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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 27, 2014

The Honourable NOËL A. KINSELLA
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, March 27, 2014

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH

Hon. Judith Seidman: Honourable senators, in the last few years, experts from across the country have been questioning the use of the word “system” to describe Canada’s health care sector, some calling it a “misnomer.” In 2011, then CMA president Dr. Jeffrey Turnbull put it this way: The health care system is fractured to such a degree that it is, in some ways, a system in name only.

Professional silos — as they are described by health experts — may be most visible in the transition between acute and community care. In 2007-08, outside of Quebec and Manitoba, more than 1.7 million hospital days were attributed to people waiting to be moved to more appropriate care settings. Often it is seniors who occupy these beds, no longer in need of acute care but unable to be discharged with no support.

One study included in a 2012 CIHI report found that more than one in four people over the age of 75 had been in this position and that 35 per cent of them were in need of home care.

Recently, the integration of care across sectors has become a mantra for health system reform. Yet, it is important to consider what this means in practice. How do we ensure quality services across a broad continuum of care?

Social workers are in a unique position to help. In a hospital setting, they address the psychosocial needs of both patients and families. This includes caregiver support, grief and loss counselling, and community resource information and referral. Social workers also provide discharge planning, a critical support during the transition from acute to community care.

Honourable senators, in practice, social workers bridge gaps between sectors and bring us closer to the meaning of a “health care system.”

As we shift focus away from the delivery of acute care in hospital settings and towards a holistic community approach, we must ensure that the points of transition between sectors are seamless. Social workers are essential to the success of this transition.

Please join me in recognizing March as National Social Work Month.

YOUR ENERGY STORY

Hon. Elaine McCoy: Honourable senators, I’m very pleased to announce today the launch of a new website. The website is called yourenergystory.ca and I am the sponsor of the website.

I must thank one of our senators for giving me the inspiration for this site. It happened several years ago now, when we were just starting our energy study in the Energy Committee, and a new senator from Montreal, who was a new member of the Energy Committee, said to me, “I have no background in this subject. Is there something that I could read that would give me a foundation so that I can participate more intelligently?” This is a PhD in epidemiology saying this.

I, of course, have spent most of my career in and around energy matters; I assumed that there would be something out there. I sat down and looked and, to my surprise, discovered there was nothing. I could find a little bit here, probably written by an industry association, or a little bit over there, on another subject, probably written by an environmental association, or a government would say something, and another government would say something else. But there was nothing of a systems-wide approach written for a Canadian who had no particular professional background in the subject.

Initially I sat down and wrote an energy primer for the committee, which gave a bit of fundamental background, but in doing so, I realized that there’s much more to tell and much more nuanced information to be put out there, and that there really was a need for Canadians to have some access to this information.

It’s taken four years of effort, but we now have a website. It’s Canada-wide, and it has information about how we use energy in each different region. It’s in English and French, it’s accessible, and it’s designed as a platform to encourage Canadians all across the country to engage in a conversation that is thoughtful and meaningful to them about how we use energy and to harness the thoughts of Canadians on how we can use energy better in this country and in each region.

It also illustrates the differences between regions that we have in our approaches to energy, driven largely by the available resources. But that also is a bit of a nation-building exercise, because when I learned what Senator Moore is doing in Nova Scotia as opposed to what I might be doing in Alberta, I gained just that much more of an understanding of how diversified and rich our country is in our similarities as well as in our differences, so I have a better understanding of how we all work.

This afternoon from four o’clock to seven o’clock we are having a launch in room 256, just down the hall, and I certainly encourage you and all your staff to attend the launch this afternoon.

- (1340)

I also encourage you to attend virtually on the site www.youenergy.ca, and I would encourage you to give us your feedback. There are three questions: What do you like about the site? What don't you like about the site that we could improve? And what more do you want? We regard this as phase one. What we are looking for in the future is to make it even more interactive, give you more tools to play with, and more ways to consider how we improve the way we use energy in this country.

IRAN

Hon. David Tkachuk: Honourable colleagues, if the international community's treatment of Iran is any kind of bellwether, Vladimir Putin can rest easy. He has every reason to assume he can wait out the storm and even profit from its ravages.

Undoubtedly, the Russian President has taken note of the accelerating collapse of international sanctions against an unrepentant Iran, a country that has executed over 100,000 of its own citizens and whose nuclear ambitions have been fed by Russian indulgence.

Undoubtedly, Mr. Putin has observed how quickly Iran has been readmitted to the international community despite its threat to annihilate other states, its violation of Lebanese sovereignty, and its direct participation in President Assad's slaughter of over 120,000 Syrian citizens.

Undoubtedly, Mr. Putin also watched the West's rush to embrace Iran despite its murderous crusade against Iran's gay community, before he introduced anti-gay legislation of his own.

Mr. Putin knows that Iran has not paid a significant price for stoning over 120 women to death; for deeming its Baha'i citizens members of a deviant sect deserving of eradication; and for bearing, in the words of Amnesty International, the shameful status of being the world's last official executioner of child offenders.

The Iranian regime's largely unchallenged assault on its own citizenry is of gross proportions. Even Iranian nationals living abroad have been unable to escape. Iranian death squads have killed 127 dissidents in 16 countries, including the United States and several European nations.

Yes, Mr. Putin has surely learned some invaluable lessons from his Iranian clients. They have taught him how little traction the issue of human rights can have in the creation of Western policy. Putin has seen the matter of Iranian human rights violations get completely sidelined during the P5+1 nuclear negotiations.

Meanwhile, the Iranian regime has continued abusing the human rights of its citizens under the protective umbrella of nebulous concessions on its nuclear program. Putin has watched his clients in Tehran receive what amounts to a judicial pass on human rights violations from a West that is desperate for a deal, regardless of how flimsy.

Even Canada, which has stayed strong on sanctions against Iran, has done so in response to Iran's nuclear violations. We have yet to impose sanctions against Iran for being one of the worst abusers of human rights.

Honourable colleagues, we need to expand the existing sanctions regime against Iran so that it incorporates not only its behaviour on nuclear policy, but on human rights and terrorism as well.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I would like to draw your attention to the presence in the Governor General's gallery of Mr. Tad Milmine, a police officer and anti-bullying advocate who also runs the website bullyingendshere.ca, and Mr. Austin Bender, who started a gay-straight alliance at Springbank Community High School in Calgary, Alberta.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

BULLYING ENDS HERE

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, today I rise to recognize an outstanding police officer named Tad Milmine. Tad's work as a police officer is commendable, but it is his work outside of the force as an anti-bullying advocate that I would like to recognize today.

Inspired by the tragic story of Jamie Hubley, Tad began to volunteer his time to speak to students and created a website called bullyingendshere.ca. On his website, youth can connect directly with Tad to look for support, advice or even just friendship.

When I first met Tad in Vancouver, he told me a story about a young boy who grew up in a broken home. His parents were divorced, his father was an alcoholic, and his stepmother was abusive, confining him to the basement. The only relief that this young boy had was to cry uncontrollably. Whenever he went through any stress, his body's reaction was to cry. The crying followed him to school.

As an extremely introverted young man, standing up for himself was difficult. Words like "cry baby" or "suck" were repeated over and over by a cruel few, causing the young boy to burst into tears in public. At some point, the bullying went beyond the point of being called names and became physical.

On top of this, the young boy was coming to terms with his sexuality, but out of fear for further abuse he did not tell a soul that he was gay. The abuse continued right up until the young boy turned 17 when he ran away from home to start a new life for himself.

This is Tad's life story. It is a story he tells thousands of young boys and girls across Canada through his anti-bullying advocacy campaign called *Bullying Ends Here*. Tad encourages these young students to look beyond their differences and to create an environment where everyone feels accepted. He also gives them hope for the future, assuring them that difficulties can be overcome and anyone can achieve their dreams, just as he achieved his lifelong dream of becoming a police officer.

Honourable senators, Tad has become an inspiration for thousands of young people. His presentation gives people like Austin Bender, a 16-year-old student from Springbank Community High School in Calgary, the confidence and encouragement to start a gay-straight alliance in his school. Austin is here today with Tad. Austin's initiative has made Springbank Community High School a safer and more welcoming environment for everyone.

