



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 49

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 8, 2012

The Honourable NOËL A. KINSELLA
Speaker

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

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Published by the Senate
Available from PWGSC – Publishing and Depository Services, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5.
Also available on the Internet: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

THE SENATE

Wednesday, February 8, 2012

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to advise that today Inuktitut will be spoken during Senators' Statements. When it is, the floor language will be on channel 1, the English on channel 2 and the French on channel 3.

[*Translation*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of Jean-Marc Robitaille, Mayor of the City of Terrebonne and a former member of Parliament and parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance. With him is his spouse, Monique Robitaille; Frédéric Asselin, municipal councillor and chair of the City of Terrebonne planning board; Denis Lévesque, general manager, and his spouse, Mariette Lévesque; and Diane Legault, assistant to the mayor. They are guests of the Honourable Senator Carignan.

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

[*English*]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

PARLIAMENTARY CONDUCT

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, as many of you know, I spent part of my career as a police officer serving in some of Canada's toughest neighbourhoods, both in Winnipeg and in Vancouver. Every day on the job was rewarding, but some days were tougher than others. However, no form of training can really prepare an officer for that gut-wrenching visit when you must inform a parent that their son or daughter was killed.

I cannot describe the anguish that immediately takes hold of parents during those trying moments, to which I bore witness on far too many occasions. These moments for the informed often mark the beginning of a lifetime filled with anger, uncertainty and an understandable desire for retribution to be served upon the souls of those who committed these heinous acts. Some of us in this chamber know of which I speak.

Honourable senators, today I stand here in understanding of our colleague Senator Boisvenu. I have not lost a child, and I will likely never be able to comprehend the life-altering pain that a

parent who has experienced a situation like this must feel. However, I was the Member of Parliament for Mission—Port Moody during the time when the “Beast of British Columbia,” Clifford Robert Olson, committed his atrocities against some of the children in my constituency, followed shortly by the discovery, in the same riding, of the barbaric acts of Willy Pickton.

I have been exposed to what the dark side of humanity is capable of, and I have seen first-hand the path of destruction it leaves on an individual. I understand the background that would motivate certain off-the-cuff comments.

Shame on those who stooped to the lowest of the low to suggest that partisan leanings were factors in the recent comments made by Senator Boisvenu.

Some Hon. Senators: Shame!

Senator St. Germain: I am totally dismayed by the political game that the NDP is making of this in the other place. Their grandstanding is, quite frankly, disgusting. To try and make a political point off of another colleague's expression of raw emotions — those which are founded in personal grief — is about as unparliamentary as one can get.

I do understand that Pat Martin called Senator Boisvenu on Monday night to offer his apology for the public comments he made last week. I have always known Pat Martin to be a good MP who has contributed much to Winnipeg, to Manitoba and to Canada. However, he has done himself a huge disservice, and he has influenced no one with such vulgarity and petty behaviour. I can only hope that this incident has made all members of Parliament remember to think before they speak.

Honourable senators, we are all here to focus on the betterment of Canada, not to assassinate each other's character. Let us readjust our focus and proceed with the business at hand.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

INUKTITUT LANGUAGE WEEK

[*Editor's Note: Senator Watt spoke in Inuktitut — translation follows.*]

Hon. Charlie Watt: Honourable senators, today I rise on the occasion of Inuktitut Language Week.

Although this initiative was created by the Government of Nunavut, the Inuit language is also spoken in northern Quebec, Labrador, and the Northwest Territories, and in cities where the Inuit choose to live. Montreal, Ottawa and Winnipeg also have vibrant Inuit communities.

I am proud to say that my mother tongue is one of the strongest Aboriginal languages in this country. This is because Inuit continue to use their language at home. I am grateful that

honourable senators are supportive of my wish to speak Inuktitut in this chamber as sometimes the words come more easily for me in my mother tongue.

When I speak Inuktitut in this chamber, it is a source of pride for the Inuit to know that their language is recognized by the Parliament of Canada.

We, the Inuit, also look forward to further cooperation and support from this government in the area of Inuktitut literacy programs and the development of Inuktitut language films and television.

Our language and culture provide us with the stability that we need, keep us connected to our ancestors and unify our families. These are the critical elements in preparing our youth for success in other arenas, because we know that happy, well-grounded individuals are more likely to be contributing members of society.

Thank you. *Nakurmiik.*

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, this week is suicide prevention week. In a previous speech on this subject, I mentioned a number of facts that I think bear repeating here.

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. Each day, more than 10 Canadians commit suicide. In the past 30 years, more than 100,000 Canadians have taken their own lives. According to the World Health Organization, at 15 per 100,000, Canada's suicide rate is one of the highest in the world. Also according to WHO, there are up to 20 attempted suicides for each death. Suicide is the second most common cause of death among people aged 10 to 24, according to the Quebec psychiatric association.

[*English*]

To talk about suicide is not a fun thing. It hurts us. We always find it painful, but we have to talk about it. We need to talk about it and tell everybody that suicide is not an option. We have to tell people that there are resources, and we need to help them.

[*Translation*]

Every time someone commits suicide, everyone suffers. During this suicide prevention week, let us all take a moment to reflect on what we can do as a society and, particularly, what we can do as senators to address the problem.

The House of Commons adopted a nearly unanimous motion calling for the development of a national suicide prevention strategy.

[Senator Watt]

I urge you, honourable senators, to support the motion I moved last fall. I hope that Senator Carignan, who is supposed to speak on this issue, will have the opportunity to do so, and I hope that we can count on his support.

[*English*]

FIREFIGHTERS WITHOUT BORDERS CANADA

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about the great work being done by Firefighters Without Borders Canada.

Last month, along with 10 British Columbia firefighters and four graduates of the firefighting program at the Justice Institute of B.C., I travelled to El Salvador to help announce the delivery of training and equipment to Central America by Firefighters Without Borders Canada. Thirty-four firefighters from El Salvador received invaluable training from Canadian firefighters on fighting fires in large buildings. In addition, the Canadian firefighters received invaluable training from the *bomberos* of El Salvador in earthquake preparedness and earthquake extrication.

In addition, the Salvadoran firefighters received, among other equipment, 100 sets of turnout gear and 60 sets of breathing apparatus.

Since its inception in 2003, Firefighters Without Borders Canada has provided free equipment and training to firefighters all over the world including Thailand, the Republic of Congo and Paraguay.

Not only do these firefighters risk their lives on an ongoing basis to protect Canadian citizens, the members of Firefighters Without Borders Canada continue to donate their time and income to help firefighters abroad to work as effectively and professionally as those in Canada.

I commend their dedication and encourage honourable senators to support this organization in its future endeavours.

