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Wednesday, April 14, 2010



THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, April 14, 2010

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

CANCER AWARENESS

Hon. Fred J. Dickson: Honourable senators, April is Cancer Awareness Month. This is a topic with which I am all too familiar. Cancer is on the minds of all Canadians. Over 80 per cent of Canadians list cancer as their greatest health concern, but they are often at a loss when it comes to knowing how to prevent it.

Forty per cent of Canadian women and 45 per cent of men will develop cancer during their lifetimes. We know that public policies, environmental regulation, public education, healthy diet, physical activity, infection control, patient empowerment and medical advances all play critical roles in reducing the burden of cancer.

In November 2006, our government made a \$425-million commitment over five years to fund a national cancer control strategy and established the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. The mandate of this partnership is to oversee the implementation of this strategy through investing in infrastructure, best practices, and forming partnerships to share advantages.

This is happening through a variety of initiatives targeting such areas as prevention, screening, guidelines, research, human health resources, and palliative and end-of-life care.

Incidence rates for cancer are growing every year, largely due to our growing and aging population. This makes improving the effectiveness and sustainability of the cancer system of utmost importance to us, both as Canadian taxpayers and as people who could potentially be touched by cancer.

An exceedingly important method for improving both effectiveness and sustainability is through early detection. Among the early detection tests is the FOBT, the fecal occult blood test, which some provincial governments are now in the process of implementing. It should be noted that this test has been available under Medicare in the United States since 1998.

We must act faster because, as we all know, if detected early, survival rates for colorectal cancer are 90 per cent compared to 10 per cent if detected at later stages. Similarly, the cost of treating a patient diagnosed with colorectal cancer at a later stage is almost twice that of treating a patient diagnosed at an earlier stage.

Despite these promising statistics, cancer screening participation rates in Canada are very low, and are especially low for colorectal cancer, the second leading cause of cancer death in Canadians. It is expected that 22,000 Canadians will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer this year alone.

I hope honourable senators will join me and many other cancer survivors in helping to promote cancer awareness, research and prevention, not only during the month of April but until cancer is eradicated.

THE LATE DONALD GARTH ANDERSON

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, the people of Prince Edward Island recently suffered a great loss with the death of one of their most outstanding citizens. Following a long and active career as a farmer, and farm and community leader, Don Anderson died suddenly at the age of 83. He died on March 1, at his home in St. Peters. Many senators had the pleasure of serving with Don's sister Doris during her term here from 1995 to 1997.

Don Anderson is perhaps best known in Prince Edward Island and across the country for his strong leadership in the potato industry and its famed Prince Edward Island potatoes. For a number of years, Don served as general manager of the Prince Edward Island Potato Board and during that time, he was responsible for the introduction of many new technologies and practices that helped to make the island a world leader in potato production. He helped to foster the growth of the seed potato industry, and the province became the second largest exporter of seed potatoes in the world.

Don also made a significant national contribution through his active involvement in the work of the Canadian Horticultural Council. He was widely admired and respected for his commitment to and passion for the agricultural industry. His many achievements were recognized by his peers through his induction into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Don was also very active in his community and his church. As a school trustee he was involved with many community causes. He was a member of a number of organizations including the Rotary Club and the Rural Beautification Society. He was active politically and was a past president of the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island.

Don will be remembered as a man of great personal integrity, a true friend and a public-minded citizen. His trademark strong handshake and hearty greetings are deeply missed by his many friends and associates. He will, of course, be missed most of all in his own home. His family has lost a loving husband, father and brother. To his wife Kathy and other members of his family I offer my deepest sympathy and condolences.

THE LATE HONOURABLE LECH KACZYNSKI

Hon. Linda Frum: Honourable senators, it is with great sadness that I rise today to pay respect to President Lech Kaczynski of Poland. President Kaczynski, along with his wife Maria and 94 other high-ranking Polish officials, was killed in a tragic plane crash this past weekend in Russia.

As we all know, the Kaczynski delegation was on its way to mark the seventieth anniversary of the horrific massacre of Polish officers by the Soviet army in the Katyn Forest during World War II. That national tragedy is echoed by a new tragedy in which Poland has lost, in one blow, so many of its leading lights.

President Kaczynski had a long career in Polish politics that stretched back to the Polish people's struggle against Soviet oppression in the 1970s and 1980s. His opposition to that repressive regime ultimately led to his internment by Communist authorities.

As an advisor to Polish Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa, President Kaczynski was there when Poland emerged from the dark days of communism and entered a new era of freedom and democracy.

President Kaczynski worked tirelessly for the Polish people following the collapse of communism. He was Mayor of Warsaw, served in the Polish Senate and in many other senior positions within the Polish government, becoming president in 2005. As president, he worked hard to combat crime and corruption within Poland. His entire career was a testament to his commitment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced that Canada will mark a day of national mourning on April 15. On that day, Canadians will have the opportunity to show their solidarity with the Polish people.

Canadians join with the tens of thousands of Poles who have taken to the streets to pray and to mourn the loss of their leader. As Canadians, we express our profound sympathy to all Polish-Canadians and to the Polish people worldwide for this great and tragic loss.

POLITICAL SPIN

Hon. Joseph A. Day: Honourable senators, recently I heard a story, which is allegedly true, that I thought might be of interest to you.

Judy Wallman, a professional genealogist doing research in Southern California, was doing some work on her own family tree. She discovered that she and United States Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid shared a common ancestor, one Remus Reid who died in Montana in 1889.

On the back of a picture which Judy Wallman obtained during her research was the following inscription:

Remus Reid, horse thief, sent to Montana Territorial Prison 1885, escaped 1887, robbed the Montana Flyer six times. Caught by Pinkerton detectives, convicted and hanged in 1889.

• (1410)

Judy recently emailed Congressman Harry Reid for information he might have about their common ancestor, Remus Reid. Harry Reid's staff from Congress sent back the following biographical sketch for her research:

Remus Reid was a famous cowboy in the Montana Territory. His business empire grew to include the acquisition of valuable equestrian assets and intimate dealings with the Montana railroad. Beginning in 1883, he devoted several years of his life to government service, finally taking leave to resume his dealings with the railroad. In 1887, he was a key player in a vital investigation run by the renowned Pinkerton Detective Agency. In 1889, Remus passed away during an important civic function held in his honour when the platform upon which he was standing collapsed.

Honourable senators, this sketch is a perfect example of what is commonly referred to as "political spin." The words we hear and the explanations we receive should not always be taken at face value.

THE LATE ANNA WALENTYNOWICZ

Hon. David Tkachuk: Honourable senators, it is a vast understatement to say that Poland has been no stranger to strife and tragedy throughout its history. It was visited by the two once again on Saturday, April 10. That day, the plane carrying the Polish president and his wife, along with a host of the country's elite, crashed in a Russian forest killing all those on board.

This was no nameless Russian forest but a killing ground named Katyn. It was there in 1940, at the outset of the Second World War, that the Soviet secret police massacred more than 22,000 Polish officers. The Soviets spent decades denying that crime. However, Katyn has never been forgotten by the Poles. It symbolizes for them the oppression and injustice visited upon their country by the Soviets during the war and for 35 years thereafter. It symbolises an oppression whose crushing grip was pried loose only in 1980 when a strike in a Gdansk shipyard led to the founding of the Solidarity movement and the unravelling of communism.

The strike and that unravelling were sparked by the firing of a crane operator and labour leader named Anna Walentynowicz, a remarkable woman whose fierce determination and unparalleled courage hardly seems comprehensible to us, and is belied by the fact that she is called "the grandmother of Solidarity."

Each December, as *The New York Times* reported, she collected money for flowers to memorialize the 50 or so workers who had been shot by the police in 1970. Their crime was to protest food shortages. Each December she was arrested. How could she know when she collected money each year that she would not herself be shot?

She published an illegal newspaper that was distributed to workers and hand-delivered to her bosses. It was her hands that delivered it. This was uncommon bravery. As a woman, it probably would have been enough in the 1980s to have been a welder and crane operator, but Anna went far beyond that accomplishment. She is an unsung hero of the fall of communism in Europe and of the women's movement too, I hazard to guess; and most of the public had never heard of her.

Anna Walentynowicz was among those killed in that plane crash in Katyn. She and others were on their way to a Catholic mass in honour of the seventieth anniversary of the murder of those 22,000 officers. The tragic ironies abound.

Our hearts and prayers go out to her family and to the families of all those killed in that accident. The world rarely sees the likes of Anna and we are all fortunate, and should be profoundly thankful, that we witnessed her in our lifetime.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Hon. Yonah Martin: Honourable senators, six years ago on April 22, 2004, the Parliament of Canada passed a resolution recognizing the genocide committed against the Armenians by the Ottoman Turks. By so doing, the Parliament of Canada sent a message to the world that we have the courage of our convictions by acknowledging this reprehensible treatment against the Armenian people by the Ottoman Turks.

Honourable senators, I remind this chamber that, despite the historical evidence, Turkey continues to deny the Armenian genocide. As honourable senators know, Turkey emerged out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 as a separate state. The Ottomans administered a vast multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire with a degree of equanimity and justice that anticipated some of the practices of the twentieth century.

However, during the last two centuries of its existence, the Ottomans lost sight of these ideals. Their administration grew intolerant of minorities, which led to outbreaks of cruelty against them and even genocide. Many cultural groups suffered, but the Armenians were singled out for industrial-scale killing.

During the course of 1915, the Ottoman authorities exterminated over 1.5 million Armenians. These unfortunate people were massacred. Death marches, death camps and poison gases were used against innocent people who were targeted because they were Armenian. The unthinkable degree of brutality that the Ottomans hurled at the Armenians can be compared only to the techniques that the Nazis later used against the Jews. The evidence that this hideous genocide took place is overwhelming and was witnessed and documented at the time by British and American diplomats and soldiers.

Furthermore, the soldiers and foreign office officials of imperial Germany, the wartime ally of the Ottoman Empire, recorded the confirmation of genocide.

Twenty-five countries have paid due respect to the memory of the Armenian victims by recognizing the fact of the genocide, despite the strenuous lobby efforts of Ankara.

Honourable senators, it is remarkable that the modern Turkish republic continues to defy the evidence of the genocide. All nations have to carry the burden of their legacies. Modern Turkey is no exception, and recognizing the Armenian genocide does not make the Turks culpable for the barbarism of an empire long dead. Recognizing the genocide would mean simply that modern Turkey is mature and stable enough to carry the baggage of its past.

