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THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, October 6, 2010

The Senate met at 1:30 p.m., the Speaker in the chair.

Prayers.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, before calling for Senators' Statements, I would like to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Michael Trinqué, a graduate of the Friends of the Senate program, now working in Senator Munson's office on Wednesday mornings as a Special Assistant.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Hon. Consiglio Di Nino: Honourable senators, last week I met with Dr. Tshimankinda Ngandu Kalala, President of the National People's Patriotic Party of the Congo — DRC. He and others are the opposition to the current government.

The visit of Dr. Kalala brought back a flood of memories of the trip that the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade made to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country the world has forgotten. It is with sadness and disbelief that I read a partial list of recent headlines dealing with the tragic, heart-breaking, long-standing situation in the DRC:

Rwanda now itself a killing machine; UN report catalogues country's monstrosities in neighbouring Congo

Rapes on the rise in Congo

Hidden horrors of a war ignored; Mass rapes, 5.4 million deaths span decades in the Congo

Revisiting the killing fields; Rwanda's meddling in Congo

Rape Councillor Visits Canada to Publicize Unrelenting Violence Against Women and Girls in Congo

Congo genocide account questioned

UN demands action on the Congo rapes

UN admits impotence in Congo rapes

UN draft report: Rwandan army attacks refugees in Congo in the 1990s could be genocide

Congo government: army needs more help to prevent attacks such as rapes of nearly 200 women, boys

The unfulfilled promise of UN protection

I will spare honourable senators the gory, inhuman details. I am sure each honourable senator will visualize his or her own images. The fact of the matter is that the truth is too horrible to depict.

I have one question: Would the United Nations and the world, after so many years of butchering, raping and destroying millions of lives, still be only talking if the victims — women, young boys and little girls — were white?

[Translation]

FRANCOPHONE ARTISTS OF WESTERN CANADA

Hon. Maria Chaput: Honourable senators, Western and Northern Canada are burgeoning creative environments. The number of French-language authors, composers and artists in these areas is growing as never before.

Because of the low density of the francophone population in the West — in every province and territory — artists cannot make a living from performing. The Réseau des grands espaces was set up to consolidate this market. The purpose of this network is to create conditions to help build identity, stimulate artistic development and create a loyal audience.

On September 23, 2010, I was very happy to attend one of the network's cultural activities, Chant'Ouest, which took place in Saint-Boniface, Manitoba. I heard young francophone artists from all parts of Western Canada. These artists had composed many of their own songs and performed them with verve, conviction and professionalism.

More and more, francophone artists in Western Canada want to stay in their own milieu to create and develop as professionals. These artists have something to say and a way of saying it that deserve our attention.

I want to extend my congratulations to all the finalists: Arianne Dicaire and Guy Daniel of Manitoba; Christie-Anne Blondeau and Amanda Proznik of Saskatchewan; Ilyas Mahfoud and Natacha Homerodean of Alberta; Pascale Goodrich-Black of British Columbia; and Sylvie Painchaud of the Yukon.

Two winners were selected by a jury of music industry professionals and will now move on to the semi-finals of the Festival international de la chanson de Granby.

From 1990 to 2009, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia took turns hosting this annual event, which has featured more than 130 artists. A school, showcase and

competition all in one, Chant'Ouest was created to recruit artists from Western Canada and prepare them to face the challenges of the music industry. Chant'Ouest is the largest French-language professional singing showcase in the West.

Congratulations to all the artists and the organizers of this event.

[English]

KOREAN WAR VETERANS

Hon. Yonah Martin: Honourable senators, today I rise to pay tribute to the unsung heroes of the Korean War who recently received the hero's welcome they deserve in Seoul, Korea, a once-flattened ghostly city that was first recaptured on September 28, 1950, by UN Forces, and is now a thriving metropolis of 40 million people. Countless Seoul residents lined the main street to watch and cheer the parade of veterans. The combined UN forces that saved the Republic of Korea from communist terror were represented by 21 countries, among them six Canadians, five of whom were revisiting Seoul for the first time in 60 years.

• (1340)

Under the blue sky and towering skyscrapers, adorned in garlands, the veterans were showered with love from the people whom they had left home and family to protect. How validating, how deeply emotional it was for them to know that their sacrifices and that of their 516 fallen comrades and countless others had not been in vain.

It was an honour to represent the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn and Canada in Seoul, Korea, to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Seoul.

