investment Program is a five-year, \$250-million program to help Canadian cow's milk producers improve productivity through upgrades to their equipment. The Dairy Processing Investment Fund is a four-year, \$100-million program to support dairy processors improve productivity through capital investments and access to expertise. The \$350 million was outlined in the Government's 2016 budget and represents a significant public investment in the sector.

The first intake period for the Dairy Farm Investment Program is now complete, and covers the first three years of the program. Producers who have not submitted an application for the first phase of the program will be prioritized for the second phase, which should be announced in the next few months. The Dairy Processing Investment Fund continues to accept applications from the sector.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT CANADA COOPERATIVES ACT CANADA NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS ACT COMPETITION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Wetston, seconded by the Honourable Senator Joyal, P.C., for the second reading of Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

Hon. Paul J. Massicotte: Honourable senators, I rise today as the official Liberal critic at second reading for Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act and the Competition Act.

The provisions of this bill seek to harmonize federal framework legislation on corporate governance and adapt them to the changing Canadian market and best practices. They also seek to make the director election process more democratic for certain corporations and cooperatives and to modernize communications between corporations and their shareholders, as well as between cooperatives and their members. The bill proposes a system to encourage some corporations to increase diversity and the number of women in leadership positions.

My main concern has to do with the last part of Bill C-25, which states that publicly traded companies would have to provide information to shareholders annually about diversity among directors and the members of senior management.

I would like to congratulate the government on this proposal. It will update existing standards for female participation at the federal level and enhance diversity in general.

[English]

Canada lags behind other developed nations in terms of women's representation on corporate boards. In 2016, only 13 per cent of the board members of Canadian companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange were women, compared with 16 per cent in the United States and 26 per cent in the United Kingdom for similar large corporations.

Moreover, even though the proportion of women in leadership roles in Canadian corporations is increasing, progress is not very satisfactory. Three years after the Ontario Securities Commission moved forward with the comply-or-explain rule, board seats occupied by women in Toronto Stock Exchange listed companies only rose from 11 to 14.5 per cent. As to women in senior management roles, in 2017 the percentage sits at 15 per cent and has since 2015. At this rate, how many decades will it take to reach equality? I'll let you do the math.

As to diversity, the situation is even worse. In 2017, only 3.3 per cent of the board members of Toronto's largest companies belong to a visible minority, yet visible minorities account for 50 per cent of Toronto's population.

While Canada proudly champions diversity as one of its main foundations, the lack of diversity in corporations is an equality issue. Moreover, if our companies do not reflect the social fabric of the markets they serve, it can be an economic issue.

A consensus corroborated by data is emerging that boards with a diversity of backgrounds, experiences and expertise outperform those that don't. Several studies have linked boardroom gender diversity with better financial performance. Catalyst, an organization that promotes the advance of women in the workplace, reported that companies with the highest representation of women board directors outperformed those with the lowest representation of women. Even a study conducted by Credit Suisse Group, one of the world's leaders in financial services, has demonstrated that companies with more women in the boardroom bring better returns and outperform the stock market. And according to a recent study by the Nordic banking group Nordea on 11,000 publicly traded companies across the world, companies with a female CEO or a female head of the board of directors showed superior annualized returns.

[Translation]

As evidenced by sluggish growth in female representation and diversity in corporate leadership, we obviously can't simply count on social norms and practices evolving naturally. We need laws like this one to drive social evolution and apply the necessary pressure. However, are the diversity measures in this bill equal to the scope of the challenge?

I would like to share two important questions arising from these proposals, questions the committee should consider. First, is a corporation's mere voluntary declaration about its diversity policy or lack thereof, accompanied by relevant figures, enough to boost female representation on boards and in senior management?

Indeed, if the goal is to be within striking distance of gender parity by 2027, which is a reasonable and logical objective given that women account for 48 per cent of the active population and over half of Canada's university graduates, perhaps more stringent measures would be appropriate.

In the three years since the Ontario Securities Commission adopted the "comply or explain" principle, the proportion of companies with a written board diversity policy has jumped, rising from 34 per cent in 2016 to 47 per cent in 2017. However, only 3 per cent of companies have set targets for appointing female directors, and many seem to be invoking the issue of merit as an excuse to justify these mediocre results. Since we continue to unconsciously define merit based on traits traditionally associated with white males, the status quo persists.

If we truly want to speed up change, do we need to go as far as imposing quotas, or should we explore more prescriptive regulatory options, combined with more specific targets and sanctions?

[English]

The second major question is focused on non-gender diversity: How can we reconcile the need to increase this diversity and avoid the rigid, artificial and cumbersome side that diversity policies can have? Should one let corporations have the flexibility to adopt diversity policies that are adapted to their markets and their communities? Should corporations be free to choose to stick to four minimum diversity criteria that will be set in regulations: gender, indigenous people, visibility minorities and people with disabilities? They could also, of course, set further criteria, such as experience or geographic background.

