



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 149 • NUMBER 113

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, January 29, 2015

The Honourable LEO HOUSAKOS
Speaker pro tempore

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

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Published by the Senate
Available on the Internet: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

THE SENATE

Thursday, January 29, 2015

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

Prayers.

[Translation]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE

THE HONOURABLE JEAN-CLAUDE RIVEST

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Honourable senators, I see that my colleague Jean-Claude Rivest is absent, but given that I myself was absent this week I would nonetheless like to pay tribute to him.

I would like to take a few minutes today to pay tribute in my own way to the Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest, who is retiring after 21 years with us.

Senator Rivest was my first seatmate in this chamber when I arrived three years ago.

In this chamber, and especially outside these walls, I had the pleasure of getting to know a man with an enviable political career and stories about the history of Quebec and Canada that he kindly shared with me.

Add to that his sometimes razor-sharp humour, which he used in his own unique way to criticize the political world in which he moved for nearly half a century.

Although he earned a degree in law, Senator Rivest devoted his life to politics. In his own way, he rendered great service first to Quebec and then to our country.

Premiers Jean Lesage and Robert Bourassa benefited from his invaluable constitutional advice. As special assistant to Mr. Lesage and secretary for legislation and parliamentary affairs to Mr. Bourassa, he worked behind the scenes, yet played a pivotal role in the constitutional positions taken by the Province of Quebec over three decades.

A quick look at the history of Premiers Lesage and Bourassa reveals that both these politicians owe their best speeches to Jean-Claude Rivest.

What is more, I sincerely believe that Senator Rivest was instrumental in shaping the historic position that Mr. Bourassa took following the constitutional meeting in Victoria in 1971,

when he called for greater clarity regarding the proposed decentralization of federal powers with a view to the repatriation of the Constitution.

After years of working behind the scenes, Senator Rivest decided to take his career to the next level and was elected to the Quebec National Assembly as the Liberal member for the riding of Jean-Talon in 1979. He did not run again in 1985, but there was no shortage of work for him since Robert Bourassa had returned as Premier of Quebec.

The constitutional debate was still going strong. The Meech, Bélanger-Campeau Commission and Charlottetown years were still ahead.

Senator Rivest, who is leaving us today, was Mr. Bourassa's confidant and special advisor, which allowed him to make an extraordinary contribution to the drafting of the Meech Lake Accord in 1987 under the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney's Conservative government. This accord was rejected by two provinces, Manitoba and Newfoundland, much to the dismay of our then Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Mulroney later recognized Jean-Claude Rivest's constitutional expertise by appointing him to the Senate in March 1993. Those who have had the opportunity to work with Senator Rivest know that his participation in this chamber's debates was very enlightening.

I learned from our conversations that Senator Rivest's career allowed him to rub elbows with world leaders. Time and time again, he participated in meetings that are now part of our history.

I was happy and privileged to spend time with him occasionally and learn about parts of history that, unfortunately, are not taught to our young people in school. Senator Rivest, I want you to know that I remember many things from the few years we worked together.

Senator, I wish you a wonderful retirement. Please know that it will always be a pleasure to see you again.

[English]

DEE GORDON

Hon. Jim Munson: Honourable senators, today is no ordinary day in the Senate. We have a visitor in the chamber, and her name is Dee Gordon. It is my honour to pay tribute to her this afternoon, a courageous mother.

Dee is a remarkable woman whose strength of purpose and character are best conveyed by telling you about the gruelling journey she has completed. Imagine this: Two weeks ago, on January 15, Dee embarked on a walk from Toronto to Ottawa, a trek called Walk to Ottawa. She has done this to raise awareness about autism spectrum disorders and to gather signatures on a petition for a national ASD strategy. We're talking about January for two weeks, Toronto to Ottawa.

Described by one of her friends as a "warrior mom," Dee has three children, one of whom, a young teenager named Jacob, has autism. For 13 years she has struggled to get the care and support he needs. It has been tough, but it certainly has not gotten her down.

