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Tuesday, May 16, 2006



THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

COLORECTAL CANCER

Hon. Wilbert J. Keon: Honourable senators, this morning the Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada held its second annual parliamentary breakfast to raise awareness of this disease.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common form of cancer in Canada now, next to lung and breast cancers. This year, about 20,000 Canadians will be told they have the disease, and about 8,500 will die from it. Here is the sad news: Most of them did not have to die. The disease is highly treatable if caught early and can be preventable if people follow a healthy diet, exercise and are screened.

This type of cancer usually develops from polyps in the colon, which can be detected with screening tests. The polyps are removed and the patient is cured. Several screening procedures are available and the family doctor can explain what is available. Everyone should avail themselves of these tests, especially those people over the age of 50.

Colonoscopy provides the greatest accuracy and knowledge. It is referred to as the gold standard test to prevent colorectal cancer.

Most patients have no symptoms or warnings of the disease and therefore are dependent on screening. Of particular concern to those of us in this chamber are those over 50 years of age; they have a much higher risk of developing the disease. Thus, I urge Canadians to take the initiative and have themselves screened for colorectal cancer. Why risk dying from a preventable disease?

• (1410)

CANADA-UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

RESOLUTION ON NORTH AMERICAN ENERGY STRATEGY

Hon. Jerahmiel S. Grafstein: Honourable senators, the forty-seventh annual meeting of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group, held in Charleston, South Carolina, from May 5 to 8, 2006, was one of the most productive in substance and bilateral action. Let me draw your attention to one of the many resolutions critical to our shared continent's economic productivity and growth — a North American energy strategy.

I quote from our joint resolution:

Delegates recognize that a cooperative approach to develop a North American Energy Strategy is critical. Our future energy security will depend on the development and implementation of new technologies. The transfer of this technology globally will deal with the global problem of air pollution and climate change. Both countries should be encouraged to become world leaders in: conservation; carbon dioxide capture and sequestration; coal gasification; efficient use of fossil fuels; and development and implementation of a wide variety of alternative energy sources.

We go on to propose that both the Canadian and U.S. governments, as well as federal legislators in both countries, undertake the following actions on an expedited basis — and let me just point out one:

...develop an energy security plan by which, within a decade, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partners will be self-sufficient. This plan should focus on both renewable and non-renewable energy sources, and should contemplate minimum standards for renewable energy.

Our American colleagues referred to their initiatives as “10 by 2010” — 10 per cent renewable energy by 2010 — and “25 by 2025” — 25 per cent renewable energy by 2025. Hopefully, committees of the Senate will consider this work crucial to our future as soon as possible.

FORTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING

Hon. Anne C. Cools: Honourable senators, I wish to join Senator Grafstein in saying a few words on the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group meeting held from May 5 to 8, 2006, in Charleston, South Carolina.

I begin by thanking Senator Grafstein and Senator Angus for their great commitment and the hard work they have been doing on this important matter of Canada-United States relations. I would like to record my pleasure and satisfaction in attending this particular meeting I found extremely relevant and pertinent in respect of the issues raised and debated.

I also wish to place on the record one of our resolutions that caught my attention, and in which debate I participated. I am referring to the resolution concerning reform of the United Nations. It states:

Delegates support and urge a policy of aggressive reform of the United Nations that would include: its current mandate; its financing and administration; and its governance issues, including the role of the Security Council, the criteria for its choice and the role of the Office of the Secretary General. Such reform should establish timelines, standards of measurable results and a fixed periodic review.

Honourable senators, I have not attended many of these meetings but, as I said before, this one was especially important to me. It was important, not only because of the historical, long-time relationship between Canada and the United States, but also because this meeting took place in Charleston, the centre of the antebellum South. Of particular importance to me is the fact that Charleston was founded by Barbadians. It may not be known to many senators here, but Barbadians, royalists and aristocrats, who moved from Barbados, where I was born, settled in Charleston in the 1670s. They introduced to Charleston the phenomena of sugar cultivation, the sugar plantation and much of the political and social infrastructure that was to found the life and culture of this part of the U.S. South.

I was touched, honourable senators, by the deep concern among individual delegates for Canadian sensibilities in respect to border issues. I thought it was remarkable that these members from the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives paid a lot of attention to these border issues. I was also moved by the fact that they were also concerned by what we call healthy relations between Canada and the United States and that they had been somewhat disturbed about certain distasteful statements made by particular Canadian members of Parliament in past years.

I thank Senator Grafstein again for a very successful meeting, for extremely wonderful events. There is something to be said for southern hospitality and southern food. Being in that plantation community and seeing some of the vestiges of those great plantations was reminiscent of my upbringing on the little island of Barbados, which contributed much to the U.S.A.

• (1415)

RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH JOINT COMMITTEE
TO STUDY LONG-TERM TRADE DISPUTE
RESOLUTION MECHANISM

Hon. Ross Fitzpatrick: Honourable senators, we all know the Government of Canada has announced a framework agreement to settle the current softwood lumber dispute with the United States. We are now waiting anxiously to see the complete agreement as the devil is so often in the details. Settling the current dispute fairly is critical to the industry, but we need to find a viable, long-term and efficient dispute resolution process. Differences will arise again and, when they do, it is imperative that we have a method of resolution in place that is fair, predictable and expeditious. In that regard, I am pleased to report that at the recent meeting of the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group in Charleston, South Carolina, chaired by Senator Grafstein and attended by Senators Angus, Cools, Austin, Mahovlich, Mercer and myself, it was resolved by the representatives of both countries that a joint committee of our legislative bodies be created to work toward recommendations for a fair, long-term trade dispute resolution mechanism and urge our governments to act well before the next dispute arises.

Honourable senators, this is a unique and constructive approach. I believe it is the first such resolution ever adopted by members of the Congress of the United States and members of the Parliament of Canada to establish an international committee of legislators to deal with a trade issue. It is my fervent hope that by working in the spirit of cooperation and friendship that was represented in Charleston, our respective governments will heed

[Senator Cools]

our recommendations and expeditiously implement an efficient, long-term dispute resolution mechanism to provide for a fair trade settlement process for softwood lumber in the future.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: I interrupt Senators' Statements to draw the attention of honourable senators to the presence in the gallery of a distinguished delegation of Russian parliamentarians from the Federation Council Commission of Internal Economy: Vladimir Fedorovich Kulakov, delegation Head and FCC Chairman; Levon Horenovich Chakhmakchyan, FCC member; Mikhail Mihailovich Kapura, FCC member; Evgeny Yakovlevich Kirillov, Head, FCC Finance Department; Igor Vladimirovich Seregin, FCC Counsellor; and commission officials. On behalf of all honourable senators, I extend a warm welcome to our visitors from Russia.

THE LATE JUSTICE WILLIAM J. HENDERSON, OBE

Hon. Hugh Segal: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to the Honourable William J. Henderson, a three-term Member of Parliament for Kingston and the Islands, a former Ontario Supreme Court Justice, a former President of the Ontario Liberal Association, a renowned philanthropist, an advisor to politicians and a decorated war veteran who died yesterday morning in Kingston General Hospital at the age of 89. The man that many people in Kingston simply called "The Judge" was the son of a farmer. He arrived alone in Kingston at the age of five, having been put on a train in Alberta to come east to live with relatives until his parents arrived.