[*Translation*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS,
MARCH 27-APRIL 1, 2010—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the 122nd IPU Assembly and related meetings, held March 27 to April 1, 2010, in Bangkok, Thailand.

SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,
FEBRUARY 17-19, 2011—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the 259th Session of the IPU Executive Committee, held February 17 to 19, 2011, in Geneva, Switzerland.

ANNUAL SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
CONFERENCE ON THE WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION, MARCH 21-22, 2011—
REPORT TABLED

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the 2011 Annual Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization, held March 21 and 22, 2011, in Geneva, Switzerland.

ASIA-PACIFIC WORKING GROUP MEETING,
JULY 14, 2011—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the Asia-Pacific Working Group Meeting, held July 14, 2011, in Jakarta, Indonesia.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

PUBLIC SAFETY

INFORMATION OBTAINED BY TORTURE

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Canadians were stunned yesterday to learn that in December 2010, this government quietly issued a directive to CSIS authorizing the use of information that may have been obtained through torture. On October 19, 2009, a little more than a year ago, the government was telling Canadians a very different story. In a document tabled before a committee in the other place, the government's response was:

The Government of Canada's policy on torture and the use of information elicited through torture is clear. As stated by the Minister of Public Safety on April 2, 2009, we do not condone the use of torture in intelligence gathering. Our clear directive to our law enforcement agencies and our intelligence services is that they are not to condone the use of torture, practice torture, or knowingly use any information obtained through torture.

My question is: Was the Minister of Public Safety misleading Canadians in April and October 2009? If not, when did the government's policy change and why?

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

The government's position is clear. We do not condone and certainly do not engage in torture. When we have information that Canadian lives are at risk, we will act without delay. Canadians expect no less. Our government will always protect Canadians from those who wish to harm us. To be clear, we do not condone torture and we do not engage in torture.

Senator Cowan: The same document from which I read, dated October 19, 2009, went on to say:

Federal departments and agencies involved in protecting Canada's national security do not condone or support torture or other abuses of human rights. This unequivocal position is supported by the recent ministerial direction issued to CSIS by the Minister of Public Safety, which clearly states that the government is steadfast in its abhorrence of and opposition to the use of torture by any state or agency for any purpose whatsoever, including the collection of intelligence.

• (1350)

That sounds unequivocal to me. Yet, the government is changing its position and privately saying one thing and doing another. Canada is a party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Supreme Court has been clear on the issue. The government took a public position that was consistent with the convention, with the Supreme Court decision in 2009, and with international and Canadian law.

Can the leader tell honourable senators whether the government has informed other governments around the world, including the Government of Afghanistan, about this change in government policy?

Senator LeBreton: My answer will be exactly the same, honourable senators: The government does not condone and certainly does not engage in torture. When the government has information that Canadian lives are at risk, it will act without delay; Canadians expect no less. The government will always protect Canadians from those who wish to harm us. The government's position is clear: It does not condone and certainly does not engage in torture.

Senator Cowan: The government's position is apparently clear as well in that it will use information obtained by other governments and agencies through the use of torture. Is that correct?

Senator LeBreton: I can say only that when the government has information that Canadian lives are at risk, it will act without delay. I would imagine that any Canadian would expect that of the government. The first priority is to protect Canadians from those who wish to harm Canadians. The government's position is clear: It does not condone and certainly does not engage in torture.

Senator Cowan: However, the government will use information obtained through the use of torture outside Canada. How does the government square that with the obligations it has under Canadian law and under international treaty and law?

Senator LeBreton: Try as he might to put words in my mouth, the honourable senator will not succeed. The government does not condone or engage in torture.

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, the Leader of the Government in the Senate said that the government will act without delay. Does that mean the government will act without delay in torturing someone to get the information or in using the information that it obtained through torture?

Senator LeBreton: That is a ridiculous question. The government neither engages in torture nor condones torture.

HEALTH

TRANS FAT REGULATIONS

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, we also discovered this week that in 2009, the government chose to ignore the findings of its Trans Fat Task Force and the recommendations of Health Canada experts and to back out of its promise to impose federal regulations to limit the levels of trans fats in Canadian foods. The government relied instead on a system of voluntary industry action — a system which clearly did not work. However, Canada's Minister of Health continues to support this failed approach.

High levels of trans fats have been proven to be detrimental to the health of Canadians, as highlighted by the government's Trans Fat Task Force. Why did the Minister of Health renege on her promise? When will the government start to treat the health of Canadians as a priority?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): The government is treating the health of Canadians as a priority. We are working to ensure that consumers and people like myself who shop for products and read their labels have the product information they require to make informed decisions. We took action with our trans fats monitoring program, which is reducing trans fats in Canada. Almost 75 per cent of prepackaged foods have met the new targets. We continue to work with industry in an effort to further reduce trans fats.

Senator Cordy: Honourable senators, monitoring is one thing but following up and taking action to help Canadians live healthier lives is another. The federal government is showing no leadership in this area. Health Canada has said that regulations on trans fat restrictions would improve the health of Canadians. Industry has not met the voluntary reduction targets set by former Health Minister Clement. One health department briefing to the minister states that critical gaps remain, primarily in bakeries and the food services sector. Health Minister Aglukkaq continues to claim that the food industry is making progress toward lowering trans fats in its products, but the evidence from Health Canada is showing otherwise.

The leader seems quite assured that voluntary measures are making a difference. Will she table evidence in the Senate indicating that the food industry is making progress? A promise was made by the Harper government to regulate trans fats if voluntary measures failed and voluntary measures have failed. Why has the government ignored the evidence and gone back on its word?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I would argue that 75 per cent of foods meeting the criteria is not failure. I would argue that it is proof positive that the industry is responding. When the Minister of Health speaks, she does so with some knowledge. The food industry has worked with the government. Those of us who read labels, which I do because of my husband's health, can see a marked difference in the last few years as a result of government efforts to work in cooperation with industry. A 75 per cent success rate to date is pretty impressive.

Senator Cordy: If the Health Minister is so certain about her responses, I am curious to know why she ran away from the media yesterday when they were asking her questions about the issue.

The leader is right in saying that some areas have improved, but the success rate in other categories, such as prepackaged baked goods, is dismal: 75 per cent of croissants fail to meet the target; 67 per cent of doughnuts fail to meet the target; and 55 per cent of brownies fail to meet the target. Everyone loves to eat those foods but those foods do not meet the targets set by the Trans Fat Task Force, the government and former Health Minister Tony Clement. Minister Clement said that if the targets were not met within two years, the government would bring forward regulations.