Dee has explained the significance of walking to the nation's capital during the coldest winter month we have. She put it this way:

The reason why I picked January is because Jacob's struggle is like ploughing through the snow every single day. It's difficult, it's harsh, you have to plan ahead.

Walk to Ottawa has run like a well-oiled machine, with online updates and encouraging messages posted from all corners.

This is important for us, honourable senators. This is close to home for all of us because we were all in this together, and still are. You will remember our 2007 report *Pay Now or Pay Later: Autism Families In Crisis*. It has been on her Facebook page. She made this walk for Jacob, but the petition's support is for what we had proposed seven or eight years ago.

The only thing that would make me prouder than witnessing the positive influence of the Senate's report on the autism community is the creation, as the report said, of a national strategy.

We have a mental health strategy and we have the Mental Health Commission. Where did they come from? The idea was right here in the Senate. Why not the same for autism?

With each step Dee Gordon has taken over the last two extremely cold weeks, she has helped bring us closer to that goal. She arrived on the Hill just one hour ago with the plea she has carried with her throughout her journey and will present to the government, on behalf of all us who support the call for strategic federal action, a petition with tens of thousands of names calling for a national autism strategy.

Dee, these few minutes are about you, your very special family and the people who have supported you. I am delighted that your three children are able to join you to hear testimony about your extraordinary determination and commitment to making a difference. You are a very special mom.

[Senator Munson]

This afternoon at Minto Place, honourable senators, there will be a reception. I hope some of you can make it to the Lisgar Salon of Minto Place from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

• (1340)

This part of the story may be over. Dee's walk may be over, but we as senators will not rest because we know we are in this together until this country has a national autism spectrum disorder strategy.

Thank you, honourable senators.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence of visitors in the gallery. We have with us Ms. Dee Gordon, an Etobicoke resident, an advocate for a national autism strategy who, as we just heard from Senator Munson, has walked from Toronto to Ottawa to raise awareness about autism. Her son Jacob and her family are guests of the Honourable Senator Munson.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE LATE EDWARD "TED" HARDY HARRISON, O.C., O.B.C.

Hon. Daniel Lang: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding Canadian and an exceptional Yukoner, Mr. Ted Harrison. Ted passed away on January 16, 2015, at the age of 88 in Victoria, B.C.

In the past I have risen to recognize Mr. Harrison, an internationally renowned artist whose work effortlessly captures the magic of Canada's Yukon with brightly coloured depictions of our people and our scenery.

Born on August 2, 1926, in England, Ted showed an interest in art from a young age and was encouraged by his parents, particularly his mother, to follow his passion. Ted pursued studies in art and design at Hartlepool College of Art, only taking time off to serve in the military during World War II. After the war, he received a diploma in design and a teaching certificate from the Durham University, which launched him into a 28-year teaching career.

After travelling and teaching in different countries around the world, Ted, along with his wife, Nicky, and son, Charles, emigrated to Canada in 1967 and chose to settle in Carcross,

Yukon, where he lived and painted some of his most glorious work. All Yukoners take great pride in Ted Harrison, including his editorial cartoons for the *Whitehorse Star* in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1993 Ted moved to Victoria but continued to visit and paint the imagery of Canada's North and Yukon.

Ted's fondness for Canada's North is also reflected in numerous children's books he wrote and/or illustrated, including *Children of the Yukon*, *A Northern Alphabet* and the internationally acclaimed *The Cremation of Sam McGee*.

In 1987 Ted Harrison was inducted into the Order of Canada, and in 2005 he was inducted into the Royal Conservatory of the Arts. He also received the Order of British Columbia in 2008, as well as numerous honorary doctorates and distinctions.

Ted's art has been exhibited across Canada and around the world. In 1996 Canadians got to see his work first-hand when he was selected to design the Canada Post Christmas stamp.