[Senator Tkachuk]

Denying history is both futile and dangerous. The failure of the international community to recognize the Armenian genocide and punish the guilty led to the Holocaust of the Second World War. Was it not Hitler who said, "Today, who remembers the Armenians?"

Honourable senators, Canada remembers the Armenians and the world at large remembers those who perished in the Armenian genocide.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

VISIT TO UNITED NATIONS,
DECEMBER 17-18, 2009—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Noël A. Kinsella: Honourable senators, I ask leave of the Senate to table a document entitled: "Visit Report to the United Nations — December 17 and 18, 2009."

Is permission granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO CHANGE COMMENCEMENT
TIME ON WEDNESDAYS AND THURSDAYS AND
TO EFFECT WEDNESDAY ADJOURNMENTS

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

That, for the remainder of the current session,

- (a) when the Senate sits on a Wednesday or a Thursday, it shall sit at 1:30 p.m. notwithstanding rule 5(1)(a);
- (b) when the Senate sits on a Wednesday, it stand adjourned at 4 p.m., unless it has been suspended for the purpose of taking a deferred vote or has earlier adjourned; and
- (c) when a vote is deferred until 5:30 p.m. on a Wednesday, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings, immediately prior to any adjournment but no later than 4 p.m., to suspend the sitting until 5:30 p.m. for the taking of the deferred vote, and that committees be authorized to meet during the period that the sitting is suspended.

**MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT
CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999**

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour to present Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

(Bill read first time.)

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

(On motion of Senator Comeau, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

• (1420)

MEDICAL DEVICES REGISTRY BILL

FIRST READING

Hon. Mac Harb presented Bill S-217, An Act to establish and maintain a national registry of medical devices.

(Bill read first time.)

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

(On motion of Senator Harb, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

[*English*]

THE SENATE

**NOTICE OF MOTION TO RECOGNIZE
VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION
IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES**

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

That the Senate recognize the value and importance of education in the First Nations communities throughout Canada; and,

That the federal government, with the provinces and territories, and the First Nations groups and other willing partners, develop options to improve the governance framework and clarify accountability for First Nations elementary and secondary education so as to close the gap in educational attainment by First Nations students.

**MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES
FOR OFFENCES INVOLVING TRAFFICKING**

PRESENTATION OF PETITION

Hon. Donald Neil Plett: Honourable senators, it is my privilege to present a petition that has been signed by 3,009 Canadians, adding to the 8,338 signatures that I presented originally on

March 9, 2010, to total 11,347 Canadians who are asking the upper chamber not to delay the passage of Bill C-268, legislation that will create mandatory minimum sentencing for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of 18.

QUESTION PERIOD

PUBLIC SAFETY

**CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA—
MINIMUM SENTENCES**

Hon. Joan Fraser: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The estimates for 2010-11, in the section on Correctional Service Canada, tell us that over the next three years, the budget for the correctional service will go up by 27 per cent, that is to say, in the third year, \$861 million a year. That is a lot of money.

The leader will recall that I asked in the past for estimates of the impact on Canada's prisons, notably the population of federal prisons, by the various increases in minimum sentences that have been passed into law or proposed under the present government. Presumably, Correctional Service Canada had precise estimates of the impact. Correctional Service Canada outlines in the explanatory notes that it is looking to expanded populations.

Can the leader now tell us how many more prisoners the federal prison system is expecting to have to accommodate as a result of the new legislation that has been adopted?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, that is a complex and difficult question to answer. I suppose one could look at the situation the other way and say that, by toughening our laws and strengthening sentencing, more people would be reticent to commit crimes, being fearful of ending up in a penitentiary.

The fact is, as I have said to the honourable senator before, our government is committed to protecting the safety of Canadians. With regard to spaces in prisons, many of those spaces are taken up by the same people. Sometimes the numbers are confusing because people will be in prison, be released, reoffend and then be back in prison. That is counted as two offences, when in fact it is just one offender.

With longer sentences, the deterrence of stronger penalties would hopefully create a situation whereby, once people understand the laws and once our courts properly enforce those laws, the need for an increased number of spaces — which undoubtedly we will need — will not be as onerous as perhaps we may believe now.

In any event, I do not know, honourable senators, whether someone has actually tried to anticipate the criminality of Canadians in the future, but I will certainly attempt to provide an answer by written response.

Senator Fraser: I appreciate that undertaking from the leader.

Certainly the correctional service is looking at the prospect of an increased prisoner population as a result of the legislation. That is made plain in the commentary on the estimates. Indeed, of the \$861 million a year, \$708.3 million a year is scheduled to go for custody — that is in addition to the money already spent — which sounds like pretty precise calculations of what will be involved. Indeed, the estimates note that the risk is that longer periods of time in federal custody will put additional pressures on an aging physical infrastructure and potentially increase risks to the safety and security of staff and offenders.

I believe it is fairly well established in most of the research that one of the ways to diminish the risks to the safety of staff and offenders, as well as to diminish the risk of reoffending, is to provide programming while the prisoners are incarcerated to help to rehabilitate them and train them for reintegration into society once they are eventually released, which of course most of them will be. In that context, it is perhaps a little discouraging to note that the budget for programming for correctional interventions will only increase by \$147 million, compared to the overall increase of \$861 million, although it has been reported over and over again that the programming budget was already not strong enough.

Can the leader's government give us details, please, on precisely what will be done to increase and improve the programming for those prisoners in order to ensure, as I said in a question last month, not only their safety but also our safety once they are let out?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators well know that, through Correctional Service Canada and also the Department of Justice, significant funds of money have been allocated to counsel, train and help people who are incarcerated. The honourable senator spoke about the increase. The obvious goal of the system is to prevent or help people who are incarcerated from reoffending. Through various programs and significant effort, staff and personnel in our institutions work toward that end. There is a need for specialized workers in the area of mental illness as the results of more research come forward.

I will do everything I can to get as much information as possible for the honourable senator.

• (1430)

Senator Fraser: Thank you. I ask the leader to request that her colleagues provide us with one more piece of information. In regard to the leader's answer to my first question, she talked about what one would hope is the deterrent effect of knowing that if you get caught, you will do hard time.

There seems to be a vast body of evidence in the United States of America, which began implementing strong mandatory minimum sentences in many places a generation or more ago. In California, as I am sure the honourable senator is aware, the prison budget now exceeds the education budget and the state is kicking out prisoners and reversing their policy on mandatory minimum sentences.

Could the leader tell us or find out for us whether the department has done studies or had studies done for it to demonstrate why the outcome of these policies would be different

in Canada? Has any serious work been done on this subject? I accept that there might be good reasons for the results to be different.

Senator LeBreton: I believe I did see such a study. It is difficult to compare Canada and our system with the system in the United States. Demographically, some states in the United States have no counterpart in Canada. Other states do. Some of the northern states are more demographically aligned with Canada.

At the end of the day, honourable senators, I think the goal of all Canadians — and this is certainly the goal of the government — is to ensure that law-abiding citizens are able to live in their homes and communities knowing that their safety is of paramount importance to all officials responsible for their safety.

However, if there are studies that I can obtain, I would be happy to provide them to the honourable senator.

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, in response to Senator Fraser's first question, the leader indicated one of the mitigating circumstance would be that mandatory minimum sentences passed into law by this government and that are proposed in legislation before, or that will be before, these houses during the current session would undoubtedly provide a deterrent effect that will diminish the prison population over time.

Senator Fraser asked particularly about studies in the United States. I suggest to the honourable senator that for some time we have had mandatory minimum sentences of varying times for various types of crimes. Surely, before proposing new mandatory minimum sentences, the government would have undertaken studies as to the effectiveness of existing mandatory minimum sentences.

I ask the leader in the course of her investigations on the items she has taken as notice to check into that and provide us with details to support the suggestion given to Senator Fraser, namely, that these mandatory minimum sentences would have the suggested deterrent effect.

Senator LeBreton: I believe that mandatory minimum sentences or strengthened sentences would act as deterrents. In my own family, I may have a couple of family members still living if proper sentences had been administered in the first place instead of practically no sentence at all. I believe many people in this country would be alive if it were not for the fact that the people who killed them should not have been on the roads or in a position to cause these criminal acts. Strengthened sentences not only act as deterrents but also as a great safety measure to prevent innocent people from losing their lives.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Cowan: Most senators who participated in or attended meetings of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs several years ago when we considered Bill C-2, entitled Tackling Violent Crime, would have agreed with what the honourable senator said when we began the hearings. Intuitively, it makes sense. Unfortunately, the vast preponderance

of the evidence from experts who appeared before the committee was to the contrary, namely, that mandatory minimum sentences did not have a deterrent effect.

Whether that was the case then or not, several years have passed. I expect that the government would have undertaken some studies between then and now that either reinforce and support the position the leader has taken — which I intuitively held at the time, but which was contradicted by evidence — or not. Would the leader ascertain whether the government has done such studies?

Senator LeBreton: I have to go back to the fact that evidence is evidence and it depends on what one is looking for in a witness to appear before a particular committee. In the case of the criminal justice system, I keep watching defence lawyers and the various difficulties they have with strengthening laws in some cases. Honourable senators, all of this depends on who the witnesses were and whether witnesses on the other side were heard, particularly witnesses representing victims groups, to balance properly this overall study.

As I indicated to Senator Fraser, I will attempt to find a balanced study of the views on both sides.

[Translation]

HERITAGE

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Hon. Francis Fox: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. It concerns funding for the cultural institution that many of us believe to be the country's leading cultural institution: CBC/Radio-Canada.

It was recently reported in the media that CBC/Radio-Canada's funding will be reduced in 2010-11.

Unfortunately, these budget cuts announced by the Canada Media Fund will reduce the funding envelope for original productions by 10 per cent.

Under the previous regime comprising the fund's predecessors, the Canadian Television Fund and the New Media Fund, the corporation benefited from guaranteed subsidies that the Harper government has eliminated. The government's decision will affect programming because the francophone and anglophone schedules will lose some 50 hours of original programs. That will end up diluting Canadian content, and Canadian identity will suffer as a result.

When will the government give CBC/Radio-Canada the funding it needs to carry out its mission in this country's cities and regions?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, unlike the previous government that promised and did not deliver, we provided increased funding to

the CBC. As I answered, I believe, to Senator Poulin in regard to a question on CBC/Radio-Canada, they were provided with an envelope of funds.