Since starting his program, Tad has received thousands of emails, many are from victims of bullying, thanking him for encouraging them to seek help. Some are from self-professed bullies who vow never to treat their peers poorly. Others are from parents thanking him for saving their child's life.

Honourable senators, I know you will join me in commending Tad Melmine and Austin Bender for making an enormous difference in the lives of our children. Thank you very much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

JOB GROWTH

Hon. Art Eggleton: Honourable senators, a recent Canadian Chamber of Commerce report based on Stats Canada data said that Canada's job market sputtered — their word — in 2013. Canada created only 99,000 new jobs in 2013, and that was the slowest job growth, excluding the recession, in over a decade.

To make matters worse, 95 per cent of those jobs were part-time positions, a type of employment that lacks sufficient pay, benefits, pensions or job security. Close to 70 per cent of them were concentrated in only one province, the province of Alberta. Most of these part-time jobs went to Canadians 55 and older, not to prime working-age adults in the 25 to 54 age bracket. That group saw the number of employed drop 34,000. Youth employment fell by a further 21,000, keeping the youth unemployment rate at approximately 14 per cent, which is twice the national rate.

To look at it from the other side, instead of unemployment, our employment rate of 61.6 per cent, the ratio of employment to working age population, is well under the pre-recession high of 63.5 per cent.

Internationally Canada ranks 20 out of 34 OECD countries in net job creation, with countries such as Germany and Australia better at creating jobs. What happened to our being world economic leaders? Unfortunately, we're far from it.

The overall trends aren't good.

[Senator Jaffer]

Honourable senators, it has been five years since the financial crisis, and we've had very little progress in the creation of good, decent-paying jobs in this country. The growing disparity between age groups, job sectors and provinces is only getting larger. Where are the policies that create good jobs with benefits, job security and pensions? Canadians need a government that understands these challenges. They need a government that they can count on.

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND VETERINARY SCIENCE

Hon. Marie-P. Charette-Poulin: Honourable senators, I am proud to draw your attention to a recent decision concerning training provided in French in agriculture and veterinary science in Ontario.

You probably know that the University of Guelph announced that it was closing Alfred College and Kemptville College.

• (1350)

This news gave rise to serious concern in Ontario, especially among francophones.

We already know that agriculture and veterinary science training is very important for Ontario's agricultural communities in the east and mid-north.

This is a major economic issue.

In this case, the issue is even more significant because it is at the crossroads of francophone cultural development and the province's economic priorities.

Today, I am pleased to inform the Senate of Canada that Collège Boréal in Sudbury will take over the agricultural technology training program and continue to offer the veterinary technician program that it was providing in partnership with the University of Guelph.

Collège Boréal will work closely with La Cité collégiale of Ottawa in order to explore other training in French that might contribute to strengthening our rural, agricultural and francophone communities.

This good news comes as we celebrate the International Week of La Francophonie. This year's theme, "Place au talent," is focused on talent. That is very good.

Canada became the large industrialized and educated country that it is because we believe strongly that access to education supports our economic development.

We are all the more respected the world over because we fully respect our founding peoples and the fundamental rights of all Canadians.

With you, honourable senators, I wish to acknowledge these fine initiatives by our two French-language colleges in Ontario as they work together to train young Canadians in agriculture and veterinary science.

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO FRANCE AND
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY,
NOVEMBER 18-24, 2012—
REPORT TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I ask leave of the Senate to table a document entitled: “Visit of the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate, and a Parliamentary Delegation, to France and the Federal Republic of Germany,” November 18 to 24, 2012.

Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

CRIMINAL CODE NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FOURTH REPORT OF LEGAL
AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Bob Runciman, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, presented the following report:

Thursday, March 27, 2014

The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (mental disorder), has, in obedience to the order of reference of Tuesday, February 11, 2014, examined the said Bill and now reports the same without amendment but with certain observations, which are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

BOB RUNCIMAN
Chair

(For text of observations, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix, p. 620.)

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

(On motion of Senator McIntyre, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—NOTICE OF MOTION TO
AUTHORIZE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE TO STUDY SUBJECT MATTER

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

That, in accordance with rule 10-11(1), the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs be authorized to examine the subject matter of Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, introduced in the House of Commons on February 4, 2014, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate.

QUESTION PERIOD

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

FAIR ELECTIONS BILL

Hon. Jim Munson: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Leader in the Senate.

Your government introduced the so-called Fair Elections Bill last month. There has been a lot of talk about it in the country. It proposes sweeping changes to our independent, non-partisan elections agency, from its alarming proposal to strip Elections Canada of its investigative powers to limiting the agency's public information role. As we have seen, Canadians are concerned.

Neeta Kumar-Britten, from Sydney, Nova Scotia, is among the many who are worried about these changes and would like to know —

An Hon. Senator: Oh, oh!

Senator Munson: Be that as it may, this is still a democracy. This is her question. Big Liberal, little liberal, big Conservative, little conservative, big democrat, New Democrat, little democrat, what does it matter? The question is the question. She's a Canadian. She's a Canadian from Cape Breton, where you are from, Senator MacDonald.

This is her question: What is the government's intention with respect to educational programs dealing with democracy education that are led by Elections Canada, both in terms of resources that are their own and programs they support like Student Vote?

Again, this question is from Neeta Kumar-Britten, from Sydney, Nova Scotia, a Canadian taxpayer.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): I would like to thank that Canadian taxpayer for her question. I think the important thing is communicating with the people, with citizens, about elections. The Fair Elections Act enhances Elections Canada's ability to increase voter turnout by focusing its efforts on providing basic information people need in order to vote: the location, the date, what ID they need to bring, and the specific tools available to help Canadians with disabilities exercise their right to vote.

Elections Canada's CEO will still have the option — the obligation, actually — to communicate with the public about elections.

I would like to assure that Canadian taxpayer that the CEO of Elections Canada will have access to all of the necessary communication tools to encourage people to vote in accordance with the law.

[English]

Senator Munson: I have a supplementary question. I don't think the Chief Electoral Officer is too impressed. In fact, last week Marc Mayrand told the CBC's *The House* that he would no longer be permitted to participate in Student Vote if the Fair Elections Bill becomes law.

Elections Canada's support for the group began a decade ago when all parties in the other place backed a Liberal motion at that time on youth and political engagement.

Honourable senators, voter turnout among young Canadians is still hovering at historic lows. Just 38.8 per cent of voters aged 18 to 24 cast a ballot in 2011.

• (1400)

Elections Canada's mandate to educate voters remains as important today as it was then. Why is your government forcing the agency to abandon its crucial public information role?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Elections Canada will still be able to provide basic information to the public about voting. The Deputy Leader of the Government gave notice that a motion will be moved at the next sitting of the Senate in order to allow a pre-study of Bill C-23.

[Senator Munson]

If that is something that interests you, I hope that next Tuesday you will vote in favour of the pre-study so that we can study this bill, which is currently in the other place, and continue to debate it.

[English]

Senator Munson: The answers you're giving aren't satisfactory. If you're not going to listen to Neeta from Sydney, Nova Scotia, there's somebody else by the name of Preston Manning. So Neeta is not alone when it comes to concerns about the fairness of Bill C-23. Preston Manning had this to say about the fair elections act at the Manning Networking Conference earlier this month:

It can be improved, as I say, by strengthening rather than reducing the role of Elections Canada and the Chief Electoral Officer with respect to promotional and educational activities designed to increase voter participation in Canada's elections.

This is Preston Manning. A footnote to the prepared text of his remarks proposed the following amendment:

Add to Section 18 (1) listing the only topics on which the Chief Electoral Officer may provide information to the public, "(f) public education and information programs to make the electoral process better known to the public and increase voter participation."

Leader, I would like to know whether your government will accept this reasoned amendment, and can you assure Neeta and Preston Manning that Elections Canada will continue its public information role and maintain its support for Student Vote?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: I like your practice of using Canadians' queries to ask your questions. It introduces an interesting perspective, and I am always pleased to answer Canadians' questions. I would just like you to be clear when you ask your questions. If you add something that the person didn't mention, we don't know whether it is you or the person asking the question. To be respectful of that person, I would ask that when posing your questions, you make a distinction between your own comments and those made by the person asking the question. I think that would be more respectful of that person.