Later in the week, I stood with our veterans, dressed in their signature green blazers and berets, at the United Nations Cemetery in the port city of Busan, southwest of Seoul. The wind carried the sound of bagpipes, played by a Scottish veteran, over the field where, row upon row, the fallen are buried in sections divided by country. I walked with one of the veterans through the Canadian section of the cemetery and eventually found the friend he had lost some 60 years ago.

Sixty years ago, they were but young men — 19, 20, 24 years of age at most. I listened to their stories of unimaginable conditions worse than the Second World War. I listened to Kenneth R. Villager, 79 years young, of the 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and Anthony Elliott, 84, of Lord Strathcona's Horse, Royal Canadians. I heard from Thomas B. Slattery, 79, of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry; William G. Leslie, who celebrated his eighty-second birthday on September 30, of the 191 Canadian Infantry; and Patrick J. Ezekiel, 80, of the Black Watch, Royal Highland Regiment of Canada. I spoke to Henry Martinak, 82 years of age of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Mr. Martinak fought at Kap'young, where he and his comrades were outnumbered 10 to 1. In the end, they were victorious and were awarded the U.S. Presidential Unit Citation for their success.

To me, to my parents and to many, they are and will forever be our heroes.

[Senator Chaput]

ORBIS CANADA

Hon. Vivienne Poy: Honourable senators, one of the organizations that took part in yesterday's World Sight Day event on the Hill was ORBIS Canada, which is part of ORBIS International.

ORBIS was established in the 1970s to prevent and treat blindness in developing countries. There are 45 million blind people in the world today. One person goes blind every five seconds and one child goes blind every 60 seconds. The tragedy is that, with proper treatment, most blindness is preventable.

What distinguishes ORBIS Canada from other Canadian charities is that ORBIS is committed to local capacity-building through its Flying Eye Hospital. The hospital staff has trained thousands of local health care workers in more than 70 developing countries and has saved millions from blindness.

The ORBIS DC-10 jet aircraft is outfitted with a 48-seat mobile classroom and an operating room with a two-way audiovisual system that broadcasts both in the plane as well as to classrooms on the ground. Last year, ORBIS trained many health care practitioners, screened and treated millions and restored sight to over 150,000 people through surgery. The cost of cataract surgery is only \$36 but the gift of sight is priceless.

Over the next 10 years, ORBIS will work toward the Vision 2020 goal of eliminating avoidable blindness by building paediatric and adult eye care centres in underserved areas and screening for eye disease in diabetics and people with glaucoma.

Honourable senators, as a member of the board of ORBIS Canada, I would like to point out that ORBIS is always looking for Canadian ophthalmologists and nurses, as well as medical students, to volunteer for the Flying Eye Hospital. Some of the volunteers are immigrants to Canada who are grateful to ORBIS for the work it does in their countries of origin.

One of the events senators could support is ORBIS' Pull for Sight. Thousands have come out in Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto and Halifax to participate in a team contest to pull a FedEx cargo plane a distance of 12 feet; FedEx is a major supporter of ORBIS. While many may not want to pull a plane, I encourage everyone to give the gift of sight by donating to the work of dedicated organizations such as ORBIS Canada.

THE LATE HONOURABLE DIANNE WHELAN

Hon. Ethel Cochrane: Honourable senators, Newfoundland and Labrador lost one of its most passionate and hard-working advocates on Sunday. Municipal Affairs Minister Dianne Whelan, a veteran politician and a strong advocate for women in politics, passed away following a lengthy battle with cancer.

Minister Whelan first gained a profile in the province when she entered municipal politics. She was a successful and a popular community leader who served 18 years as Mayor of the Town of Paradise — the fastest growing town in Atlantic Canada. Under

her leadership the community thrived, enjoying a period of remarkable growth and development. During this time, she also served as director of both the provincial and national federations of municipalities.

In 2003, Ms. Whelan made the transition to provincial politics, becoming the member for the House of Assembly for Conception Bay East—Bell Island. Later that same year, she received the first of many cabinet appointments when she became Minister of Government Services and Lands. Most recently, in 2008, Ms. Whelan was named Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister Responsible for Emergency Preparedness and Registrar General.

Honourable senators, Minister Whelan was widely praised for her abilities as a natural leader and a minister. The president of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, Harry Hallet, described her as:

... a true leader who understood the role of municipal governments and the many challenges they face.

Premier Danny Williams explained how, in spite of her illness, she was determined to carry on with her responsibilities as minister. She participated fully in cabinet and continued to advance the work of her department. Premier Williams said:

Dianne has left behind a legacy of a compassionate, caring and determined individual, whose main goal was to work on behalf of the province she so dearly loved.