The current regulations have not been met by industry. There seems to be a pattern. A department or a minister sets up a working group, such as this one or the one on sodium; departmental officials spend valuable time and money on an issue and prepare briefing notes to the minister to indicate why action should be taken. Then, at the last minute, after all that time and money is spent, the minister rejects the data. This happens frequently. When the minister is asked questions by the media, he or she runs away from the issue.

Can the leader bring honourable senators up to date on the status of the targets set by the working group put in place by Minister Clement?

Senator LeBreton: At first I thought the honourable senator was referring to me when she talked about running away from the media; but I run away from nothing.

The government is working to ensure that consumers have the information they need to make informed and healthy choices. What would the honourable senator want me to do the next time I see her reaching for a croissant — slap her wrist?

Senator Cowan: This is a serious matter.

• (1400)

Senator LeBreton: I am taking this matter seriously and I do not need any lessons from Senator Cowan.

The fact is we are working with the industry. There is significant success so far. As these products come to market, consumers are now being given more information on the content of those products. We are working with the industry and making every effort to ensure that consumers make informed choices. At the end of the day, if we can educate consumers about the content of food, not only will we have better health outcomes, but they will be better informed.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Honourable senators, my wife tried slapping my wrist when I reached for a brownie, and as you can tell it did not work very well.

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICE LEVELS

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Honourable senators, we know that cuts to the federal public service in Atlantic Canada have hurt the region disproportionately. According to Treasury Board, from 2009 to 2011, 450 federal positions were cut in Atlantic Canada. We also know that many more are coming, including cutting 42 positions at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and closing eight Service Canada centres.

If the government is determined to cut positions in Atlantic Canada, could the leader tell us if the high paying jobs that the former Minister of ACOA ensured went to Conservative friends and failed candidates like Kevin MacAdam and Cecil Clarke are also on the chopping block? We all know the old adage: Last in, first out. Can the leader assure honourable senators that anyone who was recently hired will be the first fired?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, obviously there will be some adjustment to jobs across the country as a result of the government looking for savings. The senator mentioned specifically Mr. MacAdam. Mr. MacAdam was hired — and I believe I have pointed this out to Senator Mercer previously — through a competitive process run by the agency, free of political interference. Thanks to this government, because we post these positions, this process was open to all Canadians. Any appointments we have made are based on merit.

Senator Mercer: The Just For Laughs Festival is down the road in Montreal. With an answer like that, does the honourable senator think we are going to believe that?

Honourable senators, ACOA is slashing public jobs in order to save money but is shelling out hundreds of thousands of dollars on failed Conservative candidates and friends in federal positions. This is nothing new. For example, there is the aforementioned Kevin MacAdam, who was hired as Director General of ACOA's P.E.I. operation. Prince Edward Island is an island off the coast of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. It is a beautiful place; you should all go there. The position of Director General requires proficiency in French, and one would assume it requires him to actually live in P.E.I. so that he can monitor the province. However, Mr. MacAdam has apparently lived in Ottawa since his

appointment and studies French here. Meanwhile, there are many schools in Atlantic Canada where he could study French, including the University of Prince Edward Island and Collège Acadie, both in P.E.I., that island off the coast of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Could the leader explain how the government thinks spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on Mr. MacAdam's position is a good expenditure of the public purse when he seems to be too busy hobnobbing with Pete and his buddies rather than serving the good citizens of P.E.I. and all Atlantic Canadians?

Senator LeBreton: I never thought that I would have to rely on Senator Mercer for a geography lesson to let me know where Prince Edward Island is. I know full well where it is, and I agree it is a beautiful place.

I am not familiar with the circumstances regarding this individual's French language training. I would dare say, honourable senators, that Senator Mercer may have colleagues that would be rather upset that one of their colleagues was criticizing a public servant for having French language training.

With regard to the positions at ACOA — and I do believe I answered this before, but if not, I will say it again — these reductions will not take away from the services being provided to the entrepreneurs and communities of Atlantic Canada. Employees affected by this decision are receiving assistance to transition to new jobs, new training, or attrition applies as they are retiring. However, as I mentioned previously, when we are talking about good jobs for Atlantic Canada, our national shipbuilding strategy is an excellent example of the jobs and growth agenda of this government. We will continue to pursue good opportunities for all Atlantic Canadians into the future.

Senator Mercer: Earlier the Leader of the Government in the Senate said that she did not want Senator Cowan putting words in her mouth, and I do not want the Leader of the Government in the Senate to put words in my mouth. At no time was I critical of the fact that Mr. MacAdam is on French language training. My criticism was that he is in Ottawa on French language training. He is supposed to be in Prince Edward Island. He is supposed to be working for ACOA on behalf of Islanders and Atlantic Canadians, but he is in Ottawa studying French. There are at least two schools in Prince Edward Island, a number in New Brunswick, and some very good schools in Nova Scotia. All are within easy driving distance of the Charlottetown office of ACOA. Why is Mr. MacAdam not studying in P.E.I., New Brunswick or Nova Scotia instead of wasting taxpayers' money by being in Ottawa so he can hang around with his buddy Pete?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, there is an adequate sound system in the Senate. The honourable senator does not have to shout to be heard.

I am not going to comment on the various language training facilities that people can avail themselves of, except to again support the government's full commitment to our Official Languages Act and the linguistic duality of our country.

[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

SERVICE CANADA—SERVICE LEVELS

Hon. Maria Chaput: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate and concerns the closure of 98 of the 120 Service Canada offices over the next three years.

You will remember, honourable senators, that I have been closely following the reorganization of Service Canada centres since February 2011. I have never shied away from extolling the merits of Service Canada, especially the provision of services to official language minority communities. Service Canada could have been a model for other federal institutions for a long time to come. I understand that the reorganization is due to budget cuts, hence the importance of good planning and anticipating the impact of the changes.

Therefore, I would like to ask the Leader of the Government to provide us with the following information.

How many of the 98 offices that will close — where there are approximately 600 jobs — are located in regions designated as bilingual? Which ones? What is the exact number of positions that will be cut? How many are full-time, part-time and contract positions? How many of these positions are in regions designated as bilingual and which ones? How many of these positions are designated as bilingual?

As for the 22 offices that will remain open, how many positions will remain? How many are full-time, part-time and contract positions? How many of these positions are in regions designated as bilingual and which ones?

Can I count on the leader to obtain this information for us?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I thank the senator for the question. I will take the question as notice and respond at a later time because she has asked for a significant amount of detail.

• (1410)

With regard to the overall plan of HRSDC for the operation of Service Canada, I think we all agree that the services provided to Canadians have been vastly improved by Service Canada. Some small community offices have been closed, but government employees did not work in those offices. As I have pointed out in last few days, the government and HRSDC are moving from a paper-driven process to an automated process.

Significant progress has been made on automation.