• (1500)

As to targets corresponding to each of those diversity criteria, should corporations be able to set them in proportions reflecting sociological reality?

Those were my questions and comments on the diversity aspects of the bill that I hope the committee's review and study can best answer.

Before closing, let me make a last comment on another aspect of the proposed legislation. I note that the bill does not include any provision requiring public companies' shareholders advisory say on executive pay. This has been adopted in the United States and by the largest public companies in Canada. With the skyrocketing executive pay increases within the last couple of decades contributing to the widening gap between top and bottom income levels, I would have expected such an advisory say on pay provision to be included. I trust that the committee's sober second thought review will also further study this possibility and its merits. Thank you for your attention.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Would Senator Massicotte accept a question?

Sen. Massicotte: By all means.

Sen. Carignan: I listened to your speech and started familiarizing myself with this bill. Since you have read and studied it, could you tell me the definition of the word "diversity" as you understand it?

Sen. Massicotte: That is an excellent question.

The bill does not actually define the term “diversity.” Most people who hear this word often think of gender and women, but its scope is far broader than that. As I said in my speech, this bill should require companies to use a broader definition of diversity, one that is not limited to gender, but encompasses all visible and other minorities. That is an important point, and I believe the term should be defined in the bill, or if not in the bill itself, in the resulting legislation’s regulations.

Sen. Carignan: Do you happen to know how many publicly traded Canadian companies are incorporated under federal law? Also, did you have a chance to check how many companies are incorporated under provincial law? I am sure you realize that if we make the standards under the Canada Corporations Act more stringent, companies might be tempted to avoid coming under federal legislation by operating under a provincial charter.

Sen. Massicotte: There are about 500,000 federally incorporated companies in existence. I do not know how many provincially incorporated companies there are, but the criteria would apply only to companies that are publicly traded. Since seven out of ten provinces have adopted these criteria to date, very few public companies would not be subject to the federal regulations that would be imposed.

(On motion of Senator Wallin, debate adjourned.)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, seconded by the Honourable Senator Mégie, for the third reading of Bill C-305, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief).

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

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 third time and passed.)

Senator Martin: On division.

The Hon. the Speaker: Ordered, That a message be sent to the House of Commons to acquaint that House that the Senate has passed this bill, without amendment.

SENATE MODERNIZATION

TENTH REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Joyal, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy, for the adoption of the tenth report (interim), as amended, of the Special Senate Committee on Senate Modernization, entitled *Senate Modernization: Moving Forward (Nature)*, presented in the Senate on October 26, 2016.

(On motion of Senator Martin, for Senator Neufeld, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

STUDY ON THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT’S MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING PROGRAM

TWELFTH REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Smith, seconded by the Honourable Senator Ataullahjan:

That the twelfth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance entitled *Smarter Planning, Smarter Spending: Achieving infrastructure success*, tabled with the Clerk of the Senate on February 28, 2017 be adopted and that, pursuant to rule 12-24(1), the Senate request a complete and detailed response from the government, with the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report.

Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to the twelfth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance entitled *Smarter Planning, Smarter Spending: Achieving infrastructure success*. The report looks at the design and delivery of the federal government’s multi-billion dollar infrastructure funding program.

[English]

First, I would like to acknowledge the work done by all members of the Finance Committee. This committee works very hard and bears great responsibilities. I also want to thank the Library of Parliament staff who support the committee in its work. They are doing a great job.

[Translation]

My dear colleagues, I would also like to remind you that my comments reflect my views alone, not those of my colleagues in the office of the government representative.

In my speech, I will explain my concerns about the Senate adopting this interim report, which was written between February 2016 and February 2017, because it is focused much more on the past than on the future. I should also note that I am in no way singling anyone out and that my remarks should not be taken personally by anyone who was a member of the Finance Committee during that time. My aim today is to make constructive comments.

I believe it is our duty to be as thorough in our analysis of the reports we receive for adoption as we are in our analysis of the bills we are asked to pass.

• (1510)

As we all know, public infrastructure has always held a significant place in Canada's history. Canada is an immense country. In this geographical context, transportation and communications have held and still hold a strategic place in shaping the country. At the time of Confederation, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald said:

To prove our determination, let us first build a railway.

That is what ushered in the transcontinental railway to ensure Canada's economic development.