Judge Henderson graduated from Queen's University in 1938, attended Osgoode Law School and was called to the bar in 1942. He enlisted in the Canadian Forces in 1939, transferred to the Royal Canadian Corps of Signallers in 1942. He served in England, Italy, France, Belgium, Germany and Holland as an intelligence officer. He was injured in the war, underwent extensive surgery and was discharged in 1946, but served in the Canadian Army Reserves until 1952. Among his numerous honours, The Judge was most proud of those associated with military service. He received the Order of the British Empire for overseeing the reconstitution of a judicial system in Holland after the Second World War. While his official service ended in 1952, his loyalty to the military did not end.

• (1420)

Years after he left the forces, Judge Henderson, by then a member of the provincial legislature, fought for veterans, fought for the legion, and fought for the armed forces. In the 1990s, he supported the Royal Canadian Legion's appeal for pension increases, and he was the moving force behind the Military Communications and Electronics Museum, Canadian Forces Base Kingston, paying tribute to our signallers, who have served freedom, Canada and our Armed Forces for so long.

Honourable senators, when John Diefenbaker visited Kingston in 1970, he pointed out, as he was speaking at Sir John A. Macdonald's grave, that this particular Henderson family owned a plot right next to Sir John A. Macdonald's. He said to Bill Henderson, "I would like to buy part of that plot for when my time comes."

Bill Henderson said, "Why would I sell it to you? I only have to rent it to you for three days."

Mr. Diefenbaker turned on his heel and walked away. Yes, my friends, Bill Henderson was a Liberal, but he was a Louis St. Laurent and Mike Pearson Liberal, the kind that balanced nationalism and realism, and economic justice and economic progress. Even this unreconstituted Tory stands in admiration for the service he gave our country, our city, our Armed Forces and our future. God rest his soul.

[Translation]

RAINWATER RECOVERY

Hon. Madeleine Plamondon: Honourable senators, I would like to draw to your attention a potentially inspiring rainwater recovery initiative being discussed in France as part of proposed water legislation.

The purpose of this initiative is to grant a tax credit equal to 40 per cent of the cost of equipment needed to recycle rainwater and use it for facilities that do not require drinking water, such as toilets, washing machines and outdoor faucets for watering lawns or washing cars.

In France, only 8,000 homes have rainwater recovery systems, compared to 100,000 homes in Germany.

It is true that rainwater must be treated for use in washing machines. When it comes out of the eavestrough, it must go through a purification system. A pump then moves the rainwater into a concrete cistern where lime neutralizes its natural acidity. Honourable senators, people have been recovering rainwater since antiquity.

According to calculations, 100 square metres of rooftop in France can collect about 60,000 litres of water per year, which is about half of what a family of four needs. In Canada, every Canadian consumes an average of 335 litres per day, which adds up to more than 122,000 litres per year, or twice the consumption of a family of four in France.

The forecast is for a hot, dry summer. Citizens will be asked to avoid using drinking water where rainwater could be used instead.

We do not have to make major investments or install filtration systems to encourage rainwater recovery. We all have a roof. Industries and farm operations, which have big buildings, could use rainwater.

Every Canadian must do what he or she can to conserve drinking water for specific uses. Provinces that experience droughts, like Alberta, are making an effort.

[English]

A report on storm water use in the city of Calgary shows that for some time urban development has to take into account the use of storm water. Whether it is done on a small scale or by a large city, we all have to make an effort.

[Translation]

Drinking water must become a basic human right in Canada, but using drinking water for other purposes is an individual responsibility.

[English]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of a class of students from the Glebe Collegiate Institute of Ottawa. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Gordon Hamilton Southam. They are guests of the Honourable Senator Marcel Prud'homme.

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

• (1425)

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

AUDITOR GENERAL

MAY 2006 REPORT TABLED

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the first report of the Auditor General of Canada for the year 2006 with an addendum on environmental petitions, (July 1, 2005 to January 3, 2006).

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

ADJOURNMENT AND ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT OF PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA PRINTED AS APPENDIX—NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That at 2:30 p.m. Thursday, May 18, 2006, if the business of the Senate has not been completed, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings to adjourn the Senate;

That should a vote be deferred until 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 18, 2006, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings at 2:30 p.m. to suspend the sitting until 5:30 p.m. for the taking of the deferred vote;

That the Address of the Prime Minister of Australia, to be delivered in the Chamber of the House of Commons at 3:00 p.m. that day before Members of the Senate and the House of Commons, together with all introductory and related remarks, be printed as an Appendix to the *Debates of the Senate* of that day, and form part of the permanent records of this House; and

That when the Senate adjourns on Thursday, May 18, 2006, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 30, 2006, at 2:00 p.m.

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO CONGRATULATE HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II ON EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence, I will move:

That the Senate send an Address to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, expressing the heartiest good wishes and congratulations of all Senators on the occasion of her eightieth birthday.

[English]

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY CONCERNS OF FIRST NATIONS RELATING TO SPECIFIC CLAIMS PROCESS

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, I give notice that at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, in accordance with rule 86(1)(q) of the Senate, be authorized to examine and report on the general concerns of First Nations in Canada related to the federal Specific Claims process, the nature and status of the Government of Canada's Specific Claims policy, the present administration of the policy, the status of the Indian Specific Claims Commission, and other relevant matters with a view to making recommendations to contribute to the timely and satisfactory resolution of First Nations' grievances arising out of both their treaties with the federal Crown and the Government of Canada's administration of their lands, monies, and other affairs under the *Indian Act*.

That the Committee report to the Senate from time to time, but no later than June 14, 2007, and that the Committee retain until September 1, 2007, all powers necessary to publicize its findings.

[Translation]

NATIONAL FINANCE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO RECEIVE PAPERS AND EVIDENCE ON STUDY OF MAIN ESTIMATES, 2005-06 IN THIRTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

Hon. Joseph A. Day: Honourable senators, I give notice that at the next sitting of the Senate I shall move:

That the papers and evidence received and taken and the work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance during the First Session of the

Thirty-eighth Parliament as part of its study of the Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, be referred to the Committee for the purposes of its study of the Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, as authorized by the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2006.

• (1430)

ANTI-TERRORISM ACT

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO MEET DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Pierre Claude Nolin: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, the Honourable Senator Smith will move:

That the Special Senate Committee on the Anti-terrorism Act be empowered, in accordance with rule 95(3), to meet on Monday, May 29, 2006, even though the Senate may then be adjourned for a period exceeding one week.

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO URGE GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC AREAS

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

That the Senate takes note that tobacco smoking continues to cause an estimated 45,000 Canadian deaths and to cost our economy up to \$15 billion each year;

That the Senate notes that current federal legislation allows for ventilation options and smoking rooms in workplaces under federal jurisdiction even though they do not provide full protection from second-hand smoke and that full protection from second-hand smoke can only be achieved through the creation of workplaces and public places that are completely free of tobacco smoke;

That the Senate urges the Government of Canada to pass legislation to ensure that all enclosed workplaces and public places under its jurisdiction are smoke-free;

That the Senate ask the Government of Canada to call upon each province and territory that has not yet done so to enact comprehensive smoke-free legislation; and

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

[Senator Comeau]

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

THE ENVIRONMENT

CUTTING OF ENERGUIDE PROGRAM

Hon. Daniel Hays (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is addressed to the Leader of the Government in the Senate and concerns a matter I first raised on May 4. At that time I put questions to the minister on the government's lack of an environment policy — apart from cutting programs — as it searches for what we are told is to be a made-in-Canada plan or solution.

This issue has been much in the news, which is what prompts me to return to it. One of the cuts is the “made-in-Canada” EnerGuide Program, which was established some time ago. Under the terms of the program, the government worked closely with the business community and homeowners to encourage the efficient use of energy resources.