Honourable senators, I ask you to join with me in extending sincere condolences to Minister Whelan's family, friends and colleagues. She was a great leader, a role model and a tireless supporter of women and communities. She will be deeply missed.

EDMONTON

EFFECTIVE URBAN WASTE MANAGEMENT

Hon. Tommy Banks: Honourable senators, I have some good news I want to share with you. I am proud to tell you that my city, the city of Edmonton, is not merely the Canadian leader and the North American leader, but the global leader in effective urban waste management. The Edmonton Waste Management Centre is the largest such operation and the most inclusive such operation in the entire world.

Edmonton initiated its curbside recycling program in 1988, and it presently diverts more than 60 per cent of its residential waste from landfill. The goal is to reach 90 per cent by 2012 — and they will make it because on Tuesday, August 31, the City of Edmonton took another innovative and very large step in beginning construction of the world's first industrial-scale, municipal waste-to-biofuels facility.

Mayor Stephen Mandel said that the facility will be operational by late 2011 and it will produce 36 million litres of biofuels every year. It will help to reduce Alberta's environmental footprint by 6 million tonnes over the next 25 years, which is the equivalent of taking about 42,000 cars from the roads every year.

Montreal-based Enerkem Alberta Biofuels invested \$70 million in the project, and will build, own and operate it.

• (1350)

The project will convert 100,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste that cannot otherwise be recycled or composted and which would, in most places, be sent to a landfill. Instead, this Canadian-developed technology will convert waste into usable motor fuels.

The Government of Alberta contributed \$33 million to the initiative and awarded a further \$7.5 million by way of a grant to allow Enerkem to move residual heat from the biofuels plant to the community energy system in Strathcona County. That energy will be used instead of natural gas to fuel hot water boilers to deliver heat to 1,600 homes and businesses.

Edmonton, Alberta, continues to lead the world in innovative waste management and in the conversion of waste to good and environmentally valuable purposes.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the Prime Minister's Gallery of the Treaty Commissioner of Manitoba, James B. Wilson and his wife Kristin Erickson.

They are guests of the Honourable Senator Plett.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

CANADA PENSION PLAN

BILL TO AMEND—DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, I rise to request leave to table a document that relates to Bill S-223, which deals with the retroactivity part of the Canada Pension Plan. The document is a legal opinion written by the law firm of Heenan Blaikie in regard to the proposed legislation and is tabled in both official languages.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO REFER DOCUMENTS FROM STUDY ON BILL C-15 DURING THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTIETH PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT STUDY ON BILL S-10

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

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs during its study of Bill C-15, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, during the Second Session of the Fortieth Parliament, be referred to the committee for the purposes of its study on Bill S-10, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts during the current session.

QUESTION PERIOD

NATIONAL DEFENCE

OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY OF ARMED FORCES

Hon. Roméo Antonius Dallaire: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate and it has to do with the Department of National Defence and funding. The query is about a policy implementation of which we might be unaware, but which has significant ramifications on the operational capability of the Armed Forces.

Last week, a question was asked about the General Jean V. Allard Memorial Library at the Saint-Jean Garrison and the \$175,000 that was being cut because there was no operations and maintenance money to keep an essential library and a language school open. At the same time, there was an announcement not very long before that the government would put about \$200 million of infrastructure money into the general area of Montreal. On the one side, there seems to be money for acquisition and infrastructure, but on the other, there is no money for operations and maintenance.

We hear more and more about the curtailment of training, ammunition, fuel and training days, and we have the data on that. Has the government taken a decision to reduce the operational capability of the Armed Forces ahead of the end of the 2010 decision on Afghanistan because it has reduced the budget in this fiscal year significantly in National Defence?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for the question. The Department of National Defence, like other departments of government, is allocated certain funds to run the department. The honourable senator's

question is wide-ranging and affects many different operational areas of National Defence. Therefore, the honourable senator would understand that I would have to go to the Department of National Defence and ask for specific answers to his direct questions.

Senator Dallaire: As an example, we have reservists who are veterans of the conflicts over the last eight years, particularly in Afghanistan. They had a high training capacity and had been used to a high training tempo. They are now leaving the reserves in significant numbers because there is no money for training days so that they can continue to function within those units or to receive the concern and care of the units if they are injured by the operations.

That is a direct decision by National Defence to curtail a specific area of operational effectiveness, namely, the reserves, which are essential to our operational deployment and expeditionary capabilities.