There have been other major investments in Canadian infrastructure since Confederation. After the Second World War and throughout the 1950s, major investments were made in transportation, communications, and social infrastructure. However, as the data in the twelfth report indicate, since the early 1960s, public investment in infrastructure has declined. The percentage of GDP that goes toward investment in public infrastructure declined significantly until the 2007-08 financial crisis. These investments, which totalled more than 3 per cent of GDP in the early 1960s, dropped to 1.5 per cent of GDP toward the middle of the 2000s. It is therefore not surprising, dear colleagues, that our roads, schools, and hospitals are in such bad shape.

Honourable senators, here we are in 2017, 150 years later, and the federal government is proposing a new, highly ambitious plan to invest in infrastructure, a plan that represents more than \$186.7 billion over 10 years. This plan is centred on public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure. It is divided in two phases. Phase 1, as announced in budget 2016, stands at \$13.6 billion. It targets short-term economic growth. In fact, it seeks to serve double duty: meet urgent needs and support economic growth and the creation of good jobs.

In the short term, infrastructure projects revolve primarily around public transit, wastewater treatment, social housing and the protection of existing infrastructure. This short-term plan involves 32 different departments, and the National Finance Committee's first interim report focuses primarily on analyzing phase 1.

As for phase 2, it is currently being implemented. This phase will ensure Canada's economic and social development over both the short and long term. It aims to support the fundamentals needed for Canada to prosper. Accordingly, this second phase mainly revolves around the activities of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which was created under Bill C-44. The first interim report deals more with phase 1, not phase 2.

In the first interim report, the committee makes six recommendations, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Develop a national infrastructure strategy;
2. Create a single window for the funding of projects;
3. Adjust the Gas Tax Fund for inflation;
4. Make the funding criteria more flexible for the municipalities;
5. Ensure that the federal government coordinates with the municipalities in its agreements with the provinces and territories;
6. Incorporate lessons learned from previous governments' infrastructure programs.

Let's begin by looking at the first recommendation regarding the need for a national infrastructure strategy. This first recommendation does not really apply to phase 1 of the investment program. In fact, this phase is meant to address existing infrastructures that are in urgent need of repairs, on the local level, where needs have been identified. We need to recognize that phase 1 of the government's public investment plan is both vital and necessary to ensure our economic growth, while also improving the well-being of Canadians. One of the main goals of this phase is to support the transition towards a more diversified economy. The fact is, the price of oil is lower than it has been in quite some time, dropping from over \$100 a barrel at the beginning of 2014 to just over \$50 a barrel today. The price of oil appears to have leveled out for now, and this has caused a drop in private investment, especially in the oil and gas sector, which threatens the vitality of the Canadian economy. Infrastructure spending will help steer our economy clear of a recession, and help maintain or even accelerate growth.

There is a broad international consensus on the importance of expediting public investment in infrastructure to support both national and global economic growth. A low-interest-rate monetary policy is no longer enough to boost the economy. Public investment is needed, as the Governor of the Bank of Canada has regularly told senate committees.

The managing director of the International Monetary Fund recently told a media scrum that industrialized nations should follow Canada's example and invest heavily in infrastructure, saying, "I really very much hope that Canadian economic policies can actually go viral."

Massive infrastructure investments served us well during the financial crisis of 2007-08, as they kept Canada from sinking into a deeper recession. Not so long ago, the previous government made significant public investments in response to the needs of local governments, allowing them to finance certain projects through the Gas Tax Fund and the goods and services tax credit, as well as through various other public funds.

This brings me to the other recommendations, which basically propose that the current government do the same thing the previous government did. The committee modelled these recommendations on those of the municipal officials who testified before it. I respect this approach. These recommendations are no doubt extremely useful for expediting local investment. However, they fail to address all of the issues involved in infrastructure investment, such as efficient management of infrastructure projects, worker training needs, fraud prevention, and the impact of the investments on employment and productivity. The report is also silent on the current government's approach. How are we to judge whether the recommendations have merit or are more effective if we have no way to compare current practices to past practices?

On another note, the report highlights an alarming situation regarding a potential delay in the allocation of funds for infrastructure projects. This situation has evolved quite a bit since the report was drafted. At the finance committee meeting on May 3, 2017, the Parliamentary Budget Officer raised his growth projections for the GDP, which is connected to infrastructure investments. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's *Economic and Fiscal Outlook — April 2017*, the initial delay in infrastructure spending will largely be offset in 2017-18 by higher spending than originally projected. The report states the following on page 27, and I quote:

PBO expects that spending will pick up in 2017-18 to above the level originally projected in Budget 2016 (112 per cent). This would result in overall infrastructure spending being close to 90 per cent of originally projected levels. Remaining money would be spent in subsequent fiscal years.

I want to get back to the idea of developing a national infrastructure strategy. Such a strategy is necessary, in the medium and long term, to have a real impact on economic development. However, it is a massive, complex challenge to develop a cohesive and effective infrastructure-investment strategy, especially since Canada is a confederation made up of a number of provinces and territories. As such, the idea of a pan-Canadian strategy deserves detailed, in-depth study.