Today, for instance, Canadians complete 99 per cent of the nearly 3 million Employment Insurance claim applications online. Over the next three years, our goal is to have 70 per cent of the processing of EI applications fully or partially automated. At

present, almost 20 per cent of claims are fully automated and 58 per cent of claims are fully or partially automated. These are claims that are filed online, matched with an electronically submitted record of employment and approved quickly for payment. It is a much more efficient method than the old paper method.

With regard to the numbers, the various locations and the bilingual capacity, honourable senators, I will be happy to take the question as notice and seek the answer she wishes.

[Translation]

Senator Chaput: Monday's edition of *La Presse* reported that there are significant delays in the processing of 80,000 employment insurance claims. The claims of thousands of Canadians that should normally be processed in 21 days are taking 123 to 128 days to process.

The government itself admits that it was unable to provide workers who had lost their jobs with these essential services within the prescribed time frame and that it had to quickly bring in 400 additional employees to process claims.

How can the government reassure Canadians by telling them that, three years from now, it will be able to provide these services effectively with 600 fewer employees?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, this year, as in others, we have added resources in anticipation of the seasonal effect of unemployment in the winter. Over the last number of weeks we added 475 employees to the processing efforts and shifted 120 positions from part-time to full-time status.

Honourable senators, Human Resources and Skills Development is working extremely hard to ensure that the people who apply for benefits get them.

This whole exercise is closely monitored by Service Canada to ensure that Canadians receive the benefits to which they are entitled as quickly as possible.

[Translation]

Senator Chaput: Canadians understand full well that the government is trying to cut costs. However, is it reasonable to expect Canadian workers to bear the brunt of these budget cuts when they are already being forced to wait for months to receive their first employment insurance benefits?

Does Service Canada's restructuring plan indicate how such delays will be avoided with fewer employees to process employment insurance claims?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I will dispute the claim that Canadians are being subjected to unduly long wait times before they get their benefits. I do not think that is correct. I do not know the source of the senator's information.

I just explained that services have been improved through automation and I explained also that, because we are in a seasonal peak time, Service Canada has actually added people and moved people from part-time to full-time status to process these applications quickly.

As part of the written response that I will request on behalf of Senator Chaput, I will ask also what the normal wait time is.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, last year I asked the same question because of this situation and I am asking this again because the situation has not changed. I am looking at the situation of requests for CPP disability claims filed in New Brunswick. The standard across the country is supposed to be 90 days for a reply. Last year I indicated to the leader in this place that the norm was double that time in New Brunswick for a New Brunswicker applying for CPP disability benefits to receive any kind of answer.

Two weeks ago, I called the 1-866 number on behalf of one of my constituents to receive an answer. They said, "We will call you back within five days." Well, it is two weeks later. I finally got in touch with a director at the centre and I asked, "What is going on?" This application has been in the process for more than 180 days. That is twice the standard that it should be in Canada, but in New Brunswick it is longer than that. She said that even after 180 days the file was still in the triage process. That is the kind of service that we have in New Brunswick and it is unacceptable. I asked the leader that question last year and am asking it again this year.

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I cannot respond directly to the question. There are often circumstances that develop. I do not know what the circumstances are with regard to this particular individual. Obviously, there is some problem, according to the senator. However, I cannot answer the question because I have no details on the case. I would have to have much more information before I could give a detailed answer.

Senator Ringuette: Ask for the statistics with regard to applications.

Senator LeBreton: I will be very happy to put the senator's question. I will take the question as notice and see what we can do.

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

COAST GUARD—RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRES— BILINGUAL SERVICES

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The government announced its intention to close the rescue coordination centre in Quebec City in 2012. Effective March 31, 2012, air and marine rescue missions in Quebec will be coordinated from centres in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

Maritime communities in Quebec are still very concerned about this decision. The government maintains that new communication tools will allow the centres in other provinces to take care of rescue operations in Quebec.

However, the centre's transfer to other provinces does not take into account the importance of language and knowledge of local geography or the fact that, in a situation where lives are at stake and every second counts, it is not enough for staff to be bilingual; they must be able to speak French well enough to understand people when they are in a state of panic.

Why is the government prepared to jeopardize people's safety by disregarding the obvious problems of language and geographic knowledge?

[English]

There are elements that technology cannot replace. The dispatchers working in the Quebec rescue coordination centre have a detailed knowledge of not only the region's geography and the names of the small towns but also the language, accents and regionalism spoken in Quebec. Why does the government refuse to reconsider this decision when it is obvious that the lack of dispatchers with a detailed knowledge of Quebec's French may cause delays?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for the question. Our government is constantly assessing our search and rescue capabilities. Our government, like any government, always seeks to improve the service to assist Canadians and reduce the loss of life. With regard to the specific question, I will take it as notice.

• (1420)

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

SENIORS' BENEFITS

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, I am wondering about the status of the government's reply to a question that I asked on November 23, 2011, with regard to Old Age Security and the take-up of that program.

The leader took the question as notice and said that she would supply up-to-date figures. I wonder when I might expect to receive those.

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Acting Deputy Leader of the Government): If the honourable senator will allow us to check into that specific question, we will get back to her as soon as possible.

Senator Callbeck: Thank you.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE SENATE

MOTION TO RESOLVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO RECEIVE ANNE-MARIE ROBINSON, PRESIDENT OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION, AND THAT THE COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE SENATE NO LATER THAN ONE HOUR AFTER IT BEGINS ADOPTED

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Acting Deputy Leader of the Government), for Hon. Claude Carignan, pursuant to notice of February 7, 2012, moved:

That, at the end of Question Period and Delayed Answers on Tuesday, February 14, 2012, the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole in order to receive Ms. Anne-Marie Robinson respecting her appointment as President of the Public Service Commission; and

That the Committee of the Whole report to the Senate no later than one hour after it begins.

(Motion agreed to.)

INCOME TAX ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—
DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Mitchell, seconded by the Honourable Senator Banks, for the second reading of Bill S-205, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (carbon offset tax credit).

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau (Acting Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I see that this item has reached its fifteenth day, and we do not want it to die on the Order Paper. However, with leave of the Senate, I would like to reserve the 45 minutes for the sponsor of the bill.

The Hon. the Speaker: If I understand correctly, Senator Comeau is asking to reserve 45 minutes for Senator Raine and wants to debate this right now.

Senator Comeau: Honourable senators, I will be brief. I see that this item has reached its fifteenth day, and I would like to have more time to prepare. I always like to speak to Liberal bills on the Income Tax Act. Nonetheless, I believe we have to be very careful with this type of bill.

[English]

We have to be very careful when Liberals propose any changes to the Income Tax Act. Therefore, with that said, I would like to continue to reserve the balance of my time for when I have had a chance to completely review the proposals by Senator Mitchell.