Does the minister know whether or not there have been policy decisions about reducing the operational effectiveness of the reserves, for example?

Senator LeBreton: I doubt that we would make decisions to affect the operational aspects of the reserves, but, as I indicated in my previous answer, I will seek further direct answers from the Department of National Defence on the overall defence budget and how the money is allocated, in accordance with the honourable senator's questions.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

SUPPORT FOR FARMERS

Hon. Robert W. Peterson: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The 2010 harvest is nothing short of a disaster for Saskatchewan producers. While the harvest should now be closing in on 90 per cent completed, barely half of our crops are in the bin, only 51 per cent. In addition, farmers have been unable to seed winter cereals or conduct fall field work. The livestock industry is hurting as well. Drought, rain and depressed prices are hurting producers of all description in Western Canada.

Last spring, we lamented the floods and called in the government to take action. This summer, the rain kept coming and, even now, the wet weather affects everything from farmers' ability to deliver grain to harvesting what is left. These farmers are the core of prairie life.

Will the government admit its programs are not doing enough for Saskatchewan farmers, and will it commit to providing extraordinary assistance for producers in my province?

• (1400)

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, our government, along with the governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, are delivering the fastest and largest aid package ever for farmers, including \$450 million, or \$30 per acre, in disaster assistance to

farmers throughout the prairies. This aid builds upon an estimated \$1.4 billion in crop insurance and AgriStability payments that act as the first line of defence for farmers during flooding.

Allen Oberg, Chairman of the Canadian Wheat Board, said, “This announcement provides a welcome measure of relief. . . .”

Travis Toews, President of the Canadian Cattlemen Association, said, “This quick response is impressive.”

As honourable senators well know, we have an outstanding Minister of Agriculture, who is a prairie farmer. He and the government will continue to work to ensure that all farmers, including grain and oil seed farmers, as well as cattle farmers, are able to function through this difficult year on the prairies.

Senator Peterson: On behalf of the farmers of Saskatchewan, and indeed Western Canada, I trust they can rely on the leader’s commitments.

Having said that, can the leader confirm to this chamber that the government will have an adequate number of knowledgeable persons available for post-harvest claims, including the forms, website updates and information pieces to deal with these matters?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, as was the case with the previous government and with this government, we have an outstanding public service that works for the various agencies, and there is no reason to question their ability in dealing with this particular situation.

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the situation in Alberta is as dire as Saskatchewan. Statistics Canada has confirmed that the number of cattle declined by 5.6 per cent in Alberta this year. The number of family farms raising cattle in the Western provinces is estimated to have dropped by 3.5 per cent. Farmers have to sell off some of their mother cows and calf crops to feed the remaining herds.

Let me remind this chamber that the agriculture and agri-food industry forms the foundation of many of Canada’s rural communities and rural economies, employing nearly 2 million Canadians and representing 9 per cent of the gross domestic product.

Are our Western Canadian farmers a priority for this Conservative government?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, incidentally, Senator Tardif cited a report of Statistics Canada, for which I believe the information was provided to them voluntarily.

In any event, I have answered the question already. We have an outstanding Minister of Agriculture, who is a Western farmer. In my answer to Senator Peterson, if the honourable senator was listening, I quoted the head of the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association.

I can say unequivocally that this government, especially the Minister of Agriculture, is fully committed to dealing with the situation facing not only the wheat and oil seeds industry but also the dairy and beef industry in the West.

Senator Tardif: The government’s relief package comes to about \$50 per head. According to some Alberta farmers, this amount covers approximately one month of feed. That relief is clearly insufficient.

When will the leader’s government commit to supporting these important players in our economy by increasing the financial aid of their relief package and by implementing a more effective federal initiative?

Senator LeBreton: I think the head of the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association said it best. Obviously, Senator Tardif is quoting people who feel that the payment is not sufficient. I would have to check the basis of those claims, honourable senators.

All I can say, as I mentioned in my answer to Senator Peterson, is that significant funds have been expended not only by the federal government, but by all three provincial governments — Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba — in dealing with the situation. Of course, Senator Tardif’s question was specific to Alberta.

The situation is unusual this year for the Prairies because of the flooding. As the head of the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association said, the government is in there working with the producers and the farmers. If there is further information with regard to the cattle industry, I will be happy to provide it to honourable senators.

