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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, October 24, 2006**



THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA  
SPEAKER

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## THE SENATE

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

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

Prayers.

### SENATORS' STATEMENTS

#### THE LATE HONOURABLE MARK LORNE BONNELL

**Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck:** Honourable senators, I wish to take a moment to pay tribute to our former colleague, Senator Lorne Bonnell, who passed away on October 9.

Dr. Bonnell lived a full life. He was a successful medical doctor, politician, entrepreneur and family man. He always showed a remarkable passion for the well-being of Islanders in both his public and private life. Over the course of his career as a medical doctor, he had more than 10,000 patients and delivered more than 3,000 babies. He was a fierce advocate for expanding and improving medical services, so that all Islanders could receive the very best possible care.

In his public life, he was seldom low-key. In fact, he was one of the most successful politicians in the history of Prince Edward Island politics. Dr. Bonnell was elected for the first time in 1951, at the age of 27, won re-election five times in a row, and served in a number of cabinet positions while in the legislature. He worked hard on behalf of his constituents, and his success on the campaign trail was a testament to the respect and confidence Islanders had for him.

Dr. Bonnell was no different when he arrived in the Senate in 1971. Anyone who served with him can attest to his spirit and energy here in this chamber. During his 27 years here, he fought for the Island and its people. He was proud of his birthplace, and worked hard to ensure that the voices of Islanders were always heard in Ottawa.

I am sure Lorne Bonnell will be greatly missed by all who had the good fortune to know him. I offer my sincere condolences to his children, Mark and Linda, and to the rest of his family.

#### QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

WITHDRAWN

**Hon. Terry Stratton:** Honourable senators, on Thursday last, I gave written and oral notice of a question of privilege. At this time, I wish to advise the house that I will not be pursuing this matter as a question of privilege.

[Translation]

#### LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE POUR L'ALPHABÉTISATION EN FRANÇAIS

**Hon. Maria Chaput:** Honourable senators, I wish to acknowledge today the Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français, which is working strenuously for literacy in Canada, and literacy in French in particular.

In an email dated October 19, 2006, Mr. Fernan Carrière, the Director of Communications for the FCAF, confirmed to me that:

— we are indeed talking about nine million people of working age (16-65 years old) across Canada who have difficulty understanding what they read.

And, according to him,

— if we were to add those over 65 years old, the number would grow to 12 million.

This is not a condemnation of the education system because, in language learning, lack of use will cause regression.

However, he points out that, in reality:

— a large portion of the nine million people of working age have a job. The problem facing them is that they can manage just fine until, following a work injury, health problem or plant closure, they have the misfortune of losing their job. Having made do with minimal reading skills until then, all of a sudden they find themselves lacking.

These figures are much more telling when we put a face on them.

I have learned that, each year, the FCAF publishes a collection of testimonials from a number of these individuals, under the title *Le Printemps des lettres*. Allow me, honourable senators, to read some excerpts from the 2006 collection, which are often very moving.

My name is Stéphane. I am 33 years old. It is important to learn to write because I want to work as a janitor.

• (1410)

And Michel wrote:

The business I work for will be closing soon. I would like to work for a company as a machinist. I would like to go to adult school to improve my reading and writing and to complete high school because you need high school to go to trade school.

Here is Monique's contribution:

I am a 40-year-old single mother. My son and I do schoolwork together after supper. I went back to school because I was afraid I would not be able to help my son.

Honourable senators, I would like to congratulate and thank the Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français.

### THE HONOURABLE ROBERT BOURASSA

#### UNVEILING OF OFFICIAL STATUE—QUEBEC CITY

**Hon. Dennis Dawson:** Honourable senators, last Thursday, I had the great pleasure of participating in the unveiling ceremony of the official statue of Robert Bourassa in Quebec City on the tenth anniversary of his death. I sincerely congratulate my colleague, Senator Lise Bacon, as well as the Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest, friends of Robert Bourassa who played a major role in this event.

Robert Bourassa gave Quebec medicare, family allowances and legal aid. He gave the province its Official Language Act, the first legislation to strengthen French in Quebec. He gave Quebec its status of women council and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

The best description of his priorities is captured in the two inscriptions at the base of the statue. The first reads:

April 10, 1971. Developing James Bay is the key to Quebec's economic progress. It is also the key to its social progress and political stability. It is Quebec's future.

The second, which is still quite relevant, says:

June 22, 1990. Quebec is, today and forever, a distinct society, free and capable of assuming its destiny and development.

This subject remains topical today, as evidenced this weekend in Montreal.

Far from being a passionate federalist, he was nevertheless a great, rational Canadian. His work on the Meech Lake Accord file, in partnership with the Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Mulroney, is an example of his practical approach to federalism. When Meech Lake failed, he could have easily used it as an opportunity to promote sovereignty and look like a hero in Quebec. On the contrary, although risking his reputation and his health, he launched a new effort to bring Quebec back within the Canadian Constitution.

We have all met people who will mark our lives forever. For me, that person was Robert Bourassa. As a member of the Liberal Party, but not a militant one, I followed the career of this young opposition member in the Quebec National Assembly. In the fall of 1969, when he decided to take the plunge and run for the leadership of the Liberal Party, I decided to run as a delegate. I told myself that, if a young man of 35 wanted to and could potentially become leader of the Liberal Party and Premier of Quebec, then I could do my part. That is how my political career began.

[English]

I spent many years working in the Liberal Party under Robert Bourassa. I helped create the Quebec Youth Commission with Lawrence Cannon, who is now sitting in the other place. It was at that time that I met both Senator Rivest and Senator Lise Bacon. She was president of the party at that time, and Jean-Claude went

[ Senator Chaput ]

on to become my provincial counterpart as an MLA when I became a federal MP.

Mr. Bourassa's defeat in 1976 was a major setback for federalists in Quebec. However, his return in 1983 as leader, and then premier in 1985, of a still-federalist Liberal Party showed his commitment not only to Quebec, but also to Canada.

[Translation]

Upon his return to politics in the early 1980s, his path led him to me, since I was the Liberal caucus chair in Ottawa, and I did not hesitate to support him a second time. I remain proud of my support for this man, who gave so much to Canada, to Quebec and to Quebecers. Thank you, Mr. Bourassa.

• (1415)

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### CANADA HEALTH INFOWAY

2005-06 ANNUAL REPORT TABLED  
2006-07 CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN TABLED

**Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, two copies of the Canada Health Infoway 2005-06 annual report and the Canada Health Infoway 2006-07 corporate business plan.

### RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

NAME CHANGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
TO INCLUDE INTERNATIONAL TRADE—  
THIRD REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

**Hon. Consiglio Di Nino,** Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, presented the following:

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

The Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament has the honour to present its

#### THIRD REPORT

Pursuant to the order of reference from the Senate of September 28, 2006, your Committee recommends that rule 86(1)(h) of the *Rules of the Senate* be amended by replacing the words "Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs" with the words "Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade."

Respectfully submitted,

CONSIGLIO DI NINO  
*Chair*

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

On motion of Senator Di Nino, report placed on Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

#### CANADA-FRANCE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL MEETING, SEPTEMBER 11-16, 2006—  
REPORT TABLED

**Hon. Lise Bacon:** Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 23(6), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Thirty-fourth annual meeting of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-France Inter-Parliamentary Association, held in Paris and Touraine from September 11 to 17, 2006.

• (1420)

[English]

#### CANADA-UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES,  
AUGUST 16-20, 2005—REPORT TABLED

**Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein:** Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 23(6), I have the honour to table in the Senate, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at the National Conference of State Legislatures Annual Meeting and Exhibition, 2005, entitled Strong States, Strong Nation, held in Seattle, Washington, August 16 to 20, 2005.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES,  
AUGUST 14-18, 2006—REPORT TABLED

**Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein:** Honourable senators, I also wish to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary group respecting its participation at the National Conference of State Legislatures Strong States, Strong Nation, held in Nashville, Tennessee, from August 14 to 18, 2006.

#### STUDY ON PRESENT STATE OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SYSTEM

INTERIM REPORT OF BANKING, TRADE  
AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE TABLED

Leave having been given to revert to Presentation of Reports from Standing or Special Committees:

**Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to table the tenth (interim) report of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce entitled, *Passports and PASS Cards, Identity and Citizenship: Implementing the WHTI*.

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

#### SENATE REFORM

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE SPECIAL  
COMMITTEE TO EXTEND DATE OF FINAL REPORT

**Hon. Daniel Hays (Leader of the Opposition):** 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 Wednesday, June 21, 2006, and Wednesday September 27, 2006, the date for the Special Senate Committee on Senate Reform to submit its final report be extended from October 26, 2006 to December 21, 2006.

Before the motion is put by the chair, I wish to ask leave to explain what is behind my moving of this motion, to clarify.

**Hon. Marcel Prud'homme:** I intended to ask for clarification.

**Senator Hays:** Honourable senators, the committee has been working on, and I can advise has completed its work —

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I take it that the honourable senator is simply giving a notice of motion at this time. If the honourable senator is asking for the consent of the house to make a few observations, we will not get into the substance of the motion. This is a notice of motion, but the Leader of the Opposition is always recognized. If he wants to make an observation, the house would be pleased to hear it.