Colleagues, in October 2009, Ms. Laureen Harper, the wife of our Right Honourable Prime Minister, invited Ted Harrison to tea at 24 Sussex in recognition of his contribution to Canada as an artist. At that event, he helped to unveil 12 of his original paintings in the foyer of the Prime Minister's official residence where they continue to hang today. Mr. Harrison's paintings can also be seen in the office of our Honourable Speaker and in my Senate office. It's my hope that one day Canada's National Art Gallery will see fit to also embrace Ted's work, as millions of Canadians have done in the past and will continue to do well into the future.

Honourable senators, please join me in paying tribute to a World War II veteran, a great Yukoner and a most distinguished Canadian, Mr. Ted Harrison.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

HOCKEY CANADA

CONGRATULATIONS TO JOE DRAGO ON ELECTION TO CHAIR OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hon. Marie-P. Charette-Poulin: Honourable senators, Hockey Canada elected, by acclamation, Joe Drago of Sudbury as chairman of its board of directors at its annual meeting in December of 2014. This is an historic event for two reasons. Mr. Drago is the first northern Ontarian to hold this position, and his election coincides with Hockey Canada's celebration of its one hundredth anniversary.

This is a very proud moment for northern Ontario, where hockey plays such a large part in our lives and culture. We need only look in our own Senate backyard for evidence of this in the person of our former colleague from Timmins, the Honourable Frank Mahovlich.

Honourable senators, Joe Drago is a real natural when it comes to leading Hockey Canada. An educator by profession, his extensive hockey experience includes playing at the varsity level, as well as coaching, managing and being part-owner of the Sudbury Wolves Junior A club. He has served as Commissioner for the Northern Ontario Junior Hockey League and President of the Ontario Hockey Federation, and in 2013 he became Executive Vice-Chair of the Hockey Canada Board.

Sudbury Sports Hall of Fame has honoured Mr. Drago on two occasions. In 1998 he was inducted as a builder, and in 2005 the Coach of the Year award was named in his honour.

Now, honourable senators, you would think that all of this would keep Mr. Drago very busy, but this is only the half of it. Beyond his commitment to hockey, he has a lengthy history of community service: He served on the board of Laurentian University, he received an honorary lifetime membership to the Alzheimer Society of Sudbury-Manitoulin and a life membership in the Salvation Army, and he was the founding chair of the Sudbury Regional Hospital Foundation.

Mr. Drago brings his community service perspective to Hockey Canada, and in his own words: "This is a volunteer type of organization. We have to recognize that, and we have to appreciate it and respect volunteers, but we certainly have to get more of them involved."

Honourable senators, I believe that Mr. Drago will not only provide strong leadership at Hockey Canada but will also serve as a wonderful role model for everyone involved, from the youngest player to the oldest volunteer. He's a real team player. Congratulations, Joe Drago.

[Translation]

TRIBUTE

THE HONOURABLE JEAN-CLAUDE RIVEST

Hon. Paul E. McIntyre: Honourable senators, this week the Senate paid tribute to Senator Rivest. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be here, but I would like to say a few words about his political contribution today even though he is not here.

I would like to begin by saying that we were sad to hear he was leaving. I repeatedly insisted that he stay, but my efforts were in vain.

I know that Senator Rivest cherishes memories of his childhood in L'Assomption. He grew up in L'Assomption and completed his classical studies at Collège de L'Assomption. I gather that he was a day student, lucky guy, whereas I completed my classical studies at Collège de Bathurst in New Brunswick, an institution affiliated with the Université de Moncton, and I had to board there.

Senator Rivest has been in politics for a long time. He trained as a lawyer, then he served as an elected representative both provincially and federally. He also served as special advisor to Gérard D. Lévesque, political advisor to former Premier Robert Bourassa and lastly as a senator, and the list goes on.

His contribution to the Senate over the past 22 years has been tremendous. I won't recap all of the speeches that he delivered without notes and often with no preparation, but I will say that he had a gift for choosing the right words and for timely updates. Most importantly, though, as my colleague Senator Dagenais said, his greatest contribution was to help in developing the Government of Quebec's constitutional strategy during negotiations for the Meech Lake Accord, the Bélanger-Campeau Commission and the Charlottetown Accord.