• (1520)

However, this report offers no concrete proposals for how to develop such a strategy within the context of Confederation.

Rather, it recommends employing the same approach to major investment projects that was adopted in response to the 2007-08 crisis, which was effective. At the time, the government funded projects submitted by the provinces and municipalities. The government was responding to provincial and local government requests, which seems highly contradictory to me. How can we have a national strategy if we are essentially responding to the requests of local governments? What I am trying to say is that, in the past, we made hasty investments without any real overarching plan because we were responding to requests. That is what was done in phase 1.

Actually, the Finance Committee focused on producing precise data about the more than 8,000 federally funded projects. The committee invested in creating a database called the infrastructure project analyzer. I had an opportunity to consult this microeconomic database, which offers a geopolitical perspective on infrastructure projects. I feel we have strayed from the fundamental governance issues with respect to public investment, and I don't really know what purpose the infrastructure project analyzer serves.

Today, the Finance Committee is asking us to adopt the interim report. I would like to remind my colleagues that Senate standing committees' substantive reports can be tabled in the Senate or presented for adoption. In recent years, substantive committee reports have typically been presented for adoption and forwarded to the government for its response to the recommendations therein.

Although I find the committee report quite informative, it is primarily an interim report. It basically proposes a review of how the previous government did things, without explaining in detail how the current government is proceeding on infrastructure. It also proposes investing in the creation of a geopolitical data analyzer, without specifying its potential usefulness.

As a complementary chamber to the House of Commons, should our role not be limited to identifying new avenues for making public investments as effective as possible, taking a fresh look at these investments, and proposing new ways of doing things?

I hope the final report will make innovative recommendations that will provide assurances to Canadians that their infrastructure investments will serve to improve their economic well-being and quality of life.

That is why I want to express my reservations regarding the need for the Senate to adopt and therefore endorse the conclusions of this interim report. After all, in an independent Senate, should we all automatically unanimously endorse the recommendations made by every committee? I would add, however, if my honourable colleagues are wondering, that I would not request a standing vote.

Thank you.

[English]

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to, on division, and report adopted.)

STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF TRANSITIONING TO A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

FIFTH REPORT OF ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the consideration of the fifth report (interim) of the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, entitled *Positioning Canada's Electricity Sector in a Carbon Constrained Future*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on March 7, 2017.

Hon. Richard Neufeld: I move the adjournment of the motion standing in my name.

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

(On motion of Senator Neufeld, debate adjourned.)

RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

FOURTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Fraser, seconded by the Honourable Senator Hubley, for the adoption of the fourth report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, entitled *Sessional Order*, presented in the Senate on March 7, 2017.

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: I move the adjournment of the motion standing in my name.

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

(On motion of Senator Poirier, debate adjourned.)

STUDY ON RECENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN ARGENTINA IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR POTENTIAL IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND GLOBAL DYNAMICS

THIRTEENTH REPORT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL
TRADE COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the consideration of the thirteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, entitled *A turning point in Canada-Argentina Relations?*, tabled in the Senate on June 1, 2017.

Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk moved:

That the thirteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, entitled *A turning point in Canada-Argentina relations?*, tabled in the Senate on June 1, 2017, be adopted and that, pursuant to rule 12-24(1), the Senate request a complete and detailed response from the government, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report, in consultation with the Minister of International Trade.

She said: Honourable senators, on behalf of the committee, I thought I would put some of the comments of our study on the record, and hopefully senators will wish to read the complete report.

Nearly two years ago, Argentina experienced one of the most significant and historic election results in its and South America's history. In the years leading up to that election in late 2015, Argentina seemed doomed to repeat its history of political instability and economic crises. After 12 years of dominance by the Kirchners, the country was facing double-digit inflation, slowing if not stagnant economic growth, international isolation, high levels of corruption, and compromised political institutions.

From the parliamentary perspective, particularly worrisome was that the executive was regularly circumscribing the role of the National Congress in the country's political process. The populous Kirchner administrations and their growing authoritarian and divisive style had become increasingly unpopular among key segments in Argentina's society, threatening an impending crisis in the country's governability and a continuation of its "troubling century."

Against this background, the long-standing, mutually beneficial relations between Argentina and Canada stagnated. The Kirchners' protectionist policies effectively raised significant barriers for Canadian exporters and differences on regional issues, including the future of the Falkland Islands, which created friction. High-level political engagement between our two countries began to lag.

In the 2015 presidential election, however, the candidate of the ruling political party was defeated, albeit by a narrow margin, by Mauricio Macri, a former businessman and Mayor of Buenos Aires, and his “Let’s Change” campaign.