How can the elimination of this made-in-Canada program, popular and useful to countless Canadians, make sense when the government claims it is searching for just such a program? In light of what I interpret as a strong public reaction, will the government reconsider its decision to end the program?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank Senator Hays for his question.

The EnerGuide Program was a plan of the previous government which saw 50 cents of each dollar go to inspections and administration, money that never reached the homeowner. Our government is committed to achieving results and ensuring that taxpayers receive value for their money instead of spending tax dollars on administrative costs. Canadians need real environmental benefits.

The honourable senator is quite right when he says that as of May 12, 2006, no new applications will be accepted for the EnerGuide Program. Property owners who have had a pre-retrofit evaluation performed prior to this date can have a post-retrofit evaluation and still qualify for a grant until March 31, 2007, subject to the availability of funding.

• (1435)

Senator Hays: Honourable senators, this morning I heard Clifford Maynes' radio interview. Mr. Maynes is with the organization that has responsibility for part of this program, and during his interview he contradicted the figure of 50 per cent quoted by the Leader of the Government. He indicated that the administrative costs were 11 per cent of every dollar and said that subsequent inspections may well have used up an additional percentage of the dollar spent on the program. That is

understandable in that we must be assured that the activities under the program actually achieve the energy savings that it was designed to achieve.

Is the information I heard from Mr. Maynes correct?

I am pleased to hear that the government will recognize the programs that are in the process of completion.

KYOTO PROTOCOL—ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

Hon. Daniel Hays (Leader of the Opposition): My second question on the environment comes from a statement made by the Director of the Climate Change Program of the World Wildlife Fund, Jennifer Morgan. In the context of Canada holding the chair until the next conference of the parties in the Kyoto accord process, Ms. Morgan said that the international reputation of Canada is currently at stake.

When will we have a program? The cost of not having a program is very high in terms of lost benefit from a program. The cost is also very high in terms of Canada's international reputation. It puts the government and the ministers involved on the spot. The last time I asked about this, the Leader of the Government in the Senate said something very general, such as “stay tuned.” It is now time for a more precise answer.

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank Senator Hays for that question. I will have to get the transcript of that radio program and I will seek to ascertain the facts regarding whether it is indeed 50 per cent or 11 per cent for administrative costs.

I also read Ms. Morgan's comments. It is clear, as the Prime Minister has said, that the government will be seized of this very important issue very soon. The honourable senator can expect some very substantive policies from the government in the not-too-distant future.

In the meantime, Canada will continue to help shape global dialogue on long-term international cooperation on climate change in a way that advances our country's interests and delivers meaningful results for Canadians. Our plan will focus on cleaning up the environment, not on more administrative costs.

I hasten to add that the previous government missed its Kyoto targets by 35 per cent. Canadians want action on this issue, not ever-changing platitudes.

As chair of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change for 2006, Canada will work with other countries to help advance a more transformative long-term approach to tackling climate change. We will be open to other options for regional and international collaboration in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

• (1440)

Senator Hays: Honourable senators, the Minister of the Environment acknowledges that Canada will inevitably have to engage in the Kyoto process if we are to address this international problem. Canada is responsible for 2 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, so a made-in-Canada approach to deal with our emissions, while essential, will not solve the global

problem. I ask the minister to please reconfirm this: The heart of the Kyoto process is the clean development mechanism, joint implementation and trading, all of which anticipate — and the minister used language hinting at this — that how we make the most important contribution is by engaging the world, not only by being a good example, but by participating in this multilateral approach.

Can the minister confirm that we are still, as the website of Environment Canada says, an enthusiastic adherent to the Kyoto Protocol, none of which matches the current policy position of the government?

Senator LeBreton: The minister has stated many times that the Kyoto objectives are laudable. The problem is that we have not been able to meet those objectives, and there is no possible way Canada can meet the objectives. I totally agree that it is a worldwide problem. However, I hasten to point out again that India, China and the United States are not part of the Kyoto accord.

The minister will attempt to work within the world community, but will be realistic as to what Canada can do. The minister will work on a made-in-Canada solution to contribute to the climate change problem and will not get into the topic of trading for credits. Rather, the minister will propose real solutions for real environmental problems.

CUTTING OF ENERGUIDE PROGRAM

Hon. Mira Spivak: I have a supplementary question.

Since the EnerGuide Program is important in Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro participates in the program, I want to know the government's definition of "administrative costs."

Part of the administration is to carry out an inspection pre-retrofit and an inspection post-retrofit. What percentage of what you classify as "administrative costs" is pre-retrofit inspection and post-retrofit inspection? These inspections are essential to the whole system of making houses and offices more efficient, which saves a lot of money and is in line with what the government may want to do in terms of efficient administration.

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): As I indicated to Senator Hays, I will endeavour to provide information as quickly as possible as to the breakdown of the 50 cents on the dollar figure for pre- and post-retrofit costs.

Hon. Madeleine Plamondon: Is the government scrapping the EnerGuide Program, which I believe is a very good program, simply because it thinks it costs 50 per cent? I am in agreement with Senator Spivak. How do you decide that part of the 50 per cent administration; is it not like the law you want to pass on accountability?

If the government is to ensure that the money is spent wisely, it should be in accord with what Mr. Harper said. One must check how the money is spent. Administrative costs are one thing, but knowing how the money is spent is another thing.

[Senator Hays]

• (1445)

The honourable leader says that the government will scrap the 50 per cent that goes to the consumer. With what will the government be replacing this program, and how will it be more efficient than EnerGuide?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, the information that I have is that 50 cents on the dollar went into administrative costs and did not go to the homeowner and, therefore, into making homes more energy efficient.

I will endeavour, as I said to Senator Spivak and Senator Hays, to ask for a complete breakdown as to where the 50 cents actually goes.

I am confirming that the EnerGuide Program was cancelled as of May 12. The Minister of the Environment and the government will be announcing, in due course, our own made-in-Canada environmental plan.

KYOTO PROTOCOL—ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

Hon. Tommy Banks: Honourable senators, my question is to the Leader of the Government, who has often referred, as have other members of her ministry, to a made-in-Canada solution. My understanding is that every one of the objectives under Canada's commitment to Kyoto was arrived at by the Government of Canada. Which part of the present Kyoto commitments are not made in Canada?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): That is an interesting question. When the Canadian public sees credits being exchanged with Russia, for instance, they have a hard time understanding how that will improve the quality of air in this country.

In any event, I will attempt to refer that question to the environment officials and respond with a delayed answer.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

SOFTWOOD LUMBER AGREEMENT— VETTING CHANGES IN POLICY WITH UNITED STATES

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Following a media interview of Minister Emerson in Vancouver, an article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on Saturday, May 13 stated:

Provincial governments will be expected to vet any forest policy changes through Washington under the terms of the new softwood lumber agreement, International Trade Minister David Emerson said yesterday.

Senator Mercer: Made in Canada.

Senator Ringuette: How can this government give up sovereignty over the management of our natural resources?

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

SOFTWOOD LUMBER AGREEMENT—
REQUEST FOR TABLING

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, the article further states that Ottawa has indicated that it wants a June 15 signing date. The government leader said last week that the issue was behind us, while in reality it is right in front of us.

This is the second time that I ask: Will the Leader of the Government in the Senate table in this house the potential softwood lumber agreement, thereby putting a dent in this culture of secrecy, and refer this document to the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce for further study?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I will say for the second time, in answer to Senator Ringuette, that I will take the question as notice.

THE SENATE

AFGHANISTAN—DEBATE ON EXTENDING MISSION

Hon. Art Eggleton: Honourable senators, I note that the government has decided to put the issue of extending the Afghanistan military mission before the House of Commons for a vote.