**Senator Hays:** I take it that I have leave, honourable senators, to do this.

I wanted to advise the reason for the notice of motion, to avoid confusion in senators' minds. As honourable senators know, we have had under study Bill S-4, and a motion moved by Senator Murray, seconded by Senator Austin, to increase Senate seats.

The notice of motion is not given in respect of anything to do with those two matters. It is expected that reports on those two matters will be tabled in this place this week, on either Wednesday or Thursday. It has to do with other work that I wish to propose that the committee do and that will be dealt with in the committee at a later date.

[Translation]

#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

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

**Hon. Maria Chaput:** Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, pursuant to rule 95(3)(a), the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages be authorized to meet on November 14 and 15, 2006, even though the Senate may then be adjourned for a period exceeding one week.

• (1425)

[English]

## QUESTION PERIOD

### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

#### CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD—MEMBER PARTICIPATION—MARKETING SYSTEM

**Hon. Daniel Hays (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, last week, in an exchange with the Leader of the Government, we talked about the Canadian Wheat Board. As senators will recall, our exchange touched on the provisions of legislation relevant to whether or not the single-desk selling function of the board would change, a measure with which the government has indicated they wish to proceed. In answer to a question from Senator Mitchell, I took it that the leader was confirming that plans were being made to hold a producer vote on this question. Of course, the legislation provides for such a vote.

My question is: Can the Leader of the Government confirm that my understanding of her answer is correct?

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** I thank the honourable senator for his question.

There will be an election involving the Canadian Wheat Board this fall as grain producers vote to elect directors to the Wheat Board in an electoral process that, as you know, is currently under way.

**Senator Hays:** Honourable senators, the conclusion that I drew was incorrect, then, and I need the leader to confirm that she did not make that statement.

Let me ask the question now: Is it the intention of the government to hold such an election, as called for by the legislation, on the issue of whether or not the single-desk selling function should continue?

**Senator LeBreton:** I thank the honourable senator for his question. The government is working on the outline of how a strong and viable Canadian Wheat Board will operate in a marketing choice environment. We are presently consulting producers as we prepare the way forward. No options have yet been ruled in or out. A task force is currently exploring a range of options, and the Minister of Agriculture has said in the other place that he expects to receive the report on the findings of the task force within the next couple of weeks.

It is interesting to note that the Province of Manitoba has now said that they are prepared to go ahead with a vote, but as I said, we will await the findings of the task force.

**Senator Hays:** I have noted the statement of the Minister of Agriculture for Manitoba on that subject, as the leader has indicated. I think it represents a strong sentiment from an important Prairie province that signals how strongly the feelings are about respecting the legislation that would require that producers be given a voice in a plebiscite. A moment ago I used

the word “election;” I meant “vote.” That is, a plebiscite, a referendum or whatever the word might be; the provisions of the act are clear that, before changing that section or before changing that practice, this vote is a condition precedent.

However, the closed-door hearings of the committee looking into this matter tend to be a flag for many supporters — and in some cases non-supporters — of the board that the government is not following the proper procedures, which I have described. I will not repeat them.

• (1430)

If the Leader of the Government cannot give the answer now, will she seek an answer, or if she can give an answer now, will she indicate when these concerns will be addressed and producers can be satisfied that they will have their proper say in a plebiscite as called for by the legislation?

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, I believe that in July a round table was held with producers and various stakeholders in the industry. I will only repeat what I said a few moments ago. We are committed to marketing choice. The task force that has been struck to consider all options is in the final stages of preparing its report. Minister Strahl did say that he expected to make a decision on their findings, and on the direction the government plans to take, after the report is presented within the next couple of weeks.

**Senator Hays:** In the same context, can the Leader of the Government in the Senate confirm that the government intends to respect the requirement of the legislation?

**Senator LeBreton:** The government intends to respect the commitment we made in the last election campaign to provide marketing choice for Canadian wheat growers.

## HEALTH

### FUNDING TO THE SECRETARIAT ON PALLIATIVE AND END-OF-LIFE CARE

**Hon. Sharon Carstairs:** Honourable senators, my question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I want to thank her for her very quick reply to my question of October 3, which was provided by delayed answer on October 19.

I am extremely pleased that the Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care in Health Canada is taking pride in all the programs that were initiated during the time I was the minister with special responsibility for palliative care. However, that was three years ago, and it appears that nothing has happened since.

I know that there were a number of initiatives on the drawing board from the working groups. Can the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell me why the public awareness program informing Canadians about palliative care, about advance directives and the right to choose the care they receive will no longer be funded?

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, when my honourable friend asked the question about palliative care, the information I received indicated that the government did not cut the funding. The

honourable senator talked about a meeting she had attended in Montreal, where a letter from Minister of Health, Tony Clement, was read.

There were savings all across the board, but the government did not cut the funding. There was a proportion of the budget that had never been used. In fact, no cuts were made to the palliative care program.

**Senator Carstairs:** Honourable senators, I think the minister's information is incorrect. The budget for the secretariat last year was \$1.3 million. The budget for the secretariat this year, after cuts, is \$470,000. By any stretch of the imagination, that is a cut.

Can the Leader of the Government tell the house why there will not be a national strategy on palliative care, a concept approved by this chamber last week but, quite frankly, on the drawing board of the secretariat for the past three years, and for which there will now be no funding?

**Senator LeBreton:** Oftentimes, various agencies of government draw up a budget, so we can use the terms "budget" and "actual need." It is my understanding that when the Department of Health went through the various programs, they budgeted sufficient funds for all of these programs to continue. However, they put into the savings pot, if you will, monies that were not used. That in no way impeded the ability of the program to operate because they never used the full budgeted amount.

• (1435)

**Senator Carstairs:** Honourable senators, even in the minister's own reply she indicated that the working groups were not guaranteed to have this money. Obviously, they once had money but now they do not have money. Can the honourable minister tell the house how Canada is to have national standards for the delivery of palliative care and how those standards are to be implemented when there has been a cut of greater than 50 per cent to the secretariat that would be the very group to coordinate the development of these international standards?

**Senator LeBreton:** The honourable senator has complimented me on the delayed answer to her that clearly outlines many of the good initiatives that she worked on. By virtue of the answer, those programs are continuing. I do not accept that the government has turned its back on this or on any other important area simply because it found savings, often produced by the departments, in areas where programs can continue without spending every cent previously allocated, especially the money that had not yet been spent. The delayed answer in response to the honourable senator's question states that palliative care is not in any danger.

## HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### FUNDING FOR LITERACY PROGRAMS— FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL PARTNERSHIPS

**Hon. Joyce Fairbairn:** Honourable senators, my question is to the Honourable Leader of the Government in the Senate. I wish to continue with a concern that has been expressed across the country. I received many phone calls yesterday from people in coalitions who are very worried about trying to keep their programs alive for the next few months. The Honourable Diane

Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, said in our exchange last week that she is eager to work in cooperation with her provincial and territorial counterparts. That was good news, and I would hope that we will see the benefits from that association.

In recent years, the National Literacy Secretariat and its provincial and territorial counterparts had been working hard at a pan-Canadian literacy strategy, which would open up the doors of learning ever wider and would create greater value for dollars spent. This was a strong recommendation of the Human Resources Committee in the other place and of a broad cross-section of business, educators and social policy groups across the country.

I would like to know from the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether this federal-provincial partnership can continue to be pursued in a practical manner, and not in a way that pulls back from a mutually beneficial cause. The strategy has been out there for a while and simply should not stop. We should have a Canadian accord on literacy that would help every person in every corner of this country.

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I thank the honourable senator for her question. There is no indication whatsoever that cooperation between the federal, provincial and territorial governments on literacy programs will stop. I have seen no evidence of that ending, and I have heard not one person say that the good work in the area of literacy has been impeded or impaired by government announcements. Literacy and skills programs abound in virtually every major department of government such as Indian and Northern Affairs and Citizenship and Immigration, just to name two.

The government has spent considerable time looking at the issues of skilled workers and adult literacy and has earmarked \$81 million specifically, in addition to the funding that I mentioned in the chamber the other day for various other departments. I have seen no proof.

• (1440)

As I said several weeks ago to Senator Fairbairn in answer to this question, if she could say six months from now that somehow or other the literacy programs or people in this country have suffered as a result of the considerable efforts that the government is making, then I might be prepared to concede that we should take a look at them. In fact, these programs will be improved because we are targeting our efforts to train skilled workers. As we know, there is a serious skilled labour shortage in the country.

Rather than running around like Henny-Penny saying the sky is falling in, the literacy and skills training programs that the government is supporting will certainly benefit Canadian citizens and will prove to be very worthwhile.

**Senator Fairbairn:** I should say to the Leader of the Government in the Senate that I am no Henny-Penny either. I have listened carefully to what she said. I also must listen carefully to those who are on the ground teaching people in these programs and who now must shut their doors because they do not have the assistance forthcoming that had been indicated. I am not making these things up. These people are hoping their funding will last into the new year. I am hopeful as well, but at

the moment they are concerned about being able to fund the programs they have been using.

Honourable senators, there is a glitch somewhere. I do not know what it is, but I do not want to see it happen any more than does my honourable friend, certainly not to those people who are coming forward to learn new skills so they can have a decent life.