As for Preston Manning, he said:

This legislation, which is a commendable democratic initiative, seeks to eliminate those practices — robo-calling, misuse of the vouching provision, misuse of election contributions, etc. — which discredit elections and parties associated with them.

[English]

Senator Munson: I have one quick, further supplementary question.

When I asked the question — her question — I did say, "This is her question." That was the first question. That was pretty clear. I'm not so sure about the answer, leader.

Then when I asked the other question about Preston Manning, I said this is what he had to propose, and in the middle I asked my own question. I didn't have to preface her. I just wanted to make sure that was clear. Thank you.

Hon. Jane Cordy: I'm curious whether we get a different answer if the question is asked by a senator or if it is asked by another Canadian. Is that the premise behind your statement to the senator?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: The answer would be the same. It is a question of identity theft. One of the objectives of the law is to eliminate voter identity theft. Senator Fraser has been a victim of identity theft in the past. We want to know the person's identity. When I ask for this clarification, it is because I don't want anyone to take on a citizen's identity in order to ask a question.

[English]

Senator Cordy: You spoke about the pre-study and whether or not we would vote in favour of it. If the pre-study includes consultation with Canadians, I would certainly vote for it because so far any discussions or consultations — other than one of the political parties that has travelled across the country — have been here in Ottawa. I represent Nova Scotia, and Nova Scotians would appreciate having a Senate committee come to hear what they have to say about this proposed bill. Certainly if you bring forward a pre-study and allow the Senate committee to travel to Nova Scotia, I would second your proposal on that if, in fact, the committee can go to Nova Scotia.

Having been a former teacher, part of this election bill causes me great concern.

Senator Tkachuk: Which part?

Senator Cordy: Many parts. And Senator Tkachuk, there are good parts to this bill, but there are many parts that cause Canadians great concern. I have had a tremendous number of people in touch with me. One doesn't have to wait very long or read many newspapers to find experts, both within Canada and outside the country, who have great concern about what this will do for the number of people who will actually vote in the next few elections.

Senator Munson said fewer than 40 per cent of young people — I think 38 per cent was the number he gave — are voting. That's unfortunate, and it's not good for democracy. Yet this bill will do away with the program established by Elections Canada's Student Vote. Mr. Mayrand, who is the current head of Elections Canada, will not be able to encourage young people to vote.

I'm just curious to know why you would do away with a program that is encouraging the young people of Canada to take part in the democratic process?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: First of all, I noted that people shared their views with you even though you did not travel to Halifax to hear them. It is therefore possible to get peoples' opinions without necessarily travelling to every region of the country. I hope that will not be the main reason you vote against the motion for a pre-study of this bill, and I also hope you will not vote against this pre-study for partisan reasons.

The Chief Electoral Officer will continue to have the communication tools he needs to encourage people to vote and to explain to them how to vote, primarily regarding the technical aspects. He will have all the necessary tools, and anyone who wants to vote will have all the information they need to do so.

[English]

Senator Cordy: The people of my province of Nova Scotia have just as much right as the people in Ottawa to hear parliamentary committees and to speak to parliamentary committees, and I represent them. I assure you that I have been speaking to a number of people individually in my province and will do so again this weekend when I'm at home because people in my area, in my province of Nova Scotia, are greatly concerned about this bill. I think it would be really nice, as I said earlier, if the Senate committee was permitted to travel to my province of Nova Scotia to listen to the people of my province and to have the committee consult with the people in my province. Then I will certainly be supportive of the pre-study. Other than that, I will not be.

My question is related to Mr. Mayrand and Elections Canada, and why they will not be able to continue with the Student Vote program to encourage young people in Canada to take part in the democratic process. In the last election, 38 per cent of young Canadians voted. That is tragic, in my opinion.

• (1410)

If the program is not working, then let's tweak the program. But please don't remove from Elections Canada the right to educate young Canadians on the importance of voting in our elections.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: As for the introduction to your question, yes, it would be nice to travel across Canada. However, your saying that we have to go to Nova Scotia if you are to support this bill — because you are saying it is necessary to hear from people — casts doubt on the process and the legitimacy of the process in the Senate. All, or nearly all, the committees conduct their studies in Ottawa and occasionally hear from people via telephone or via electronic means. The hearings are held here, however.

Are you saying that the Senate's system is not a good way to hear from people? Is that what I'm hearing? I'm surprised by your comments. I repeat, the Chief Electoral Officer will have access to all of the necessary tools to ensure that all Canadians — including disabled persons, seniors and young people — know how to vote.

[English]

Senator Cordy: I have great pride in the work that all Senate committees have done, especially when I look at studies Senate committees have done. That's not my intent at all. I have no problem with the process of Senate committees.

I certainly do have great concerns and problems with the process that has been put forward by the Minister for Democratic Reform in bringing forward this bill. I have to question how many Canadians were consulted in the drafting of this bill, because when I see the number of concerns being raised by experts in Canada and around the world fearing what this will do for democracy in Canada, I have to say that I have great concerns about that particular process.

In terms of processes of Senate committees, we all share great pride in the work Senate committees have done.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: I'm happy to hear you say that. I was worried when I heard your introduction. I think that all the elements are there to allow us to proceed with the pre-study of this bill as quickly as possible.

I hope you won't have a whipped vote next Tuesday against this motion.

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMENTS BY MINISTER—VETERANS BENEFITS

Hon. Joseph A. Day: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate, and I bring you a question from Mr. David B. from Grafton, Ontario. He states:

The Question Period for citizens of all political persuasions, (if in fact they have any bent), is a wonderful idea put forward by the Liberal Caucus of the Senate, and I applaud you for thinking of this. Thank you.

I recently had a meeting with my MP, the Hon. Rick Norlock, about the Government's programs for Veterans. I was shocked and appalled when Minister Fantino said that the unions were manipulating the Veterans, but his apology led us to believe that it was not the Government position.

I was shocked when Mr. Norlock parroted Julian Fantino's lines. From my conversation with Mr. Norlock, it appears it **is** the Government position! It is appalling that the Government chooses to politicize and demonize the Veterans who have served Canada. The welfare of the men and women who served is not a political matter, and the Government should be ashamed for trying to make it one to serve their twisted ideological goals.

Mr. B. goes on to state —

Senator Tkachuk: He's not here to answer —

Senator Day: He goes on:

I have done some research on the Last Post Fund.

Please just flip to the Last Post Fund, because my question will be in relation to that.

It seems that while the Government has made more funds available, the means test is disallowing more veterans, so the funds are not being distributed. Some 60 per cent of applicants are being denied support. When is the Government going to walk the walk, modify an overly restrictive means test, and deliver the funds so desperately needed by some Veterans?

That is the question I'd like you to answer, Mr. Leader: When will the government be modifying the overly restrictive means test?

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): There seem to be several parts to that question. First, I want to reiterate Minister Fantino's apologies about the statement.

With regard to the fund, I believe you are talking about funding for funeral expenses under the Last Post Fund. As you know, senator, our government more than doubled the amount paid under the Funeral and Burial Program, from \$3,600 to \$7,376. The Liberals voted against additional investments in this veterans' fund.

I would also like to talk about certain aspects of Economic Action Plan 2014 that you have likely already heard about and that I hope you will support. Economic Action Plan 2014 proposes to expand the Funeral and Burial Program to ensure that modern-day veterans of modest means have access to a dignified funeral and burial.

The Economic Action Plan also improves veterans' access to services by allowing them and their families to contact the Department of Veterans Affairs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and pays tribute to Canadian veterans by giving former members of the Canadian Forces priority for job opportunities within the federal public service.

These are specific aspects of Economic Action Plan 2014 that affect veterans. I hope that you will support them and that this answers part of the question that you asked about when these measures would be implemented.