[Translation]

FINANCE

ECONOMIC RECOVERY— DEBT CAPACITY OF CANADIANS

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. A recent report from the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada examining 20 OECD countries revealed that Canadians are deeper in debt than anyone else. Canada’s position is worse than that of the United States, the Czech Republic, and even Greece.

Contrary to what all those government-funded advertisements would have us believe, nothing is being done to change that trend and avoid a financial crisis here in Canada.

When will this Conservative government stop patting itself on the back and claiming that our country is leading the economic recovery, and admit that the measures it took in its stimulus budget only made things worse and created an unbelievable deficit?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I hate to break the news to the honourable senator, but today the International Monetary Fund again reported that Canada leads the industrialized world in economic growth.

There is no question that personal household debt is a matter of concern to the government and to others. The state of the economy in the country shows that we are emerging from the economic recession better than any other country in the G7 although, as we have also pointed out, the recovery is fragile, and we are not immune to the instability that still threatens the global economy.

Many Canadians are still feeling the effects of the recession. That is why the government's primary focus is the economy, jobs and creating an economic climate in this country that allows Canadians to work, save money and provide for their families. Obviously, we have some way to go yet, but we are still in the best position of any other country in the world.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: I guess there is only one way I can agree with the leader, and that is to say that we are indeed in a fragile situation.

Honourable senators, the figure that the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada provided as the total debt of Canadians was \$41,740. In 2009, this amount represented a debt-to-income ratio of 144.4 per cent.

At the same time, the federal government bought roughly \$70 billion worth of mortgages from Canadian banks, effectively wiping their books clean of possible toxic assets while, at the same time, failing to regulate the percentage rate of credit cards, something that even the United States did.

When will the government stop aiding big corporations and Canadian banks, and increasing their profits, while Canadians become buried under even more debt and their situation becomes more fragile as interest rates go up?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, we clearly do not want Canadians to be overextended. Ensuring that individual Canadians and Canadian households make informed financial decisions is important. To prove that this is a priority of our government, let me put on the record a few of the things we have done. Obviously, the honourable senator is misinformed.

We set up an independent task force to work towards a national strategy on financial literacy. We introduced credit card reform to ensure Canadians have the information they need, and all payment networks, major credit card and debit card insurers and payment processors have adopted this code of conduct, in case the honourable senator had not noticed. We changed mortgage rules to protect Canadians when they buy their homes; we want to ensure appropriate and prudent lending by financial institutions. We have acted and, if necessary, will act again, to prevent lenders from facilitating unhealthy trends.

• (1410)

In 2008, we took pre-emptive steps to limit the kinds of excesses that caused trouble in other countries, including the percentage for a down payment when buying a home. We cut taxes. Total tax savings for a typical family is over \$3,000. We also created the Tax-Free Savings Account, which has been used extensively by Canadians to save for their future.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: I have a correction, honourable senators. The new tax break is for people who have money to put aside. I am talking about those who are in debt, and I doubt they will be able to save \$5,000 from money they do not have.

[Senator LeBreton]

The government has done nothing about credit card debt. The interest rate of many credit cards stands at 19.5 per cent. The interest rate charged on credit cards from the regular banks — I looked at this area recently and it was studied by our committee — is currently at 19.5 per cent. These rates are totally unacceptable. They are hurting Canadians and, as far as I am concerned, those with low and medium incomes are the ones affected. The government can offer all the tax credits it wants, but people need a decent income and they need to work. At the same time, people also need back-up from government policy and we are not seeing those policies.

Senator LeBreton: We do have these policies, honourable senators. As Senator Segal said many years ago, the best social policy is a job. We are working hard to focus on jobs and the economy. Reducing taxes for families does help. We have brought in many other measures, including the Child Tax Benefit, to help low-income families. The government has brought in many things, honourable senators.

We brought in a code of conduct on the use of credit cards. Unfortunately, we see situations where people have experienced difficulty as a result of activities that they were not responsible for. We saw that situation in the United States. We are doing everything we can to assist these people through many programs of government. We are trying to create a climate with our manufacturers, our industries and our businesses, by keeping taxes low, so that they will be in a position to expand their businesses, and bring in new equipment, increase their productivity, hire more Canadians to work and, therefore, help our economy in the long run.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO REPORT

Hon. Jim Munson: Honourable senators, my question is to the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. A recent report from that committee's Subcommittee on Cities entitled *In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness* contained 74 recommendations based on 35 hearings, 5 round tables and site visits to 20 agencies in 9 cities across Canada. In all, the committee heard testimony from 175 witnesses, some of whom were homeless or living in poverty themselves.