• (1350)

That is Senator Rivest's tremendous contribution. I believe that his contribution will go down in Quebec's political history. Senator Rivest has definitely left his mark on politics in Quebec City and Ottawa.

Enjoy your well-deserved retirement, Senator Rivest.

[English]

THE LATE TOLLER CRANSTON, C.M.

Hon. Elizabeth Hubley: Honourable senators, last weekend the world of figure skating lost one of its greatest pioneers when Toller Cranston passed away of an apparent heart attack at his home in Mexico. He was 65 years old.

It is notable that his death occurred during the Canadian Figure Skating Championships. There can be no doubt that the male skaters competing there owe him a debt: Toller was a trailblazer for the sport, consistently demonstrating not only his athletic skill, but also his attention to artistry.

He was a six-time Canadian men's champion, winning consecutive competitions from 1971 to 1976. He won bronze at the 1974 World Championships and bronze at the 1976 Olympics.

He constantly chafed at the limits placed on his artistic vision in the sport that rewarded pure technical ability and athleticism. It is said that he retired from amateur skating by throwing his skates into a canal in Sweden after the 1976 Worlds.

After that significant moment, he began his life as a professional figure skater, touring in live shows and appearing in television specials. He wrote a number of books about his life and was a commentator on CBC for figure skating competitions.

[Senator McIntyre]

In 1997, he finally retired from skating but continued to express his creative side through painting, an activity he had begun as a young man. His works now are exhibited in galleries and museums around the world.

Over the course of his lifetime, Toller was recognized in many ways for his undeniable contribution to figure skating: He was inducted into the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame, the Ontario Sports Hall of Fame, the Canadian Figure Skating Hall of Fame, the World Figure Skating Hall of Fame and the Order of Canada. He received a star on Canada's Walk of Fame and a Special Olympic Order from the Canadian Olympic Committee.

In a statement on Toller's death, Marcel Aubut, President of the Canadian Olympic Committee, said:

Toller Cranston was a stellar athlete and a trailblazer for sport in our country. His creative performances and artistry on the ice helped revitalize the world of figure skating, and his contributions helped inspire future generations of Canadian skaters.

Please join me in paying tribute to a figure skating innovator and a great Canadian athlete.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH

UNIVERSAL PHARMACARE

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Your Honour. My question is for my friend the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I did call his office yesterday and gave him notice of this question so that he would have an opportunity to acquire some information with respect to it.

This is another in a series of questions that we've received in response to our invitation to Canadians to ask questions. Today, this comes from three first-year medical students and representatives of the Canadian Federation of Medical Students.

Vivian Tam is the junior Government Affairs and Advocacy Committee representative at the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine at McMaster University; Lucy Soudek is the junior Government Affairs and Advocacy Committee representative at Dalhousie University Medical School; and Henry Annan is the junior Global Health Advocate at Dalhousie University Medical

School. This is what they wrote. It's quite lengthy, but I'm sure we'll all agree it's an important issue. I will read the question in the form in which they ask it:

Dear Senators,

On November 24, 2014, we, and about seventy of our fellow medical students, met with your colleagues on Parliament Hill on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Medical Students. Together, we hoped to draw attention to the negative impact that the current fragmented approach to pharmaceutical coverage has on the Canadian healthcare system. We proposed that the Government of Canada convene a Special Committee or Task Force to do the following:

1. Report on the current state of pharmaceutical coverage in Canada, and
2. Outline steps towards the development of a national Pharmacare system that corrects current financial inefficiencies while ensuring Canadians have equal access to necessary medicine as part of a truly universal health care system.