President Macri’s election promised the beginning of a new era for Argentina’s political, economic and global leadership. Within weeks of taking office, his administration put forward key legislation, subsequently passed by the National Congress, that aimed to restructure the country’s economy. It also created an Investment and Trade Promotion Agency and has been standing up in defence of human rights in the region, among other international policies that emphasized the stark contrast with Macri’s predecessors. In other words, the Macri administration is making a concerted effort to re-engage Argentina with the world and to reform the country’s political and economic systems in a manner that opens up opportunities for new partnerships, stability and prosperity.

To better understand the potential significance of this shift for Canada’s engagement with Argentina and for the region, the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade undertook to comprehensively examine the changing political and economic dynamics in South America’s second-largest economy and one of the most captivating countries in the hemisphere.

The study entailed hearings in Ottawa that began in February 2016, as well as a fact-finding mission to Buenos Aires in September 2016.

• (1530)

Throughout, witnesses included parliamentarians from the National Congress who engaged with us on a wide range of issues regarding opportunities for commercial partnerships, increasing people-to-people links, as well as our common experiences related to federal-provincial relations and the social development of remote regions.

We also exchanged views about regional dynamics and opportunities for cooperation in the multilateral fora such as the Organization of American States.

I should put, as a subset, that Argentina and Canada played a significant role in the OAS with respect to Venezuela.

As the study took off, we were heartened that several of the messages and issues put on the table by the committee’s witnesses found an audience amongst official circles and had immediate effect on Canada-Argentina relations. In particular, Canada’s Prime Minister paid an official visit to Argentina in November 2016 during which he and President Macri agreed to collaborate in several areas that were already commanding the committee’s attention.

Having made its mark in this way, the committee’s study concluded with a report that made seven recommendations to the Government of Canada and highlighted the tremendous opportunities by which Canada can revamp its bilateral relations with Argentina, sustain the positive changes taking place in that country, deepen its network in the Americas, and advance its foreign and commercial interests more generally.

The committee tabled its report entitled *A Turning Point in Canada-Argentina Relations?* — with a question mark — on June 1, 2017.

On behalf of committee members, I want to share our findings. On global and regional facets, we said:

As “a country of the Americas,” the Committee stresses the tremendous stakes for Canada of Argentina’s shift in its domestic and foreign policies and of their favourable outcome.

It affirms that both bilateral and multilateral measures are required in an updated Canadian policy in Argentina and the Americas.

Given its growing profile in the region, a deeper relationship with Argentina strengthens Canada’s multilateral approach in the hemisphere, possibly leading to a new era in our relations with Latin America.

Officials from Global Affairs Canada noted:

In order to be effective multilaterally, we need strong bilateral relations.

As Argentina reintegrates with the world, the committee underscores that Canada should pursue opportunities for regional and global cooperation that build on the common interests and values of the two countries. Such opportunities exist across a range of regional and global concerns including: human rights, democratic consolidation, market access, drug trafficking, organized crime, migration, nuclear energy, arms control, natural disaster and humanitarian relief. And that’s not the whole list.

Another possibility that stands out is combining efforts to implement Colombia’s peace accord and promoting conditions for inclusiveness and long-term stability in that country. Opportunities also exist to strengthen engagement with other groupings in which Canada and Argentina have overlapping interests such as the Pacific Alliance or as hosts of the 2018 G7 and G20 meetings, respectively.

To capitalize on the potential dividends where its regional profile and enhanced bilateral relationship with Argentina are concerned, the committee is convinced that Canada should do more to affirm its commitment to the Organization of American States. In so doing, it would be reinforcing the OAS as Canada’s principal hemispheric avenue for strengthening dialogue and values as well as deepening networks with key countries in the region on matters of common concern.

These countries include those with whom Canada’s partnerships have been evolving in recent years, including Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Peru and now Argentina.

As Argentina becomes a regional force, the report noted that Canada's relations with the country would also benefit from a focus on shared value of human rights as a key area of collaboration either bilaterally or in the international fora.

One area with potential for collaboration between Canada and Argentina exists with respect to mediating the political tensions and growing humanitarian crises in Venezuela and the ongoing plight of political opponents there.

As a case in point, Canada and Argentina, in August 2017, signed, with 10 other hemispheric partners, the Lima Declaration that jointly condemns the rupture of democratic order in Venezuela. In addition, prominent jurists from Canada and Argentina were appointed in September 2017 by the OAS Secretary General to the three-person independent panel of experts mandated to assess the possibility that international human rights standards have been violated in Venezuela. These experts are our former colleague, Irwin Cotler; and Dr. Santiago Canton, secretary of human rights of the provinces of Buenos Aires, and previously the executive secretary of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; and the third member of the panel is Manuel Ventura Robles from Costa Rica, a former judge of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Given its painful history under the 1976 to 1983 military regime, Argentina's credentials as a regional leader reinforced the credibility of any multilateral initiatives that it may drive to ensure an international order that protects human rights. The committee gained an invaluable appreciation of how the traumatic period continues to influence Argentina's consciousness and identity even after 40 years.