Having participated in the committee that produced the report, I would like to ask the chair of this committee to acquaint the chamber with the government's response to the report and its recommendations.

Hon. Art Eggleton: Honourable senators, the report was unanimously adopted by the Senate on April 29, 2010. In accordance with the rules, the government was to respond within 150 days. It did so. We received the response about a week ago and it was tabled on our first sitting day.

The government response, to me, was disappointing. It did not address the 74 recommendations directly. On the positive side, it thanked the committee for its work, it recognized the considerable effort that had been put into the report, and it said the

government would take the report under advisement. However, considering the severity of the situation in this country with respect to poverty, housing and homelessness, a more substantive response would have been better.

However, I must say a couple of things about the report's recommendations that the government has acted on. One of the prime examples of good, promising practices and community organizations is one called Pathways to Education, and we said in our report that community-based programs like that one should be spread across the country, and that they really do have application in other locations. The government provided, in the last budget, \$20 million to do exactly that.

I am also advised that the Minister of Finance has announced an indexing for the Working Income Tax Benefit. Again, that indexing will assist the working poor and help to make work pay. However, so many other things need to be done.

The report has about 20 pages describing what the government spends money on now in this area. There is no doubt that the federal government spends a lot of money with respect to these issues. All levels of government spend a lot of money. Our study found that transfers to income support for people are about \$150 billion a year. The issue that is lost in those 20 pages, and the issue that we highlighted substantially in our report, is that this spending is not getting the job done. This comment is not a specific criticism of the federal government of any political colour. No government is bringing people out of poverty effectively. People are entrapped in poverty. We spend a lot of money, but we are not seeing results.

The essence of the report in that regard is to say, it is not a question of spending more money but a question of spending the money more wisely, efficiently and effectively. I hope the government, as it proceeds to look further at our recommendations, as they say they will in the days ahead, will bear that point in mind.

The other thing that needs to be borne in mind is that poverty is not only a moral issue. It is not only a moral imperative that we do something about people living in poverty. Ten per cent of the people in this country are living in poverty. There are 800,000 children living in poverty. The poverty rate for Aboriginal women, for example, is about 40 per cent. There are staggering numbers of people who are suffering in this rich country, a country that should be able to deal with these kinds of issues.

Poverty costs all of us. In addition to the moral issues, there are economic issues. Don Drummond, Judith Maxwell and James Milway prepared a report last year that indicated poverty costs taxpayers some \$30 billion a year. That is more than half the federal deficit. Think of all the things we could do if we cut down on poverty and saved much of that \$30 billion that all taxpayers pay.

The other issue the government needs to bear in mind as it goes forward is the demographic changes in the country. The aging population will lead to a shrinking workforce. That shrinking workforce means that in another 20 years we will have about half as many people working, paying taxes, paying for pensions and paying for health care as we have today. We all have to face this serious issue in the coming years.

Oddly enough, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce came out with a report at the same time that said there are people in our population who are under-represented in the workforce. They named Aboriginals; the disabled; older workers, people in their 50s and early 60s; and new immigrants. Those people are the same ones, along with lone parents, lone mothers in most cases, that our report, adopted by the Senate, identified as people in poverty. It turns out the people languishing in poverty are the same people we need to fill jobs in the future to meet this demographic challenge.

There are compelling economic as well as moral arguments to address the issue of poverty. I hope the government will take those arguments into consideration as it looks further at the recommendations adopted unanimously by the Senate.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

ASSISTANCE FOR LOW-INCOME CANADIANS

Hon. Consiglio Di Nino: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. After a long speech by our colleague, Senator Eggleton, I believe it would be worthwhile for all senators to listen to the leader once again with regard to all the things this government has done for the homeless, the working poor, senior citizens and others in a so-called disadvantaged situation.

Will the Leader of the Government please outline the list of strategies and projects?

• (1420)

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I will be happy to answer Senator Di Nino's question. I just happen to have the list of government strategies and projects.

In 2008, we renewed our Homelessness Partnering Strategy, with \$1.9 billion over five years. We are currently investing in more than 1,200 projects across the country to prevent and reduce homelessness. We consulted with all levels of government and are listening to local communities and organizations to identify priorities and needs beyond 2011 to find effective, long-term solutions for homelessness.

Honourable senators, on the question of low-income families, as I mentioned a moment ago, the best way to fight poverty is to get Canadians working. Canada's Economic Action Plan is doing just that by helping to grow our economy and increase the number of jobs. In this regard, we have seen an increase of 430,000 jobs since July 2009.