Far be it from the government to interfere with the decisions made by the board of CBC/Radio-Canada about how to allocate those funds. That is their decision. I can imagine that if we ever tried to direct them as to where they should put their funds, there would be major problems and charges of interfering with the activities of CBC/Radio-Canada.

• (1440)

[Translation]

Senator Fox: Honourable senators, in the same article Daniel Giroux, from Laval University's Media Studies Centre, noted that Canada's public broadcaster receives far less funding from the government than its counterparts in many countries. The Canadian government contributes \$34 per capita annually; that is, less than 10¢ a day. France contributes \$77 per capita annually and Britain, \$124. In a document that the members of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications know very well, entitled *Digital Britain*, the British government has recognized the importance of the public broadcaster at a time when, because of the digitization of programming, foreign content is increasing significantly in the country. To quote that report:

[English]

The Digital Britain Report makes a clear case for continued strong intervention to deliver public service content; and we take as a given the importance of an independent, stable, well funded BBC as the cornerstone for the production and distribution of high quality public service content.

[Translation]

At a time when many countries are taking the necessary steps to preserve their cultural identity through adequate funding for their public broadcasters — who thus have the means to attain their objectives — why is the Harper government not trying to do the same in Canada?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I cannot stand here and answer for the budgetary decisions of the Government of France or Great Britain. All I can do is answer for the Government of Canada. As the honourable senator well knows, we did provide increased funding to the CBC. The honourable senator mentioned in his first question the Canada Media Fund. We have also provided \$100 million for the Canadian Feature Films Fund, \$200 million in Canadian film tax credits, and another \$100 million per year for the Local Programming Improvement Fund.

Honourable senators, the person who wrote this article is greatly misinformed. First, I am not sure what the structure is in France or Great Britain, but he is misinformed if he believes that our government is not supportive of CBC/Radio-Canada and also that we have not lived up to our commitment of providing the funding that we promised, unlike the previous government.

[Translation]

Senator Fox: This is no time for the government to fall back on its past commitments. It is time the government recognized that we are entering a new age, the digital age. France has released *France numérique* and England, *Digital Britain*. Both reports concluded that the public broadcaster has an important role to play in this new environment, which did not exist two years ago.

My question was: when will the Government of Canada release a report entitled *Digital Canada*, for example? I bet that such a document will recognize what the minister refuses to recognize, that is, the importance of providing adequate funding to CBC/Radio-Canada in this new context.

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, we have a Minister of Canadian Heritage who is attuned to the new reality in our communications and broadcasting industry, the Honourable James Moore.

The fact is that we have provided significant taxpayers' dollars to CBC/Radio-Canada. They are responsible for that envelope of money to provide the services that are expected of them as public broadcasters.

In terms of entering the new digital era, we cannot pick up a newspaper without being confronted by the new realities, including the issues the CRTC is wrestling with. That does not take away from the fact that the government has provided funding to CBC/Radio-Canada.

It is interesting that the opposition is always saying to us, "Be careful what you spend," and then, every time I get up to answer a question, it is "Spend more money."

CBC/Radio-Canada has a significant amount of money, \$1.1 billion, and most private broadcasters would love to have that amount of money to operate with.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Young people in Canada are facing staggering unemployment figures. In fact, the unemployment rate for young people is roughly 16 per cent. Hundreds of thousands of students are now looking for summer work to help pay for their university and college. About 70 per cent of these students rely on summer jobs to help finance their education.

The Canada Summer Jobs program is popular and successful, both with students and employers. However, the government added only \$10 million to their budget this year. That is less than \$10 per student. Why has this government not invested more in the Canada Student Jobs program?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, that confirms the point that I was making to Senator Fox — "only \$10 million." I am aging myself, but it does have shades of C.D. Howe: "What's a million dollars?"

There is information with regard to the employment picture relative to students, and it is not universal across the country. There are regions that are more affected than others. I do not think it is fair to make a blanket statement that there is a certain percentage of unemployment across the country. There are places in the country that, in fact, are experiencing shortages in employment.

I do believe, honourable senators, that the programs that the government has put in place in a host of areas to assist the unemployed are working. We have proved that they are working. We are certainly getting evidence that young people are in a much better position now than they were a few years ago in obtaining summer employment, although there are areas of the country where that is not so, and I will absolutely acknowledge that.

Senator Callbeck: Assistance for student employment is certainly an investment; it is not a cost. Students have been hard hit by the downturn in the economy.

Last year, there were 128,000 fewer jobs. The money that has been added to the budget this year will create roughly 3,500 jobs, which is only about 3 per cent of the jobs that were lost.

What is the government doing to help the 97 per cent of students who are looking for jobs that no longer exist?

Senator LeBreton: First, the Honourable Senator Callbeck asked a question, but she failed to acknowledge the significant amounts of money that the government has put into the actual education of students and in terms of our student grant program.

We made post-secondary scholarships and bursaries tax-free and we are not given any credit for that. We introduced the textbook tax credit and we never hear any credit for that. We are providing \$87.5 million for over 1,500 master's level and doctoral scholarships and we never hear anything about that.

We created tens of thousands of jobs for students last summer, and Budget 2010 takes further action through the funding of Canada Summer Jobs, the Career Focus component of the Youth Employment Strategy, the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, and many more.

• (1450)

We are providing up to \$4,000 to encourage youth to pursue skilled trades through the apprenticeship program, something of which I am particularly proud. Honourable senators, because of our skilled trades programs, administered by my colleague, the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of HRSDC, we are now producing the skilled tradespeople of the future.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

SNOW CRAB QUOTA

Hon. Elizabeth Hubley: Honourable senators, my question is also for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

The recent decision by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to reduce the snow crab quota for 2010 by 63 per cent is catastrophic for fishermen, their crews and processing plants on the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Can the minister tell us what action is being taken to alleviate the hardship being placed on the snow crab fishery?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, obviously this was not an easy decision to make. It was based on scientific advice. In setting the total allowable catch for 2010, Minister Shea placed a high priority on conservation of the resource. However, the impact on harvesters and communities was also considered.

In terms of helping those most impacted by this decision, the minister is trying to work with the provinces and the communities to try to come up with some reasonable options to help the people in this industry through this crisis.

Senator Hubley: A 63 per cent reduction in a quota in one year is dramatic for the industry and those who rely on it. Can the minister explain why such a drastic measure was necessary this year? Have the departmental scientists not been recommending more balanced cuts over the past several years? Why has this government not heeded these calls for conservation?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, the fishery industry is a tenuous industry. I am no expert on the fishery but, obviously, conditions often develop that cause difficulties.

I cannot give the honourable senator a definitive answer but I will ask the Department of Fisheries and Oceans the breadth and depth of the scientific research they contemplated when they made this decision.

[Translation]

DELAYED ANSWER TO ORAL QUESTION

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table a delayed response to an oral question raised by the Honourable Senator Chaput on March 16, 2010, concerning Canadian Heritage, funding for official language minority publications by the Canada Periodical Fund.

HERITAGE

PUBLICATIONS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(Response to question raised by Hon. Maria Chaput on March 16, 2010)

Official language minority communities participated in the public consultations for the design of the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) held in 2008, and the Fund has

customized eligibility criteria for these publications to recognize their importance and the specific challenges they face.

Official language minority publications are exempt from the normal eligibility requirement of at least 50% paid circulation, and they must sell a total of 2,500 copies per year to qualify for funding rather than the 5,000 that is required for other publications. This is a significant reduction in the required minimum annual circulation, and recognizes the difficulty in reaching these small but important communities.

In 2008-2009, 27 official language minority publications received a total of \$690,629 in funding from the PAP. We anticipate a similar or greater number receiving funding from the CPF, and many may see increases in funding.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 27(1), I would like to inform the Senate that, when we proceed to Government Business, the Senate will begin with Item No. 1, the Speech from the Throne, under Motions, followed by the other items as they appear on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*.

[English]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Poirier, seconded by the Honourable Senator Runciman:

That the following Address be presented to Her Excellency the Governor General of Canada:

To Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Military Merit, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the Senate of Canada in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise today to speak in reply to the Speech from the Throne, a speech that charts the course for our government and our country.

On the day following the Speech from the Throne, March 4, the Minister of Finance tabled Budget 2010, a prudent budget to implement the second phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan. It is most encouraging to note that the budget was widely acclaimed from small and large businesses, university heads and, most important, hard-working, taxpaying Canadians.

We have embarked upon the Third Session of the Fortieth Parliament. Our task as parliamentarians is onerous. Canadians rightly expect action and results. They expect us to work hard, manage our expenses, and conduct our affairs honestly and directly, just as they do in their own lives.

The resilient spirit of the Canadian people is not often fully recognized or realized until we are faced with very difficult challenges. Our determination, perseverance and creativity have helped our nation grow. That spirit led us to unite seemingly disparate regions into a federation that now stands as a model the world over.

We demonstrated that strength and spirit in World War I — the story of Vimy Ridge is fresh in our minds — World War II, the Korean War and many other conflicts, as well as our peacekeeping efforts.

Canada also showed the world another side of its character, with record-breaking success, at the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics. These games, it has been said, marked a new coming of age for our country, a demonstration to the world community that ours is a great land, full of promise, ingenuity, strength and dedication. We demonstrated that we are winners, not content to be in second place.

Canadians also demonstrated their generosity and compassion for the plight of those less fortunate. The outpouring of support by Canadians for the people of Haiti has been nothing short of miraculous; but we should not be surprised. It reaffirms one's faith in humanity to see individuals giving all that they can so that Haiti might rebuild and emerge stronger than before.

Our Armed Forces, the RCMP, diplomats and non-governmental personnel demonstrated the true Canadian spirit in their work in Haiti, both before and after the earthquake. We can be very proud that we acted decisively and quickly, thanks to solid decisions by our government to properly equip our Armed Forces.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator LeBreton: All those who gave so much aided us in our efforts and we sincerely thank all the aid organizations, churches and individuals who did so much and continue to do so much in Haiti.

On the home front, throughout the last year, through no fault of their own, many Canadians have endured job losses, pension shortfalls and general anxiety as they faced the

unknown. However, they did not lose faith. They have continued to work hard, provide for their families and prepare for a better tomorrow.

Canada was one of the last countries to enter the recession and we will be the first to recover. While we were not responsible for the recession, we were affected by it due to the increasingly integrated nature of the world economy, but most particularly because of the situation faced by our neighbour and largest trading partner, the United States of America.