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, as part of the overall literacy program announcements and also as part of the announcements with regard to the savings that were found, it is clear that existing agreements are not being touched. Again, all programs that had been funded will continue to be funded through Minister Finley and her provincial and territorial counterparts.

One of the problems of the past, as the honourable senator knows, was governments infringing on each other's territory. In the future, some of the organizations that are presently being funded will have the opportunity to approach their provincial authorities, who will be working with Minister Finley at the federal level. Again, if six months down the road there is an organization that has not been able to access a particular program, then perhaps it will be time to ring the alarm bell; but at the moment I certainly do not think so.

Few members of the government have actually asked this question in our own caucus. Without divulging caucus secrets, this is not an issue that is receiving much attention from people out there. When it is explained what the government is doing, there is not a great deal of concern being expressed across the country about our well-thought-out literacy and skills training program.

**Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck:** Honourable senators, on a supplementary question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, I do not know how she can say that no concern is being expressed.

• (1445)

I would like the Leader of the Government in the Senate to come to Prince Edward Island and talk with some of the Islanders who have been involved in these programs. The leader says there is no indication that literacy programs have been affected. I can tell honourable senators that in my province, the Prince Edward Island Literacy Alliance has indicated that they will be closing their doors on March 31 unless the federal government reinstates that money. How can the leader say that there is no indication that literacy programs have been affected?

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, there will always be people who have strong views on all sides of these issues. The fact is that we have set aside \$81 million, in addition to the monies that other departments spend on literacy and skills training.

With regard to the specific organization in Prince Edward Island, I will take that question as notice, because I would be interested to know what the provincial and federal governments are doing co-operatively for literacy on the Island. We have witnessed many examples of people saying that if they do not get X number of dollars, they will shut their doors. In fact they do not

because, having looked into the program and accessed it properly, such a consequence did not occur. I am not referring specifically to the organization that the honourable senator mentioned.

However, I will take her question as notice and get back to the honourable senator with the views of the department and the minister, including the minister's dealings with her counterpart in Prince Edward Island, in an attempt to answer the honourable senator's specific question.

[Translation]

## THE CABINET

### STATUS OF MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GENERAL ELECTION AND BY-ELECTION

**Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

It will be recalled that, when the minister was appointed to the Senate a few months ago, he promised to resign from the Senate at a certain point and run in the next election.

We also know that there will be a by-election in the riding of Repentigny, near Montreal, on November 27. The minister has let it be known that he will not stand in this by-election.

I would like to make two points: first, we are not in a hurry to lose him because we like having the minister among us; and second, some of us do not accept the principle so often stated by the Prime Minister that there is less democratic legitimacy in being a senator, or even a minister in the Senate, than there is in being a member of Parliament or a member who is appointed minister.

That being said, the Prime Minister and other members of his party have often stated this principle.

I would like to know, in terms of the so-called principle of democratic legitimacy, what is the difference between a general election and a by-election?

[English]

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I am very happy to report that we will not be losing Senator Fortier. Senator Fraser's wish is our command. Senator Fortier will be staying in the Senate for a while yet.

Senator Fortier will not be running in the by-election. We already have a candidate nominated in that by-election.

The Minister of Public Works is a very important position. When Senator Fortier was named to the cabinet in their portfolio as well as representing Montreal at the cabinet table, he made it clear that it was his full intention to run in the general election for a seat in the House of Commons, not for a seat in the Senate. His position was clearly understood and everyone supported it.

[ Senator Fairbairn ]



It is rather interesting to observe the short memories on the other side, because the Liberals appointed a senator as a member of cabinet in 1997 or 1999, I believe, when they won no seats in Nova Scotia. It caused Senator Graham to lose his position as Leader of the Government in the Senate. The Liberals appointed Senator Bernie Boudreau, who sat as the government leader in the Senate. Thereafter, there were many by-elections, including in Nova Scotia, but Senator Boudreau did not run. He stayed in the Senate, and when the general election was called he ran and lost.

• (1450)

**Senator Fraser:** I have two supplementary questions. First, why can the minister not answer questions about his own political future? Second, I shall repeat my main question: In terms of this much vaunted principle of “democratic legitimacy,” what is the difference between a general election and a by-election? Could the minister answer that for me?

**Senator LeBreton:** If I have to explain to the honourable senator after all her years in politics and as a former editor of a major newspaper the difference between a general election and a by-election, we are in severe difficulty.

The fact is that I take this question, as the government leader in the Senate. We had a discussion about this issue in the chamber the other day, and it is not a matter specifically relating to the Department of Public Works.

**Senator Fraser:** Does the leader mean that if the minister vacates his position, it is not a matter related to his department?

**Senator LeBreton:** At the beginning of my answer, I said the honourable senator would get her wish and that Senator Fortier would be here. There is no question of his vacating his position as the Minister of Public Works.

[Translation]

## DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I have the honour of presenting two delayed answers to oral questions raised in the Senate. The first response is to a question raised by Senator Dallaire on September 26, 2006, regarding equipment procurement, and the second to a question raised by Senator Campbell on October 3, 2006, regarding palliative and end-of-life care.

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

#### EQUIPMENT PROCUREMENT

(Response to question raised by Hon. Roméo Antonius Dallaire on September 26, 2006)

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

The increase in funding allowed DND and the Canadian Forces to move forward on major procurement purchases, including strategic airlift. The procurement announcements that were made last June are the most significant investment in the Canadian Forces in a decade.

Negotiations are underway with Boeing to acquire four C-17 Globemaster aircraft. Boeing will be required to invest in the Canadian industry in an amount equal to the value of the contract.

Due to a recent change in government accounting practices, the cost of projects of this magnitude is now 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.

With respect to the acquisition of strategic airlift, the funding was provided to the Department separately and specifically for that particular project. Furthermore, Budget 2005 and 2006 provided additional cash investments that will allow the department to pay for the life cycle costs of the aircraft. The senator can be assured that the department has not taken money away from existing projects to pay for the acquisition of strategic airlift.

## TREASURY BOARD

### TERMINATION OF SECRETARIAT ON PALLIATIVE AND END-OF-LIFE CARE

(Response to question raised by Hon. Larry Campbell on October 3, 2006)

This government is committed to ensuring quality health care for all Canadians, both young and old, this includes palliative and end-of-life care.

Health Canada's Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care supports community-led initiatives to improve end-of-life care. The Secretariat's budget is determined on a year-by-year basis by allocation from within departmental resources. There is no pre-set annual budget. The budget for the current fiscal year has not yet been finalized.

In the past, resources have supported the palliative care community in the implementation of national-level improvements to the education of health care providers, accreditation standards for palliative care, and networks for palliative care research. This is valuable work and this government looks forward to, and indeed counts on, continued engagement of the palliative care community, with available funding.

This year, the government continues to support work by the palliative care community. For example, Health Canada is working with the Canadian Virtual Hospice to build an interactive website to provide one-stop shopping for Canadian palliative and end-of-life care researchers. This web site will make available to researchers information such as sources of research funding, research methodologies, research findings, proposal summaries and the like. It will also provide opportunities for networking among

researchers. This will allow researchers to build on each others' work and improve the capacity in Canada for palliative care research. This work is already underway.

In addition to funding provided through the Secretariat, the federal government supports palliative and end-of-life care through other means. Other important initiatives funded by Health Canada include the \$1.2 million *Educating Future Physicians in Palliative and End-of-Life Care*, the \$750,000 *Teaching Interprofessional Collaborative Patient-Centred Practice Through the Humanities*, and the \$4.3 million *Pallium Integrated Care Capacity Building Initiative*. Furthermore, Human Resources and Social Development Canada is administering Employment Insurance Compassionate Care Benefits which allow Canadians to take time away from their jobs to care for gravely ill loved ones. Such federal initiatives are enhancing Canada's capacity to handle end-of-life issues.

Provinces and Territories have responsibility to deliver health care. The federal government is providing \$41.3 billion to provinces and territories in order to give Canadians better access to quality health care, including home palliative care services, through the Canada Health Transfer fund.

[English]

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES AND TUNNELS BILL

#### SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Eytton, seconded by the Honourable Senator Angus, for the second reading of Bill C-3, respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act.

**Hon. Jerahmiel S. Grafstein:** Honourable senators, the Senate finally has an opportunity to consider this bill, which deals with the international bridges and tunnels across Canada.

• (1455)

This bill, in my view, is crucial to our economy. It talks about trade corridors between our two countries in a very important and systemic way. You will recall that the Senate Banking Committee in its report on productivity stressed the importance of border efficiency. We are delighted that finally this bill has been presented to us.

There are 24 international bridges and tunnels along the 6,400 kilometres of border that separates Canada from the United States, and each is different: Twenty-two are public and two are private. There are two major crossings: one in Windsor-Detroit and one in Buffalo-Niagara Falls. Of the two private bridges, one is in Fort Francis — not a large one but an important one — and a major one is in Detroit.

[ Senator Comeau ]

The two major crossings, Detroit and Buffalo, represent almost 70 per cent of all commercial traffic between our two countries. There has not been an expansion in those crossings since the 1930s, nor have they been expanded, in over three quarters of a century. Obviously, bridges and tunnels play an indispensable role, especially when they are international, and crucial to Canada's transportation network. They facilitate our explosive international trade and, regrettably, our diminishing tourism.

