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The Honourable NICOLE EATON,
Speaker pro tempore

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

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THE SENATE

Friday, May 11, 2018

The Senate met at 9 a.m., the Speaker *pro tempore* in the chair.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of May 9, 2018, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 22, 2018, at 2 p.m.

She said: I move the motion standing in my name.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

SILVER ALERT

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Wallin, calling the attention of the Senate to the Silver Alert concept, which mirrors the successful AMBER Alert system, and which is focused on helping the more than 700,000 Canadians living with dementia or Alzheimer's and their families and caregivers and is aimed at helping to locate missing cognitively impaired adults.

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to an issue that affects more than 700,000 Canadians and their families, mine included. In fact, I want to dedicate these comments to my mum, dad and sisters, particularly Tracy, who, along with my dad, shoulders the lion's share of caring for my mum as she gradually slips away from us.

• (0910)

The damage that dementia and Alzheimer's does to families is indiscriminate and is expected to double in the next 15 years as our population ages. The need for national coordination in tackling this is urgent.

I thank Senator Wallin for her leadership in advocating for Silver Alert. She recognizes the urgency of creating a strategy for expediting searches for missing seniors with cognitive impairments. Many of us know all too well the acute fear that grips hearts and minds when a loved one wanders off, and we know because of their cognitive impairment that they are well and truly lost.

[Translation]

Creating and implementing a national program to help vulnerable individuals who have gone missing could save lives. Although some regions have taken steps to implement a Silver Alert program, the Government of Canada must coordinate the program and provide support at the federal level in order for it to be as effective as possible.

[English]

Ontario announced its intention in 2011 to create a provincial Silver Alert system, but this program has not moved forward. In 2017, Alberta and Manitoba passed bills creating Silver Alert systems.

B.C. has an active citizen-led Silver Alert program where private citizens provide a valuable public alerting system. The group formed because:

Despite many people with dementia and autism dying on the streets of Metro Vancouver and elsewhere in BC, the government ha[d] chosen not to implement this service. So, [they] decided to do it [them]selves.

Honourable senators, health and mental health challenges affect families throughout the country. In fact, there is an e-petition on the House of Commons' website, sponsored by Liberal member of Parliament Bob Bratina and initiated by Ontario Liberal MPP Sophia Aggelonitis, which is currently open for signatures for all citizens of Canada to call upon the government to develop a national Silver Alert strategy for all Canadian provinces and territories.

Silver Alerts are a step in the right direction, but they must be combined with other measures that enhance care and quality of life for those with cognitive impairment. Increasing public awareness of health and mental health is one step, but so are social and educational services. Investment in dementia friendly villages is one measure that Canada can take to provide care for vulnerable adults in our society.

The first "village" was created in The Netherlands. In the small town of Weesp, there is a living centre called the Hogeweyk, which is a self-contained village with a single point of entry and exit. The community has around-the-clock care provided by trained geriatric nurses and caregivers dressed as "villagers" in street clothes.

Various businesses in the village are trained in dementia care. The environment fosters a decrease in agitation and aggression and is predicted to reduce the need for high-powered drugs and medicine for residents. This Dutch village serves as a model for the rest of the world.

Germany, Switzerland and the U.K. have studied Hogeweyk and have proposed plans for their own dementia friendly villages.

The U.S. is working to create a concept as a day program using reminiscence therapy to prompt positive recollection of memories.

Canada's first village is under construction in Langley, B.C., and is planned to be completed by spring of next year. Elroy Jespersen, the mastermind behind the B.C. village, wanted dementia patients to feel the same amount of independence as their able-bodied counterparts. The compound is privately funded, but developers hope that the government will eventually assist with residents' costs. I urge that a more universally accessible service be available for those who have limited resources as well as those in more geographically remote and culturally diverse contexts.

To this end, although there is no substitute for human kindness, care and compassion, another measure that might enhance care for those with cognitive impairment is to support a growing robotic innovation in Canada.

The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology studied the broad range of health care applications in robotics and artificial intelligence and produced a report in October of last year.

The report highlighted how assistive robots can be used in the field of elder care. For example, Goldie Nejat, Director of the Institute for Robotics and Mechatronics at the University of Toronto and a Canada Research Chair in Robotics for Society, discussed her work on the use of robots as a means to reduce demands on caregivers and provide unique care for patients.

Honourable senators, as the Canadian population ages, dementia and other cognitive impairments are going to be an increasingly severe problem. As such, I am pleased to support Senator Wallin and work alongside other senators to ensure care and quality of life for all in Canada.

Meegwetch, thank you.

(On motion of Senator Pate, for Senator Lankin, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I ask leave of the Senate to suspend the sitting to the call of the chair with a 15-minute bell.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

• (1010)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

(*At 10:11 a.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, May 22, 2018, at 2 p.m.*)

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