The OECD recently confirmed that Canada is, in fact, expected to have the strongest recovery in the G7 in the year 2010. Canada is in the best fiscal position of the G7 nations.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator LeBreton: Why is this?

Senator Munson: We set the table!

Senator LeBreton: You are right, we did set the table.

Senator Munson: "We."

Senator Mercer: We, over here.

Senator LeBreton: Why is this, honourable senators? Well before the worldwide economic downturn —

An Hon. Senator: It is called the GST.

Senator LeBreton: — the Conservative government paid down the debt by \$38 billion.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Senator: That is performance.

Senator Mercer: You are welcome.

Senator LeBreton: We did not waste that \$13 billion that the Liberals say they left us; our government put it back where it belongs. We put it in the pockets of hard-working Canadian taxpayers.

Senator Segal: That is what we are, people first.

Senator LeBreton: Economists have stated that this helped enormously in positioning Canada in a favourable position to deal with the recession.

Our banking system is the envy of the world, and the Governor of the Bank of Canada moved aggressively to protect Canada's financial system.

• (1500)

While the Liberal opposition has trouble accepting this fact, our government's reduction of the GST from 7 per cent to 5 per cent left a great deal of money in the pockets of Canadians, which was especially important to lower income Canadians.

An article in *The Globe and Mail* on Friday, January 29, 2010, headlined “Liberal MP calls for talks on raising the GST,” stated:

Not all economists are dismissive of the GST cut. Carl Sonnen, the president of Infometrica, said his firm’s economic modelling shows a two-point cut in the GST translates roughly into about 162,000 new jobs. Conversely, reversing the Conservatives’ cut would mean losing those jobs.

“You can’t argue that raising the GST rate won’t hurt jobs. It will,” said Mr. Sonnen who said the Conservative GST cut likely softened the recession blow. . . . “In our analysis, we got some positives out of that for GDP in the second quarter of last year. Otherwise we might have been in recession much earlier.”

Clearly, Mr. Sonnen credited the cut in the GST for Canada’s ability to deal with the recession.

Honourable senators, emerging from the deficit and returning to balanced budgets is achievable. Indeed, our current deficit represents only 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product. Our American neighbours face a ratio over three times as high. Their deficit-to-GDP ratio reached 11 per cent in fiscal year 2009, and is expected to be at 9.9 per cent for fiscal year 2010.

In the calendar year 2009, the United Kingdom recorded a general government deficit equivalent to 11.4 per cent of GDP. This year, it is expected to remain around 11 per cent.

The Deputy Chief Economist at the TD Bank, Craig Alexander, said this of the federal budget, which implements year two of Canada’s Economic Action Plan: “It’s a credible plan, and it gets us back to balance in a reasonable time.”

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce “welcomed the federal government’s strategy to achieve its recovery plan, to return to balanced budgets, and to promote a more innovative and competitive economy.”

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities stated:

FCM applauds the federal government for protecting core investments in cities and communities as it reduces the federal budget deficit. These investments will help local governments — and Canadian property taxpayers — build the infrastructure that is the backbone of our economy and quality of life.

The Forest Products Association of Canada noted the following:

From a forestry industry perspective, the government has its priorities right: investing in green jobs of tomorrow, stimulating the economy through clean energy technologies.

For the month of February, Statistics Canada reported that employment increased by nearly 21,000 jobs, lowering the unemployment rate from 8.3 per cent to 8.2 per cent. A further

18,000 jobs were added in March. Honourable senators, since July 2009, Canada has created almost 178,000 new jobs. I hasten to remind honourable senators that through the entire period of the 1990s, the unemployment rate fell below 9 per cent only once.

For the record — and I will keep repeating this information until the message gets through — the undeniable fact is the largest annual deficit in the history of Canada relative to GDP was 8.3 per cent, left by the Trudeau government. In spite of the recession during the early 1990s, the Mulroney government turned over an economy with a debt relative to GDP of 5.3 per cent, a full 3-per-cent reduction. No amount of Liberal spin can change that fact.

Honourable senators, while positive signs in early 2010 are encouraging, we fully understand that our work is far from done. Our government will not be satisfied until every Canadian who has experienced a job loss is back working again.

We realize that while we are fortunate to have a stable banking system, and that there are positive signs of recovery, the emergence from the recession remains fragile, and the focal point for the government will continue to be the economy and jobs — a subject strangely absent from the concerns of the official opposition, even though I have to acknowledge that Senator Cowan, in his speech, does refer to these issues. Perhaps the honourable senator should take these concerns to his leadership and convince them that jobs and the economy are priorities for Canadians.

With the economy and jobs as the primary focus, the government has taken measures to enhance international trade. Minister Flaherty and Minister Van Loan recently announced the elimination of all remaining tariffs on manufacturing inputs, machinery and equipment. These measures will provide an additional \$300 million in annual duty savings for Canadian businesses. It is projected that these savings will result in the creation of up to 12,000 jobs and will vastly improve Canada’s productivity.

As a matter of fact, in *The Globe and Mail* this morning, there was promising news. The headline read: “Canadian exports ride resurgence in global trade.” The subtitle said: “February surplus swells to highest level since late 2008 as companies extend their reach beyond a slowly healing US market.”

As promised at the beginning of our economic action plan, we are proceeding with \$19 billion in new federal stimulus under year 2 of Canada’s Economic Action Plan to continue to create and protect jobs. The provinces, territories and municipalities are contributing an additional \$6 billion to this effort.

The new stimulus for 2010-11 includes: \$3.2 billion in personal income tax relief — I know that is something that is foreign to our opposition, but we do believe in income tax relief; over \$4 billion in additional benefits, training opportunities and Employment Insurance premium relief to help unemployed Canadians; \$7.7 billion in infrastructure stimulus to create jobs; \$1.9 billion to create the economy of tomorrow; and \$2.2 billion to support industries and communities.

Also, Budget 2010 has targeted initiatives to build jobs and growth for the economy of tomorrow, harness Canadian innovation and make Canada a destination of choice for new business investment.

Measures include: over \$100 million to protect jobs by extending the maximum length of work-sharing agreements — a huge success that my colleague the Honourable Diane Finley should be credited with because this idea was hers and the work-sharing agreement program is a great success; \$108 million to support young workers through internships and skills development to help them find jobs, and also to support Aboriginal students; over \$600 million to help develop and attract talented people to strengthen our capacity for world-leading research and development, and to improve the commercialization of research; establishing a red tape reduction commission to reduce paperwork for business; implementing measures to support investment in clean energy generation; and as I said before, and I repeat, making Canada a tariff-free zone for manufacturers by eliminating all remaining tariffs on machinery, equipment and goods imported for further manufacturing in Canada.

The Minister of Finance also outlined a three-point plan to return Canada to a balanced budget, by following through with the planned exit strategy once the economy has shown real signs of recovery.

• (1510)

Importantly, as part of our economic recovery, our government will live within its means by restraining spending through targeted reductions. Budget 2010 proposes \$17.6 billion in savings over five years, and we will conduct a comprehensive review of government administrative functions and overhead costs to identify additional savings and improve service delivery.

Honourable senators, let me tell you what we will not do. We will not put the burden of these challenging times on the backs of hard-working Canadians and pensioners, as was the case in the mid-1990s. I need not remind you that the previous Liberal government did not rein in their own activities, but rather laid the burden on the backs of Canadian provinces with cuts to transfer payments, and by emptying the Employment Insurance fund.

Unlike the previous government, we believe in funding efficiencies, operating effectively and maintaining Canada's position as an ideal place to invest.

What are the results of the policies of the Conservative government, led by the Right Honourable Stephen Harper? Two weeks ago, *The Globe and Mail* carried the headline: "Canada ranked No. 2 in competitiveness." The article stated:

KPMG said one key reason for Canada's high position on the list is that federal and provincial governments have been cutting taxes and reforming tax laws. Indeed, Canada now has lower business taxes than any other G7 country, the consultants say.

However, Michael Ignatieff would start to unravel these gains. At the Liberal conference in Montreal, Mr. Ignatieff announced that he would freeze corporate tax levels at the present rate, and

not honour the planned reduction to 15 per cent in 2012 that our government has pledged itself to.

Today is the one year anniversary of Michael Ignatieff's pledge to hike taxes. The pledge was straightforward. He said one year ago today: "we will have to raise taxes."

Michael Ignatieff also said: "I'm not going to take a GST hike off the table." That is what he said, and he described himself, honourable senators, as a "tax-and-spend, Pearsonian, Trudeau Liberal."

Is it any wonder that Canadians are looking to the Prime Minister and our government for economic leadership?

Honourable senators, I listened carefully to Senator Cowan's remarks on March 31. Much of what he had to say I had heard before in previous rants about the Harper government. He obsessed about prorogation as if this was some new procedure hatched up by the Conservatives. The government was clear: We did not prorogue because of the Taliban prisoners; and we did not prorogue to gain control of the Senate — although I must admit it was, for me, a delicious by-product.

We prorogued Parliament for the grand total of 22 days for the following reasons. A year had passed since our government introduced Canada's Economic Action Plan, which included one of the most comprehensive stimulus packages in the industrialized world, a demand, by the way, of the Liberal opposition. They are now saying we should not have done it.

Since that time, all the stimulus and budget measures have been adopted and implemented. With the continued delivery of our economic action plan remaining a top priority, the fact was that the economic landscape at the beginning of 2010 had changed dramatically and fundamentally from a year ago. That is why we prorogued.

The government believed it was time to consult with Canadians, recalibrate our agenda and set new priorities. That was the purpose of prorogation, a purpose entirely consistent with the past practices of all federal governments.

Over the coming year, we will focus on completing the implementation of the economic action plan; returning to balanced budgets once the economy has recovered; and building the economy of the future. Our focus is and will remain jobs and the economy.

Honourable senators, I was taken aback slightly by the deliberate misinformation of the Liberals and some of their friends in the media. The most egregious statement, and so unfair to politicians of all political stripes, was that, when Parliament is not in session, all of us are on an extended vacation.

In Canada, prorogation is a routine, constitutionally legitimate process. It has occurred 105 times in the last 143 years. The average parliamentary session is little more than a year. Prorogation does not enable governments to avoid parliamentary scrutiny. When Parliament returns, governments face immediate and unavoidable confidence votes in the House of Commons.

I am giving Senator Cowan or Munson — whoever spoke — a little history lesson. I have big ears, figuratively and physically. I will not tell you what my brother and sisters used to call me when I was a kid but they used to say that I would take off in a good windstorm.