(On motion of Senator Comeau, debate adjourned.)

INTERPRETATION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—
DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Charlie Watt moved second reading of Bill S-207, An Act to amend the Interpretation Act (non-derogation of aboriginal and treaty rights).

He said: Honourable senators, today I rise to speak on Bill S-207, An Act to amend the Interpretation Act. My bill deals with the Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Those rights are expressly recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

It is my responsibility as an Aboriginal senator to continue the process of shaping Canadian legislation for the betterment of our people.

Honourable senators, my bill is offered to this chamber as a small step toward upholding the rights of Aboriginal peoples and standardizing the manner in which these constitutionally recognized rights are considered and respected in federal legislation.

Our statute books are sprinkled with what we refer to as “non-derogation clauses,” but the wording of those clauses is not consistent, and they are absent from many pieces of legislation.

My bill proposes to amend the Interpretation Act to provide that no enactment — that is, no federal statute or regulation — is to be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from Aboriginal and treaty rights. This rule of interpretation provides a lens through which every bill should be evaluated for compliance with section 35 of the Constitution. It presumes a parliamentary intention to honour Aboriginal and treaty rights. This approach does away with the need to add a non-derogation clause to each and every bill in order to ensure that the bill contains no infringement of those rights.

Please keep in mind that the proposed new section 8.3 of the Interpretation Act would be subject to subsection 3(1) of that act, which provides that:

Every provision of this Act applies, unless a contrary intention appears, to every enactment, whether enacted before or after the commencement of this Act.

Honourable senators, I remind you that in 2007, the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs undertook their study on section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, which examined the use of non-derogation clauses in Canadian legislation.

In their report, they proposed some very fine recommendations to address the shortcomings in Canadian legislation. Honourable senators on both sides of the chamber participated in the committee work and expressed willingness and a desire to bring a resolution to this unfinished business.

The details of this can be found in the Standing Senate Committee report entitled *Taking Section 35 Rights Seriously: Non-derogation Clauses relating to Aboriginal and treaty rights*.

Honourable senators, the Senate has agreed to these important principles — including that a non-derogation provision should be added to the Interpretation Act — and my bill simply implements what has already been adopted.

For all these reasons, I am seeking your support to send this bill to committee for what I hope will be a short but meaningful stage on its way to the other place.

During the committee clause-by-clause consideration of this bill — if it is referred — a correction, by way of amendment, will be required to address a problem of the use of a double negative in the French version. The French word “pas” in clause 1, line 6, will need to be removed to reflect the English version and the intent of this bill.

I believe the Canadian public has an appetite for a healthier relationship with Aboriginal peoples. This bill is one way that we as senators can contribute something positive and meaningful to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

We as Aboriginal people will need the support of parliamentarians in both houses to bring this bill into legislation. I hope that honourable senators will take the time to read the committee report to give you the full background on my bill so that you can be an active participant in this process.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my work, and I trust this bill will make it to committee for further study.

Nakurmiik.

(On motion of Senator Comeau, debate adjourned.)

• (1430)

STUDY ON ACCESSIBILITY OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

SIXTH REPORT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE AND REQUEST
FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Ogilvie, seconded by the Honourable Senator MacDonald, that the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology entitled: *Opening the Door: Reducing Barriers to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, deposited with the Clerk on December 22, 2011, be adopted and that, pursuant to rule 131(2), the Senate request a complete and detailed response from the government, with the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report.

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak today on this report entitled *Opening the Door: Reducing Barriers to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. It is the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology on the accessibility of post-secondary education and research in Canada.

First, I want to thank all members of the committee, the researchers, the clerk, the translators and others who worked so hard on this report.

As well, I want to note the strong leadership role played by our steering committee, Senator Ogilvie, Senator Eggleton and Senator Seidman. I also want to offer a special thank you to all the people who appeared as witnesses because they took their time to share their views with us, and they are people who are deeply interested in and concerned about education.

I initially introduced this motion in the Senate back on April 29, 2008. I was pleased that it was accepted. It has taken a long time, but that is because the committee had a lot of legislation to study. As well, we had elections, and then Parliament was prorogued.

Now, I believe that post-secondary education and research are critical to the success of the nation. Post-secondary education benefits individuals and society. We need to make sure that every person who is willing and has the ability to attend post-secondary education can do so, and that includes not only universities but also community colleges, trade schools and other career training.

I believe that if the recommendations of this report are implemented, it will play a large role in increasing accessibility to post-secondary education and will help foster research and innovation in this country.

Today, I want to deal with just a few of the recommendations, as time does not permit me to deal with all of them.

One of the most interesting findings is that a young person's financial situation is just one of the factors that determine whether or not an individual will pursue post-secondary education. Many other factors come into play: high school completion, secondary school experience and grades, family environment and exposure to post-secondary education. For example, recent research by Statistics Canada shows that young people with parents who have a university education are twice as likely to get a degree themselves. Parental background is a huge factor as are the others that I mentioned. That is why the committee recommended that the federal government convene a meeting with all provincial and territorial ministers of education to develop a strategy to address these non-financial matters.

We also heard a great deal about financial issues. The committee's report contains a number of specific recommendations in this area, including a regular review of student loan limits so that the funding available takes into account increases in the cost of post-secondary education and increases in living expenses. We made this recommendation because the committee found that federal measures may be reviewed infrequently, and they do not always keep up with the times.

The committee also recommended that the federal government establish a relocation grant for low-income students who must leave their parental home to pursue post-secondary studies.

Income tax measures for students was a subject on which we heard a great deal, especially about tax credits. I recognize that tax credits are very useful for a large number of Canadians, but they are not for many others. It is known that these tax credits are non-refundable, which means that students must pay taxes in order to take advantage of them. However, about 60 per cent of students earn less than \$10,000 per year. They do not pay taxes; therefore, they cannot take advantage of these tax measures. In addition, several witnesses indicated that the ability to use tax credits was a greater benefit to wealthier students and their families than to those who really need the assistance.

This is why we recommended the federal government undertake a review of the effectiveness of these income tax measures. The government may find there is a more helpful and cost-effective way to break down the barriers that prevent people from accessing post-secondary education.

With regard to students with permanent disabilities who apply for student grants, the committee felt that there are additional factors from these students that must be considered, not just the income. There are often cases where students with disabilities have additional expenses, such as renovations for accommodations, and those expenses may run very high. The committee felt that those additional expenses should be considered. Therefore, we recommended that eligibility for the Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities and the Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities should not be based solely on income.