This was particularly evident when we visited the museum in Buenos Aires dedicated to the victims of the severest form of human rights abuses perpetrated by that regime and to the promotion of human rights more generally.

Turning to the need for diversification of partners, consistent with recommendations from the committee's previous work, including its February 2017 study on free-trade agreements, this report underscores that strengthening ties with Argentina advances Canada's ongoing need to diversify its political and commercial partners for the benefit of our prosperity. This message is now more prudent and urgent than ever given the prevailing uncertainty about Canada's existing trade relationships and agreements, notably the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement and the renegotiation of NAFTA.

Turning to sustaining long-standing change in Argentina, the committee's report underscores that the need for value-added policies and partnerships that foster constructive, long-standing change in Argentina during this consequential period in its history are obviously necessary.

In order to reinforce positive trends in Argentina and in the region, witnesses, for instance, raised the possibility that Argentina's shift away from populism may not be the region's last. The committee emphasized that Canadian policies need to be aligned with Argentina's core political and economic priorities. These include developing key commercial sectors,

promoting social development and national unity, strengthening its economic fundamentals, and ultimately creating a favourable climate for business and investment.

The committee also emphasized the importance of the Canadian support for Argentinian's democratic institutions in order to reinforce Canada's own value as a bilateral and regional partner. Such support should focus on areas that strengthen Argentina's governance structures and values, including trust, confidence and integrity, in order that it function effectively, deliver on its policies and ultimately mitigate the volatility that in the past has undermined the country's politics, economy and society.

• (1540)

Turning to the recommendations and the context of these findings, the committee's report made seven recommendations to the Government of Canada on how it can deepen relations with Argentina across the following areas: four recommendations on enhancing and creating new commercial partnerships, especially regarding cooperation on clean technology and renewable energy and the responsible development of Argentina's oil and gas industries; one recommendation on promoting education cooperation; one recommendation on strengthening federal provincial frameworks; and one recommendation on regionalism and global issues more generally.

The report also highlights opportunities for revamping Canada-Argentina relations in terms of parliamentary diplomacy, enhancing people-to-people links, sustaining social and regional economic development, and institutional capacity building.

The committee believes that action in these areas of significance would foster confidence on the part of Canadian investors in Argentina's opportunities, encourage the positive momentum already generated in the country's reforms, build up its resistance against potential instability and downturns, and benefit Canada-Argentina relations for the long term.

But we do point out a need for caution.

I ask for five minutes.

The Hon. the Speaker: Five more minutes? Is it agreed?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Andreychuk: In drawing attention to the opportunities and policies that it believes would encourage a more constructive engagement between Argentina and Canada, and notwithstanding the enthusiasm and progress made today, the report cautions for a degree of measured optimism. Such advice is in large part a function of Argentina's history of political swings and their disruptive impact on economic policies.

Indeed, Argentina's current path towards reform is narrow. In other words, efforts to implement Macri's ambitious program are fraught with the dilemma of finding the right balance between quick action in order to keep the momentum and to bring some evident benefits while also ensuring sustained support by proceeding with changes more gradually.

Other pressures that generate a risky political environment for the current Macri administration relate to international developments and uncertainties about the global economic recovery, including the commodity market, as well as other regional dynamics.

In this context, the mid-term congressional elections in Argentina taking place in late October 2017, upon us now practically, have particular significance for Macri's program of reforms for the country. Their results will show the degree to which the consensus in Argentina's new direction, a consensus that has included to one extent or another support from various elements of the National Congress, continues to hold.

For instance, some observers are noting that the adjustments already taken have been painful and that patience amongst voters for beneficial results is being stretched.

In the months leading up to these mid-term elections, there have been developments that warrant continued attention. In one respect, such developments demonstrate President Macri's efforts to navigate the narrow political passage before him. They include several changes in his cabinet, such as the departure of the finance minister, the foreign affairs minister, the education and defence ministers just this past summer. They also include his government's announcement that the minimum wage in Argentina will increase 24 per cent. In another respect, they point to the political manoeuvring taking place as elections come to view. For instance, former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner has not only established a new anti-Macri party but is also running for a seat in the Senate.

On the other hand, *The Economist* Intelligence Unit, among others, is reporting that Argentina's economy is showing positive signs of growth, that foreign investment into the country is increasing, particularly on such priority areas as infrastructure and agriculture, but that regional and international developments may yet impede further progress.