It is difficult to understand how prorogation can somehow render Canada's Parliament powerless. That great Liberal icon, the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, prorogued Parliament twice and dissolved it once in the space of two years and five months.

Some Hon. Senators: Not Lester!

Senator LeBreton: However, of course, that was entirely okay because it was the Liberals.

Senator Comeau: That is different.

Senator LeBreton: On January 29, 2010, historian and author Michael Bliss, wrote in *The Globe and Mail*:

It's hard to see why there is so much fuss about the Harper government's prorogation of Parliament. The House of Commons, which is not very well respected by either ordinary or informed Canadians when it is sitting, will now sit for three weeks less than it would have otherwise. Some useful government bills are going to have to be reintroduced. The Afghan hearings, into events of several years ago, will be delayed for a few more weeks. And that's about it.

He went on:

One would think from the heated rhetoric of opposition politicians, the strange gaggle of academics who signed the long, sanctimonious letter against prorogation, and the fulminations of some editorialists and pundits, that our democracy is somehow imperilled by the government's resort, twice, to one of the most common of all parliamentary practices.

Bliss further wrote, not missing an opportunity to declare on this institution:

The appointed Senate of Canada is obviously a standing, outrageous disgrace to democracy and ought not to be tolerated by a free people.

Those are his words, not mine. He continued:

It's surely to Stephen Harper's credit, both short and long term, that he keeps trying to change the Senate. One of his reasons for resorting to prorogation and falling back on making his own partisan appointments appears to be to try to stop the egregious abuse of their power by certain Liberal senators.

He obviously thought one of the reasons of prorogation was because of the Senate. I already put on the record that this was not the case. However, I accepted the consequences.

Bliss concluded with these statements:

Instead, the dancers just kept on, encouraged by their media and academic acolytes, not noticing that the music had stopped and the audience had gone home. They were

too manic to take a golden opportunity to rest, reconsider and recuperate. Prorogation appears to be wasted on those who need it most.

I think those comments speak volumes.

Honourable senators, let me also address the issue of parliamentary decorum.

Senator Rompkey: When ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise!

Senator LeBreton: That is good, Senator Rompkey. Sometimes I regret that Senator Rompkey's witticisms do not make it on the record.

Honourable senators, I want to address the whole issue of party decorum. There are so many areas I can point to, but here are a few. In the present Parliament, we have a Leader of the Opposition who refers to the Prime Minister as "that guy" and our government as "those guys." He ends comments by saying "hello?", "get real," "hey presto" and "right?"

He also calls an MP a "liar." So much for dignified parliamentary language.

• (1520)

On the issue of Afghan prisoners, we have Michael Ignatieff's attacks on our soldiers. In a January 8 news conference on the issue of the release of documents, he said, "This is a document about the conduct of our troops in the field . . ." How can one be any clearer than that?

Honourable senators, some would have you believe that things have never been so bad and that this is a new phenomenon, only in Canada, and only the fault of the Conservatives. We only have to look south of the border for examples of lack of decorum, and that is in a case where they had the majority in both houses and a president from the majority party. I do believe, honourable senators, that the 24-7 news phenomenon has contributed to this.

Let us look back and remind ourselves of past behaviour. There were the preposterous actions of the opposition in this place during the GST debate; the phony protest that went on for weeks by a Liberal senator staging a hunger strike in the foyer of the Senate; and the antics of the rat pack, led by table-hopping Sheila Copps.

Honourable senators, speaking of Sheila Copps and talking about decorum, what do you think the Liberals and their media lickspittles would have said if a Conservative had said the following? I refer to the debates of the House of Commons on December 22, 1988. Then Liberal leader John Turner asked Prime Minister Mulroney a question on language rights, and the Prime Minister responded in French. Ms. Copps blurted out, and I quote this from the parliamentary record, "You are a slime bag. Speak in English."

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh.

Senator LeBreton: Can you imagine, honourable senators? Had any Conservative ever said that, we would not have lived it down until the turn of the next century.

An Hon. Senator: We should not let them live it down.

Senator LeBreton: Prime Minister Mulroney replied, somewhat taken aback, I am sure: “. . . she is suggesting that by speaking French I am doing something wrong.” That is the wonderful Sheila Copps who pronounces in *The Hill Times*.

How about the MP who put a dead fish on the desk of the Prime Minister during a contentious debate over the fishery? Or, my personal favourite, Peter Donolo, the present chief of staff to Mr. Ignatieff, not believing in my right to free speech when he called me a “battle-axe” and said I was “so stupid” when I gave a speech outlining the many indiscretions and outright ethical challenges of Mr. Chrétien and his ministers.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh.

Senator LeBreton: Where was the righteous indignation of Liberals during those shameful, ridiculous stunts that did so much to damage our parliamentary institutions? The Liberals have not changed and Canadians see through this.

Honourable senators, in closing, I assure you that our government will continue to focus on what Canadians expect: strengthening Canada’s economy; providing the climate to create jobs; living up to our international obligations, including our obligations to the Canadian Forces; and continuing to be proud of the great country that we live in, the country we love called Canada.

Just for the record, I will finish my speech by bringing honourable senators up to date on some things. I always regretted that I could not speak French. I was born in 1940, so that tells you my age.

An Hon. Senator: You are not that old!

Senator LeBreton: I never actually encountered a French-speaking person until I started to go to high school, and I took French in high school, but we know what high school French was like. Even though I can understand it better than some people think and I can read quite well in French, I have never managed to get my tongue around the language. I surely do regret that.

In any event, I will close off with some of the wonderful achievements of the Conservative government under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper: making government more accountable and transparent by introducing the Federal Accountability Act; helping everyday Canadians in the global economic downturn through the Economic Action Plan; improving access to financing and the strengthening of the Canadian financial system; taking immediate action to build infrastructure and create thousands of jobs; creating wage-earner protection programs; investing \$8.3 billion in a skills and transition strategy that will help unemployed Canadians learn the skills they need to find a job in the new economy; supporting workers hit by the economic downturn by enhancing EI with the

addition of five weeks of benefits, extending the long-tenured workers program by 20 weeks; and help for the self-employed. As well, we are about to introduce legislation to assist people who are in the Armed Forces with parental leave benefits.

We are making day-to-day life more affordable for Canadians by providing billions of dollars in tax relief through tax refunds to leave Canadians with more of their own, hard-earned money in their pockets, including, as I mentioned earlier, the reduction of the GST from 7 per cent to 5 per cent; \$20 billion in additional personal income tax relief over 2008-09 and the next five fiscal years; tax deductions for workers who purchase their own tools; tax deductions for commuters who ride the bus; tax deductions for parents who enrol their children in sports; the tax-free savings account, which is a powerful investment tool to allow Canadians to save \$5,000 per year tax-free; and, of course, the popular Home Renovation Tax Credit, which allowed up to \$1,350 tax credit for home renovations, helping homeowners stimulate the economy.

We also are committed as a government, and I think this is one of our crowning achievements, to keeping Canadians safe. We raised the age of protection and the age of consent; brought in the comprehensive Tackling Violent Crime Act, toughened sentences and bail for those who commit serious gun crimes; protected youth from sexual predators; protected society from dangerous offenders; and got serious with drug-impaired drivers. We passed legislation to end conditional sentences for serious personal injury offences, including sexual assault. Of course, we know about the credit for time served, a new law that stops criminals from automatically getting two-for-one or, in fact, three-for-one credit for time served before sentencing. We established the National Anti-Drug Strategy to reduce the supply of and demand for illicit drugs in Canada, and we established the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime.

We have worked hard as a government to protect the health and well-being of Canadians while improving their quality of life by bringing in real, mandatory targets that would bring our greenhouse gas emissions down; to protect the safety and health of Canadians through important consumer product safety legislation, which, as the Throne Speech mentioned, we will be bringing back after it was blocked in the last Parliament by our colleagues opposite; and to protect children and youth from inducement to smoking by prohibiting the use of certain flavoured addictive additives in tobacco products, by prohibiting the advertising of tobacco products in publications with an adult readership of less than 85 per cent, and by requiring the sales of little cigars and blunt wraps in packages of no less than 20.

I could not end this speech without referring to the portfolio I was so happy to have been able to hold on behalf of the government and in support of my Prime Minister. I must mention what we have done for seniors. We created the Minister responsible for Seniors. We invested \$13 million to fight elder abuse. We put money back into the pockets of seniors who chose to remain in the workforce by increasing the GIS exemptions by seven times its former amount, from \$500 to \$3,500. We introduced pension income-splitting, saving senior couples thousands and thousands of dollars in taxes. We increased the Guaranteed Income Supplement two years in a row by hundreds of dollars for seniors. We have supported over 1,700 seniors’

projects in communities across Canada that help seniors remain active through the New Horizons for Seniors Program. One of the first things we were accused of when we formed the government was that we would cut the New Horizons for Seniors Program, which was \$25 million per year. In fact, we increased the funding to \$35 million per year.

• (1530)

We created the National Seniors Council to give seniors a say in issues that matter to them. We doubled the Pension Income Tax Credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000, helping 2.7 million seniors and taking 85,000 pensioners off the tax rolls. We increased the age credit by \$1,000 from \$4,066 to \$5,066, saving seniors hundreds of dollars per year in additional tax relief. We increased the refundable medical expense supplement tax credit by more than 30 per cent.

I know this information is troubling for some to listen to.

Senator Comeau: Not for us. Keep going.

Some Hon. Senators: Boring!

Senator LeBreton: We have increased the age from 69 to 71 years for converting registered retirement savings plans to registered retirement income funds. We have expanded the Employment Insurance compassionate caregivers benefit. We launched a comprehensive advertising campaign to make seniors aware of retirement benefits. We have increased Service Canada's points of service to include outreach and mobile services to visit seniors at home, including nursing homes. We have also introduced a targeted initiative for older workers to help older Canadians contribute to their communities.

Senator Segal: Who was the minister who did all that?

Senator LeBreton: My colleague's spouse, Minister Finley, and, of course, myself.

The program was expanded to \$50 million per year in 2008-09. We also created an excellent panel on older workers to monitor Canada's evolving labour market.

In conclusion, I wish to thank honourable senators for their attention. On behalf of my colleagues may I say we are extremely proud of our hard working, dedicated Prime Minister, my cabinet colleagues and our government.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Munson: Unaccountable Conservative-dominated Senate.