All of us say this over and over again: Canada is a trading nation. More than one out of every three jobs depends on our trade. The role of international bridges and tunnels in our economy is simply indispensable if we are to prosper in the future. It has been 13 years since the Liberal government signed on to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Trade between Canada and the United States continues to accelerate. Over \$1.6 billion in trade crosses that border every day, and our trade has continued to increase by more than 6 per cent, year over year, over the last decade. This, obviously, is due in large measure to both the FTA and to NAFTA.

To repeat, we know that the great majority of Canadian exports into the United States go by truck or rail, particularly by way of the crossings between Ontario and New York and Michigan. This is a crucial point when we consider, for example, the auto industry and the auto parts industry that play such a central role in Canada's economy as engines of growth. In our shared jurisdiction, between Canada and the United States through the Auto Pact, we now produce cars more efficiently than any single nation state in the world. It is extremely important, therefore, honourable senators, to ensure that transportation between our two countries remains clear and unimpeded or, as the auto people will tell you: On time, just in time.

That goes to the very heart of Canada's productivity. That was the subject matter that the Senate Banking Committee explored in its study. Regrettably, the committee discovered that we lag dramatically behind the United States — by something like over 15 per cent in productivity, and we are not making much progress in that direction.

Today, all companies track their inventory in live time as it is shipped and delivered. This just-in-time inventory management practice has swept through most economic sectors now, and each and every company that does trade with the United States relies on seamless, continent-wide transportation delivery systems. In 2005, our bilateral trade in total exceeded \$580 billion — \$1.6 billion each and every day. One study suggests — properly — that if Canada does not improve its operation of its existing stock of international bridges and tunnels and start at once into developing new crossings, Canada could lose — and I want honourable senators to note this — up to 70,000 jobs by the year 2030, and possibly forgo almost \$22 billion in production.

Clearly, what is needed is to give the federal government the legislative authority required for effective oversight of international bridges and tunnels, in order to ensure that the interests of all Canadians are protected, maintained and accelerated. It was the Liberal governments' work in this area that culminated in an understanding that we must finally make a coherent, systematic, overall approach to all these vital structures.

The bill that we are now considering is identical in purpose to the legislation that former Liberal governments brought to the other place on two previous occasions. The chronology is simple and clear, and I will be concise. The Canadian Transportation Act amendments were along the lines of the current Bill C-3, which were tabled as part of Bill C-26 during the Second Session of the Thirty-seventh Parliament. The current Prime Minister and the Canadian Alliance were not interested at the time in working on these amendments, and they voted against them at second reading.

• (1500)

In the Thirty-eighth Parliament, the Liberal government introduced Bill C-44, which included the very same amendments; and, once again, the opposition of the day, now the government, found little if any merit in the proposals made by Liberal governments. At the time, instead of choosing to bring down the government with the help of the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, they, in effect, killed the legislation for a second time, seriously impeding the modernization of bridges and tunnels upon which so many jobs depend in Canada.

Some still claim that the previous Liberal governments did nothing. That is absolutely not correct.

Finally, the introduction of Bill C-3 is a clear statement by the current government — and I welcome this — in actions, rather than words. This is an affirmation to me of the previous work that we and others on this side did, and the Liberal governments did, working for the interests of all working Canadians.

Honourable senators, let us briefly look at the key elements of this bill. At its core, Bill C-3 is the exercise of the federal government's jurisdiction and constitutional powers as outlined in sections 91(29) and 92(10) of the Constitution Act, 1867. Bill C-3 reaffirms our federal government's investments in the safety and security and the commerce of our country across these border points.

At first blush, the bill would appear to grant an almost unfettered authority in the Governor-in-Council or the Minister of Transport when it comes to all matters relating to international bridges and tunnels. A closer look suggests that it achieves a reasonable balance between the free movement of goods, people and services and the need for emergency powers and standards for building, owning, financing and operating such a bridge or tunnel, all the while building in safeguards to protect against excessive control and appropriate security standards.

The bill does not address the expansion of these border points, but it does give the government leverage to direct and push and promote the expansion of these bridges and tunnels. For example, under Bill C-3, no one can build or alter an international bridge or tunnel without federal approval. This is a hallmark feature of the previous Liberal government's approach to this issue. I hope the government does not use this as an excuse, especially with respect to Detroit-Windsor and Buffalo-Niagara Falls, to impede or slow down the expansion of those two border points. As I pointed out, Detroit is in private hands and Buffalo is in public hands. There is absolutely no reason why the federal government should not insist, prod and push for expansion in Detroit and Windsor and in Buffalo-Niagara.

Members of the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group have been on this issue for a decade and still no progress, still no expansion. It has been 75 years, three quarters of a century, with trade booming and still these two key border points have not been expanded. It is a national scandal.

I am delighted that the government has finally seen the wisdom of previous Liberal governments, changed its mind and accepted our Liberal principles to expand and modernize these border points. However, those powers are not in that bill. When it is referred to the Transport Committee, I hope the committee will look at this question and determine how the existing powers will be utilized to promote those objectives.

A transparent approval process is set out in this bill, all to the good, including the need for documentation, giving wide scope for the imposition of terms and conditions that the Crown considers appropriate. When it comes to maintenance and repairs, the Minister of Transport would be authorized to order any action of an owner or an operator to ensure the bridge or tunnel is kept in good and safe condition.

The key is the power of issuance of letters patent for incorporation, which would allow the creation of a corporation to operate or build an international bridge or tunnel. If existing tunnels and bridge ownership lag behind, it gives the government power to facilitate new bridges at these key points or all key points. I hope the committee will look at this quickly and efficiently, and the government will start moving on this front.

Liberal governments worked very hard to ensure a high degree of specificity around any new company that might get into the bridge or tunnel business. The current bill reflects this, as to require approval for a number of directors on a corporate board, their powers and duties, that a code of conduct would apply and that the terms of ownership of the corporations would be spelled out.

Honourable senators, we on the Liberal side went further. We set out methods of consultation. The Liberals believe that the government also should be in a position to revoke letters patent of incorporation, onerous duty-of-care provisions for any directors and officers of corporations in the international bridges or tunnels business. The Liberal governments worked to build a foundation to demonstrate that this bill could assist in the oversight of international bridges and tunnels in the national interest, in the interest of a vibrant, growing, productive, national economy.

Other orders of government expect that the federal government would have these powers and Canadians would assume that their federal government would look after these matters. Is it not ironic that the new government continues to take the substantive work done by Liberal governments to underpin this bill, all to the good? Liberal ideas are usually borrowed or stolen or adopted by the party on the other side and this will not be the last one. If they are good ideas, we welcome the theft.

Canadians could be forgiven for concluding from this stance on this bill, as in so many actions, that the Conservative government needs to be prodded to rebuild a strong, vibrant and productive economy, all to the good.

There is, however, an outstanding issue — the question of regional consultation. We in this house represent the regions of this country, so we should be concerned; that is to say, should the Minister of Transport ultimately authorize, for example, the construction of a new bridge or the expansion of an existing tunnel, what obligations rest on the minister to consult with other orders of government and interested parties? Some have argued that municipal and provincial governments ought to have some formal forum to express their views. We on this side would agree with that proposal.

Others have said that compelling private parties should be consulted by the minister, which might compromise what they describe as “trade secrets.” Hopefully, the committee can work this problem out and make stern and strict recommendations to the minister about how to deal with these questions.

It is unfortunate that the government, in its approach to this debate, has not clarified the question of consultation. This can be worked out in committee. Consultation should be allowed without delaying decisions to be taken for new construction in the national interest. The government should clarify its position in committee on this issue.

Honourable senators, I support Bill C-3. Hopefully, the committee will examine why delays have taken place in not expanding those two crucial border points that we all agree are so vital to the growth and productivity of our economy.

Finally, the government has crossed a point of no return — the Rubicon, as they said in the other place — to move forward on this border agenda. Bill C-3, at its heart, core and substance, is yet another example of great Liberal legislation that for 13 years languished in the other place for lack of support on the other side, which would have strengthened the economy and defended Canadians against threats to their safety, security and mobility.

I commend the government now for choosing a modest and well-founded work for its second bill this session. The committee has diligent work to do. The opposition on this side will help. We will not play games with what is clearly a bill in Canada’s national interest.

Let us get on with the work, honourable senators. Let us push to provide new and modern transit points across all our border crossings — especially Windsor-Detroit and Niagara-Buffalo. I urge that we move this bill to committee as soon as possible. The committee has much hard work to do and we will help.

**Hon. Norman K. Atkins:** Would the honourable senator take a question?

**Senator Grafstein:** Of course.

**Senator Atkins:** Is my honourable friend aware that the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence has been working on this case for a long time? I think his speech is great, but he could have left out the Liberal rhetoric. We are all in favour of improving the border entry points.

However, negotiating on the other side with the municipalities and states has become a big problem in terms of solving, for instance, the border entry issues at Detroit-Windsor. A new

bridge is being built in New Brunswick, and it even took a long time before we could get that done. I think what the honourable senator is saying is admirable. I hope this bill does go through. However, a great many impediments have to be overcome in terms of dealing with the Americans.