I would also like to remind you that, since 2008, the government has had a solid track record of helping veterans. We have provided \$2 billion to improve programs under the New Veterans Charter that support veterans who were seriously wounded; \$65 million to improve the Funeral and Burial Program; \$52.5 million in additional support for members of the armed forces who are seriously wounded, veterans and their families;

\$282 million to implement the Veterans Independence Program, which also extends benefits to survivors of World War II veterans; \$10 million per year for the creation of five new operational stress injury clinics; \$1 million per year for the Community War Memorial Program in order to help communities build monuments to commemorate our veterans' achievements; and \$19 million in 2007-08 and then another \$20 million to improve services for veterans and create the position of Veterans Ombudsman.

Honourable senators, we should be proud of what we have done for veterans, and we should also be proud of what veterans have done for our country. Our commitment and our track record reflect the high esteem in which we hold our veterans.

• (1420)

[English]

Senator Day: I didn't hear included in your list of things you are proud about the closing of eight offices of Veterans Affairs across Canada that were dedicated to Veterans Affairs matters.

My question doesn't go to the *bilan* of various items. There are a lot of issues we could talk about with respect to veterans. The announcement to which you just referred in this year's budget is with respect to three years of funding only to expand the base so that modern-day veterans, their families or their loved ones may claim for funeral expenses they can't afford. I looked at the estimates with respect to the Last Post Fund dealing with funeral expenses for veterans of modest means and found no indication of a significant increase. In fact, the fund is only \$2 million.

When can we expect this to come into effect? Although it was announced in the budget, it doesn't necessarily mean it will happen. Can you tell us when?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: As the honourable senator knows, because of his position on the Finance Committee, several of the legislative measures announced in the budget are part of the study on the budget implementation bill. It will be studied in committee and passed, I hope, with the support of the honourable senators in this chamber in the coming weeks.

As for the comments about closing offices, need I remind honourable senators, as I have done many times, that veterans who need case management services or authorized nursing care will continue to receive those benefits in the comfort of their own homes? In each of the eight regions where a district office was closed, a full-time Veterans Affairs Canada client service agent can answer detailed questions and help veterans. The eight Service Canada offices are located in close proximity to the former Veterans Affairs offices. Five of them are in the same building. Two are less than a kilometre away, and the other one is four kilometres away.

[English]

Senator Day: Perhaps we could get back to the question about the means test for veterans who have put their lives on the line to protect the security of everyone here and all Canadians. These veterans are deserving of respect. I salute the Royal Canadian Legion, in particular the work of retired Lieutenant-General Louis Cuppens over the past 14 years in trying to resolve this very serious problem.

It costs approximately \$10,000 to bury a person. The current program provides for up to \$7,000, but only for those who meet the means test. What is the means test? If a veteran is married and he and his wife have assets of \$12,000, they don't qualify for \$7,000 to bury them. The wife may spend \$10,000 to bury her husband and be left with \$2,000 in total family assets to carry on in life. Is that the kind of respect we want to give those people who put their lives on the line to protect us?

Allow me to end this question by repeating the question of Mr. B.:

When is the Government going to walk the walk, modify an overly restrictive means test, and deliver the funds so desperately needed by some Veterans?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: To begin, I would like to remind Canadians and the honourable senator, because he seems to have forgotten, that our government more than doubled the financial assistance available through the Funeral and Burial Program, from \$3,600 to \$7,376. I say we doubled it because the amount used to be \$3,000 when the Liberals were in power. However, they voted against those additional investments.

Second, I would like to repeat that the Economic Action Plan —

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

Senator Carignan: I have to answer the whole question, and that includes the preamble. If you don't want me to respond to the preamble, don't give one.

Second, the Economic Action Plan —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Order.

Senator Carignan: If you don't want the whole answer, don't give such a long preamble with statements I have to address.

Economic Action Plan 2014 includes the Funeral and Burial Program so that veterans of modest means can have a dignified

funeral and burial. The Funeral Service Association of Canada said:

The Federal Government's actions today ensure that modern day Canadian veterans are able to receive the funerals they deserve.

[English]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 5, 2013-14

THIRD READING

Hon. Larry W. Smith moved third reading of Bill C-28, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2014.

He said: Honourable senators, I'll provide a quick review and then Senator Day may want to comment.

The bill before you today, Appropriation Bill No. 5, 2013-14, provides for the release of supply for Supplementary Estimates (C) 2013-14 and seeks Parliament's approval to spend \$358.3 million in voted expenditures. These expenditures were provided for within the planned sending set out by the Minister of Finance in his March 2013 Budget. Supplementary Estimates (C) 2013-14 reflects the decrease of \$15.4 million in budgetary spending, which consists of \$358.3 million in voted appropriations and a decrease of \$373.7 million in statutory pending.

On behalf of the members of the committee, I thank our chair for doing an outstanding job and I thank the members for their questions on the bill. As you heard through debate yesterday, we focused on trying to get results and follow-up from some of the departments on spending. We're awaiting that feedback and will provide it to honourable senators once it is received.

Hon. Joseph A. Day: I appreciate the invitation by Senator Smith to say a few words. I will try to keep it to a few words because many of the points have been made. I remind honourable senators that this supply bill did not go to committee, but the estimate supporting the two schedules attached to this bill did come before the committee. We looked at that report yesterday, and it's available for all honourable senators to review.

Bill C-28, called a supply bill, or more correctly an appropriation bill, provides for supply; and that's why it becomes known as a supply bill. They're treated somewhat differently in this chamber from other matters, but it's a classic example of our inheritance in terms of the political process.

[Senator Carignan]

• (1430)

The bill starts out, "Whereas it appears by message from His Excellency," and then goes on. The government, through the Queen and Governor General, are petitioning Parliament for funds to run Parliament and to run the Public Service of Canada for the next period of time. It's a petition by the Prime Minister and cabinet to have Parliament consider releasing these funds from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, and then it goes on to say that Parliament does hereby pass that amount that's being requested.

It's reflective of the division of powers that we have between Parliament and cabinet, which is separate from but forms a semi-part of in the other place, and the Prime Minister and the public service.

Honourable senators, the form is somewhat the same as appears regularly, and it's about seven or eight clauses long only with two schedules attached. I've gone through those two schedules and compared them to what we saw in the Supplementary Estimates (C) schedules and they appear to be the same. We can be assured that what we studied is now reflected in this bill.

The bill says that the government, through Treasury Board, can spend up to these amounts that you're requested to approve, which in this particular case is \$358 million for Supplementary Estimates (C). The amount that can be spent is up to that amount.

I don't like to see these particular words and we don't see them very often, but once you vote for this, maybe later today or tomorrow, this will be deemed retroactive to the first of the fiscal year. We typically don't have these as deemed and retroactive in this chamber, but from a finance point of view we do, so that's in here and that's what you're approving and saying it's okay for that to take place.

Honourable senators, those are all of the points of the standard clauses that I should bring to your attention. It concludes by saying that the government, who spends up to or all of the money that we're approving, would be required to account for that. They account for that through documents that are filed six months after the fiscal year end, in the fall, and they're called the Public Accounts of Canada. That's the accounting that goes with the front-end approval of the estimates. You have the estimates in the spring and then supplementary estimates throughout the year that just supplement the main ones we're looking at, and then this one we're looking at right now is the third supplementary estimates that ends off that fiscal year.

There are two schedules attached to this, and the second schedule is for certain departments that are authorized to carry on business and get funding for two years. Virtually for all the other departments it's one year. There are a few departments — one being Parks Canada — where it sometimes takes over two years for them to expend and commit the money because of the nature of their expenditures.

In fact, there are other departments like that, which we saw from our discussions yesterday, that maybe we should be considering giving funding to for a longer period of time, but

then we're loosening the reins a little bit too much, so maybe it's not so much of an inconvenience for us to look at these on an annual basis to see how they're going and allow for certain amounts of carry forward, which we do, from year to year.

Honourable senators, those are highlights of this Bill C-28 and the \$358 million that you're being asked to approve. It's known as appropriation No. 5, which is the last appropriation for the fiscal year that ends at the end of this month.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Some Hon. Senators: On division.

(Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed, on division.)

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 1, 2014-15

THIRD READING

Hon. Larry W. Smith moved third reading of Bill C-29, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2015.