Senator LeBreton: I believe that when we are having a conversation amongst ourselves, most people know what Canadians are saying is true. They trust the Prime Minister and our government. They believe we are the best suited to steer the economy and to run the country. I am grateful to be part of such a wonderful government.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Munson: Always look on the brighter side of life.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to and Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne adopted, on division.)

[*Translation*]

(On motion of the Honourable Senator Comeau, ordered that the Address be engrossed and presented to Her Excellency the Governor General by the Honourable the Speaker.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

COMMITTEES AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 58(1)(a), I move:

That committees scheduled to meet today have power to sit from 4:15 p.m., even though the Senate may then be sitting, and that rule 95(4) be suspended in relation thereto.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*English*]

BUDGET 2010

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Comeau calling the attention of the Senate to the budget entitled, *Leading the Way on Jobs and Growth*, tabled in the House of Commons on March 4, 2010, by the Minister of Finance, the Honourable James M. Flaherty, P.C., M.P., and in the Senate on March 9, 2010.

Hon. Lowell Murray: Honourable senators, I begin by thanking the Deputy Leader of the Government for having placed this notice of inquiry on the Order Paper. It has thus afforded us an opportunity that we might not otherwise have had to discuss the budgetary policy of the government and to avail ourselves of the latitude that traditionally pertains to these debates and allows parliamentarians to discuss various grievances and other matters.

I also thank Senator Finley for such a strong and substantive start to the debate in what was his maiden speech, delivered — let it be said — in both of our official languages. Speaking as one who set about trying to learn to speak the French language as an

adult, I am only too aware of the challenges that this exercise involves. I commend and congratulate him most warmly on the evident progress he has made towards mastering this sometimes difficult language.

I do not share his enthusiasm for the fiscal management of the government these past six years nor the enthusiasm expressed in the earlier debate today by the honourable Leader of the Opposition. Still less do I share their optimism that this management will lead to a balanced budget any time soon. I acknowledge that there are credible people, experts and others — even people as inexpert as I am — that support the budget as being not the best but the only fiscal stance realistically open to the government at this moment in time.

However, I cannot find many or, in fact, any who regard the attainment of a balanced budget by the end of 2014-15 as even plausible on the present track. How Mr. Flaherty will achieve this goal is, in the words of a great former British Prime Minister in another context, “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”

My purpose in intervening today is to flag several disparate issues. I want honourable senators to think about these issues if they have not done so already and, perhaps, to consider, reflect upon and discuss them in the weeks and months ahead either in the chamber or in some of our committees.

The first issue I want to flag — and I hope I can do so without infringing the rule against anticipating debates on bills that have not yet arrived in this chamber — for the attention of honourable senators is Bill C-9. This Budget Implementation Bill is an omnibus bill of some 880 pages in 24 parts. I lost count at 30 of the number of statutes that it proposes to amend.

• (1540)

Honourable senators, in this bill, you will find everything but the kitchen sink. There is everything from the possible reorganization of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to environmental legislation, to tax measures and so on, through 30 statutes in 880 pages. This is an abuse of Parliament.

I will not argue it now — I hope that I will not have to argue it again. What I am suggesting to honourable senators on both sides who have some influence in their respective caucuses, whether government or opposition, is that they encourage the parties in the other place to get together and agree on a method of separating out from this omnibus bill those measures that ought to be — and must be in any self-respecting Parliament — debated on their own merits and examined in committee with an attention commensurate with their importance and complexity.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Murray: The bill should not arrive in the Senate like this. It is really up to the members of the House of Commons to do their jobs and to split this bill as it should be split, if they have any regard for their role as parliamentarians in our Canadian democracy. I will leave that as it is for the moment.

Honourable senators, the second matter I would like to flag for your further consideration is government borrowing. In this

respect, I would invite your attention to page 309 of Budget 2010 and the chapter entitled “Debt Management Strategy, 2010-11.” On page 315, it is announced that the aggregate principal amount of money required to be borrowed by government from financial markets in 2010-11 is projected to be \$251 billion. I hasten to add that almost all of that is refinancing. It would take people more expert than I am in these matters to explain how all that is done.

A bit later, at page 316, the minister mentions a budgetary deficit of some \$49 billion in 2010-11 and a financial requirement of \$45 billion is projected. It is something in the neighbourhood of \$45 billion that I am talking about here.

Up until 2007, when the government had to borrow money to cover a budget deficit, they would come to Parliament with a bill seeking authorization. In 2007, they slipped into a budget implementation bill, an omnibus bill, a provision removing Parliament’s authority in these matters. This is the bureaucratic instinct infecting the political authority in the country. It ought not to happen.

That provision went through the House of Commons without anyone noticing it because they, as we later, were preoccupied with other matters in the budget bill. It went through here without anyone noticing it until Senator Banks picked up on it. Unfortunately, it was a few hours after the bill had Royal Assent.

In any event, on several occasions I have brought in a private members bill to restore Parliament’s authority in these matters and the bills died at prorogation or dissolution. I will try again. However, I think a better solution altogether would be for the government itself to bring in a government bill to restore Parliament’s authority.

I think the government could genuinely argue that in 2007, when this provision was put in, there was no thought of deficit financing or borrowing; it was not anywhere on the horizon. However, now that we are in a universe where we have deficits and borrowing for some years to come, it is appropriate to restore Parliament’s authority.

If the government were to bring in such a bill, it would at once improve and confirm government’s accountability to Parliament, Parliament’s power of the purse and fiscal responsibility — to all of which the government professes to be committed. Needless to say, if they did this, I would withdraw any private member’s bill I had on this subject from the Order Paper in a nanosecond.

The third matter I want to flag is the Employment Insurance fund. I was going to do this anyway, but there came to hand through the magic of email a letter signed “Sincerely, James M. Flaherty.” On reading it, I believe it was not sent to all honourable senators and members of the House of Commons but, rather, only to the members of his own caucus and to a few close friends like me who happened, by some error, to be on the mailing list in the minister’s office.

In it, he says,

... our Conservative government has taken landmark action to take political interference out of the Employment Insurance program.

[Senator Murray]

He then goes on to talk about how the Liberal government exploited the contributions of workers and businesses; that they

. . . shamefully raided those contributions for their own political schemes . . .

That they

. . . completely decimated the EI account . . .

That we have had a decade of

. . . shameful Liberal fiscal mismanagement . . .

That

. . . the legislation passed in 2008 to create a new Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board will prevent future governments from creating a Liberal-style political slush fund . . .

And that his Conservative government

. . . shares the disgust of Canadians in reaction to that shameful Liberal record.

That is a lot of indignation even for an Irishman.

I wanted to talk about the EI fund anyway. The first thing that needs to be said for the record is that there is no government money in this fund. Since about 1990, it has been financed, as I think all of us know, entirely by premium contributions from employers and employees.

What I find a bit inconstant, given the letter to which I just referred, is that in his budget Mr. Flaherty says:

There will be a 15-cent limit on annual changes. There are increases, of course, but, based on current economic projections, it is expected that the deficits incurred by the EI program during the recession will be paid back by 2014.

What on earth is he talking about? What deficits is he talking about? Year after year after year, there has been an excess of contributions over payout. Cumulatively — and this is found in the public accounts — to 2008-09, there would be a surplus of \$54 billion.

If you look at the charts in the budget, the revenue outlook on page 176 and the program expenses outlook on page 180, for the seven years for which they project revenues and expenses, in five of those years, there will be a surplus of EI revenues over payouts, and in only two of those years will there be a deficit of revenues compared to payouts. If you do the arithmetic out to seven years, including the cumulative surplus that is there now, the number you get is \$70 billion.

My point in all this, honourable senators, is that there is absolutely no justification for increasing EI premiums and every justification for lowering them. There may still be an EI actuary under that legislation; I am not sure. However, when there was an

actuary, the actuary's view, repeatedly expressed, was that you needed a surplus of some \$15 billion to \$20 billion as a cushion against an economic downturn and a sudden or even prolonged increase in unemployment.

• (1550)

You will have a \$70 billion surplus in premiums paid over benefits paid by 2014. It is not generally appreciated how much Mr. Martin and Mr. Flaherty, in their respective times, have depended on those EI premiums on the revenue side to “solve” the deficit problem.

Honourable senators, we must be realistic. I know there is not an innumerable number of options before governments when it comes to dealing with deficit and debt. There simply is not. Still, we and many other taxpayers do not pay Employment Insurance premiums but the people who do pay those premiums also pay income tax, GST and all the rest of it.

I think there is a question of equity here that we should turn over in our minds as to whether those who pay those premiums are carrying a disproportionate share of the burden of fighting the deficit.

Finally, I want to say something for which, perhaps, the Leader of the Government in the Senate's speech provides an appropriate background. It is just a general word about budget policy and the road ahead.

The Hon. the Speaker: I regret to inform the honourable senator that his time has expired.

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): If he wishes, we will agree to five more minutes.

Senator Robichaud: Agreed.

Senator Murray: The airwaves are full of punditry, demanding more specific commitments on how we will work our way to balance. Some of this surfaced in much of the commentary at the time of the Liberal meeting in Montreal.

People are not supposed to talk about the future so long as the present economic and fiscal constraints are present. I think the political leadership of the country, and all those who are close to them, should resist demands for a blueprint for specific targets. I think Mr. Flaherty has made too many commitments in that respect. I sense that there is an agreement — because there is not much argument — among parliamentarians and politicians that we will get to balance as soon as we can, having regard to the impact of fiscal and monetary policy on the economy as well as having regard to the situation in the United States.

We like to take satisfaction in the fact that our recovery has been proceeding better than theirs on just about every standard of measure. The fact is, however, that the situation in the United States is quite delicate at the moment. One does not know what will happen. If they were to go into a sharp, much less prolonged decline, it would affect us negatively.

From that, I draw that, while the commitment should be firm, it should not be that precise as to dates when we will try to get out of deficit because it is unrealistic to do so. It will depend on

circumstances. Why should we argue about how to get to balance? We will get there as soon as we can while having regard to the economic circumstances in the country. I presume that is what will dictate the fiscal policy of any sensible minister or government.

As far as new ideas are concerned, I think people are agreed that they can only be implemented post recovery, or once a balance is achieved. If the Liberals want to talk about new social and cultural initiatives and the Conservatives want to talk about lower taxes and less government, that is fine. That is a dialogue that we can have at the time. I think there is more agreement than disagreement that the short-term priority is to balance the budget. There will be lots of room, then, for debate about the real alternatives that those parties will want to place before the people in a general election.