• (1450)

I would like to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether the government plans to allow this chamber to debate the same question as well. Will she put this matter before the Senate?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): As the honourable senator knows, the opposition leaders in the other place have all agreed to hold a debate and vote on a motion to support the government's two-year extension of Canada's diplomatic development and the presence of civilian police and military personnel in Afghanistan.

Insofar as the Senate is concerned, it is a matter of someone putting the motion. I personally have no problem with participating in such a debate. I am sure that most honourable senators on both sides of the chamber fully support the decision of the previous government to engage in the Afghanistan theatre. I am open to suggestions.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

DARFUR, SUDAN—DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS

Hon. Art Eggleton: Honourable senators, as former Minister of Defence I was involved in sending the first mission to Afghanistan.

The minister gave a curious answer. I would have thought a clear "yes" would have been the answer. If the government has respect for this chamber, why would it not put it before this chamber as well? The Honourable Senator LeBreton is the Leader of the Government here and I should think she would do that.

I want to follow that comment with a concern about the extension of troops into Afghanistan. I am concerned that it does not become an excuse for not sending troops to Darfur, if we need to send them. I heard the Minister of Defence say that we do not have the troops, although during my time as the Minister of Defence, there were at least two occasions where we went over 4,000 troops. I am not advocating we do that. I will admit that they were stretched into too many theatres of operation around the world. However, we needed to do that to help save lives.

This is also a question of saving lives. Can we not find 600 to 700 troops for this mission? That would bring the number up to 3,000, which is still far less than those two times we went over 4,000.

I know we are doing other things there. The past government did and the current government is, but the fact is the African Union troops are not able to do the job. I know there is a peace agreement, but we have seen a lot of peace agreements in Africa go by the boards. People's lives are being threatened day in and day out. Why can we not find the troops? Are we using this extension as an excuse not to send troops to Darfur?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): That is absolutely not true. We have a serious commitment to Afghanistan, and no one is suggesting that anyone in the government would for one moment turn his or her back on the situation in Darfur.

At the moment, as the honourable senator knows, Canada continues to support and has supported in many ways the important contingency planning work being done by the United Nations as part of the transition to a UN-led peacekeeping mission in Darfur from the current African Union force, which the honourable senator has described as not having great success.

During this process, it is important that the international community continue to support the African Union until responsibility is transferred to the United Nations. The recently signed Darfur Peace Agreement is an important step forward, as both the African Union and the United Nations work together to prepare for the handover to a UN-led peacekeeping mission in Darfur. We have not had a formal request, as far as I know. Allan Rock, Ambassador to the United Nations, is playing an important role at the moment. We are watching this situation carefully and preparing to move when the transfer to the UN has taken place and there is a request for what we can reasonably do in Darfur.

• (1455)

Senator Eggleton: Notwithstanding the comment that the Minister of Defence made a week or so ago, is the government still open to the possibility of sending Canadian troops into Darfur as part of a United Nations mission for peace support options?

Senator LeBreton: There was no contradiction with what the Minister of Defence said. He was referring to a large-scale force like we have presently in Afghanistan. There was never any suggestion by the minister that we would not be willing, when the transfer process was over and complete, to participate in Darfur as part of a United Nations-led peacekeeping force.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

RIGHT TO ABORTION

Hon. Lucie Pépin: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The Conservative Party has come out in favour of reopening the debate on women's right to abortion. The right to terminate pregnancy has made a significant, positive change in women's role in society. Questioning that right is an outmoded debate that means undoing years of collective effort.

Could the Leader of the Government tell us what the Conservative government's current position is on women's right to abortion?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, at the beginning of Senator Pépin's question, she said something to the effect that we intend to re-open this question. That is incorrect. The Conservative government has no plans to change our laws on the issue of abortion.

[Translation]

Senator Pépin: Honourable senators, in January 2006, during the election campaign, party president Don Plett promised that a backbencher would introduce a private member's bill to restrict the right to abortion.

In addition, there are Conservative members like Maurice Vellacott and Garry Breitkreuz who have spoken out against abortion for years and even introduced anti-abortion bills.

Can the leader tell us whether her government is prepared to protect women's right to abortion?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: The only private member's bills that have ever been tabled in the other place, or at least in the last Parliament, were by Liberal members of Parliament.

Abortion is a very personal issue. Some people are pro-choice, like myself, and others are not. They can be found in all political parties. I will have to go back to Hansard and read how the Liberal government handled the private member's bills on abortion sponsored by their own members.

[Translation]

Senator Pépin: I would just like to remind the leader that last week, a huge pro-life rally took place and Conservative members were there.

Look in the *House of Commons Debates* and you will find their anti-abortion bill.

Senator St. Germain: There were also Liberals at the rally. I was there.

[English]

Senator LeBreton: I saw the rally going on outside the window. I did not see much coverage of it on the news other than that Liberal and Conservative members were there, as is their right in a free country.

PUBLIC SAFETY

FIREARMS CENTRE— CUTTING OF LONG-GUN REGISTRY

Hon. Lorna Milne: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. In the Speech from the Throne, this government made a commitment to keeping the lives of Canadians and their families safe and secure. In fact, the speech stated that the streets and communities are increasingly under the threat of gun, gang and drug violence. It also proposed tougher sentences for offenders involved in weapons-related crimes.

• (1500)

Given this apparent commitment to protecting Canadians, why on earth would this government be considering dismantling a system that police officers across the country use 5,000 times each and every day — for their own protection and other things — the Canadian firearms registry? Is this government more concerned with appealing to its support base than it is to the promotion of safety for our peace officers?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the issue here is the long-gun registry, not gun control. I hasten to point out that the strictest gun control laws brought into this country were by a Conservative government, the R.B. Bennett government, in 1934, and then strengthened by a Conservative government when Kim Campbell was the Minister of Justice, in 1989, I believe. The issue is the long-gun registry and not gun control. We support strict gun control laws.

As today's Auditor General's report proves once again, the long-gun registry has not worked. When that bill came before the Senate years ago — I looked up what I had to say at the time — I said that I supported gun control, but that I would rather see the money that they were planning to spend on the long-gun registry spent on border security and homes for battered women.

Senator Milne: Honourable senators, I am sure the Leader of the Government in the Senate is aware that according to recent opinion research, more than 70 per cent of the people in Ontario and Quebec believe in retaining a gun control system — and this includes long guns. In the Prime Minister's home province of Alberta, 51 per cent agree that the registry system should be kept in place.

If the police associations and a majority of Canadians are in favour of retaining the registry, how does this government justify the elimination of this program? Is this government's desire to appeal to a specific group of Canadians more important to them than their own commitment to ensuring the lives of Canadians and their families and keeping them safe and secure?

The firearms registry works, particularly for women. The homicide rate for women killed by gunfire has fallen by 67 per cent in the years between 1991 and 2002 — rural women are killed by long guns.

If the government is committed to hiring a large number of new police officers, why take away one of the few tools that make both women and police safer?

Senator LeBreton: I want to make it very clear that the Conservative Party and the Conservative government are very supportive of gun control. The issue is the long-gun registry.

I read the poll, and I believe it was misleading because the people who conducted the poll were mixed up between the long-gun registry and the issue of gun control. The safe streets and communities part of the platform in the last election was aimed at the people who kill, threaten and do horrible things with illegal guns, which, by the way, never make it onto a registry. That is the problem that people see in their communities, the use of guns that have illegally entered the country, illegally used and that do not show up in any long-gun registry.