He said: Honourable senators, the 2014 Main Estimates include \$235.33 billion in budgetary expenditures that cover the cost of servicing the public debt, operating and capital expenditures, transfer payments to other levels of government, organizations or individuals and payments to Crown corporations. These Main Estimates support the government's request for Parliament's authority to spend \$86.28 billion that requires Parliament's annual approval of their spending limits. The remaining \$149.05 billion is for statutory items previously approved by Parliament, and the detailed forecasts are provided for information purposes only.

Part I of the 2014-15 Main Estimates includes a detailed comparison of 2014-15 Main Estimates against the 2013-14 Main Estimates we looked at earlier. Together, budgetary and non-budgetary voted spending authorities total \$86.31 billion, of which \$24.82 billion is sought through the appropriation act No. 1, 2014-15. The balance will be sought through appropriation act No. 2, 2014-15, in June 2014.

Your Honour, I have no further comments. With your approval, Senator Day may wish to speak.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: I presume there is no question for Senator Smith, but probably comments from Senator Day.

Hon. Joseph A. Day: In fact I only have a compliment for Senator Smith. I agree entirely with the points that he has made, and I have a slight addition that honourable senators may find interesting.

This is the first supply that begins next month, on April 1. This is the first amount of money that you're approving for the government to carry on. It's called interim supply and it goes to the end of June, and then, in late June, we'll be rushing around again trying to get the full year's supply and that bill before you and passed and explained.

What I typically do — and this is not something we can do at committee so I typically do it and then speak on it — is compare the schedules that are attached to the bill because the bill is you speaking, it's Parliament speaking, and I compare those to the supplementary estimates for this particular year, 2014-15. There are attached here schedules of all 133 different government departments that are looking for funds and how much they're seeking for the year. The typical comparison leads me to say that what is in this bill is the same as what we looked at in the estimates.

While I was looking through the estimates, I found an interesting point that I want to share with you. Clause 2 divides Schedule 1 of the Estimates into a number of different categories. Those departments that want eleven twelfths right away, interim funding, want most of the year's funding. They say it's because there are a lot of front-end requirements. There are Schedules 1.1, 1.2, right up to 1.7 — all different numbers of months over 12 for which departments would like funding.

• (1440)

It then says everything else — that is, Schedules 1 and 2 — where there aren't exceptions would have three twelfths. I look back here and see all the exceptions, but I see nothing attached to this particular piece of legislation with respect to those that want three twelfths. We could say that this bill stands by itself, but then a whole lot of departments are not getting any funding because that particular schedule, which is Schedule 1 less the special ones that want more than three twelfths, does not appear here. Schedule 2 does; Schedule 1 doesn't.

I'm not going to suggest that we hold up the legislation to send it back to get that particular point clarified. I never noticed it before. I brought it to the attention of Treasury Board, but this bill is before you now and there is that gap, which I am led to believe will be rectified in the future. What you have to do now is do a mental jump from this bill, which refers to Schedules 1 and 2, but the Schedules 1 and 2 are not the same as what is attached to the bill. Schedules 1 and 2 are what's in the Estimates. There is a piece of Schedule 1 from the Estimates that is not in the bill. Does having the reference back to the other make it legal? I invite the government to have that matter looked into so we can have it clarified at a future time.

Having raised the flag and having brought it to the attention of Treasury Board, I would think that because of the nature of this bill, we probably would want to consider letting the government have money to operate for the next few months, but we may want to keep that particular issue in mind. Thank you, honourable senators.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Question.

Hon. Wilfred P. Moore: Would Senator Day take a question?

Senator Day: Yes; I would.

Senator Moore: With regard to that missing schedule, how is the taxpayer of Canada supposed to know what department is getting one twelfth, two twelfths, three twelfths? How is that person supposed to know? This is not meant to be a document for bureaucrats; this is a document for the people of Canada. How are they supposed to know?

Senator Day: Thank you, Senator Moore. The way they would find out is to talk to Senator Smith. The way they would find out, in addition to that, would be to look at the schedules attached to this bill, and you would know who is getting three twelfths, four twelfths, right up to eleven twelfths; they are all listed here. But the departments that are getting three twelfths, which is one quarter — and that is typical — are all those in Schedule 2, which is in here. However, for those in Schedule 1 that get funding for one year, for three twelfths you have to go back to the Estimates and take away all the exclusions. Then you know which departments they are. Are you with me on that?

Senator Moore: I'm just a simple taxpayer here, and I don't know why I would have to go through some kind of a process of elimination and go back and find this estimates book to find out where my money is going. Why are we doing it that way? Why is there not full disclosure? Why is there not a full listing of the various departments and the percentages of the monies that they are asking for?

Senator Day: I repeated the same question. You posed the questions better than I could have. We have to wait to hear from the government on this particular issue, but we don't have it today.

Senator Moore: I think you said you asked the officials of Treasury Board about that. What answer did you get from them?

Senator Day: I intended to say I brought it to the attention of Treasury Board. Just recently when I started thinking about it and noticing it while preparing to make my presentation to this chamber. The indications I got were that probably because there is reference to the estimates, legally it's probably okay, if not somewhat convoluted, but less desirable than it would be if we had all the departments that are looking for money in this one bill as opposed to two. They say that is likely the process that they will be following in the future. We will have to wait to see.

This happens only once a year. This happens when there is interim funding, and not all departments want the money at the same time. Those that want the money more quickly, or more of it than three twelfths, are listed here. The normal ones that get it for three twelfths are not listed here.

Senator Moore: Is it in order for your committee to write to the appropriate officials in Treasury Board and require them to put the full listing in the bill so the taxpayer of Canada will know?

Senator Day: Thank you, Senator Moore. I will have to speak to my committee on that, but I think that's a very good suggestion that would follow up on the conversation I've already had.

[Translation]

Hon. Fernand Robichaud: Is that the usual way of doing things, or did someone forget to include those numbers in the schedule this year?

Senator Day: Unfortunately, my research suggests that this is the usual way of doing things. The same thing happened last year and the year before. I don't know about previous years. I hope that things will change in the future.

[English]

Hon. Jane Cordy: My daughter and husband, who are accountants, would be a little nervous if they saw me asking a question about the Finance Committee. Nonetheless, I will go forward with it.

My understanding is that the Department of National Defence is having a substantial decrease in their funding. Yet when you look at the supplementary estimates, the numbers from last year and this year were quite similar.

Could you explain to me, in simple terms, why there is a discrepancy? Is there in fact a cutback in funds or isn't there?

Senator Day: Thank you, Senator Cordy, for your question. It's not indicated in the Main Estimates for the coming year that there is any significant change in the funding to National Defence. These are just the Main Estimates. National Defence, traditionally over various years, has asked for and received a very significant amount of money through Supplementary Estimates (A), (B) and (C). We haven't seen those Supplementary Estimates (A), (B) and (C). If National Defence does not get the significant amounts in (A), (B) and (C) that they have in the past, then over the year they will have received quite a bit less than they have in the previous year.

Our understanding, from talking to National Defence and having them before our committee on a number of occasions, is that they are required to make significant reductions.

Senator Cordy: How does the average Canadian find out these numbers? I'm not an accountant, so how do I find out about the actual amounts that a department is going to get? Do I look retroactively at it, or is there any way that the average Canadian can look ahead and see that a department is getting more money or less money or what their actual funding is going to be? Not many Canadians are going to go through documents this thick. Is there any easy way for an average Canadian, who is not an accountant or an economist, to determine that information?

• (1450)

Senator Day: Thank you, Senator Cordy. This is not an easy process. We develop skills within the Finance Committee over time, and knowing what documents to look at, the *Reports on Plans and Priorities*, which talk about programs, and we can look at the funding from that point of view.

The Main Estimates are only those estimates made even before the budget comes out, so there can be lots of changes. We have found in the past that we, Parliament, have approved expenditures to DND, but then cabinet has refused to allow National Defence to spend those monies on certain capital projects, so there's a lot left over at the end of the year. A lot of things can happen during the year.

The short answer is that you have to look after the fact. We much prefer, as senators, to look at estimates and plans and priorities, and where we're likely to go, but it is very imprecise. What isn't imprecise is that six months after the year, when the Public Accounts of Canada come out, we know exactly how much was spent by that department in the year that ended six months earlier.