Hon. George Baker: Would the Honourable Senator Murray entertain a question?

Senator Murray: Yes, gladly.

Senator Baker: I was watching television the other evening —

Senator Comeau: Shame!

Senator Baker: It was late in the evening and CPAC was running a symposium out of Calgary with university and law professors present. A speaker said there had been a fundamental change in the accountability of the government to Parliament with a change in legislation that took place, which no one knew had taken place, in the House of Commons. I think it was the Dean of Law at the University of Calgary who said that it was left to the Senate to discover this tragic error. He looked at it and said the official opposition in the House of Commons missed it, all the political parties missed it, and he said, perhaps, the politicians in the House of Commons did not know what they were passing. However, the Senate discovered it.

This is reminiscent of a bill we had a year and a half ago here that all the political parties in the House of Commons agreed to, as I think they did this measure; the official opposition and the government agreed to the measure. They all came to us in the Senate and said “Stop this bill because we missed those nine pages. We did not know what we were passing.” The honourable senator knows what I am talking about.

To complete the substance of his speech, could the honourable senator give his view on how something as fundamental as he references in his speech and which he repeatedly puts forward in his bill could pass the House of Commons; how could something pass without a reference from a government member or an opposition member? In other words, does it really have effect or should it have legal effect if no one knew that it was in the provision? Does a tree make a noise in the forest if it falls and no one is there to hear it?

Could the Honourable Senator Murray address that question? What is happening in the House of Commons?

Senator Murray: I do not know what is happening in the House of Commons, but the exercise proves beyond any doubt the danger that lurks in these omnibus bills. As I have said, in 2007, a

bill like this went through. Most of us, the honourable senator included, were preoccupied with other matters in it. As a matter of fact, his mind was on the offshore agreements with his province and with Nova Scotia. We were focused on other important matters. No one noticed this little provision that went in to remove Parliament’s authority over government borrowings.

Of course, it is law. It had Royal Assent and Royal Assent, as they say, covers a multitude of sins. Senator Banks tweaked it just a couple of hours too late, but none of us saw it, either.

I believe it reinforces my point that a bill like this is an abuse of Parliament. If we continue, we will come to the stage that there will be something called a Speech from the Throne implementation bill. We will pass the entire legislative program for that session in that way. This is a complete distortion and a corruption of the way any self-respecting Parliament should work. I will leave it at that.

God only knows what else is in here we have not focused on. My only suggestion is that we try to persuade our brothers and sisters in the House of Commons to separate this bill as they should. If they do not, we will have to take it as our own responsibility, and I hope honourable senators will do so.

(On motion of Senator Comeau, debate adjourned.)

• (1600)

NATIONAL DAY OF SERVICE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Wallin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Marshall, for the second reading of Bill S-209, An Act respecting a national day of service to honour the courage and sacrifice of Canadians in the face of terrorism, particularly the events of September 11, 2001.

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Point of order, Your Honour. I would like to reserve the 45 minutes for our critic for that bill, but I would be most pleased to hear Senator Segal.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed, honourable senators, that the rule providing the 45 minutes is reserved to the opposition?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Segal rises; he has 15 minutes.

Hon. Hugh Segal: Honourable senators, I rise to support Bill S-209, because I believe, as I think we all do, that September 11 is a date when everyone above a certain age and, certainly, everyone in this chamber, will remember exactly where he or she was and exactly what he or she was doing when the news arrived that a plane had crashed into one of New York City’s twin towers. While reports were confusing at the time, the news that a second plane had hit the second tower made it crystal clear as to

what exactly was transpiring. For all of us, it was a moment of stark realization that the world would never be the same. Life for everyone on this planet on September 12, 2001 was a much different life than we had been living on September 10, 2001.

Designating September 11 as a national day of service is, I believe, very appropriate for Canada and Canadians. On that day, and in the days following, Canada and Canadians went out of their way to serve. Hundreds of families in Newfoundland and Labrador opened their homes to strangers whose aircraft were forced to land. These strangers were clothed and fed, entertained and were strangers no longer and they became friends. Newfoundlanders served as they always have before they were Canadians in 1949 and every single day since.

In blood clinics across the country, tens of thousands of Canadians lined up to donate in hopes of assisting injured victims yet to be pulled from the rubble of the twin towers. Canadians served.

Hundreds of Canadian firemen and women, police personnel, nurses, doctors, coroners and volunteers made their way to New York, often at their own expense, to offer assistance. These Canadians served.

One hundred thousand Canadians converged on Parliament Hill with barely 24 hours notice to stand in support with our American friends and let them know that we would do whatever was necessary to assist them in the days following the attacks on North America.

Fire companies across Canada continue to this day to observe a moment of silence every September 11 to remember their comrades who were lost running in to save others on that day in New York City.

Canadians' service in times of trouble at home and abroad did not begin or end with 9/11. There have been floods or fires in our own country; the recent earthquake in Haiti; our military men and women currently in Afghanistan or dozens of other hot spots worldwide in years past; the individual Canadians who come to the aid of neighbours in need and collect money and clothing for families who lose their homes to a fire; and hundreds of other individual and collective examples of service that are worth celebrating.

September 11 is a most appropriate date for this remembrance. It is certainly a date that we will never forget for obvious reasons, and it should be a date when we stop for a moment, remember those events, and how they changed our world. More important, it is a fitting date to set aside some time to commemorate the events of September 11, honour all victims of terrorism and, as the bill outlines, pay tribute to Canada's civilian and military efforts in the battle against terrorism.

Honourable senators, as long as terrorism threatens the innocent, Canadians must and will be on the front line — civilian, humanitarian or military.

Honourable senators, there are no exit dates in the battle for humanity, no end date to the struggle against cruelty, not in Afghanistan or anywhere else.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Segal: An official national day of service will also be a reminder to those too young to recall its origin and for those yet to come that history can point back to September 11, 2001 as the actual date on the calendar when the world changed. On this date it is our responsibility as Canadians to honour those who served, who continue to serve and, in some small way, emulate the service with small acts of kindness and volunteerism ourselves.

Throughout history, much has been accomplished and many inroads have been made, not by warring factions but by individuals who offered resolute assistance and acts of courage, kindness and empathy.

A Canadian national day of service would be a high-minded and noble annual reminder of who we are every day and what we do in tough times for our neighbours, allies and friends in need and, more important, of the decency and humanity that Canada has come to represent at home and abroad and will always represent in the future.

I commend this bill to the house's early and thoughtful consideration.

(On motion of Senator Hubley, debate adjourned.)

2010 OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Nancy Greene Raine rose pursuant to notice of March 4, 2010:

That she will call the attention of the Senate to the success of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games held in Vancouver, Richmond and Whistler from February 12 to 28 and, in particular, to how the performance of the Canadian athletes at the Olympic and Paralympic Games can inspire and motivate Canadians and especially children to become more fit and healthy.

She said: Honourable senators, when I look back and reflect on what a wonderful job everyone did in hosting the Olympics, it is easy to be proud of the organizers, the volunteers and, of course, our athletes. However, honourable senators, I have always said that to really win the Olympics, we must take advantage of the special spirit of the games to inspire Canadians young and old to choose a healthy lifestyle, one that includes exercise, a healthy diet, dealing with stress, and, of course, not smoking.

I have been following health issues in Canada for quite a few years, and I have come to be increasingly concerned by the troubling statistics on obesity. Over the past several years, Canada has experienced an alarming increase in obesity rates among adults, children and youth.

• (1610)

Obesity is more than being overweight. Obesity is measured by relating weight to height and looking it up on a chart called the Body Mass Index. When someone goes beyond being overweight,

it is a cause for serious health concerns. Obesity is a contributor to a wide variety of chronic diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular and lung diseases, hypertension and liver disease. It is also implicated in breast, colon and prostate cancer. As well, I do not think it makes one feel happy.

The number of Canadians who are overweight or obese has increased steadily over the past 25 years. According to the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey, nearly one quarter of adult Canadians were obese, and a further 36.1 per cent were overweight. Close to 60 per cent of adult Canadians were either overweight or obese six years ago, and experts tell me the percentage is not going down.

Obesity statistics can be confusing. In some cases, they are self reported, and when these rates are compared to actual measured rates, there is a big discrepancy. Self-reported obesity is 30 per cent less than actual obesity rates. Obviously, some overweight Canadians are in a state of denial.

In any case, the figures are not getting any better, and it is evident that parents making poor personal health choices will, for the most part, have children with the same outcomes.

The causes of obesity are clear. They are a combination of poor eating habits and a lack of exercise. The problem is magnified among low-income families who may have difficulty providing healthy food choices and physical activity opportunities for their children. Sadly, for Aboriginal Canadians, a complex combination of historic, economic and social factors result in them having the highest rates of obesity in the country.

It should be no surprise that the likelihood of children being overweight or obese tends to rise with an increase in the time spent in watching television, playing video games or using the computer. I read a recent article that said that many youngsters were now spending more than 40 hours a week in front of a screen. That is as many hours as their parents work in a week. These young people are at serious risk of developing lifelong chronic illnesses, and we are now seeing skyrocketing rates of childhood diabetes.

How bad is the problem? According to the latest research from Statistics Canada, 8.6 per cent of school-age children are obese and a further 17.1 per cent are overweight. It is hard to imagine that more than one quarter of children age 6 to 17 are struggling with weight issues. Not only do they face an unhealthy future, but they cannot be enjoying their childhood. They need help now. We have a physical inactivity crisis in Canada.

Canada is not alone in the inactivity crisis. Throughout the developed world, governments are taking action to reverse the trend, especially those governments that provide social medicine programs to their citizens. Next month, in Toronto, Canada is hosting an International Congress on Physical Activity and Physical Health, and later this year the World Health Organization will release their first global physical activity guidelines.

Honourable senators, everyone is worried about escalating health care costs. It does not take a rocket scientist to see that when we combine the increased medical costs of an aging

population with an increase in chronic diseases, we are facing a serious problem. We must take action now before it is too late.

Physical inactivity already costs our health care system at least \$2.1 billion annually in direct health care costs, plus even more in indirect costs. Two thirds of deaths in Canada result from chronic diseases that share common preventable risk factors, including physical inactivity and an unhealthy diet, as well as the use of tobacco.

Honourable senators, as the Olympics unfolded and I saw the incredible reaction all across Canada, I began to think of how we could turn that enthusiasm into motivation for young people to become more fit.