Honourable senators, our government enhanced the National Child Benefit and the Canada Child Tax Benefit. The Working Income Tax Benefit, to which Senator Eggleton referred, helps low-income Canadians to make work pay. The WITB was created in Budget 2007 and helped 900,000 Canadians in its first year. Our tax cuts mean that over 1 million low-income Canadians no longer pay income taxes.

Our government has made significant investments in affordable housing to support low-income Canadians, persons with disabilities, Aboriginals and seniors. We support families with children through the Child Tax Credit, introduced in Budget 2007, which is helping over 3 million families. Through the Universal Child Care Benefit, introduced in Budget 2006, we are providing more than \$2.4 billion each year to benefit over 2 million children. Budget 2010 helped single-parent families to keep more of this benefit after tax. Funding to the provinces, through the Canada Social Transfer, stands at \$10.9 billion this year and is growing by 3 per cent each year. As we well remember, the Liberals slashed those transfers.

With regard to seniors, Canada has one of the lowest poverty rates among seniors in the world. Canada's Economic Action Plan increased the age credit by \$1,000 for the second time, providing tax savings to 2.2 million seniors. The plan built on previous tax relief we had provided, including the \$1,000 increase in the age credit in 2006, the introduction of pension income splitting in 2007, and the increase in the age limit for maturing pensions and RRSPs from 69 years to 71 years of age. We raised the GIS earned income exemption from \$500 to \$3,500. Bill C-36 allowed seniors to apply only once to receive GIS, not year after year.

We invested \$400 million in housing for low-income seniors. We increased funding for the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers. In March 2007, we established the National Seniors Council to advise the government on matters related to the well-being and quality of life for seniors. Of course, as honourable senators know, we introduced the national awareness campaign on the serious issue of elder abuse and we increased support for the New Horizons for Seniors Program to \$40 million per year.

Senator Munson: I thank the leader for those cue cards.

My question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Is the government prepared to implement the 74 recommendations in this report?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I think it is obvious. The government was grateful to the Senate for the report. As Senator Eggleton acknowledged, we are well on our way to implementing some of the recommendations, and some of them we have fully implemented.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Hervieux-Payette, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Tardif, for the second reading of Bill S-204, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (protection of children).

[Senator LeBreton]

Hon. Donald Neil Plett: Honourable senators, we have reached day 13 on the Order Paper for this item. I had hoped to be able to speak on this item earlier, but because of the summer break, I ask that I be granted more time, into November, to prepare my notes. I would like to adjourn this item under my name.

(On motion of Senator Plett, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

THE SENATE

MOTION TO CONDEMN ATTACKS ON WORSHIPPERS IN MOSQUES IN PAKISTAN AND TO URGE EQUAL RIGHTS FOR MINORITY COMMUNITIES— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Finley, seconded by the Honourable Senator Greene:

That the Senate condemns last Friday's barbaric attacks on worshippers at two Ahmadiyya Mosques in Lahore, Pakistan;

That it expresses its condolences to the families of those injured and killed; and

That it urges the Pakistani authorities to ensure equal rights for members of minority communities, while ensuring that the perpetrators of these horrendous attacks are brought to justice.

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, Senator Jaffer would like to speak to this motion. Since she is unable to be here at this time, I therefore move adjournment of the debate in her name.

(On motion of Senator Tardif, for Senator Jaffer, debate adjourned.)

• (1430)

NATIONAL FINANCE

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY GOVERNMENT'S USE OF TEMPORARY STAFFING AGENCIES TO FILL PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS— MOTION WITHDRAWN

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette, pursuant to notice of June 10, 2010, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine and report on the use by the Government of Canada of temporary staffing agencies to fill Public Service jobs;

That, in conducting such study, the committee take particular note of:

- The approximate \$300 million annually that is charged to the Canadian taxpayer by agencies to staff Public Service positions;

- Whether the use of such agencies has allowed the circumvention of geographic, linguistic and merit rules in the hiring process;
- The cost to Public Service employees for the use of services provided by temporary staffing agencies;
- Its impact on the ability of a sound, stable Public Service to provide services to Canadians; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2010, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

She said: Honourable senators, I gave notice of a motion to authorize the study of the critical situation of the use of placement agencies to fill positions without going through Public Service Employment Act processes.

I am pleased that the President of the Public Service Commission tabled a report yesterday that deals specifically with the use of placement agencies to hire temporary employees in the Canadian public service and thus circumvent the laws and regulations passed by our two chambers.