Senator Cordy: During Question Period today you asked a question about the Last Post Fund. There could be \$2 billion in that fund, but if it's not being spent, then that money remains in the government coffers; would that be correct?

Senator Day: Thank you, Senator Cordy. That is absolutely correct, and that's what happened. You make a great announcement, and then 60 per cent of those who apply are refused. There are many others who didn't apply because they know how restrictive the qualifications are to be approved, or they don't want their wife to have to sell the washing machine and all the other things in order to pay for their funeral.

Obviously, there will be a significant amount of money that isn't tapped, that doesn't go out and that provides for someone who doesn't have a chance to look at the overall picture to think that maybe it wasn't needed. But then when you look at all the restrictions that were placed on that money going out, you understand that it was needed but wasn't disbursed.

Senator Moore: Senator Day, I want to follow up on the questions of Senator Cordy with regard to the defence budget. Is there a breakdown of the figures and those numbers as to whether or not the asset level has been raised so that more people could qualify for the Last Post Fund? Is there a breakdown as to how much is being spent on ships and what kind of ships? Is there a breakdown as to how much is being spent on airplanes and what kind of airplanes?

Senator Day: With respect to the Last Post Fund, there is a breakdown. It's under grants and contributions. If you look there, you'll see that the amount is roughly the same, about \$8 million or \$9 million, which isn't anywhere near what was announced in the budget. That was the point I was making with the Leader of the Government in the Senate: Where is this? That one is there.

For some of the other items, it's not in as much detail in the estimates. We don't see the detail on some of the intended asset acquisitions that you might find in the *Report on Plans and Priorities* document. We don't have that, and that doesn't form the basis for this supply bill.

Senator Moore: I understand the amount of money that's there for the Last Post Fund, but my question is this: In that funding provision, are we providing for a higher asset holding in order for more veterans to qualify for funding for burials under the Last Post Fund? Is there any provision for that?

Senator Day: The amount announced, from my recollection, was something over \$100 million over three years to expand the base to include modern-day veterans in addition to the traditional veteran, which refers to the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War. There has been a lot of public debate and demand to open that up to include others. That announcement was made, but we haven't seen the funding yet. It's either going to be in a supplementary estimate or a budget implementation bill or not at all.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Bellemare: Senator Day, I have a question for you that relates to Senator Cordy's question.

Is it not true that the public servants who appear before the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance are very open to answering any questions they are asked and that the Treasury Board in particular makes a point of being absolutely transparent in explaining all of the procedures?

Clearly, as Senator Cordy pointed out, government spending is a very complex issue. That committee has the difficult task of examining how money is spent and how that spending fits into the budget.

I encourage anyone who is listening to us here to follow the deliberations of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and to write to us with any specific questions they have. I would not want anyone to be left with the impression following today's debate that that committee lacks transparency.

Senator Day: I wholeheartedly agree. I have nothing negative to say about the witnesses. I really admire the level of expertise I have seen among the committee members. The information we receive always comes from the questions asked by our members. I am pleased to be able to say that our committee does an excellent job.

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

Hon. Senators: Question!

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Hon. Senators: On division.

(Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed, on division.)

[*English*]

RUSSIAN SANCTIONS

MESSAGE FROM COMMONS

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, a message has been received from the House of Commons, as follows:

Wednesday, March 26, 2014

RESOLVED,—

That, in view of the sanctions against parliamentarians and other Canadians announced by the Russian government, the House (a) re-affirm its resolution of Monday, March 3, 2014, (b) strongly condemn Russia's continued illegal military occupation of Crimea, (c) call for Russia to de-escalate the situation immediately, and (d) denounce Russia's sanctions against the Speaker and members of the House of Commons, a member of the Senate, public servants and the President of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress;

That the Speaker do convey this resolution to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation; and

That a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours accordingly.

ATTEST

AUDREY O'BRIEN
The Clerk of the House of Commons

• (1500)

Honourable senators, when shall this message be taken into consideration?

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(j), I move, seconded by the Honourable Senator Fraser:

That the Senate join with the House of Commons for the purposes outlined in the message dated March 26, 2014;

That the Speaker convey this resolution of the Senate to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Canada; and

That a message be sent to the House of Commons to acquaint that House accordingly.

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

Hon. Anne C. Cools: Honourable senators, I am curious as to the nature of the speed with which this motion is being moved. I want to know the nature of the urgency; that is to say, why is leave needed?

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Senator Martin, on the reason why you want leave now?

Senator Martin: Well, as all senators are aware of the situation that is playing out before us — we are all aware of this very important issue — the urgency is to stand with the house as the Parliament of Canada.

[The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*]

Senator Cools: Honourable senators, I can understand the desire on behalf of some for a unanimity or harmony of the two houses' opinion. As I look at this motion, it is extremely complex and makes mention of many large issues that are difficult. In fact, on the face of it, this motion looks as though we're inching into war. This is an extremely important matter.

My question is why is it so urgent? Why is it that we, as senators, cannot have a day or so to examine the issues closely and to give this debate our measured and considered opinion?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): Since this is an urgent situation, I would like to echo some aspects of the strong condemnation of the illegal military occupation of Crimea. We also call for Russia to de-escalate the situation.

Currently, the situation continues to escalate. There are different versions of events in the news from this region. According to some versions, there are 20,000 soldiers. Others say that 100,000 Russian soldiers are posted in Crimea and at the Ukrainian borders.

Military involvement seems to be ramping up significantly, which is increasing pressure in this area of Europe and raising concerns about other military action that might be taken.

It is important that Parliament speak with one voice and that this message of concern be conveyed to the Russian ambassador.

[*English*]

Senator Cools: Honourable senators, it is not Parliament speaking; it is the two houses. I do understand a desire for the two houses to speak with one voice, when I speak about the urgency. I am mindful that the government, through Her Majesty's prerogatives in respect of war and in respect of foreign affairs, has all the powers it needs at its disposal to deal with any foreign affairs matter that arises. There is no need for the government to go to the houses for agreement. Usually when the government goes to the houses, it is for political reasons.

Honourable senators, I understand the politics. I just do not understand why this Senate cannot take the time that this difficult motion demands and needs. Crimea and Russia are large questions. Unfortunately, dear colleagues, most here are not that well-acquainted with the issues in those countries as per this motion. It would be nice if these issues could be put before us with proper time for needed consideration.

This motion from the House of Commons — this is one reason I am curious — makes many assumptions. None of these questions has been put before this Senate at all. Not one of them has been put before this house. As a matter of fact, I have been eagerly awaiting Senator Andreychuk's speech on her inquiry so that we can learn more about the hard facts of the crisis.

Honourable senators, this motion cites many issues. But none of them has been put before the house in any form of evidence. It seems that the haste, the rush and the urgency is so great that

those questions and important issues will not be properly put before this house. That is my concern. Undue haste is rarely thorough.

I ask the leader to give an indication to me of when he would proceed to call the vote. Is it possible there will be no debate? I seek to know the proposed course of action on this motion. These matters are large questions. Is there a war looming at the end of this? I think we should give this debate the time it requires. I don't think it would take too many days to do so.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: I believe that NATO adopted a similar resolution yesterday or in the past few hours or days. I understand the argument about the government's prerogative to take certain measures. The idea is not to go to war, but to ensure that Canadians speak with one voice, from both of these chambers, to call for Russia to de-escalate the situation. I hope that honourable senators will support this motion, which we hope to adopt immediately.

[English]

Senator Cools: Honourable senators, it is not the substance of the motion that I question. I am questioning the haste. Haste is important because it is unclear, and we do not know where this motion is going. I would like to satisfy myself that we, as senators, take the time and the care on this motion. I want full explanations on all of the issues in this Crimean-Russian case.

Honourable senators, as I said before, this house, this Senate, has no knowledge of any of the assertions mentioned in Senator Martin's motion. If we're talking about a matter that is so grave, I think we should give it the needed time and attention that gravity deserves. These are my thoughts. I wish to, as should we all, speak to this matter in a fulsome way. I hope you understand, Senator Carignan, where I am coming from and what I am saying.