For the past month, I have been researching the relationship between obesity and physical activity. The more I looked into it, the more concerned I became. Governments at all levels are aware of the problem. In fact, in 2005, after three years of consultation, all provinces, territories and the federal government signed on to an Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy to address the declining levels of fitness and health. There was great hope that, by working together on a strategy, somehow things would get better. Here is a quote from their 2005 document:

The Healthy Living Strategy offers a means to ensure greater alignment, coordination and direction for all sectors. It provides a forum for multiple players to work collaboratively to achieve common goals. This integration ensures that stakeholders are better and more broadly informed, thereby facilitating greater synergy and improved identification of opportunities across sectors. Moreover, the intersectoral nature of the Healthy Living Strategy provides a national mechanism/resource for provinces, territories, the federal government and other sectors to develop and measure their own healthy living approaches. . . .

Taken together the goals, strategic directions, targets and priorities for action will contribute to the success of the Healthy Living Strategy.

Lofty goals were set back in 2005: a 20-per-cent increase in the proportion of Canadians who are physically active, eat a healthy diet and are at healthy body weights by the year 2015. In 2003, the provincial ministers responsible for physical activity had set a target of 10-per-cent improvement in physical activity by 2010. Well, we certainly missed the goals for 2010, and it is not looking good for 2015.

Unfortunately, today, people accept that being overweight is somewhat normal, and we need to change this attitude. Canada has proven in the past that a concerted effort to change unhealthy behaviour can work. We are leading the world in anti-smoking promotion, resulting in a steady decrease in the number of people smoking and a denormalization of smoking.

Honourable senators, think of what happened when the federal government attacked the problem of smoking. Once the research was in and the experts recognized that smoking was causing many health problems, action took place on many different fronts. Yes, there were major anti-smoking promotions, but there were also other actions: warning labels, increased taxes, restriction on where

smoking was allowed, et cetera. The result is that Canadians changed from thinking it was normal to smoke to where it is now the opposite. Smoking is no longer accepted by any educated person as being normal.

In the federal government, responsibility for physical activity lies with the Department of Health, in the Healthy Living Unit that is part of the Public Health Agency of Canada. The Public Health Agency of Canada was established in September 2004, in part as a response to the SARS outbreak in 2003. It was the agency that did such an excellent job in the recent H1N1 crisis.

The Public Health Agency's primary goal is to "strengthen Canada's capacity to protect and improve the health of Canadians and to help reduce pressures on the health care system." Surely that goal must include a focus on the crisis in physical inactivity.

I am hoping the agency will now turn its full attention to the crisis in physical inactivity and the resulting chronic illnesses that come as a direct result of unhealthy living. Even though this crisis is not contagious, it is every bit as much a threat to Canada's health care system.

Honourable senators, today, everyone knows we have a serious problem. The research has been done. We do not need any more studies to convince us. We also know that it is not a problem that can be solved easily or without the involvement of all levels of government and our citizens themselves.

The delivery of both health and education are the responsibilities of the provinces. However, there is a role for the federal government to play, especially in setting standards and sharing best practices. More important, leadership is needed to ensure that all government departments work together to tackle the issue.

When I read the Pan-Canadian Physical Activity Strategy, I was flabbergasted that there was no mention of the need for quality, daily physical education in our schools. It is almost like the writers of the strategy were somehow told that they cannot touch that need. Yet, in my opinion, we must use the school system to deliver the necessary physical education programs. These programs must start in kindergarten and go all the way to Grade 12. More and more research shows that physically active students learn better than sedentary ones, so there should be no excuse that there is not enough time for physical education. Nor should fitness programs be allowed to be cut because of the expense. This cost is an investment for the future. The costs of poor health far outweigh the costs of daily physical education.

What must we do now? Let us look at what has worked in the anti-smoking campaign.

- (1620)

The present Federal Tobacco Control Strategy is a comprehensive, integrated initiative built around four mutually reinforced pillars: protection, prevention, cessation and harm reduction. Over 40 per cent of the total funding goes to mass

media targeted at Canadians, but with an emphasis on youth and high risk populations. Approximately \$100 million a year is being spent by Health Canada on its anti-smoking strategy. Surely now is the time for some serious money to be spent to tackle the inactivity problem in Canada, especially targeting our youth.

While our government has taken positive and meaningful steps to encourage physical activity with the Children's Fitness Tax Credit, we must look for additional measures to encourage all Canadians to become more fit. We must tackle the issue on many fronts, just as we did against smoking.

Physical education in Canada is struggling. In some jurisdictions, it is being gutted, while in others there is a goal for more activity but the quality is not there. School budgets are limited and all too often it is physical education that gets cut. Educating and deploying qualified physical educators will be key, and this can be done with different levels of certifications to teach different age groups.

Schools have always measured and reported for subjects such as language and mathematics. However, physical education has never had standards and measurement tools to guide programs in the schools and to be able to determine if children are succeeding. In fact, most physical education programs are currently not marked or taken seriously by educators.

The latest research is developing a new approach called physical literacy. This includes developing the skills and tools that children need to receive the inherent benefits of taking part in physical activity and sport for lifelong enjoyment and success. National standards and the ability to measure progress will be key in developing meaningful physical literacy in our schools. Both youngsters and the schools need to have targets to work for.

Bringing back a national fitness awards program is a no-brainer. However, this time, instead of rewarding kids who are already fit, why not use the awards as a motivator for improvement? Let us target those children — and there are a lot of them — who are not sporty and who are spending way too much time at the computer and watching television. Let us reward improvement and not just excellence.

Schools need appropriate facilities, but there is nothing wrong with changing an empty classroom into an aerobics studio or a weight room. Creative thinking can turn a lack of facilities into just another challenge.

I was pleased that ParticipACTION was re-launched a few years ago and received funding in the recent budget. This program has been recognized around the world as a very effective way to promote fitness and healthy living to the general public. Partnering with the private sector makes it very cost-effective.

Honourable senators, our athletes' success at the recent Olympics showed what we can do when we put serious resources into a strategy, as we did for the Own the Podium program, and I am very pleased that our Conservative government has announced the continuation of that program. Now let us use the success of our top athletes to motivate and inspire our children.

Remember that the complications of inactivity result in obesity, diabetes, heart and lung disease, and cancer. All of these result in major health costs. A 10 per cent improvement in physical fitness will save hundreds of millions of dollars.

Honourable senators, the spirit of the 2010 Olympic Games is alive and must be harnessed to address the crisis in physical activity. The time to act is now.

Thank you.

Hon. Jim Munson: Would the honourable senator take a question?

The Hon. the Speaker: I regret to inform the honourable senator that her time has expired.

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Deputy Leader of the Government): She can have five more minutes.

Senator Munson: Thank you, honourable senators. I first want to praise the senator for this initiative, and I support it wholeheartedly. When it comes to children and obesity, it is long overdue.

The honourable senator alluded to ParticipACTION. I think I still have a ParticipACTION T-shirt with a pink sneaker on it somewhere. I do not know if it fits, but I do have it. I remember that the country was energized at that particular time because there was a focus across the country.

With the honourable senator's new ideas, how do we get across that provincial border in education and into the schools, so we can talk about federal money being spent and how we can bring everyone together in the same room to develop a truly national program to deal with children, obesity and physical education?

Senator Raine: ParticipACTION was introduced in the 1980s and it was a great success. One of the first advertisements said the average Canadian 20 year old was not as fit as the average Swedish 80 year old, or something like that. It had the effect of engaging people in their personal fitness.

The program was brought back three or four years ago. In my opinion, it is underfunded. The program is now set up to go out and canvass for private contributions in terms of advertising and actual support. However, I think these private companies would like to see a little bit more of the taxpayers' dollars in it, as well.

The beauty of a program such as ParticipACTION is that it can be targeted directly to the neediest groups. Research shows that young people in particular respond really well to the proper targeted messages. Just as kids took home the message against smoking to their parents, they can take home the message of healthy living.

This whole issue is a subject that has to be approached on a broad spectrum, and I know the parts are in place now because the provinces and territories have signed on with the strategy. Everyone wants to do it. I just think it needs a kick-start and the time is now.

Senator Munson: Thank you for that. I have only been here six and a half years, but it seems much shorter. I had an inquiry on autism. I started off with a simple speech and I did not know

where I was going with it until someone told me to launch an inquiry. That is what the honourable senator is doing now in launching this inquiry.

Once we launch an inquiry, then what do we do? I was going through those steps about six and a half years ago. Lo and behold, I took it to a committee and we had a report called *Pay Now or Pay Later*, and it seems to have galvanized the autistic community into wanting a national autism spectrum disorder strategy.

I know that my issue involved study and I know the honourable senator just said we do not need more studies. However, in terms of getting to that place she wants to get to and having a rallying cry, is it the honourable senator's hope that perhaps we can get it to a committee, bring in groups again and use the Senate and her initiative to have a national rallying cry for this cause?

Senator Raine: Thank you for the question. I am not exactly sure, because I have only been here one year.

I do know that, in British Columbia, there is a strategy for physical activity called ActNow BC. They used the 2010 Olympics as part of the motivator. Although there are different ministers involved, that file sits on the desk of the Premier of the province. He is always watching it and asking what people are doing. It is on the table all the time.

This is something I think we need to push for. I do not know how we do that from the Senate side of things, but I think that the time is now. Everything is lined up.

There is a great researcher in childhood obesity from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Dr. Mark Tremblay. He is conducting a pilot project right now on a program for the schools. There are all kinds of things happening.

I am absolutely convinced that, with some nudging from all of us, we can move forward. If we talk about it in the Senate and talk about it in our circles, it cannot do anything but help.

As to whether we need another study or not, there are plentiful studies out there. In early May, there will be a conference in Toronto where they will be presenting a charter called the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity. That charter is probably already available on a website. It lists everything we have to do.

The blueprint is there and I believe that our government has a commitment to do this. I just hope that it can become non-partisan in its approach because these problems affect all of us. If we start to have partisan fights over it, it will just slow things down.

Senator Munson: The honourable senator will not get a partisan fight from me on this. I would like to speak to this in this chamber, but this is inside this chamber. I would also like to go on the road with this message so that Canadians can actually see the honourable senator's initiative and the initiative we could collectively create to deal with this. Therefore, I wish to take the adjournment.

(On motion of Senator Munson, debate adjourned.)

(The Senate adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

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