There are financial and health benefits associated with universal Pharmacare. It is estimated that Pharmacare could save Canada upwards of \$11 billion every year and dramatically reduce the costs of prescription drugs for Canadians by increasing purchasing power. A universal Pharmacare system would place Canada on par with our OECD peers. As it stands, we are the only OECD country with a universal healthcare system that does not include coverage for prescription medications. These facts may already be familiar to you as the topic of Pharmacare has been raised at prior Senate Question Periods. Indeed, the momentum for universal Pharmacare has been building for quite some time now, and an estimated 78 per cent of Canadians support such a policy according to a 2013 EKOS poll. It is our hope that continued support from the public and medical community can transform slow progress into tangible change.

As medical students, we have already seen the harsh realities of a healthcare system in which patients are unable to afford necessary treatments. As we learn to take a patient's history, we are taught to also ask, "Do you have a drug plan?" Unfortunately, negative responses are all too common. One in ten patients report having difficulty affording their prescription medications. We are therefore left with a system where patients who have the ability to pay for medicines can enjoy better health. This is not the kind of equitable, sustainable healthcare system we envisioned for our future practice. Consequently, our question to you is this: Is the Government of Canada willing to fulfill the Canadian Federation of Medical Students' request and further study the possibility of universal Pharmacare?

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): I would like to thank the senator for the background information and the question from these students.

I met with this federation's representatives when they came to Parliament Hill on November 24, 2014. It was a very pleasant meeting. They also shared with me their suggestions for the pharmacare system.

As I have already said, Minister Ambrose has discussions with her provincial and territorial counterparts at meetings of ministers of health. She definitely intends to continue working with the provinces and territories in order to come up with innovative solutions.

• (1400)

She is currently working on a way to give Canadians more effective access to drugs at a lower cost and ensure that Canadians have access to medication purchased in bulk. The provinces and territories join forces to buy drugs together, in bulk, in order to get a better price. Minister Ambrose will continue to work with provincial and territorial representatives and health ministers to develop this innovative solution.

[English]

Senator Cowan: Thank you for that, Senator Carignan. There have been press reports that Minister Ambrose has spoken to Minister Hoskins, who I believe is the Minister of Health in the province of Ontario, and asked him to lead a task force or to consult with his fellow provincial premiers with a view to developing such a plan.

Can you confirm that that request has been made by Minister Ambrose to Minister Hoskins and that he has agreed to assume that responsibility?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: As I said, Minister Ambrose discusses these files with all of her provincial and territorial colleagues, particularly at the health ministers' meeting.

[English]

Senator Cowan: There were press reports recently that while the Minister of Health for the province of Quebec was interested in this and they were open to this approach, I understood him to say that he had not received any overtures from the Government of Canada in this regard. Can you confirm that?

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: As I told you, the minister meets with her counterparts at the health ministers' meetings, and we will continue working with the provinces and territories in order to come up with innovative solutions. We are pleased to continue working with them, specifically in the context of a possible plan for the bulk buying of drugs.

[English]

Senator Cowan: I wonder, Senator Carignan, if you would remind your colleague Senator Ambrose when next you see her of the good work that was done by our Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, which produced a report in 2012, a committee led at the time by your colleague Senator Ogilvie and deputy chair Senator Eggleton. That was a review of the 2004 Health Accord. Recommendation 28 in that report recommended:

That the federal government work with the provinces and territories to develop a national pharmacare program based on the principles of universal and equitable access for all Canadians; improved safety and appropriate use; cost controls to ensure value for money and sustainability; including a national catastrophic drug-coverage program and a national formulary.

Perhaps you would remind the minister that that report was presented to the Senate by the committee and was endorsed unanimously by this chamber. Perhaps that would add some impetus to her efforts to work with her provincial colleagues to develop a national strategy which I think is universally acknowledged to be needed to replace the current patchwork of coverage for pharmacare in this country.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: The minister is well aware of the Senate report on health and, of course, the provinces and territories decide themselves what drugs are covered by their respective plans.

I would remind you that, in fact, we are providing the provinces and territories with the largest health transfers in the history of Canada. This unprecedented funding will reach \$40 billion by the end of the decade. The minister is very familiar with this file.