The committee also heard that some adults simply do not have the skills and knowledge required to pursue post-secondary education. One way of addressing this issue is through adult and family literacy programs. Statistics tell us that more than 40 per cent of working-age Canadians have low literacy skills. People with low literacy skills may be able to read the words on the page, but they may not be able to understand the meaning.

True literacy includes the ability to analyze, understand and apply what has been read. However, four out of ten Canadians have difficulty coping with the demands of everyday life. On an individual level, low literacy has been linked to poor health outcomes. People can be ill more often and can experience more mis-medications. They have lower employment rates and tend to make less money. There is also a correlation between literacy and crime. Seventy-five per cent of Canadian offenders have low literacy skills.

This is an issue that I care very much about, and you will be hearing a lot more from me when I speak on my inquiry on literacy later on.

Because adequate literacy skills are essential to the pursuit of post-secondary education, the committee recommended that the federal government, in collaboration with provincial, municipal and territorial governments and all other stakeholders, encourage

and strengthen adult and family literacy programs with the goal of helping Canadians develop the skills necessary to access post-secondary education.

In addition, the committee recognized the value of lifelong learning and recommended that the federal government look at ways to encourage small and medium-sized businesses to support continuing education and training of their employees.

We also looked at the issue of apprenticeship training. Some witnesses stated that the main barrier to apprenticeship training is the difficulty in finding employers who will take apprentices for on-the-job training. We heard that there is great value in hiring an apprentice. They told us that every dollar an employer invests brings an average return of \$1.47 at the end of four years, but still there are many employers who hesitate or will not hire an apprentice. Therefore, the committee recommended that the federal government promote the creation of lasting jobs for apprentices with tools for encouraging cooperation with the private sector.

The committee also heard the current funding mechanisms for research tend to favour larger universities, leaving smaller universities like those in Atlantic Canada facing difficulties in obtaining grants from research councils and from the Canada Research Chairs program. We therefore recommended a review to be done on those allocated mechanisms so that smaller universities are not disadvantaged when it comes to research funds.

- (1440)

In addition, the committee heard a lot about the indirect costs of research as they have risen significantly in recent years. In fact, in the 10-year period of 1996-97 to 2006-07, these costs went up from \$1.1 billion to \$1.7 billion. The federal program certainly does help, but the Indirect Costs Program covers only some of these costs and that means the universities have to cover the remainder. This leaves the universities with less money in their budget for other priorities, like teaching.

As mentioned in the report, the committee looked at the issue in 2008 as part of its study of Canada's science and technology strategy. We made the same recommendation in this report as we did in that last report. The recommendation is that funding for indirect research costs be increased to an international competitive level of 40 per cent of all direct grants.

Finally, I would like to address the unique challenges facing our Aboriginal students. One of the concerns that the committee heard over and over again was with regard to the capping of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program. Since 1996, despite the vast population increases among Aboriginal youth, this program has never been allowed to increase more than 2 per cent. That is why the committee recommended that this funding cap be reviewed immediately, so that funding for this program can better reflect the needs of Aboriginal students.

I believe that by addressing these concerns and others contained in the report, the federal government, if these recommendations are implemented, will increase our chances for success on the world stage. We face significant pressures in a highly competitive, knowledge-driven global economy. In the face of such pressures,

we must recognize the importance of increased participation in post-secondary education to our economic and social development goals. We need to make sure Canadians fulfil their potential through post-secondary education and workplace skills training. We must work together — federal and provincial governments, educational institutions, the private sector and the public — to plot our course for post-secondary education in this country.

I look forward to the government's response to the recommendations that the committee has made in this report, and I hope that we will get that response as quickly as possible.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

[Translation]

RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Smith P.C. (*Cobourg*), seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy, for the adoption of the first report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament (*Revised Rules of the Senate*), presented in the Senate on November 16, 2011.

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I see that this motion was adjourned in the name of my colleague, Senator Smith. Once I have completed my presentation, I would like the adjournment to remain in his name.

Honourable senators, I would like to take a few minutes today to say a few words about the first report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament. As you know, this is a new version of the *Rules of the Senate of Canada*.

The subcommittee, made up of Senators Fraser, Carignan and Stratton, has put a great deal of energy and thoughtfulness into this major project. I sincerely thank them for that.

I believe that these changes will enable the Senate to function much more efficiently. If this version is adopted by the Senate, it will come into force in September.

As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I often refer to the Rules. The clear and logical presentation of the *Rules of the Senate* is critical to the exercise of my duties. I am pleased to see these improvements.

It is important to note that the subcommittee, along with the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, conducted a rule-by-rule analysis. That was a big job. The purpose of the exercise was not to change the meaning or the scope of the March 2010 version of the Rules. The purpose was to clarify them and make them more logical while preserving the spirit and intent of the document. To facilitate the transition to the new Rules, a cross-referencing table has been created so that senators can match up the old numbers with the new.

First of all, I would like to point out that, for the new French version, the committee worked with an expert in French parliamentary language in order to make the language easier to understand.

Reclassifying the Rules is also a positive new aspect. The sequence of the Rules and the new numbering system make the document much easier to understand and consult. The rules are now grouped together in a logical way in 16 chapters. I think the 16 chapters are structured in a more logical fashion than the 12 chapters in the existing *Rules of the Senate*.

For instance, there are separate chapters dedicated to emergency debates, time allocation and questions of privilege, just to name a few.

Furthermore, each rule is identified with the distinct numeric tag of its chapter, followed by the specific number of the rule. For instance, when a senator gives notice that he or she will raise an inquiry, he or she will cite rule 5-1, because the rule concerning oral or written notice is the first rule in the fifth chapter. As you know, this degree of organization does not exist in the current Rules.

Rethinking the glossary was also a crucial exercise. Now, instead of finding definitions of key ideas and concepts throughout the *Rules of the Senate*, we will be able to simply consult a single, comprehensive glossary. Appendix I, Terminology, will contain all of the definitions that are currently scattered throughout the *Rules of the Senate*, in one coherent section.

I am sure that this change will help us, honourable senators, to effectively interpret the rules and to better understand unique situations.

Changes have also been made to the Order Paper. I believe that the new format of this document will make it easier for us to follow and understand Senate sittings. The order of business is more detailed. In addition, the projected order of business for bills will reflect the progress of these bills. Those at third reading will be listed first, followed by committee reports on bills, then bills at second reading. This applies to government business and also to other business.

The government retains the option of reorganizing government business if it so wishes.

[English]

Some new provisions have been introduced with respect to the treatment of questions of privilege. The idea is to write the rules such that they reflect what has in fact become practice in the Senate in recent years.