• (1510)

**Senator Grafstein:** I thank the honourable senator for his question. I did not in any way, shape or form mean to demean the excellent work being done by other committees on this particular question. The problem is that there is no progress on the ground. Let me deal with the two issues that the honourable senator has raised briefly because I have spent a lot of time looking at both questions, both as chairman of this committee and also as co-chairman of the Canada-U.S. Inter-parliamentary Group. I have travelled to most of the border points across the country. I have visited bridges in many parts of the world for precisely this reason. Bridges in many countries are miles long and have been built in 18 months. The Prince Edward Island bridge, which was a tremendous undertaking, was built in a short period of time after a century of debate. Things can be done quickly if there is a political will to do it.

The problem with the New York and Ontario crossing is that there are 44 agencies, all with various interests, but there is no reason why the government cannot exert its national power. I would have gone further; I would have insisted that this would be of public interest, in the national interest, and gone forward with it and cut through all that red tape. I have spoken to American senators and congressmen; they are all in favour of another bridge in the Niagara region.

The same thing applies when we look at Michigan. I have talked to governors, senators and congressmen on the other side; they all agree as well. It takes political will to push that idea or agenda.

Ministers have met. They have met at the border. The Prime Minister, the former Prime Minister and the President of the United States met at a border point for the first time in history. Secretaries of State have met. It is great talk, but there is no action. At least this bill gives power to the federal government to move if it chooses to do so, and I hope that it will.

**Hon. Senators:** Question!

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senators seem to be ready for the question.

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

Motion agreed to and bill read second time.

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

**The Hon. the Speaker:** When shall this bill be read the third time?

On motion of Senator Comeau, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications.

## STUDY ON NATIONAL SECURITY

### REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE COMMITTEE REFERRED BACK TO COMMITTEE TO IMPLEMENT AMENDMENT

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Kenny, seconded by the Honourable Senator Moore, that the order for the consideration of the fourth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, as amended, be removed from the Order Paper and that the report be referred back to the Committee with an instruction to implement the amendment in form and substance approved by the Senate on October 17, 2006; and that the amended fourth report be tabled in the Senate no later than November 21, 2006.—(*Honourable Senator Stratton*)

**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.

## STATE OF LITERACY

### INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Fairbairn, P.C., calling the attention of the Senate to the State of Literacy in Canada, which will give every Senator in this Chamber the opportunity to speak out on an issue in our country that is often forgotten.—(*Honourable Senator Tkachuk*)

**Hon. David Tkachuk:** Honourable senators, I would like to join the debate on the state of literacy in Canada. As a former teacher, I place a great deal of value on the need for adequate literacy programs and the need to ensure that our education system produces adequate reading and writing skills.

I was once fortunate enough to chair a fundraising banquet at a Peter Gzowski golf tournament that raised the most money in Canada that year for the late Mr. Gzowski's effort to combat illiteracy. I welcome this debate, and I want to thank Senator Fairbairn for launching it.

My first experience with a reading mentor was my second grade teacher who read stories to us every day, to such effect that while I do not remember many of the stories, I do remember the reader. Ms. Newman taught phonics, and my initial reaction to this subject was a bit of distaste, but the following year, while in hospital for an extended stay, another wonderful lady brought me comic books to read. Comics were forbidden in my house, but in those days parents were forbidden to see their children in the hospital lest they upset them. Therefore, while I was in the

hospital, my parents were not allowed to visit me. My "comic angel" knew that, and passed comics to the nurses so that I was able to enjoy Superman, Batman and Robin and numerous others. My parents were none the wiser. Phonics and comics had me reading everything that I could get my hands on. This was an exploration of a world hidden from us; a world of adventure and learning.

While I have the utmost respect for people who toil in the world of teaching adults to read, I also know that reading has aided me in having a skeptical mind, and that hyperbole and scare tactics, as practiced sometimes in this debate, will not really solve the problem.

The previous government had a program and the Conservative government is changing course. Literacy is not about Liberal and Conservative; it is about people who cannot read at an adult level. Some of them, victims of learning disabilities, or products of bad teaching, and bad parenting, and some of them immigrants hurriedly brought into our country because we have lost the will to replace ourselves.

We all agree that literacy is important to Canadians. It contributes to the economy and to productivity. It improves the quality of life of our citizens and enables them to seek better paying jobs.

Liberal senator after Liberal senator has stood in their places here and bemoaned the fact that the Conservative government has cut \$17.7 million from literacy programs. Only one, by my recollection, has noted that there remains \$81 million in the budget for literacy over the next two years, plus the millions of dollars that have been allocated through other departments. None mentioned that the \$17.7 million savings will be as a result of this government's effort to refocus, targeting, amongst others, Aboriginal peoples and immigrants, two of the groups that contribute to low literacy rates in this country.

The Liberals have said that these areas are core federal responsibilities. What about community-based programs, they say? What about regional coalitions? Those who have contributed to the debate so far champion these programs and others as being essential to decreasing the number of Canadians who are literacy-deficient in Canada.

• (1520)

Senator Fairbairn implied that 42 per cent of adult Canadians lacked the literacy skills that the rest of us take for granted. Senator Chaput noted last week that 9 million Canadians are being held back by their inability to read. Senator Cook said that the \$5.8 million cut this year will have a huge and sudden impact on the thousands of local and regional literacy coalitions across Canada. She said that many of them will not be able to survive. However, none of these senators noted that the literacy rates in Canada remained unchanged over the 10 years during which these literary surveys were taken. In other words, despite all this money and these programs, there was no change.

Honourable senators, allow me to quote Statistics Canada on the results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills survey, ALLS, which was conducted in 2003. Statistics Canada said:

The average literacy score for Canadians has not changed significantly during the nine-year period since the last major survey was conducted in 1994.

Obviously, there is a problem. A change is needed and, instead of looking at the potential for real advances, the Liberals seem stuck in the past. It is not important to the Liberals that their program, though spending money, produces no results. The Kyoto Protocol and the gun registry are examples of two colossal failures that seem to be in the same mode. We are in the literacy program to gain ground, to see results, and it is time for a change.

In her speech last week, Senator Callbeck referred to a study by the C. D. Howe Institute that concluded that improving overall levels of literacy skills has a significant impact on economic performance. The operative word is "improving." For nine years, we have seen no improvement in Canadian literacy rates. It is time for a change.

Writing in *Policy Options* in February 2006, Glenn Pound, a policy expert in this field, noted:

The ALLS survey has shown that, in Canada, the current policy practices have done little to improve Canadian literacy rates.

Mr. Pound is from the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy and is the Coordinator of the Literacy Access Network. Allow me to share with you more of his words:

With so many adults having difficulty understanding the information required to function effectively in our knowledge-based society and relatively few participating in the programs that have been traditionally designed to meet this imperative, the need for new approaches and policy revision has never been more pressing.

The Liberals are criticizing cuts to programs that relatively few people participate in it seems, at least according to Mr. Pound.

I will return to the remarks made last week by Senator Chaput in which she made reference to 9 million Canadian adults whose inability to read is holding them back. Honourable senators, 9 million is a pretty large portion of Canadians who are unable to read. I have lots of time for Senator Chaput. I serve on committees with her and I know how competent she is. However, in this case she may have slightly inflated the number for the debate in order to make her point, which, I am sure, is sincere but is wrong.

I took it upon myself to look at these figures in the ALLS survey to which I referred earlier. One thing should be noted about the ALLS survey, which Statistics Canada makes clear at the outset: The results cannot be used to classify population groups as either literate or illiterate. Rather, the survey measured knowledge and skills in four domains across a range of abilities. People who participated in the survey were rated from one to five in terms of their level of ability, one being the lowest and five being the highest. The level three performance was chosen as the benchmark standard. The 9 million figure refers to those who

fell below level three in proficiency. Now I understand to what Senator Chaput was referring. However, it is surely stretching it to say that those people are unable to read. Rather, it means that they are below the benchmark standard. If everyone were perfectly proficient we would still have half the population below the norm. Anyone who has prepared a bell curve knows that.

We also need to take into account the fact that, as the survey explained, some of the respondents are older Canadians, up to age 65. As Statistics Canada points out, there is evidence of literacy proficiency declining as individuals age. This is what we call "an aging effect" and it seems that some of us here might even have it.

The study also pointed out that many of those surveyed were immigrants. Unlike in decades earlier, they are immigrants who are likely to have come from countries where neither French nor English are mainstream languages. As might be expected, immigrants whose mother tongue is neither English nor French perform at lower literacy levels than those whose mother tongue is English or French. They may be literate in their mother tongue but that is not reflected in the survey. It is also worth noting that many of those who took the test in English were francophones living outside Quebec.

Honourable senators, the survey included members of the Aboriginal population whose prose literacy performance was lower than that of the total Canadian population. A big reason for this is that the survey was designed to measure literacy in one of the official languages, and in Nunavut, for instance, a high proportion of Inuit function on a daily basis in an Aboriginal language and not in English or in French. It can be expected that they would do poorly on literacy tests in these languages. These are just some of the factors that need to be considered.

My researcher asked an official at Statistics Canada: How many people in Canada cannot read? The official did not know the answer. After all these years of studying literacy, we do not know how many people in Canada cannot read. When I say "cannot read" I mean that they are unable to pronounce words written on paper. Statistics Canada said that a current study on literacy might tell us next year how many people cannot read. I hope that we will have those results.