[English]

Hon. Jane Cordy: Leader, I know you spoke a couple of times about bulk purchasing and that would be helpful, but it's certainly not enough to solve the problem. You spoke about the provinces having control over their budgets. As the Social Affairs Committee stated, national leadership is required.

Senator Cowan:

There are two reports that you should ask Minister Ambrose to look at, if you wouldn't mind. One would be going back to the Social Affairs Committee when we studied the health care system overall under the chairmanship of Senator Kirby and Senator LeBreton, who was the deputy chair at the time. We did an in-depth study of the national pharmaceutical program and the need for it.

Those in Atlantic Canada are most likely not to be covered. Some provinces have pharmaceutical programs, but in Atlantic Canada there's a higher percentage who are not covered.

I would ask you to ask Minister Ambrose to look at the report that was done by the Social Affairs Committee a while ago, and the more recent one that was an evaluation of changes to health care and that Senator Cowan quoted from. I think the minister would find significant amounts of information within those reports that would go a long way toward starting a dialogue with the provinces and territories.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Listen, I didn't hear the question, but if I understand correctly, you're suggesting that I give the reports to the minister. However, as you know, when the Senate releases reports, the Minister of Health and Health Canada receive copies, so they are already aware of the content of the reports.

In response to Senator Cowan's question, the provinces and territories decide themselves which medications are covered by their plan, and I would remind you once again that the federal government will pay \$40 billion — an unprecedented amount of funding — by the end of the decade, in the form of health transfers. These are the largest health transfers in Canada's history.

[English]

Senator Cordy: It actually goes beyond which pharmaceuticals are covered. It goes to the whole idea that there are Canadians who are suffering undue hardship because they are unable to pay for their medications. It goes beyond the provincial jurisdiction of which medications are on the list that would be covered within the provinces.

I know the minister has gotten these reports, but if you would give her a gentle reminder to look at them because there are Canadians who are suffering undue hardship. Some of them are covered by pharmaceutical programs within their workplace, but, if they have a significant health problem that requires medication, some people are paying upwards of a thousand dollars a month and their medical program is not going to be covering that.

In fact, in the report that we did under the leadership of Senator Kirby, we dealt with those kinds of things, Canadians who are suffering undue hardship. It goes beyond which medications are covered. It goes to financial hardship for Canadians who, in some cases, are doing without the medications required for a healthy life.

[Translation]

FINANCE

BUDGET

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Mr. Leader, with the drop in the price of oil and the impact this is having on the Canadian economy, your government seems to be confused about how it plans to balance the budget. One day Minister Oliver said that the government would dip into the \$3 billion reserve, and then Minister Kenney told us that the government would not touch the reserve but would make cuts to government spending, which must certainly be giving some public servants nightmares.

Minister MacKay said that the budget would be balanced in a prudent and responsible way, implying that the government would go with neither option or both. It is not clear. Confusion aside, Canadians realize that your government is debating whether to dip into the reserve or cut services. In other words, what disease would we rather have — the plague or cholera?

• (1410)

If the Prime Minister hadn't banked entirely on oil for Canada's economic growth, which is what I was talking to you about before Christmas, we wouldn't be in this position because we wouldn't be so affected by the fluctuating prices. You can deny the obvious, but the fact that your government postponed the budget in order to come up with a solution to the problem is proof of its mismanagement.

Leader of the Government, can you tell us whether the government will dip into the reserve, cut services or both? How will it balance the budget?

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): The best guarantee of a balanced budget is to have a Conservative government — not a Liberal government led by Justin Trudeau — as will be the case for future budgets, or at any rate at least for the next one, I hope. The drop in the price of oil has different consequences for the economy, including lower prices at the pumps and lower energy costs for manufacturers. The drop in the price of oil will also reduce the government's room to manoeuvre, but we will balance the budget in 2015 and, as you know, the contingency fund, as its name suggests, is there to be used in unforeseen circumstances.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: Speaking of that fund, it would be a bit foolhardy to think that it alone could make up the budget shortfall. There is no need to lecture the Liberals. Let me remind you that when you came to power, you inherited a budget surplus with a bonus \$3 billion reserve fund. I think you have nothing to teach us.