• (1505)

[Translation]

DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have an answer to the oral question raised in the Senate on April 27, 2006, by Honourable Senator Banks concerning Crown corporation exemptions from the Alternative Fuels Act; an answer to the oral question raised in the Senate on May 4, 2006, by Honourable Senator Rompkey concerning the acquisition of capital equipment; and, finally, an answer to an oral question raised in the Senate on May 4, 2006, by the Honourable Senator Day concerning the cleanup of Saint John Harbour.

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

PRIORITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS— DEPARTMENTAL AND CROWN CORPORATION EXEMPTIONS FROM ALTERNATIVE FUELS ACT

(Response to question raised by Hon. Tommy Banks on April 27, 2006)

The Treasury Board has not excluded any Crown corporation from the *Alternative Fuels Act*.

More information on the application of the Alternative Fuels Act can be found in the annual report at http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/tbsimScripts/topic-sujet-list_e.asp?ID=426&view=expand.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

BUDGET 2006—ACQUISITION OF CAPITAL EQUIPMENT

(Response to question raised by Hon. Bill Rompkey on May 4, 2006)

Budget 2006 is exciting news for DND and the Canadian Forces. It is evidence that the Government strongly supports our men and women in uniform and recognizes the need for additional resources to pay for revitalizing the military and purchasing new equipment.

The increased funding in our budget means that we can proceed with our plan to acquire new equipment needed to support our army, navy and air force.

Over the next few months, the Minister of National Defence will be bringing a number of procurement priorities to Cabinet.

The Department of National Defence is currently evaluating options to ensure that the Canadian Forces have the right mix of naval and airlift capabilities, such as logistic support ship, strategic and tactical airlift, heavy to medium-lift helicopters, and fixed-wing search and rescue capabilities.

The cost of projects of this magnitude is spread over the useful life of the acquired asset. Accordingly, the annual budgetary amounts would only include a portion of the full capital cost of such assets. The senator can be assured that the phasing of such capital acquisition would ensure affordability.

With regard to icebreakers, the Minister of National Defence asked the Canadian Forces to look at options and to make recommendations to enhance our naval presence in the North.

As we improve our Arctic security, we will do it in a way that is both affordable and effective. The government is committed to pursuing a three-ocean navy capable of operating year-round in Canadian waters, including in the North.

PRIME MINISTER

NEW BRUNSWICK— ELECTION PROMISE TO CLEAN UP SAINT JOHN HARBOUR

(Response to question raised by Hon. Joseph A. Day on May 4, 2006)

This government understands the importance of the clean-up of the Saint John Harbour and the protection of our ocean environments. This government also appreciates the importance of infrastructure to the quality of life of Canadians, which is why Budget 2006 provided \$5.5 billion in new federal funding over the next four years, including the renewal of both the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund and the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund.

The Government of Canada has already announced federal funding for the initial step in the clean-up of Saint John Harbour. This \$8.5 million project, \$2.8 million of which is provided under the federal Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund, will lay the necessary ground work for the broader clean-up.

As a result of the recent budget announcements, we will need to talk with our partners to define how the renewed infrastructure programs, including the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, will operate. The Saint John Harbour Clean Up project will be an important part of these discussions.

POINT OF ORDER

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, a point of order was raised by Senator Corbin concerning the electronic interference with the sound system caused by certain handheld cell phones and BlackBerrys. This is not the first time this objection has been raised. In fact, on at least four occasions, going back to March 9, 2005, the effect of these devices on our sound system have been the subject of complaint.

[*English*]

Many honourable senators contributed to the discussion on the point of order. Most concentrated on the annoying effect of the interference. A few senators expressed concerns about the propriety of using these devices at all, as it raises the question of whose words are being expressed by the senator and distracts the attention of senators from what is being discussed in the chamber. While this latter argument may have merit, I believe it is more probably addressed in a substantive way either in debate in the Senate chamber or as a study by the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, rather than as part of this ruling. On the matter of interference, created by cell phones and BlackBerrys, the Rules of the Senate are explicit. Rule 19(4) stipulates that:

No person, nor any Senator, shall bring any electronic device which produces any sound, whether for personal communication or other use into the Senate Chamber, whether on the floor, inside the Bar, outside the Bar or in the galleries...

[*Translation*]

Speaker Hays gave a detailed ruling March 9, 2005, in which he outlined the problem, cited rule 19(4) and distributed a briefing note explaining the likely sources of the interference. The problem, however, persists. Perhaps there is still some confusion about the technical problem and the possible remedies. This may explain why this point of order keeps coming up.

My understanding is that these wireless devices use different radio frequencies, depending on which company is supporting them. The radio frequency used by certain suppliers causes

[Senator Comeau]

interference with our audio system. The result is the repeated buzz we have been experiencing. This problem is not unique to the Senate: the other place is struggling to cope with this problem as are other jurisdictions across the country. Similar devices, supplied by other service providers, have no discernable effect on the sound system. Now, as it happens, due to differences in service levels provided, it would appear that senators have opted to subscribe with providers whose systems are incompatible with our current sound infrastructure. In the last two years, a number of senators have switched to such suppliers; this likely accounts for some of the aggravating audio interference.

• (1510)

[*English*]

In response to the latest incident, Senate staff has conducted tests with different devices in this chamber, and learned that a unit receiving or sending an email or phone call can have an effect on an open microphone from as many as four seats. This means the range of potential offending devices is from 16 to 20 seats surrounding the open microphone. As a result, even though the electronic device is causing a noise, it would be difficult for me to identify without qualification the offending device and to hold its user to account.

In the course of the debate on the point of order, it was suggested that new wiring or microphones should be investigated to minimize the effect. I have received preliminary reports on this proposal, but I will leave the consideration of the feasibility of any such implementation to the appropriate body, the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration.

[*Translation*]

In the meantime, based on the information received from staff, it would appear that shutting down these devices is the only sure way we can be certain that the rule will not be offended. While I recognize that this dependence on cell phones and BlackBerrys is not so easily overcome, I have asked the table to distribute to each honourable senator's desk a document that details the devices that do, and do not, interfere with our sound system.

I have also had this list circulated by way of letter to the office of each senator. While it would be desirable if all honourable senators would use the suppliers who do not cause interference, I understand that the service levels individual senators require may be better met by other non-compatible companies.

[*English*]

Honourable senators who bring into the Senate chamber any electronic device that produces any sound are at risk of causing a disorder. Honourable senators who possess a device that is not compatible with our sound system are at greater risk, if the said device is not powered down or disabled before they enter the Senate chamber. If honourable senators neglect to do so, it compounds the interference by shutting off the device only when the realization comes that it is causing a problem, since the process of shutting them off sends even greater amounts of data strings that will increase the level of interference.

It is my ruling that the point of order raised by Senator Corbin is well founded. Therefore, the collaboration of all honourable senators is requested to maintain order in the house.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

COMMITTEES SCHEDULED TO MEET ON MONDAYS AUTHORIZED TO CONVENE DURING SENATE ADJOURNMENTS

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government), pursuant to notice of May 11, 2006, moved:

That pursuant to rule 95(3), for the remainder of this session, the Standing Senate Committees on Human Rights, Official Languages, and National Security and Defence be authorized to meet at their approved meeting times as determined by the Government and Opposition Whips on any Monday which immediately precedes a Tuesday when the Senate is scheduled to sit, even though the Senate may then be adjourned for a period exceeding a week.

Motion agreed to.

BANKING, TRADE AND COMMERCE

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY PROCEEDS OF CRIME (MONEY LAUNDERING) AND TERRORIST FINANCING ACT

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government), pursuant to notice of May 10, 2006, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce be authorized to undertake a review of the *Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act* (S.C. 2000, c. 17) pursuant to section 72 of the said Act; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than September 28, 2006.