In recent years, we have seen discussions and debate, not to mention several rulings from the Speaker, regarding the existing rules 43 and 59(10). As many honourable senators well know, these two rules are ostensibly contradictory. Rule 43 requires an elaborate notice period for questions of privilege to be raised, while rule 59(10) states quite plainly that no notice is required for questions of privilege to be raised. The revised provision attempts to resolve this inconsistency in a way that reflects, as I have mentioned, what has become recent practice.

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, I believe that the revised version of the *Rules of the Senate* is a significant improvement over the existing Rules, since it is more user-friendly, better written and more logical.

• (1450)

I am sure the new Rules will help us all to do our jobs as senators better.

Once again, I would like to thank the subcommittee and the members of the committee for their excellent work.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, do you agree to let the adjournment stand in Senator Smith's name?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(On motion of Senator Tardif, for Senator Smith, P.C. (Cobourg), debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

THE SENATE

MOTION TO URGE THE GOVERNMENT TO MODERNIZE AND STANDARDIZE THE LAWS THAT REGULATE THE MAPLE SYRUP INDUSTRY— MOTION IN AMENDMENT—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Raine, seconded by the Honourable Senator Andreychuk:

That the Senate call upon the Government of Canada to modernize and standardize the laws that regulate Canada's maple syrup industry, which is poised for market growth in North America and overseas, and which provides consumers with a natural and nutritious agricultural product that has become a symbol of Canada;

That the Government of Canada should do this by amending the Maple Products Regulations, in accordance with the September 2011 recommendations of the International Maple Syrup Institute in its document entitled "Regulatory Proposal to Standardize the Grades and Nomenclature for Pure Maple Syrup in the North American and World Marketplace", for the purpose of

- (a) adopting a uniform definition as to what constitutes pure maple syrup;
- (b) contributing toward the development of an international standard for maple syrup, as it has become very apparent that the timing for the introduction of such a standard is ideal;
- (c) eliminating non-tariff measures that are not found in the international standard that may be used as a barrier to trade such as container sizes and shapes;
- (d) modernizing and standardizing the grading and classification system for pure maple syrup sold in domestic, import and export markets and through interprovincial trade, thereby eliminating the current patchwork system of grades that is confusing and fails to explain to consumers in meaningful terms important differences between grades and colour classes;
- (e) benefiting both marketing and sales for an industry that is mature, highly organized and well positioned for growth;
- (f) enhancing Canadian production and sales, which annually constitutes in excess of 80% of the world's annual maple products output; and
- (g) upholding and enhancing quality and safety standards as they pertain to maple products;

And on the motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Nolin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Lang, that the motion be amended as follows:

- 1) By replacing the words "which is poised for market growth" by the words "which wants to pursue its dynamic development"; and
- 2) By replacing paragraph (d) in the motion by the following:

"Modernizing and standardizing the grading of pure Maple syrup sold in domestic, import and export markets and through interprovincial trade which would explain more clearly to the consumer the classification and the grading system;".

Hon. Bob Runciman: Honourable senators, as a senator from Ontario's main maple syrup producing region, I am pleased to support Senator Raine's motion to modernize and standardize regulations governing maple syrup. I know many of the men and women who invest thousands of dollars in their operations, all for a few weeks of back-breaking, around-the-clock labour every March and April. They are at the mercy of the weather and they hope for cold nights and warm days in that brief window when winter turns to spring.

At the best of times, it is a risky proposition. If the weather is not just right, the sap does not run. In 1998, syrup producers in my area saw their sugar bushes devastated by the great ice storm. Many were forced to buy additional property to make continued production economically feasible. I am told by producers that

[Senator Tardif]

even today, 14 years later, trees continue to die as a result of the damage and stress they encountered during that ice storm. One cannot replace those trees overnight. A sugar maple tree has to grow for at least 40 years before it is big enough to be tapped, and that same tree, carefully tended, can then produce sap every spring for up to a century.

Clearly, due to the very nature of their industry, maple syrup producers have always needed to have one eye on the future. It is not surprising then that the industry wants to be better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Drawing on extensive consultations, the International Maple Syrup Institute has proposed common-sense changes to enhance the industry. These changes, which would include the introduction of North American standards for maple syrup, require the support of all relevant jurisdictions, including the Government of Canada.

I wholeheartedly agree that the Senate should call upon the government to amend the federal Maple Products Regulations in accordance with the institute's recommendations. It is clear that in this industry traditions do not and must not stand still. The bucket, spouts and cauldrons of yesteryear have long given way to tubing systems, vacuum pumps and sophisticated evaporators, and Canada's maple syrup industry knows it must continue evolving to maintain and build on its current achievements.

Honourable senators, the need for regulatory reform is driven by competition, but not against other maple syrup producers. The competitive pressures the industry faces come from producers of other cheaper types of sweeteners. Maple syrup producers have a common interest in gaining market share against these competitors. There is, remarkably enough, no uniform definition accepted around the world for pure maple syrup. That means other natural and artificial sweeteners can add small amounts of maple syrup to their own ingredients and legitimately claim that it contains pure maple syrup. It also means that producers of pure maple syrup cannot really distinguish their product from their competitors.

Therefore, as the first order of business, the industry wants the adoption of a uniform definition of what constitutes pure maple syrup. This would make it easier for the consumers, producers, packers, retailers and regulators to identify this iconic product; and it would enable the maple syrup industry to trumpet the purity of its product over other common sweeteners. The changes would also standardize labelling across jurisdictions. All pure maple syrup would simply become grade A.

To complement the new grading system, the industry wants to introduce four colour classes. I have been told by a maple syrup producer that the cost to implement this change is negligible, just a few new labels, but the benefits could be significant.

These changes are a way to protect the industry and to set the stage for its future growth. Canada, as the world's leading producer of maple syrup, is a key player. The opportunity to demonstrate our country's leadership resides right here in this chamber. By approving the tabled motion, the Senate would call on the government to amend the Maple Products Regulations. This, of course, would be the first step toward modernizing and standardizing federal laws, a first step towards enabling our maple syrup industry to embrace the future.

Therefore, I urge all honourable senators to join with me in supporting the motion. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Are honourable senators ready for the question?

(On motion of Senator Mockler, debate adjourned.)

MENTAL HEALTH, ILLNESS AND ADDICTION SERVICES IN CANADA

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Hubley, calling the attention of the Senate to the 5th anniversary of the tabling of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology's report: *Out of the Shadows at Last: Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada*.

Hon. Judith Seidman: Honourable senators, in May 2006 the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology produced a report that would change the face of mental health in Canada. Led by the Honourable Michael Kirby and the Honourable Wilbert Keon, the committee began their work after receiving an order of reference in October 2004. An extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, October 7, 2004, states that the committee "be authorized to examine and report on issues arising from" an earlier 2002 report on the state of the health care system in Canada. The reference further states:

In particular, the committee shall be authorized to examine issues concerning mental health and mental illness.