Honourable senators, Canada does not speak from a position of being a mighty military power. Further, Canada shares an Arctic border with Russia, so if what we are describing here as an escalating situation for Canada, we should know that. This potential situation should be well-canvassed in this house so that the opinion that the government is seeking from the Senate will be a well-considered and well-studied opinion, not hastily made.

• (1510)

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Senator, I understand your point, but given the urgency of the situation, I think it is important that Parliament speak with one voice and that this resolution be adopted unanimously today. If, as a parliamentarian, you wish to continue to examine this issue, I invite you to introduce a notice of inquiry so that we can discuss the situation and examine some of the specifics more thoroughly.

At this time, given the urgency, we must send the message that Canadians condemn the occupation of Crimea and are calling for a de-escalation of military action by Russia. We must do so

immediately, without waiting, because there are serious concerns that this sensitive situation might degenerate.

If you wish to do so, you can introduce a notice of inquiry to continue examining the issue. You could even move that a committee study the issue, so that it can be examined more thoroughly. However, the important thing today is that all Canadians speak with one voice.

[English]

Senator Cools: Honourable senators, I was not proposing to refer this motion to committee. I was proposing that this motion be well debated.

With all due respect to honourable senators, I looked up the debates in the other house on both motions of March 3 and March 26, and on both occasions neither of those motions was debated. There was not a word of debate. Those two motions were simply moved and adopted. I think it is right, fair and proper that in parliamentary institutions our opinion should be justified and should not be made in such haste.

Colleagues, I am prepared to say yes and give my consent, but I would like to know at the end of my saying yes that there's a thorough debate on this issue in this place and that we do not replicate what happened in the House of Commons.

I can raise this during the debate itself, but there is something very wrong with something of this magnitude in respect of war and peace that we can just adopt something without words and debate uttered by members. There's something very wrong with that.

Senator Carignan, I know I can move a motion any day of the week to study any issue, or to speak to any issue, or move any issue, but the issue here is that the government is asking for these motions. These are government motions. One was moved by Minister Peter Van Loan. These are government motions. I do not have the capacity to move any motion that carries that weight. You know it and I know it. We shouldn't even have to raise this.

Years ago we were in a big fight on the GST. Senator Nolin, you know this. During the GST debate, debate was interrupted with agreement from both sides. The war was on in Iraq. The Senate record shows that the house stopped the fight, took notice of the war and debated it. Maybe this haste doesn't bother some here that the Senate can pass such weighty motions with no debate, but it bothers me very much.

Honourable senators, I am prepared to give leave, but I want to know that I can get an opportunity to speak to this motion, if not today — today is Thursday — then Tuesday. I think, Senator Carignan, I am being very fair. I do not like war. I do not like belligerence. I do not like posturing either, but most of all, I cannot stand the thought of bloodshed or of any Canadians having to go to war to shed their blood. I am a strong supporter of the veterans, as you know. I think my concern is fair and just.

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Ringuette, at this time, we are only dealing with the issue of leave. We are not dealing with the motion.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: I have a technical question.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: On the issue of leave?

Senator Ringuette: Yes.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: To debate it immediately?

Senator Ringuette: Yes.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I asked the chamber if leave was granted. Senator Cools seemed to have some concerns about the issue of leave. I want to be sure that the question deals strictly with leave.

[English]

Is leave granted that we discuss that now?

Some Hon. Senators: No.

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: The answer is no? There is no leave. Leave was not granted, Senator Robichaud.

[Translation]

Hon. Fernand Robichaud: What was presented to us as a notice of motion could be debated at the next sitting of the Senate. This would allow us to discuss the issue in a way that complies with the *Rules of the Senate*.

[English]

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: A suggestion is made to the government. If the government wants to listen to that suggestion, I think it's up to the government to decide. For the moment, leave was not granted, so we have to proceed with the Orders of the Day.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Government), pursuant to notice of March 26, 2014, moved:

That when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 1, 2014 at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1520)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 16-1(8), I wish to advise the Senate that a message from the Crown concerning Royal Assent is expected later today.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, rule 16-1(8) provides that after the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Government has made such an announcement:

... no motion to adjourn the Senate shall be received and the rules regarding the ordinary time of adjournment or suspension, or any prior order regarding adjournment shall be suspended until the message has been received or either the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Government indicates the message is no longer expected. If the Senate completes the business for the day before the message is received, the sitting shall be suspended to the call of the Speaker, with the bells to ring for five minutes before the sitting resumes.

These provisions shall therefore govern proceedings today.

[Translation]

THE SENATE

MOTION TO STRIKE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SENATE TRANSFORMATION—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette, pursuant to notice of March 25, 2014, moved:

That a Special Committee on Senate Transformation be appointed to consider:

1. methods to reduce the role of political parties in the Senate by establishing regional caucuses and systems to provide accountability to citizens;
2. methods to broaden participation of all senators in managing the business of the Senate by establishing a committee to assume those responsibilities, and to provide for equal regional representation on said committee;
3. methods to allow senators to participate in the selection of the Speaker of the Senate by providing a recommendation to the Prime Minister;

4. methods to adapt Question Period to better serve its role as an accountability exercise; and
5. such other matters as may be referred to it by the Senate;

That the committee be composed of nine members, to be nominated by the Committee of Selection and that four members constitute a quorum;

That, the committee have power to send for persons, papers and records; to examine witnesses; and to publish such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee;

That, notwithstanding rule 12-18(2)(b)(i), the committee have power to sit from Monday to Friday, even though the Senate may then be adjourned for a period exceeding one week; and

That the committee be empowered to report from time to time and to submit its final report no later than June 30, 2015.

She said: Honourable senators, the status quo is unacceptable for our citizens and for us.

“They need to be accountable”; “political interference has to be removed”; “regions have to regain their voice in the Senate,” and so on. How many times in the last few years have we heard these comments?

And yet, we seem to be waiting for some outside force to correct the situation. This further confirms that we are not listening, not responsive and, to some extent, supporting the current state of operations.

In my view, knowing the intelligence and experience in this chamber, we can and must rise to the challenge and take the opportunity to transform the Senate into an innovative chamber that will distinguish us from the other place and give us the efficiency and accountability mechanisms that Canadians from coast to coast to coast require.

[English]

The Senate has been the subject of numerous studies since Confederation. Except for the Meech and Charlottetown Accords, which had definite measures, the studies have been gathering dust. We should not be surprised by citizens' skepticism for the Senate and that the Senate is a prime target for politicians' irresponsible partisanship. There is no appetite in this country to open the Constitution, nor should the Senate be the cause of such turmoil.

We can provide internal leadership and change our operations to better reflect Canadians' aspirations. May I remind you that the Senate has from time to time since Confederation adjusted its operation to meet the challenges of the day. I agree that this transformation motion is a major change, but it is feasible and innovative in its approach.

That being said, I believe that 90 per cent of the changes that Canadians want to see from the Senate can be put in place without constitutional or legislative amendments. We can do it ourselves.

In the last decade, and particularly the last few years, Canadians want an independent, less partisan Senate. They also want accountability measures along with greater regional perspective from us.

The motion and proposal to transform the Senate meets most of the citizens' requests via new Senate rules which can be operational in a very short period of time, as long as we have the will to do so.

Senator Tkachuk: Read Dan Hays' report.

Senator Ringuette: Senator Tkachuk, do you have a question now?

I do realize that such fundamental transformation will be difficult for many senators to accept and adopt. However, if the private sector can change to adapt to market realities, certainly we can do the same on our road to progress.

I do believe that the transformation proposal is a clear blueprint on how we can move forward. It rationalizes operating principles for an efficient, modern Senate meeting the public's demand while respecting our Constitution.

This transformation proposal will replace certain rules to establish a non-partisan oriented Senate. The proposal will do the following: remove the partisan roles of government and opposition leaders, deputy leaders and whip; set up four regional caucuses; establish a mode for nominating the Speaker and Speaker *pro tempore* by senators; and establish an upper house affairs committee. Its roles would include fulfilling the requirements of government and opposition leaders in terms of the legislative process, would populate the committees, setting time allocation and coordinating upper house activities.