Honourable senators, I conclude on behalf of the committee that the stakes are as high as ever for Argentina's — and for the region's — democratic consolidation and future prosperity. As our report suggests, Canada, through a program of updated policies and guided by cautious optimism, can play a valuable role in encouraging favourable long-standing results.

Honourable senators, for those of us who had the pleasure to go to Argentina, it was interesting to note that at the turn of the last century, Argentina, Australia and Canada were almost neck in neck with immigration and progress, and then the political dynamics in Argentina in the 1930s swayed and ended in the coming decades in military dictatorships. It was interesting to compare all three of them. A beautiful country with resources like Canada, but it was the political environment that brought it down to a military dictatorship.

One hopes that Argentina and Canada can now both move forward as they did some centuries before.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, and report adopted.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO CALL UPON THE GOVERNMENT OF MYANMAR TO END VIOLENCE AND GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AGAINST ROHINGYA MUSLIMS ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion, as modified, of the Honourable Senator Ataullahjan, seconded by the Honourable Senator Tkachuk:

That the Senate urge the Government of Canada to call upon the Government of Myanmar:

1. to bring an immediate end to the violence and gross violations of human rights against Rohingya Muslims;
2. to fulfill its pledge to uphold the spirit and letter of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*; and
3. to respond to the urgent calls of the international community and allow independent monitors entry into the country forthwith, in particular Rakhine State; and

That a message be sent to the House of Commons requesting that house to unite with the Senate for the above purpose.

Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise today to express the government's support for Senator Ataullahjan's Motion No. 240 concerning the human rights crisis against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

The Government of Canada and indeed all Canadians are deeply concerned by these human rights abuses. Violence and the enormous displacement of people have occurred, and this is unacceptable. Canada condemns the human rights violations of the Rohingya and the violence and suffering that have forced more than half a million Rohingya to flee into neighbouring Bangladesh.

This is without a doubt the most serious humanitarian and security crisis this region has faced in many years.

We are witnessing crimes against humanity, and the responsibility for ending this ethnic cleansing falls squarely on Myanmar's military leadership and its civilian government. The Government of Canada has spoken out and taken strong and concrete actions to exert pressure as well as to offer support in response to this human tragedy.

By telephone and in writing, the Prime Minister has conveyed his deep concerns over the situation in Rakhine to State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. He has also stated that the responsibility for resolving this crisis falls squarely upon her and the military leadership in Myanmar, including the commander-in-chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

The Prime Minister also urges that military and civilian authorities do their utmost to end the violence.

Over the last month, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has spoken to her counterparts and to key influencers in the region, including Kofi Annan and representatives of Bangladesh, Norway, Sweden, Germany, the EU, the U.S., Turkey, Indonesia and Kuwait about the need to work together to pressure to end this violence.

On September 18, the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke with Myanmar's commander-in-chief to emphasize Canada's concern for human rights violations against the Rohingya population and the need to end the violence. She told him that violators of human rights must be held accountable and that humanitarian access into the region must be permitted.

• (1550)

The Government of Canada has backed these strong messages with concrete action. So far, the Minister of International Development has allocated \$7.63 million in humanitarian assistance to the current crisis. This brings Canada's total contribution in this year to more than \$13 million to respond to the needs of crisis-affected people in Bangladesh and Myanmar, including the Rohingya.

In the immediate term, the government has called for full access to Rakhine State for humanitarian and UN organizations and for the media.

It is essential that the truth about the recent horrific events be allowed to come out and that aid be provided to the suffering populations that have been cut off. This is a matter of the utmost fundamental justice and accountability.

On October 2, Canada's Ambassador to Myanmar participated in a visit to northern Rakhine for diplomats and representatives of UN agencies to see the situation firsthand.

This is encouraging, but this must be the first step in granting urgently needed access to all of this region for foreign officials and humanitarian and UN agencies, as well as the international press.

We strongly support the UN-led Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar. This mission has rightly been mandated by the Human Rights Council, and we urge the Government of Myanmar, civilian and military leaders, to grant it full and unimpeded access.

The Government of Canada expects Myanmar to make progress on implementing the recommendations of the Kofi Annan-led Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

In August, the commission published practical recommendations for peace, stability, reconciliation and sustainable development in Rakhine. Canada supports efforts in Myanmar to move forward in making those recommendations a reality.

Our embassy will continue to provide the government with timely reports on the local situation and to help to determine how Canada can contribute effectively to the implementation of the commission's recommendations.

I would also like to inform honourable senators that the parliamentary secretaries of the minister are taking a personal interest in working with all members of Parliament, including senators, who have a particular interest in this issue.

Reversing the impacts of decades of military rule, bringing an end to civil war, creating a democratic federal union, promoting sustainable economic growth and ensuring the protection of human rights for all in Myanmar will not be easy, but the Government of Canada and Canadians strongly and unequivocally want Myanmar's transition to succeed. It is in Canada's interest, the world's interests and the interests of the people of Myanmar that Myanmar's democratic transition be maintained and strengthened.