This 484-page report, with its additional 57 pages of appendices, covers enormous ground. Each chapter sheds light on the impact of mental illness in Canada. The subjective voices of individuals and families and their heartrending stories are highlighted. Service organization and delivery that looks to an integrated continuum of care with an emphasis on primary care is examined. An entire chapter is devoted to an underfunded and fragmented child and youth system where a critical shortage of mental health professionals results in very late interventions or none at all.

In addition, research and knowledge transfer are identified as necessary for the development of specialized treatment programs and support services for seniors who are too often warehoused because they suffer the double whammy of being both aged and mentally ill. The human and economic impact of mental illness in the workplace is examined along with the all-important opportunities for self-help and peer support. The report includes so much more — research, ethics, privacy, mental health promotion, and mental illness prevention strategies.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of this Senate report was the timely response to the committee's concern that the mental health sector had been so neglected over decades. Recommended was

that there should be a mechanism to ensure leadership in undertaking certain critical tasks at a national level to maintain a needed focus on mental health issues. That mechanism was the proposed Canadian Mental Health Commission.

• (1500)

The guiding principles for this commission were that it be an independent, not-for-profit organization at arm's length from both governments and all existing mental health stakeholder organizations; that it make those living with mental illness and their families the central focus of its activities; that it build on and complement initiatives already under way throughout Canada; that it establish partnerships all along the spectrum of existing national and international mental health agencies and stakeholders; that it emphasize evidence-based mental health policies and methods of service delivery; and that it evaluate, assess and report on its own activities.

The mandate of the commission is to act as facilitator, enabler and supporter of a national approach to mental health issues. It is the catalyst for reform and a national focal point for objective, evidence-based information. It is designed to increase mental health literacy in Canada and to diminish the stigma and the discrimination faced by Canadians living with mental illness and their families.

Why have I been so descriptive in detailing the principles and mission of the Mental Health Commission? Because it demonstrates the enormous role it was meant to play in changing the overall mental health landscape in Canada and in transforming the system into one that is truly of the 21st century. We look forward to the spring of this year when the commission will release the results of its work and make recommendations for the future on an agenda so critically important to all Canadians.

One of the first initiatives of Prime Minister Harper, upon winning the election in 2006, was to create the Mental Health Commission of Canada. In so doing, this government has demonstrated its priorities. Improving the quality of life of Canadians who live with mental illness and the families who support them is critical. This government has shown leadership in its will to change the archaic paradigm from one that has allowed confusion, misdirection and discrimination to one that will bring clarity, evidence-based direction and affirmation of a new, compassionate reality.

When establishing the Mental Health Commission of Canada in 2007, the Harper government dedicated an initial \$110 million in funding over 10 years. In the budget of 2008, an additional \$110 million was invested to research issues of mental health and homelessness in Canada over a five-year period.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research have received over \$234 million since 2006 towards their efforts in researching mental health issues and addiction in Canada. In addition, many major initiatives across the country are supported through the National Anti-Drug Strategy, the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, the Aboriginal Head Start program, the Community Action Program for Children, the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program, The Family Violence Initiative, the Brighter Futures Initiative, the Building Healthy Communities Initiative and the Federal Elder Abuse Initiative. While some of these programs are not focused directly on mental health or addiction, all of them produce benefits for the mental health of Canadians.

For example, the Federal Elder Abuse Initiative works to prevent the abuse of vulnerable elders. As a partner in the Federal Elder Abuse Initiative, Justice Canada funds research on elder abuse awareness, reporting and the legal aspects of elder abuse. In addition, Justice Canada raises awareness of the risks of fraud by producing materials for seniors. Justice Canada also funds public legal education and information organizations working on the legal aspects of elder abuse.

The National Anti-Drug Strategy is a multi-pronged attack on substance addiction in Canada that focuses on prevention, treatment and legal enforcement. Some \$30 million have been dedicated to the prevention action plan, which provides information on drug use directly to parents, educators and health professionals. Local, school-based awareness and prevention strategies have been developed and existing community drug use programs have been refocused and strengthened. The national prevention action plan has released a public awareness campaign called DrugsNot4Me, which reaches out to teens and opens a dialogue about illicit drug use.

In addition, the treatment action plan has been provided with \$100 million in funding for drug treatment programs for First Nations and Inuit, for young offenders and for research to develop new treatment models. As a result, the RCMP have the possibility of referring youth with drug related problems to treatment programs where they receive the assistance necessary to help them overcome the challenge of addiction.

The third plank of the National Anti-Drug Strategy, known as the Enforcement Action Plan, gives assistance to enforcement agencies to crack down on marijuana grow ops, drug labs and distribution networks across the country. Targeted funding has been provided to the RCMP to enable dedicated anti-drug squads to investigate organizations that produce and distribute dangerous drugs.

The ability of Canadian law enforcement agencies to work with their American counterparts in combating the flow of money and illicit drugs has also been improved.

The Public Prosecution Service of Canada has been given additional funding to provide legal advice to law enforcement agencies during investigations so that those involved in the production and distribution of illegal drugs can be penalized to the full extent of the law. All in all, \$102 million has been invested to support these specific efforts which will help punish those who profit from the misery of addiction.

In June of last year, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada announced a new, voluntary standard for psychological health and safety in the workplace. New guidelines will be provided to employers across the country as a model of best practices. It is hoped these will lead to measurable improvements in workplace mental health. Canada is the first country to develop such a set of standards. The rationale is to highlight psychological health as an integral part of workplace health and safety. With the investment of \$320,000, this project will help remove some of the barriers that Canadians with mental illness face in the workplace.

The peer project, launched by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, helps enhance the public's ability to provide support and understanding for friends, family and colleagues who suffer from mental illness. This program is founded on the belief that

those who live with mental illness are valuable teachers and advocates. They are best suited to share experiences and offer advice to those in similar situations.

Another important project overseen by the Mental Health Commission of Canada aims to train people in mental health first aid. This emphasis on early intervention trains human resources managers to identify signs and symptoms of potential mental health problems in the workplace and facilitate referrals to health professionals when appropriate.

Honourable senators, in the past the Senate has played a leadership role as a champion of mental health in Canada. It is

part of a great legacy, and every one of us in this chamber should be proud of this history.

Now it is our job to uphold the principles of this report. In honour of its legacy, let us come together as we commemorate the fifth anniversary of *Out of the Shadows at Last*, and let us remember that we have more work to do and more promises to keep.

(On motion of Senator Tardif, for Senator Losier-Cool, debate adjourned.)

(The Senate adjourned until Thursday, February 9, 2012, at 1:30 p.m.)

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