While some organizations might have to close down, others will take their place. This is Canada — land of innovation, vigour and enterprise. Innovation and change are good. Volunteers who are working in programs today will work in different programs tomorrow. The important thing is the ability of people to function by being literate. If the customer profits, everyone will profit.

Honourable senators have been talking about the programs and the organizations, but no one is speaking about the people. For example, in talking about cuts to health care programs, no one is talking about the patients. This government has said that because it sees a couple of problems, such as Aboriginals who are below the norm, it will spend more at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to work on this problem, not at the literacy secretariat, and it will spend more at Citizenship and Immigration Canada on immigrants coming to Canada so that we can get this problem solved.

There is a little bit of targeting, with which some people might be upset. It might not be a universal solution, as the Liberals would have us believe, but as I and anyone who has checked the facts know, there has been no improvement in overall literacy over the last nine years.

• (1530)

Certainly, for recent immigrants and for a portion of the Aboriginal and francophone population, the above factors beg the question: Is this a literacy problem or a language problem? In my view, it is a language problem and not a literacy problem. I will tell you also that it is a national problem, and that is why the Conservative government has decided to take a national approach to fixing it.

**Hon. Marcel Prud'homme:** Honourable senators, I was active in my area, giving gifts of texts to people who knew how to read well, until a sister of mine, the last one I have, said I should ask them what it means. They had no notion at all of what they just read well. The honourable senator has inspired me by saying that it is not enough to know how to read but that it is important to understand the meaning of what one is reading.

**Senator Tkachuk:** I cannot comment on that. The study to which Senator Chaput and I referred ranked people on a scale of one to five in four different areas, not only reading but also understanding and mathematics. Therefore, it is a bit confusing. That is why all these numbers are being thrown around. The study looked at general proficiency. We have the standard of three out of five, and it seems that 9 million were in that or fell below it, and 9 million were above. However, the problem is not just who falls below but why they fall below. Is it because they do not understand? Perhaps they have a reading disability. Perhaps they are of a different language. All these issues were brought into the study, so hopefully our government is on the right course. We will make a general improvement in this area.

**Hon. Bill Rompkey:** Is it possible to ask another question?

**The Hon. the Speaker:** If Senator Tkachuk were to ask for an extension of his time, the house might give it to him. I have not heard Senator Tkachuk do that.

**Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, this matter was raised last week, that we would be examining this question of extension of time. Given that we have not arrived at a conclusion yet from either of the two sides, I imagine we could, for the time being, continue with the practice that we have been using. However, I do give notice to this house that we will be examining this more closely.

**Senator Tkachuk:** I will take a question, if I am granted an extension.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I will understand that Senator Tkachuk has asked for an extension of five minutes of time. Is the house agreeable to that?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**Senator Rompkey:** I have three questions. On the point that we do not know how many cannot read, has Senator Tkachuk considered that perhaps people do not acknowledge the fact that

they cannot read? Jacques Demers, who was a very successful coach with the Montreal Canadiens, among other professional hockey teams, could not read, but he would not tell people. That is the case with most people who cannot read.

With regard to the point that literacy rates remain the same, I am wondering if the honourable senator can draw a direct connection with the amount of money available. I should point out that the relative position of Newfoundland and Labrador with regard to the rest of Canada has not changed for 50 years, and yet equalization has been in place all that time. I do not see the Conservative government talking about cutting equalization programs.

The honourable senator suggested that perhaps money could be targeted to Aboriginals and immigrants and other people who need it most. I would suggest that there are certain provinces in the country that perhaps need it most. If class size in Newfoundland were compared to class size in Alberta, one might understand why it is more difficult to teach in some classrooms than in others. In my province, between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of the annual provincial budget is spent on education.

Given that literacy rates vary across the country, would the honourable senator agree that, in addition to targeting Aboriginals and immigrants, the government might want to look at targeting provinces that need help with literacy more than others?

**Senator Tkachuk:** Honourable senators, I am not a member of the government, but I am a supporter of the government and I believe that the government has taken the right steps to begin to target the problem. There has been no change, according to the study. I will stay out of the equalization debate totally. I know that was an aside.

In terms of the variance of literacy rates across the country, I do know that the study included a rating of understanding and perception, among other things. The Yukon, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan had average scores significantly higher than the national average. I was happy to hear about Saskatchewan. However, the Yukon, where most of the population is of a working age and more of the workforce is employed in professional occupations, had the highest scores in the country. Those with scores significantly below the national average were Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Nunavut. Nunavut can be explained by the fact that its population actually communicates in a different language.

There are many other issues, but that is as far as I can go with the questions asked.

**Hon. Willie Adams:** Honourable senators, I am glad that Senator Tkachuk mentioned Inuit literacy. It has only been since 1950, approximately, that the Inuit have had to go to schools. We are many years behind the rest of Canada. I went to an Anglican school in the 1940s, and that is when I started to learn about the English language. At that time, the priests did not stay in the communities. They were there in the summertime, and usually early in the fall we went out on the land hunting.

I learned my syllabics through the Bible. Maybe 100 or 150 years ago, a bible with Inuit syllabics was published in England. I learned Inuktitut and the syllabics using that bible, and I still read it today. Since the early 1980s, we have been telling the Government of Canada that we have to learn our syllabics again. For the most part, only the elders read syllabics. In Labrador and Nunavut and Northwest Territories, they read Roman letters, and in Northern Quebec and Baffin and Keewatin, we read the syllabics. We have difficulty, as you mentioned, with different dialects. Currently in Nunavut, the government is trying its best to teach language in syllabics. Most of the Inuit went to school and finished grade 12, and some are now working in the school teaching.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I am afraid that Senator Tkachuk's time is up, but he might be allowed a quick answer.

**Senator Tkachuk:** That is fine.

• (1540)

**Hon. Hugh Segal:** Honourable senators, I rise to speak to the same inquiry advanced by Senator Fairbairn regarding the state of literacy in Canada. I do so, taking note of my colleague Senator Tkachuk's points of precision with respect to the numbers that are bandied about. It is important that we understand the constraints around those statistics, and his contribution in that respect is extremely helpful.

That being said, my intervention will speak to the breadth of views on this non-partisan matter within the Conservative caucus and, it is hoped, across the house. While I would not have made the decision made by the government to make these cuts, I understand why they had to make that decision, and I very much respect that in the other place ministers of the Crown must make difficult and tough decisions. However, I would hope that we might use portions of our debate in this chamber to make constructive suggestions that might be taken up by the government with respect to the budget that is coming in the spring, and with respect to other initiatives that might be taken to strengthen and deepen the commitment we all share to literacy in this country.

Many of us will find it hard to relate directly to the challenges of being personally unable to fill out an employment application form or being unable to read the headlines in the morning newspapers. Some of us have witnessed, perhaps, a parent or a grandparent struggle with reading or writing if English or French were not their first language. Frustration experienced by those now unable to decipher the letters and words, or unable to provide written information is palpable. According to Statistics Canada, too many Canadians of working age are challenged with low literacy and the statistics have not changed, although I would point out — and it is one of the rules of social policy and economic statistics — that even though the statistic may not change, individuals may go into and out of the category over time and the statistic may not change because larger rounds of immigration or different demographics affect the percentage. Literacy programs do help move people out of the category of “illiterate” into categories where they can make a much more constructive contribution to the process overall. I think Senator Tkachuk's reference in that respect is most helpful to us all in that regard.

[ Senator Adams ]

This is now a technological information-intense society. Even well-educated seniors — I am not quite yet a senior but I have this struggle myself — are finding it hard to navigate their way through passwords and prompts in order to pay bills. Can anyone imagine how insurmountable these tasks might be for an individual whose skills are at a minimum? Putting oneself in the situation does not even come close to the frustration and the shame associated with the inability to read or write in a society that requires this basic skill. I agree with Senator Rompkey that many who cannot read are not prepared to admit as much for reasons of pride and shame, but I also refuse to accept that, in a country as wealthy as Canada, any one of our citizens should be left behind in such a position.

At the beginning of September, it was a great privilege to be invited to present certificates to the graduates of the Kingston Literacy program. The pride of those receiving this acknowledgement was obvious. I was stunned to learn that more than 44,000 people in the greater Kingston area have genuine difficulty in reading. This is a community that boasts two universities and a community college. After the ceremony, one graduate pulled me aside and explained how this program had changed her life. It had not altered her life or enhanced her life; it had fundamentally changed it. Without basic reading and writing skills, this graduate had not been able to hold a job or to read to her children or to keep up with world events or order from a menu. The attainment of literacy had truly changed that person's life, and that graduate had enrolled in a community college professional program as a result. Above all, literacy replaced career despair with compelling hope. Hope is something we can never take for granted.

The term “literacy” is actually not used in reference to adult education here in Canada but it is in Sweden. Adult education is an inclusive concept in that country that covers all learning opportunities. It begins with adult basic education, where necessary, and extends up to and including post-secondary education. Remember: All education in Sweden is free, and study loans and grants are available to all adult participants. In Sweden, universal access is available to all adults, with priority given to those with the least education — a policy contrary to what is now practised in Canada. In Canada, adults typically return to school to improve their employment prospects or for self-improvement. Conversely, in Sweden adults are entitled to education based on a policy that is integral to the betterment of society. There are no fees involved and child care is provided. In addition, the voluntary organizations offering adult education to those outside of major centres all receive state funding to support their programs.