Motion agreed to.

[English]

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

FIRST REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the first report of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations (permanent order of reference and expenses re rule 104), presented in the Senate on May 11, 2006.—(*Honourable Senator Eyton*)

Hon. J. Trevor Eyton moved the adoption of the report.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is moved by the Honourable Senator Eyton, seconded by Senator Nolin, that this report be adopted now.

Is there debate?

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, could Senator Eyton confirm the impression I am under, that the order of reference contained in this report is the standard order of reference setting out the standard criteria by which the committee will operate and so on, or is there anything new and different this time?

Senator Eyton: Honourable senators, the question is easy. The answer is that there is no change.

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?

Motion agreed to and report adopted.

FUNDING FOR TREATMENT OF AUTISM

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Munson calling the attention of the Senate to the issue of funding for the treatment of autism.—(*Honourable Senator Mercer*)

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Honourable senators, it is an honour for me to support my colleague, the Honourable Senator Munson, in his ongoing effort to raise awareness of a problem in Canada with regard to our children. I will, no doubt, echo many of the thoughts and feelings of those here today. I can only hope that we will do our best to continue to raise awareness of autism and solve the issues surrounding it.

The Autism Society of Canada estimates the number of children with autism has grown by more than 150 per cent in the last six years. This statistic is startling. These sufferers, with compulsive behaviours and speech disorders, become alienated from their family and friends, those who care about them so deeply. According to most research, the disorder affects approximately 190,000 Canadians. Three out of every 1,000 children are being diagnosed — up from four in every 10,000 in 1986. Treatment can have a dramatic effect on autism, but the treatment is not readily available because of its cost.

• (1520)

Honourable senators, this does not sound like the Canada I know and love. We all should be aware that autism is a complex disorder with no absolute cure. Parents fight every day to secure services that are needed to help their children overcome this disorder in order to live the fullest life they can live.

As my colleague Senator Munson has said, we still do not know what causes autism and we still do not know how to cure it. Most importantly, some treatment methods are debatable and not guaranteed. Some people support behavioural intensive intervention as the best treatment for children with autism. There is no question that it is expensive and requires full-time individual therapy. There is also no question that it works.

Honourable senators, at what cost do we keep excluding this treatment from the Canada Health Act? To what future cost do we submit ourselves? I have long been an advocate of preventative measures in the health care system. Treating disease now prevents increased health costs when trying to deal with a disease in the future. In one study with an average of 40 hours per week of one-on-one treatment for two years, almost half of the children recovered to the point of being identical in behaviours to their normal developing peers. This is astonishing. However, also astonishing is the cost — between \$50,000 and \$120,000 per year, depending on the severity of the child's condition. Provinces do pay for treatment, but only up to a certain amount, and not even half the cost. That is not acceptable and it is not Canadian.

Honourable senators, imagine if your child was suffering from autism and you could not afford to pay for the treatment. Can you imagine mortgaging your home, selling your car or taking another job in order to pay for treatment that has been proven to work? This is what parents of autistic children are doing today, all because our health care system will not ensure the treatment. I do not know if all of you here would do those things for the love of your child, but I think you would. Simply put, the treatment should be covered and it should be covered starting yesterday.

Dr. Lonnie Swaigenbaum, a top researcher in autism and an associate professor of paediatrics at McMaster University, is setting up an institute to detect and aid children with autism at an early age, as well as to help train more researchers in the field. Research will help promote awareness, but we need programs. To quote Dr. Swaigenbaum, "We have the opportunity to detect autism early in life. And yet without the ability to provide effective interventions, there is a potential to create more frustration and despair for families." I believe that says it all.

All honourable senators believe that people who are sick or injured should get the treatment they need. Previously I spoke about preventative measures. As mentioned by Senator Munson, nine out of 10 children who do not receive the treatment they need are institutionalized. What a shame. How much cost is associated with that? If we cover the cost of treatment in the early years, can we prevent such institutionalizations and the associated costs? For the sake of children, and for Canada as a whole, it is time we recognize that behavioural treatment for autism is an essential health care service and should be funded by our system of health care.

Honourable senators, I have had the privilege to meet several parents of autistic children. I have had the opportunity to observe them when attending to my godchild, who is severely handicapped with cerebral palsy. She attends a camp with other children who have disabilities. One of those children is autistic. I continue to be amazed not only at the parents of my godchild, but also at the parents of this autistic child because of the care, the

love, the dedication that they affectionately give to those children. Yet, we as a society are not providing what they need: Treatment that has proven to work. It is time that we change that and the time is now.

On motion of Senator Di Nino, debate adjourned.

RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY PROCEDURE FOR REINTRODUCING BILLS FROM PREVIOUS PARLIAMENT—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Hervieux-Payette, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator De Bané, P.C.:

That the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament study and make the necessary recommendations on the advisability of amending Senate practice so that bills tabled during a parliamentary session can be reintroduced at the same procedural stage in the following parliamentary session, with a view to including in the *Rules of the Senate*, a procedure that already exists in the House of Commons and would increase the efficiency of our parliamentary process; and

That the committee report to the Senate no later than June 8, 2006.—(*Honourable Senator Segal*)

Hon. Hugh Segal: Honourable senators, I am honoured to rise and speak briefly in support of the motion put before us by Senator Hervieux-Payette. Senator Hervieux-Payette is a determined, competent and very able member of this house who has served for a long time. I am merely a new member from the class of 2005, who is on a remarkable voyage of discovery and humility every day. The structured redundancy that sees the reintroduction of all bills at the earliest possible stage, notwithstanding what transpired in the previous session, seems — and I say this as someone who believes that Magna Carta was 600 years too soon — excessive under the circumstances. I do not think that reiterating activity for its own sake — that is, activity that serves no purpose — is in the interests of this chamber or our parliamentary role. The wasteful misuse of the time of senators and the distinguished officers of the house, who work diligently to facilitate our debate and discussion, is unnecessary. This reiterative process tends to put all the procedures of the house into some measure of disrepute, unwittingly to be sure. Nevertheless, I think that is its net effect.

Honourable senators should note, as Senator Hervieux-Payette was kind enough to note in her representations, that the other place has approved this same measure on a completely non-partisan, multiparty basis, which speaks to the need for us to reflect on the subject as carefully and constructively as we can. For that reason, I am very supportive that the motion be transferred to the Rules Committee of this chamber, chaired by my distinguished seatmate, Senator Di Nino, with the full and

complete understanding that consideration of this matter would allow us to pronounce upon it in a reasonably diligent way. As this is about brevity, where appropriate, but not necessarily brevity let me end my comments at this point.

On motion of Senator Cools, debate adjourned.

• (1530)

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY RURAL POVERTY

Hon. Hugh Segal, pursuant to notice of April 5, 2006, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry be authorized to examine and report on rural poverty in Canada. In particular, the Committee shall be authorized to:

- (a) examine the dimension and depth of rural poverty in Canada;
- (b) conduct an assessment of Canada's comparative standing in this area, relative to other OECD countries;
- (c) examine the key drivers of reduced opportunity for rural Canadians;
- (d) provide recommendations for measures mitigating rural poverty and reduced opportunity for rural Canadians; and

That the Committee submit its final report no later than April 30, 2007.

He said: Honourable senators, my first notice of motion as the junior senator from Ontario, was a request asking the Senate to authorize the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to examine and report on rural poverty. Today, I want to take the opportunity to propose its passage.