The proposal would also revise Question Period to focus on committee chairs reporting and responding to questions regarding committee activities; set a more rigid procedural structure that would allow for less delay in dealing with bills; and establish rules for the removal of committee chairs and caucus leaders. Committees shall include equal representation from all regions and allow for minority opinions to be included in committee reports.

[Translation]

It provides all the elements to regain public confidence, with greatly reduced political influence and regional accountability sessions twice a year. Remember that real accountability for the members of the other place generally occurs once every four years, at election time.

Abolishing the positions of government leader and opposition leader and establishing an elected upper house affairs committee to manage the agenda in the Senate is a major step in removing political influence and also provides senators with more management input.

Senators would elect candidates for the positions of Speaker and Speaker *pro tempore*, as well as regional caucus chair and vice-chair. Sitting in regional caucuses and having equal regional representation in all our standing committees will bring regional perspective to a higher level in our deliberations.

Redirecting our current Question Period, which for too many is just questions with no answers, to a weekly 90-minute report period on committee activities will give all of us and the public a continuous update on our very important committee work.

• (1530)

Our work in committee is our greatest strength and it reinforces our “raison d’être.” These measures will improve the quality of Senate governance, independence and accountability.

[English]

The transformation proposal does not create an imbalance of power between the two houses. It will offer Canadians an upper house different yet still complementary to the House of Commons. It will bring greater efficiencies to review legislation with a greater regional outlook.

The transformation proposal respects the fundamental features and essential characteristics of the Senate as embedded in the Constitution: independence, long-term perspective, continuity, professional and life experience, and regional equality.

All of these characteristics differentiate the Senate from the other place, which was the purpose of its design within our Constitution at the time of Confederation. The Senate was the institution that enabled the creation of our country. If anyone wants to change its fundamental characteristics, they will eventually have to open the Constitution, with all the risks and perils.

Personally, I am tired of our being a political football at every election, and between elections by political leaders who should be more responsible and mature with our Constitution, our provinces, territories and country. The Senate was the institution central to the creation of our federation, and we must honour, respect and enforce the pact.

We, as a chamber of sober second thought, are able to analyze legislation in great detail as to how it will affect Canadians, and we engage in the study of complex issues of concern to citizens. Why are we mute to fully reviewing our operations in response to citizens’ discontent?

Except for Senator’s Nolin’s inquiries and Senator Greene’s op-ed article, we have thus far been content to whisper in the corridors, with no action taken. This may be crude to some, but it needs to be said. We need to be grounded in reality if we are to move towards a more transparent, responsive and efficient chamber.

Our rules and operations have somewhat evolved in the same manner as those of the House of Commons. If we operate in the same way, are we not an unneeded duplication of the other place?

[Senator Ringuette]

It was certainly not the desire nor the vision of the Fathers of Confederation.

We have the responsibility and the opportunity to respond positively to citizens’ concerns and expectations regarding how we will work for them in the future and probably prevent another constitutional crisis.

The wait-and-see attitude as to what politicians of all stripes will do to this valued institution is not acceptable since we have the necessary tools to transform the Senate.

This transformation proposal provides a concrete plan for change, enabling us to operate with a totally different approach from the other place.

It may not be perfect, but I propose it in good faith and invite you, if you so wish, to provide your own proposal to the special committee. We should not hesitate to form and mandate that special committee. Transformation should be a priority for all of us.

I’m at your disposal if at any time you want me to answer questions or make a presentation. I’ve studied this concept and the rules that need to be changed for it to operate positively for each and every one of us and, therefore, for the citizens of this country.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Bellemare: Senator Ringuette, in your proposal you refer to the possibility of having systems to be accountable to citizens. Could you elaborate?

Senator Ringuette: The system that I am proposing is very easy to implement. Each regional caucus — Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, and Western Canada and the territories — would hold public sessions twice a year, in the fall and the spring.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Senator Ringuette, this is very interesting, but you will have to ask the Senate for additional time. Do you wish to do so?

Senator Ringuette: Yes.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Do honourable senators agree to give Senator Ringuette an additional five minutes?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Ringuette: Each regional caucus, for example the Quebec caucus of this chamber, would hold a one-day session on a Saturday, both in the fall and in the spring. It would give 14 days’ notice to the public and invite people to submit problem issues for which they are seeking solutions and support in their region. During these sessions, senators representing the region

could be asked some tough questions, but this would be one way to ensure that members of the public have direct contact with the senators from their region.

We must also consider the fact that, in the Senate chamber, each region would be in a separate caucus, as provided for in the Constitution, and also that each standing Senate committee would have two senators per region.

In other words, the focus would be on the regions and how the regions can respond in this chamber and in committee. With regard to accountability — there is no need to mention to you the belief that elections are necessary for accountability — as I was elected to the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick twice and to the Parliament of Canada, I can tell you that the process I am proposing for each senator in his or her region is much more intense and demanding in terms of accountability than an election every four or five years.

• (1540)

That is what I propose. The model may not be perfect. Perhaps you would like to propose some solutions. I hope so.

However, I would like to stress that we should not hesitate to go ahead and implement this concept.

Hon. Ghislain Maltais: I would like to congratulate Senator Ringuette on her brief statement.

There is a fine line between a senator and an elected member of Parliament. Unelected citizens must not interfere with the prerogatives of elected members of Parliament, who are accountable to their constituents. That distinction must be kept in mind.

I have nothing against consulting the public, but in principle, it is the public that should consult us. I would reverse the roles. It is up to us to raise our profile without misleading the public because, after all, we are not in a position to change things here. We can only talk about issues and present them to the House of Commons through private members' bills.

It is a very fine line. We must not get ourselves into trouble.

Senator Ringuette: Listen, you and I were elected members before being appointed to the Senate. A number of our colleagues were as well. The proposed accountability formula for the regional caucuses is such that the public can speak to, be heard by and get a response from the parliamentarians who represent them in this chamber.

I am sure that the people in our regions will welcome this possibility. I would not go so far as to think that all Quebecers might end up at the same location on a given Saturday to demand accountability from their senators. However, I believe that this might trigger a process of engagement and understanding.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[English]

LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

On Inquiry No. 13, by the Honourable Senator Andreychuk:

That she will call the attention of the Senate to the challenges confronting a large and growing number of Canadians who provide care to relatives and friends living with dementia.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Government): Senator Andreychuk had asked me to request to reset the time, but I see she has not yet moved this inquiry. I don't know if I may be permitted to reset the clock.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: You are entitled to do it once, and it is today.

Hon. Joan Fraser (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Your Honour, I have run into this difficulty myself on occasion. This inquiry has not been spoken to. The person who wanted it has not raised it. If it drops off the Order Paper today she can bring it back on Tuesday. But it seems to me that, respectfully, this is not a matter that is yet before the chamber, and so it is not really appropriate for anyone other than Senator Andreychuk to be trying to restart the clock on it.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: The way I understand it, Senator Martin started to speak on it, she wants to maintain the remainder of her 15 minutes to speak on it, and she wants to adjourn the debate in the name of Senator Andreychuk. That is my reading on this, unless you have another reading of the situation. That's how I see the discussion unfolding.

Senator Martin, you are asking for the adjournment in the name of Senator Andreychuk.

Senator Martin: Yes.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

Some Hon. Senators: On division.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned, on division.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Honourable senators, pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate earlier today, the sitting is now adjourned during pleasure and will be reconvened at the call of the chair, with a five-minute bell.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

ROYAL ASSENT

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore* informed the Senate that the following communication had been received:

RIDEAU HALL

March 27, 2014

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that Mr. Stephen Wallace, Secretary to the Governor General, in his capacity as Deputy of the Governor General, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 27th day of March, 2014, at 4:03 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

C. MacIntyre for Patricia Jaton
Deputy Secretary

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

Bills Assented to Thursday, March 27, 2014:

An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2014 (*Bill C-28, Chapter 3, 2014*)

An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2015 (*Bill C-29, Chapter 4, 2014*)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I ask for leave of the Senate to move the following procedural motion.

I move:

That the message received from the House of Commons earlier this day be placed on the Orders of the Day under Government Business for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(The Senate adjourned until Tuesday, April 1, 2014, at 2 p.m.)

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