In Canada, there are often long waiting lists for adults who require or wish to improve literacy. Let me put the broad choice in stark terms. If the cost of a universal literacy program that really works means a slightly longer wait time for hip replacement surgery, I would choose literacy in the interests of this country. I would reject the notion that the vast majority of Canadians, including those awaiting surgery, would begrudge a day or two longer wait if hope and opportunity for tens of thousands ensued as a result.

I am more than pleased to support Senator Fairbairn in her inquiry, and I agree that we must all do what we can to provide the opportunities for any and all Canadians needing and wanting



to improve their levels of learning. The recent federal funding cuts indicate a refocusing and a change in priorities. I think the jury is out as to how that change in priorities produces net benefits over time; I hope it will.

I believe that literacy should be treated as a joint federal-provincial-private sector undertaking. Let me suggest to colleagues that the real way ahead must be through a federal-provincial summit on the state of literacy in Canada that invites territorial, labour, private sector and First Nations participation. This summit would bring together participants and providers who deal with the issue on an ongoing basis and are experts in the area, knowing who, where and why the problem exists. I would stress participation by the labour and private sector as well. All participants would be invited to propose their own strategy for more rapid progress.

The solution to this situation will not come about by way of infighting over who spends the most but, rather, how governments at all levels, with the inclusion of the private and voluntary sectors, produce the desired outcome. A grand strategy on literacy would emerge with checkpoints and annual measurements of progress made. It would be the ultimate outreach, and the essence of inclusion. It would say that the Canadian dream is still open to all.

Contrary to the beliefs of some, governments are not necessarily expert in all areas of life. I would urge the federal government to act as a facilitating organization in such a summit by unifying all the participants who have a stake in improving adult literacy in Canada, assisting the corporate sector through tax incentives and providing core funding to the voluntary sector. While the federal government might take the lead on set-up and capital costs incurred for literacy programs, the provincial governments and the private sector would take the lead on ongoing operational costs.

Where programs are English as a second language for new immigrants to Canada, or where the programs are for literacy and adult learning programs, these are clearly areas where the federal government must show leadership and investment. All levels of government, the private sector and the voluntary sector, rely on human capital. Dedicated, capable, reliable people are the foundation of any successful business, corporation, enterprise, government department, community or household. People with ambition and the desire to succeed and advance should never be held back because programs and services are not in place. A joint venture such as this summit would reach out to those wanting and needing literacy programs. Funding would be a shared exercise; the experts would be the program delivery people at the local level. I hope that the Government of Canada will give serious consideration to this proposal as it prepares its own plans for the coming session and the next budget.

I am pleased, therefore, to support Senator Fairbairn's inquiry. I urge other senators to do the same and ask that we reflect on the creation of a joint summit on the issue of literacy in Canada to galvanize a national effort that is greater and more important than any one government.

On motion of Senator Fraser, debate adjourned.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

## BANKING, TRADE AND COMMERCE

### COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO EXTEND DATE OF FINAL REPORT ON STUDY OF ISSUES DEALING WITH INTERPROVINCIAL BARRIERS TO TRADE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Fraser, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cook:

That, notwithstanding the Order of the Senate adopted on Tuesday, May 2, 2006, the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce, which was authorized to examine and report on issues dealing with interprovincial barriers to trade, be empowered to extend the date of presenting its final report from October 31, 2006 to June 29, 2007; and

That the Committee retain until July 31, 2007 all powers necessary to publicize its findings.—(*Honourable Senator Prud'homme, P.C.*)

**Hon. Marcel Prud'homme:** Honourable senators, this motion stands in my name. I listened to what Senator Fraser was trying to tell us and what she did not say, as well as Senator Cook. I do not see why I would stand this motion, unless you would like to take the adjournment.

**Senator Fraser:** I believe we are ready for the question.

**Senator Prud'homme:** You raised objections. I wanted to be sympathetic to your cause.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

## THE SENATE

### MOTION TO URGE GOVERNMENT TO RECONSIDER DECISION TO DISCONTINUE THE COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Joyal, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Robichaud, P.C.:

That the Senate urge the Government of Canada to reconsider its decision to discontinue the Court Challenges Program which has enabled citizens to seek redress and assert their rights guaranteed under the Constitution and particularly the Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

That the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages be authorized to study and report on the benefits and results that have been achieved through the Court Challenges Program;

That the Committee submit its final report no later than December 22, 2006; and

That a message be sent to the House of Commons informing it that the Senate regrets the government's decision to terminate the Court Challenges Program and urges it to take action to persuade the government to reconsider that decision.—(*Honourable Senator Comeau*)

**Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I need a little more time to prepare my comments. I have had the chance to review the motion. If you recall my initial comments on this motion, there had been no discussions with the committee members about introducing this motion.

At that time, I had expressed my concerns that it would have been appropriate to discuss the motion with the committee members. That said, the motion was introduced, and it will be up to the committee to examine it.

We have two motions. The first calls for a study of the Court Challenges Program, which will be cancelled as a result of the recent review, and an examination of the benefits of the program so that the committee can report to the Senate. However, the second part of the motion says that we are opposed to the cuts to the Court Challenges Program and that we want to send a message to that effect to the House of Commons.

Ultimately, we are drawing conclusions in both motions. First, the benefits of the program are examined, and second, at the end of that same motion, conclusions are drawn. I wonder whether it is worthwhile having the committee examine this program conclusions are drawn even before the committee has had a chance to conduct a study.

The Court Challenges Program — since the Senate is being asked to draw conclusions right away — addresses issues raised by minority communities, for whom I have a great deal of affection. All sorts of other groups had access to this program. We should have the opportunity to study it.

When studying this program, we might want to look at its methodology and the responsibilities of the group that was in charge of the program. I am referring to “accountability”, a cornerstone of the current government. Every program should have ways of holding people who use federal government funds accountable. This would be another area to look at if this motion is referred to committee.

If we reach this conclusion, the matter of studying the benefits of the Court Challenges Program is, to all intents and purposes, already decided. That being said, I would like to think about it a little more, and I would like to adjourn the motion in my name.

**Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, does Senator Comeau want to use the rest of his time another day?

**Senator Comeau:** Yes.

**Senator Fraser:** May I ask when he will do so? This motion has been on the Orders of the Day for some time, and the committee has been given a deadline. The more we delay the motion, the more we delay the vote on the motion and the more difficult we make things for the committee. Could we have an indication of when?

**Senator Comeau:** Yes, basically, the senator is saying that the motion has been on the Orders of the Day for a long time. It has been exactly three sitting days, which is not so long.

**Senator Prud'homme:** That is not so long.

**Senator Comeau:** It is not so long. Even if every senator on our side were available to work on what is being asked, we would still have to find the time to do it and that is just not possible. Yes, there is a deadline. In consultation with members of the committee, it could have been decided that December 22 was not a practical date. The consultation with the committee members may be the problem. The committee already has a pile of studies to conduct. It is in the process of considering the issue of the Olympic Games in British Columbia, the Official Languages Commissioner, a stack of reports that the committee still has not reviewed and a number of other things. Perhaps December 22 was not practical.

Given that the conclusion presented in the motion — that the Senate will join the House of Commons in expressing its regrets — is already there, perhaps we will not study the motion at all.

This motion was introduced three days ago. I have not misused our time in any way. I will try to provide an answer as soon as possible.

**Senator Fraser:** One small correction: This motion has been before us for more than three days. Senator Joyal discussed this motion on October 3, which was three weeks ago.

Committee members supported the motion. The committee chair expressed no hesitation with respect to studying this. As for what you deem to be contradictory, the Senate will decide that. I see no problem with the motion as written.

I simply wanted to be sure, and to assure this house that we are not delaying this motion too much. May we look forward to you finishing your remarks by the end of the week?

**Hon. Marcel Prud'homme:** Point of order. This is the first time since I have been in the Senate that an honourable senator has insisted, pushed, forced the issue and, dare I say, demanded like this. This is not the custom. Senator Comeau is not ready to give an answer.

He gave his reasons. If Senator Fraser, who is very knowledgeable about such issues, wishes to speak, I am sure Senator Comeau will give her the floor. She need only adjourn the debate in Senator Comeau's name. That is the custom. If we start questioning every one of the motions that have been on the Order Paper for so many years or months, there are all sorts of reasons. There are absences, there is extra work. I do not understand such insistence. Clearly, it must be political.

• (1600)

I fail to see why Senator Comeau should be pressed to promise to speak on the motion within the next three days. Each senator gets to rise and say that they are not prepared to speak but wish to do so later, or to say nothing. I have never seen anything like this. Perhaps someone could enlighten me.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** The situation is this: There are seven minutes of Senator Comeau's speaking time remaining. If the Chair heard him correctly, he indicated that he wished to move adjournment of the debate.

**Hon. Eymard G. Corbin:** Honourable senators, may I put a question to Senator Comeau?

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator Comeau, will you entertain a question from Senator Corbin?

**Senator Comeau:** I have five minutes left; that is not a concern. But I would hate to waste these five minutes, because eight have already been wasted.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, if the honourable senator moved the adjournment of the debate, then this motion cannot be debated.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

On motion of Senator Comeau, debate adjourned.