The Government of Canada stands ready to help Myanmar to realize a future in which the rights of all peoples are recognized and protected, but, first, the violence must come to an end and the Rohingya must be welcomed back into their own country. I urge the passage of this motion.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, as modified.)

AUTISM FAMILIES IN CRISIS

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF SENATE REPORT—INQUIRY—DEBATE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Munson, calling the attention of the Senate to the 10th anniversary of its groundbreaking report *Pay Now or Pay Later: Autism Families in Crisis*.

The Hon. the Speaker: Before you commence, Senator Patterson, I will remind you that we will be adjourning at 4 p.m. and that you will be given the balance of your time when this item is called at the next sitting.

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Honourable senators, I am pleased to respond to the clarion call of Senator Munson in introducing this inquiry into the tenth anniversary of the groundbreaking report *Pay Now or Pay Later: Autism Families in Crisis* to all of us to speak:

. . . in one voice in support of the autism community.

Senator Munson told us in initiating this inquiry:

If you are not directly affected, someone right next door . . . is . . .

That indeed is my experience with both family and friends. I want to share that with you today.

I have close friends whose adult son has ASD. He's in his 30s, and his parents have been tireless in their efforts to advocate for him and provide him with the opportunities he needs to thrive. He is a bit higher on the spectrum. He is verbal but requires help and strategies for social interaction and independent living. Their experience has provided me with some insight into how families cope with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and helped me to identify gaps in service that I believe the federal government could help to fill.

In talking to them, I now understand that the spectrum is very broad and that each individual needs specific programs tailored to their uniqueness. Individuals may often be very gifted but also may have significant limitations. Some may lack geographical awareness. Some may be very articulate. Others may not be able to speak at all. In the last budget he tabled, my friend and colleague the Honourable Jim Flaherty dedicated \$15 million, over three years, to Ready, Willing and Able, which encourages Canadian employers to hire and support youth and working-age adults with developmental disabilities, and \$11.4 million, over four years, for the expansion of vocational training programs for individuals with autism.

Despite these key contributions to employment and training, there is still a great need, as I will explain, for continued support of programs that incentivize employers to embrace employees coping with ASD.

Over 80 per cent of individuals with ASD are unemployed. For many, the accommodations required to enable them to thrive in the workplace are easily made and no different than the modified-work programs that we currently offer employees across the country who are physically ill or coping with mental health struggles.

My friend's son has taken courses in employment readiness and continues to attend weekly activities that help him to develop key skills in peer-to-peer interactions. However, the jobs that he has had are tied to government-funded programs that provide employers of Canadians with developmental disabilities with a stipend for a six-month period. Unfortunately, the jobs tend to last only as long as the funding does. I fear that this pattern is being repeated across the country and leading to many on the spectrum being underutilized.

I recognize that there is an impact on businesses because employing persons who are more limited in their capacity may impair efficiency. With that in mind, I'd respectfully suggest that targeted funding, within the overall Employment, Skills and Social Development envelope, to create incentives for long-term jobs for individuals with exceptionalities, should be a focus for this and successive governments at the federal and provincial level. Programs could include employer support, such as those resources already offered through Ready, Willing and Able. These individuals should be afforded every opportunity to pursue their dreams and to fully contribute to our society and our economy.

This may also help to lessen the prevalence of anxiety and depression experienced by many individuals with ASD.

Colleagues, the other major issue that I identified, based on my friend's experience, pertains to housing. How do we help provide individuals with ASD with opportunities for independent living and for developing key skills required for day-to-day living? Does the Canadian housing spectrum provide enough alternative housing models for people with ASD? Safe and secure housing for individuals with ASD is integral to their success in all other aspects of their life. In this connection, I believe there are other countries — I've been told Denmark and Norway — that are far ahead of Canada in developing working models for housing and accommodating the varied needs of persons with roughly similar needs on the autism spectrum.

I believe the current endeavour to create a national housing strategy is the ideal opportunity to share best practices across the country so that all Canadians with similar experiences and struggles can benefit from the same programs as some in individual provinces.

In Calgary, for example, the Sinneave Family Foundation created The Ability Hub, self-described as a world-class facility, purpose built as a centre for information and for the advancement of promising practices in the field of autism.

The Ability Hub offers various programs and resources to families of, and individuals with, ASD, including employment readiness, social skills development and recreational opportunities.

John Seigner, the Ambassador and Resource Centre Manager for The Ability Hub, has worked with families to explore and develop options for independent living.

(At 4 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on February 4, 2016, the Senate adjourned until 1:30 p.m., tomorrow.)