Our rural communities, as we know, are disappearing. The exodus of youth from those communities is continuing at an alarming rate and the remaining rural population is aging.

In 1881, 48 per cent of Canada's workforce found employment in the agricultural sector; today, less than 3 per cent of our workforce has an agricultural occupation.

More than 2 million rural poor are living without adequate shelter, access to needed medical and social services, sufficient or wholesome food, and meaningful employment. They face the problem of the boom-bust agricultural cycle. They face the problem of a lack of strategic investment for a very different future.

As of November 30, 2005, there were 270 food banks operating in small and rural communities, and their usage was up.

A child born in rural Canada is likely to leave school by the age of 15, struggle with addictions and stay poor. When one is born to poverty, when one's range of prospects is so narrow as to be virtually invisible, the incident of crime, addiction and violence increases.

It is my great privilege to serve as a member on the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. I have a strong and ongoing respect for the agricultural and other experience reflected by members of that committee. Should the Senate wish to proceed with this proposition, I am comfortable that it would be dealt with by the committee within its other range of priorities under the distinguished leadership of Senator Fairbairn in a fashion constructive and appropriate as to both time and focus.

Hon. Daniel Hays (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, would Senator Segal permit a question?

Senator Segal: By all means.

Senator Hays: The honourable senator stated that there are 2 million rural Canadians living in poverty. It is obvious that the honourable senator has given this matter a great deal of thought and his is a great motion.

Where do these people live? I am interested in how that has prompted the honourable senator to bring this matter forward.

Senator Segal: The number 2 million is determined by looking at the number of people living in communities of a size defined by Statistics Canada as rural by definition. One then considers the number of those people living below the low-income cut-off. There is a healthy debate in the country as to whether the low-income cut-off, as it is used by statisticians and social policy experts, is the best indicator of poverty. However, it is the one used in our urban areas. It strikes me as only fair to apply the same premise to our rural areas.

Second, because of some of the difficulties around transportation and access to services, one's particular position on the income spectrum may not necessarily be an indicator of quality of life. Specifically, senior women and women living by themselves and who do not have access to transportation are particularly victimized by some of the lack of services available in rural Canada.

We have a range of issues that relate both to the agricultural cycle as well as to the change in technology in both forestry and fisheries. Many of the people living in rural Canada are our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. This brings the prism of rural poverty to us in a way that might allow us to suggest some constructive macro- and micro-policy recommendations for government that could have some significant impact.

The numbers are based on Statistics Canada data. This is also reflected in the work done by others at the University of Guelph and the University of Toronto.

I hope we can look at this not in a fashion that is unrelated to urban poverty but in a fashion that relates to the way the two connect.

Certainly, in cities like Kingston and others across Canada, the inability of the rural area to provide support in a host of ways produces greater pressure on social services in the county seats as they may be across Canada. This is an issue of immense non-partisan significance and I am hopeful colleagues will wish to proceed with my motion?

Senator Hays: I thank the honourable senator for the additional information.

These are like purchasing power parity type analyses, in terms of the extent to which these people are living in poverty.

Where are these people in terms of different areas of the country? Obviously, the honourable senator is concerned with Ontario. Can the honourable senator give us a further indication as to where the poverty-stricken live?

Senator Segal: I am glad to respond to the question of the honourable senator.

There is no question that in parts of the country that are doing economically better, in the context of the rising sea lifts all ships, rural Canadians are doing better as well. For example, the issue of rural poverty in Alberta is not as intense as it is in Atlantic Canada, parts of Quebec, Eastern and Northern Ontario, Saskatchewan and north of 60. North of 60 is a huge difficulty for us in many parts of the country because those remote areas have not been sustained by a broad economic growth factor.

I should point out that other countries with large geography, for example, some of our Scandinavian and European friends, have found ways to bridge some of these gaps. It is my hope that in due course the committee will have a chance to look at those to see if any apply to the work we might do in this country.

Hon. John G. Bryden: Is the honourable senator a member of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry?

Senator Segal: Yes, honourable senators, I am.

Senator Bryden: I am a bit puzzled as to why the honourable senator would select the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to deal with an issue that is primarily a social issue. I take it that it will demand the opportunity to hear witnesses who deal in that area. I refer to experts in the field. The honourable senator said that rural poverty has a significant impact on the neighbouring urban area, whether it is Kingston or Fredericton Junction.

I am puzzled as to why the Agriculture Committee would have a high enough level of interest and expertise to be able to deal with the issue. It has been my experience that, for example, the support staff assigned to a committee often spend quite a lot of time considering what is happening in a particular area. I am talking about the clerks of committee and the people from the Library of Parliament who are assigned to help a committee on a given study.

If honourable senators consider our Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, under the chairmanship of Senator Kirby, they will know that some of the members of that committee have made a career out of health

care, whether it be regular health care or mental health care. They are probably the most knowledgeable experts in the country. I am assuming that the same applies in areas such as poverty, its social implications and its impact on children and the aged.

Why would the honourable senator choose to move that this motion be dealt with by the Agriculture Committee instead of sending it to the Social Affairs Committee?

Senator Segal: I thank the honourable senator for his thoughtful question.

My aspiration related to a sense that often the Agriculture Committee deals with cyclical issues as they relate to commodity cycles, to supply management and to the regulation of agriculture and forestry activities, all in a constructive and helpful way.

• (1540)

It was my hope, in the initial crafting of this motion, that by pulling together all those pieces in terms of the impact on people, namely the escalating and concerning levels of rural poverty across the country, the committee might be able to provide a further benefit to this chamber and to the country by assessing how all those issues come together at the level of poverty and social exclusion not only for people who live in our farming communities, but also for people in the adjacent forestry and fishery communities that are equally important.

While I understand and accept the senator's counsel that one might have first gone to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, it struck me as constructive, particularly in terms of the farm crisis issues we now face, to try to connect them with day-to-day lives, which are, in many cases, poverty-stricken across rural Canada, in a fashion that might produce an incentive for the government to act more directly and quickly, mostly because we have an uncommon window where the government has a largely rural base and needs to sustain that base. The official opposition in the other place has an urban base, but needs to grow in rural Canada. It struck me that if we could do work around this particular issue in a fashion that produced an incentive for both sides to act, we may achieve some fundamental activity on behalf of rural Canadians that would be seen as constructive, notwithstanding where anyone sits on any committee or in this house.

Senator Bryden: I assume that I am to accept that the \$100 a month for children under six years of age is a start.

Hon. Art Eggleton: Honourable senators, I rise to support the motion of Senator Segal to have the Agriculture Committee examine the question of poverty. One may ask why a big city person is supporting this motion. I support it because the issue is not only vitally important for rural Canada, but also for urban Canada, and as a former big city mayor I well appreciate the need to deal with the various aspects of poverty.

A task force in Toronto recently released a report entitled "Time for a Fair Deal." The report deals with the condition in which many working age adults find themselves. That is only part of the story. There are also the questions of child poverty and poverty of single parents. There is gender-related poverty, and the gap between the rich and the poor that is becoming more acute throughout the country.

I support this motion because I want it to be a catalyst for dealing with both the rural and urban sides of the issue. They are intertwined and we need to deal with both. The rural and urban parts of Canada are very important to each other both socially and economically.

In regard to Senator Bryden's concern, I believe that the Social Affairs Committee would be the ideal forum to deal with matters of urban poverty, perhaps in the context of an overall cities agenda.

There is much commonality between urban and rural poverty. Many issues will require study that could be of common benefit, and there are some that are peculiar to each segment of the population. This is a good start to dealing with this issue.