I must commend Ms. Barrados on her work and the excellent report she tabled in Parliament. Honourable senators will recall that a few years ago, I introduced a bill to eliminate barriers to the federal public service and to thwart bureaucratic patronage appointments.

Senators who were here at the time will remember that bill. The report tabled yesterday by Ms. Barrados clearly shows that the bill I introduced two years ago is more necessary than ever. According to this report, the use of these placement agencies suggests a serious lack of human resources planning and management in the federal public service. They are being used to get around the commission's policy to eliminate geographic barriers. In other words, the use of placement agencies located in the national capital region limits recruitment to people who live in the nation's capital. It is a vicious circle.

I do not want to drone on; I just want to tell you how excellent this report is. It is neither long nor complicated. I strongly encourage you to read it in order to understand the situation. Given the scope of the elements presented in the President of the Public Service Commission's report, I am now certain that the motion I am debating today — to study the issue of temporary staffing agencies used by the federal public service — is no longer necessary. The study has already been completed by the Commission. What we need now is legislation.

Honourable senators, you know how enthusiastic I am about this issue. In the coming days, I will be working on a bill that will focus on the gaps and facts described in the Commissioner's report. I will be introducing that bill soon.

Consequently, I ask leave to withdraw this motion from the Orders of the Day; it is no longer necessary because of the quality report tabled in the two houses. Thank you.

Hon. Suzanne Fortin-Duplessis (The Hon. the Acting Speaker): Is leave granted to withdraw the motion, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion withdrawn.)

[*English*]

THE SENATE

MOTION TO SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FEDERAL PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS' SURVIVORS SCHOLARSHIP FUND—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Bob Runciman, pursuant to notice of June 16, 2010, moved:

That in the opinion of the Senate, the government should consider the establishment of a tuition fund for the families of federal public safety officers who lose their lives in the line of duty and that such a fund should mirror the provisions of the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund, in place in the province of Ontario since 1997.

He said: Honourable senators, to explain why I put forth this motion, I would like to tell you a bit about Constable Joe MacDonald and the scholarship fund that bears his name in the province of Ontario.

Joe MacDonald was dedicated to his community of Sudbury, Ontario, coaching baseball, basketball and especially football. He was a loving husband and father of two young girls. He was a police officer for just five years when, on patrol in the early morning hours of October 7, 1993, he conducted a routine traffic stop.

Tragically for Constable MacDonald, the occupants of the vehicle were two violent thugs, Peter Paul Pennett and Clinton Victor Suzack. Suzack was on parole under the Ontario Parole Board at the time. Constable MacDonald was beaten and murdered execution style. His killers were subsequently convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

A bright young life was snuffed out when Constable MacDonald was murdered, but three other lives were profoundly altered: those of his wife Nancy and daughters Julia and Melissa, both toddlers at the time of their dad's murder.

The city of Sudbury has never forgotten Joe MacDonald and the impact he had on the city's youth. Thousands of youngsters have participated in the Joe MacDonald Youth Football League and the city has dedicated the Joe MacDonald Memorial Park located across the street from the place where this young officer was brutally murdered.

As an opposition justice critic, I got to know the MacDonald family. When I became Solicitor General in 1995, the circumstances surrounding Joe's death were the catalyst for a

number of changes that I made, including the complete revamping of the Ontario Parole Board, allowing Ontario police to use hollow point ammunition, and the creation of a tuition fund, the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund.

The tuition fund covers the post-secondary education costs for the spouse and offspring of any Ontario public safety officer who loses his or her life in the line of duty. It was started with \$5 million of seed money, which has never had to be replenished.

• (1440)

This motion is intended to create some momentum toward creating a similar fund for federal peace officers. According to the Canadian Police and Peace Officers Memorial, 49 federal peace officers have lost their lives in the line of duty since 1990. Thirty-nine of them were members of the RCMP, but the list also

includes three customs officers, three park wardens, three prison guards and a Fisheries and Oceans officer.

Honourable senators, I believe that the establishment of such a tuition fund for the survivors of federal peace officers who die in the line of duty is the least we can do for families who find their lives so profoundly altered by violence.

The cost to the treasury is a small one to acknowledge the sacrifice of those who put their lives on the line each time they don the uniform and who, in these few tragic cases, end up paying the ultimate price to protect their communities.

(On motion of Senator Fraser, debate adjourned.)

(The Senate adjourned until Thursday, October 7, 2010, at 1:30 p.m.)

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