[English]

## AGREEMENTS BETWEEN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES ON CHILD CARE

### INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Trenholme Counsell calling the attention of the Senate to concerns regarding the Agreements in Principle signed by the Government of Canada and the Provincial governments between April 29, 2005 and November 25, 2005 entitled "*Moving Forward on Early Learning and Child Care*", as well as the funding agreements with Ontario, Manitoba and Québec, and the Agreements in Principle prepared for the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.—(Honourable Senator Fraser)

**Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck:** Honourable senators, I am pleased to join in the debate today on Senator Trenholme Counsell's inquiry on the child care and early learning agreements negotiated last year by the previous Liberal government. As honourable senators know, these agreements have been cancelled by the minority Conservative government.

First, I wish to commend Senator Trenholme Counsell for her leadership on this ongoing issue. Children are indeed this

country's greatest resource, and I applaud her advocacy and her commitment to providing the youngest Canadians with the very best possible start in life.

In my home province of Prince Edward Island, the former Social Development Minister, Ken Dryden, and the Prince Edward Island Minister of Social Services and Seniors, Chester Gillan, signed an early learning and child care agreement in principle on November 24, 2005. The agreement represented a federal investment of \$20.4 million over five years to create additional high-quality and affordable early learning and child care spaces, as well as to enhance existing programs. In the first year of the agreement, 2005-06, the province was to receive \$3 million. The agreement in principle also provided for \$2.8 million in the second year and \$4.9 million annually for the three remaining years.

The agreement set out a long-term vision for child care and early learning in my province. It outlined the principles and the goals that would guide improvements to regulated early learning and child care. The agreement also outlined the objectives that the Government of Prince Edward Island would pursue over the five-year term of the agreement and how the provincial government would be accountable to Islanders.

My province was to develop and release an action plan on early learning and child care by January 31, 2006.

This agreement in principle provided funding for a number of much-needed system-wide investments: training, quality assurance, retention/recruitment, wage enhancements, fee subsidies, and operating/capital funding. Indeed, the bilateral agreements signed with each province were meant to ensure that they would have the flexibility to determine the most effective way to deliver programs in their own jurisdictions.

The goal was quality, universal and accessible child care that provided developmental programming.

Minister Chester Gillan said on announcement day, that is, the day the agreement in principle was signed, in part, the following:

Today's announcement is good news for children and their families as well as for future generations of Island children. In anticipation of this agreement, Prince Edward Island has already begun the development of an implementation plan that will see child care subsidy rates enhanced, increase direct funding to operators, increase infant incentive grants and increase the capacity of early learning centres to include children with unique needs.

However, this implementation plan as outlined by the minister will not happen because Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the federal government have refused to honour the original early learning and child care agreements. In doing so, the Conservative government has deprived the children of Canada of the best possible start in life.

Instead, the Conservative government has replaced the child care and early learning agreements with its own universal child care plan — which, as we all know, sees \$100 a month go directly to parents for each child under the age of six.

While I am pleased to see more money in the hands of Islanders and other Canadian parents, the plan does have its problems. The payment itself is taxable in a way that may leave those who need it most with less. In April 2006, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy released a study entitled, "The Incredible Shrinking \$1,200 Child Care Allowance: How To Fix It." In this study, the institute calculated the net benefits for a variety of different families in Ontario, and found the following: A family in the highest income tax bracket with one parent staying at home may get to keep \$1,076 of the \$1,200 a year. However, a dual-income family with a combined income of just \$30,000 may keep only \$199.

How is this possible? The report explains, in part:

The answer is that they will be hit by a double whammy: Not only will they pay more income taxes, like other families, but they also will be hit hardest by reductions in income-tested benefits that are targeted to them, such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit, GST credit and provincial/territorial refundable tax credits and child benefits.

We all know that our economy is increasingly being driven by knowledge and continuing skills development. It is imperative that we give our children and youth the best grounding so that they can make the most of their educations and of their lives. In this regard, early learning and child care are vital for the future success of this country. A number of studies in recent years have highlighted the advantages that early learning can provide children.

For example, in 1999, the Ontario Children's Secretariat produced an early years study, co-chaired by the honourable Margaret Norrie McCain and J. Fraser Mustard. The final report was entitled "Reversing the Real Brain Drain." In its preface, under the section "Why Ontario Should Act Now," the report reads:

We know now that development of the brain in the early years of life, particularly the first three years, sets the base of competence and coping skills for the later stages of life. Improving the prospects for the next generation of Ontarians — with respect to school performance, health and quality of life, and success in the labour market — will improve the future for us all.

While this report dealt specifically with children in Ontario, the same can be said for children anywhere. There are indeed long-term benefits from improved social development to enhancing later educational opportunities. Quality child care and early learning helps give Canadian children a better foundation for the future.

• (1610)

Honourable senators, it is not too late for the Conservative government to reverse its decision. I urge the government to do so and to give Canadian children the very best chance at life.

On motion of Senator Fraser, debate adjourned.

[ Senator Callbeck ]

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY EVACUATION OF CANADIAN CITIZENS FROM LEBANON

**Hon. Hugh Segal**, pursuant to notice of September 28, 2006, moved:

That the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs be authorized to examine and report on the evacuation of Canadian citizens from Lebanon in July 2006; and

That the Committee submit its final report no later than March 30, 2007, and that the Committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings until April 30, 2007.

He said: Honourable senators, this past summer, as a result of sudden and unexpected circumstances, it was necessary for the Government of Canada to evacuate thousands of our citizens and permanent residents from Lebanon. The efforts of DFAIT staff, both within the region and here in Canada, the coordination required with the Department of National Defence and the extraordinary speed with which the evacuation was necessary is, in the committee's view, worth reviewing and assessing.

For this reason, the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs wishes to conduct an inquiry into this evacuation. The purpose of this inquiry would be to learn from our experiences. While much was made at the time with respect to perceived flaws in the operation, we must all admit that, in an exercise of this scale and the subsequent return to Canada of so many of our citizens so quickly, much also appears to have been done properly by our officials.

In a world as volatile as ours is today, I ask that colleagues approve this motion so that we might examine all that transpired, in order to help prepare the government for any other such eventuality. Experience is the best teacher. While we have the opportunity to question those who are on the front lines, either here or in the Middle East, I suggest that we take advantage of this opportunity. Heaven forbid the situation ever prevents itself again, but should we be faced with such an exercise in the future, we would be, I think, remorse in our duties as a committee had we not taken the opportunity to learn from the first experience and assess, in the most non-partisan and objective of ways, the best practices and areas of improvement that may emerge from that review.

Let me assure honourable senators that we plan no travel. We will have hearings here in Ottawa and we may use satellite teleconferencing to talk to officials in the Middle East.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Further debate?

**Hon. Marcel Prud'homme:** Honourable senators, I did not know that we would proceed with this item today. I will not delay it, because I know how sensitive, bright, intelligent and articulate the chairman is.

I feel more at ease, but I made my views known to the chairman. I am extremely concerned about this study. I say that, because I have read everything that has been said since the end of this sad event in Lebanon, where everybody started to talk about another subject, namely, dual citizenship. As brilliant and as

tough as my colleague is, I think it will be difficult for him to keep the debate within the boundaries of what he would like us to study.

[*Translation*]

I am switching back to my mother tongue. In fact, I have attended several functions in the past few days and I am a little exhausted.

There is a high risk, I would suggest, that people who do not have the same good faith as Senator Segal could take the opportunity to engage in a debate within the broader debate on dual citizenship. This is something I have been agonizing over for 40 years. Let us imagine, for instance, that Canadian nationals could become members of Parliament in foreign countries.

[*English*]

We have enough division in this country, without having outside political parties coming into Canada to say, “Elect me to sit in someone else’s country — dual citizenship.”

Honourable senators know that Senator Segal knows how to draft a motion precisely. I hope my long-time experience will be useful to him. I will not be here next week. However, the honourable senator knows that I will attend committee meetings, to try to keep it within the boundaries the honourable senator has outlined. It is not a partisan issue but a sensitive one that touches many Canadians.

There are forces in this country that are not as elegant as some of us here would like to be. Those forces could use this study for other purposes, with an intention that is not as clear or as pure as the one we would like to advance. I have read some of the material, and I did not like it. As honourable senators know, I represented a totally *Canadien français* — I do not use the word “*Québécois*” — district when I started. Over the years, I began to represent fewer and fewer *Canadien français* and Quebec

nationalists and more and more new Canadians. These new Canadians have alerted me to that danger of debate on dual citizenship.

In a private communication, I have made my views known to the Honourable Senator Segal that we will have to be extremely sensitive when we study this motion.

With the firm hand of the honourable senator in the chair, I trust that he will not go outside what he wants to study. However, the committee chair should be prepared to have people asking to be witnesses and, thereby, to extend the mandate of the committee. We will let the universe unfold, as an ex-Prime Minister once said. It is reluctantly that I did not adjourn the debate, in order to be gracious to the chair.

I have nothing more to add at this time. If I had weeks of study, I would come to the same conclusion, which is to say that this motion will have to be dealt with great care. I will not ask Senator Segal if he will deal with the question with great care because I know the answer will be yes. I know the members of the committee, including Senator Di Nino and others in the Liberal Party, who have the ability to understand the study that they want to start.

**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.

The Senate adjourned until Wednesday, October 25, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

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