This chamber dealt with poverty in a more total context under the leadership of Senator Croll in 1971. To my knowledge, this chamber has not dealt with the matter since. It is time to deal with these issues.

I commend Senator Segal for getting a start on rural poverty, but we must look at urban poverty as well.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO ENGAGE SERVICES

Hon. Wilbert J. Keon, for Senator Kirby, pursuant to notice of April 25, 2006, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology have power to engage the services of such counsel and technical, clerical, and other personnel as may be necessary for the purpose of its examination and consideration of such bills, subject matters of bills and estimates as are referred to it.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO PERMIT ELECTRONIC COVERAGE

Hon. Wilbert J. Keon, for Senator Kirby, pursuant to notice of April 25, 2006, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology be empowered to permit coverage by electronic media of its public proceedings with the least possible disruption of its hearings.

Motion agreed to.

BILL S-211—COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO RECEIVE PAPERS AND EVIDENCE ON BILL S-11 OF THIRTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition), for Senator Lapointe, pursuant to notice of May 11, 2006, moved:

That the papers and evidence received and taken on Bill S-11, to amend the Criminal Code (lottery schemes), by the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs during the First Session of the Thirty-eighth Parliament be referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology for its study on Bill S-211, to amend the Criminal Code (lottery schemes).

She said: Honourable senators, as I ask everyone else to explain, I think that I owe the Senate a brief explanation.

In the past, Senator Lapointe's bill has been referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. This time, the same bill is being referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. It seemed like a good idea, in order to expedite proceedings, that the evidence heard by the Legal Affairs Committee be made available to the Social Affairs Committee. It is a somewhat unusual, but I think constructive, way to proceed in this case.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

THE SENATE

MOTION TO IMPLORE PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA TO ASSIST IN LOCATING RAOUL WALLENBERG— DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Consiglio Di Nino, pursuant to notice of May 11, 2006, moved:

That the Senate of Canada implore President Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, to use his good office to shed light on the whereabouts of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who was responsible for saving the lives of thousands of people from the Nazi death camps. Mr. Wallenberg was allegedly seized by the Soviet Army on January 17, 1945 and has not been seen or heard from since.

• (1550)

He said: Honourable senators, from time to time, the world produces a truly great humanitarian. It is always a person who puts the well-being and safety of others ahead of his or her own.

One such person is Raoul Wallenberg. Mr. Wallenberg was a young Swedish businessman who was recruited by his friends and colleagues to join the Swedish diplomatic corps in Budapest, Hungary. The specific mandate of this group was to set up a rescue operation for Jews, many of whom had been, and continued to be, deported to the Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps, where certain death awaited.

Let me quote some historical details of Mr. Wallenberg's successful efforts to save the Jews of Budapest from the website of Canadian Heritage:

At the end of June 1944, Mr. Wallenberg was appointed First Secretary at the Swedish Legation in Budapest with the mission to start a rescue operation for the Jews there. Wallenberg used creative methods and unorthodox diplomacy to achieve this goal. Based on an original idea of his colleague, Per Anger, he designed a Swedish pass to help protect Jews against German and Hungarian officials who were trying to deport them. Mr. Wallenberg was also able to establish safe houses for many Jews in Budapest. The Swedish flag was hung above the doors of these houses and Mr. Wallenberg declared them Swedish territory, ensuring the Nazi army did not visit to take their occupants to detention camps.

During the war, many Jews were being deported from Hungary on foot and by train. Reports suggest that Mr. Wallenberg handed out protective passes, food and medicine to people on these forced marches, and that he climbed onto the trains and pushed bundles of passes to people inside. He then threatened and bribed officials until they agreed to free those who were in possession of these Swedish passes.

During the last days of World War II, in response to concerns that the Nazis were planning to kill the 115,000 inhabitants of the Budapest Jewish ghetto, Mr. Wallenberg warned that if the massacre were carried out, he would ensure that the perpetrators would be tried as war criminals. The ghetto was left alone, and Mr. Wallenberg is frequently credited with saving its inhabitants.

The following is from the website of The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation:

Now Raoul Wallenberg began to expand the "Swedish houses." These were more than thirty buildings in the Pest district where Jews could seek shelter. A Swedish flag hung outside the door of each, and Wallenberg declared the building Swedish territory. The number of inhabitants ... soon climbed to 15,000.

The other neutral diplomatic missions in Budapest began to follow Wallenberg's example by issuing protective passports. A number of diplomats from other countries were inspired to open their own "safe houses" for Jewish refugees....

During the second week of January of 1945, Raoul Wallenberg learned that Eichmann was about to set in motion a total massacre of the Jews living in Budapest's larger ghetto. The only person who could prevent it was General August Schmidhuber, commander of the German troops in Hungary.

Wallenberg's ally Szalay was sent to find Schmidhuber and hand over a note which declared that Raoul Wallenberg would make sure that the general would be held personally responsible for the massacre and that he would be hanged as a war criminal after the war. The massacre was cancelled at the last minute as a result of Raoul Wallenberg's intervention.

Two days later, the Russians arrived and found 97,000 Jews alive in two Budapest ghettos. This brought to 120,000 the total number of Jews who had survived the Nazi efforts to exterminate them in Hungary.

According to Per Anger, Wallenberg's friend and colleague, Wallenberg must be given credit for having saved about 100,000 Jews.

Colleagues, over the years, there have been conflicting reports regarding the whereabouts of Raoul Wallenberg. What seems to be generally accepted is that on January 17, 1945, the Soviet army seized Mr. Wallenberg, and no one has seen or heard from him since.

During the last several decades, a variety of stories have surfaced about the fate of Mr. Wallenberg, including the unsubstantiated claim by the Russians that in 1947, he died of a heart attack in prison. In January 2001, Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson commented:

As long as there is no unequivocal evidence of what happened to Mr. Wallenberg — and this is still the case — it cannot be said that Raoul Wallenberg is dead.

The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation is an NGO which counts among its supporters more than 60 heads of state, close to 70 governors and mayors, over 80 Nobel Prize recipients and numerous other eminent and respected men and women including a number of Canadians. The foundation's mission is to develop educational programs and public awareness campaigns based on the values of solidarity and civic courage, ethical cornerstones of the Saviours of the Holocaust.

They have launched an international initiative to pressure Russian President Vladimir Putin to bring closure to this both heroic and tragic story by reopening the files of Mr. Wallenberg. The world owes Raoul Wallenberg and his family, including his niece Nane Annan, wife of the UN Secretary General, at least this small but hugely significant step in recognition of his courageous and heroic actions.

I urge all colleagues to support this motion, which, if passed, I intend to bring to the Russian Ambassador to Canada for delivery to President Vladimir Putin.

On motion of Senator Stratton, debate adjourned.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I hear something ringing. On a matter of order, the house will not proceed with business until the offending device is removed or turned off.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS**COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO CONTINUE STUDY ON
ISSUES RELATING TO NEW AND EVOLVING
POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING
FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Hon. Janis G. Johnson, for Senator Rompkey, pursuant to notice of May 11, 2006, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans be authorized to examine and report on issues relating to the federal government's new and evolving policy framework for managing Canada's fisheries and oceans;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and the work accomplished by the Committee on the subject during the First Session of the Thirty-eighth Parliament be referred to the Committee; and

That the Committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than Friday, June 29, 2007.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, prior to the adjournment, I ask leave of the Senate to advance my notice of motion given earlier today for an address to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, congratulating her on her eightieth birthday from two days hence to the next sitting of the Senate in light of the very short day we may have this Thursday.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Senate adjourned until Wednesday, May 17, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

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