However, this week, the Bank of Canada released a report with a passage on the impact of low oil prices on the Canadian economy, which is very dependent on oil. The report states:

The considerably lower profile for oil prices will be unambiguously negative for the Canadian economy in 2015 and subsequent years.

I believe that we can give the governor of the bank at least some credit and respect. This report indicates that GDP growth will slow, and most economists agree with that assessment. The report shows that the unemployment rate has also started to rise. The decline in the housing market will result in higher unemployment in this sector, and the report forecasts a negative impact on public finances.

In view of the fact that the Prime Minister has done nothing to diversify the economy or promote an energy transition and new technologies, this situation should have been anticipated. We therefore look forward to your budget.

Leader, instead of misrepresenting the economic leadership of the Liberal government — a government that inherited a huge deficit from the previous Conservative government — does your government have a plan for us?

What is your plan for getting the Canadian economy back on track?

Senator Carignan: Senator, you have voted against every economic action plan we have passed in recent years, and I believe that you are going to do the same thing when it comes to the 2015 Economic Action Plan. I can assure you that the government has a plan for 2015.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on your economic action plans. I think that the ones who benefited the most from them were the radio and television stations and the media that promoted them. However, we are hearing — from your colleagues as well — that there is a big problem with the budget because the price of a barrel of oil is no longer \$100, but \$47 or \$48.

As you said, this will allow businesses to invest in export sectors since, at the same time and for other reasons, our dollar is weaker. It may also allow Canadians to save money at the pump. They can do two things. They can either pay down their debt — and this would be a good opportunity because they have a huge debt burden and your government has not taken any measures to help taxpayers in that regard — or, if they are not in debt up to their eyeballs, they can take advantage of the extra wiggle room they've gained now that all of their money isn't going to pay for gas and buy goods and services from our Canadian businesses.

On the other hand, I may have a suggestion, and I am even prepared to confess that the Liberal government did the same thing. If you consider the huge tax breaks given to oil companies, most of which are foreign companies, do the math and you may be able to keep your wiggle room. Canadians may also be able to breathe a little easier and pay less to operate their vehicles. Rather than making cuts to spending, rather than threatening us with all sorts of bad things and dipping into the contingency fund, why doesn't your government consider reviewing all the tax breaks given to oil companies and other big businesses, all that money that should be paid, and take this opportunity to clean house in that area?

Senator Carignan: Senator, I will not comment on all of your statements because some of them are inaccurate and would require a lot of clarification. I simply want to tell you that when it comes to tax cuts, you've come to the right place. I want to remind you that we are redistributing wealth directly to families, even though the Liberals are opposed to it. Every Canadian

family with children will benefit from our latest tax breaks, including the enhanced Universal Child Care Benefit, which will now be worth nearly \$2,000 a year for every child under the age of 6 and \$720 a year for every child between the ages of 6 and 17, as well as lower taxes for families. Low- and middle-income families will benefit the most from these measures. That is on top of the measures that have already been taken. As I said, the average Canadian family has been paying \$3,400 a year less in taxes since our government took office. The amounts I am talking about are additional amounts that will be added to the wobble room you spoke about earlier.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: Can I just clarify something about your so-called gifts to Canadian families? I want to tell you that when children do not have access to government-run daycares like those in Quebec, most people pay around \$200 per week per child for private daycare. You're talking about \$2,000 per year, and that's \$800 per month. People will have used up your cheque in two months, but they'll have to keep paying \$800 per month. I'm sorry, but when you talk about measures to help low-income families, those low-income families don't even have the means to use private daycares, and when there aren't any, like in our province, people make do with what's available, but what's available isn't necessarily good for Canadian families.

Rest assured that when it comes to your measures, your little pre-election gifts, we'll make sure that people know those gifts won't cover the cost of sending a child to a good-quality daycare.

Senator Carignan: I realize that it's probably been a while since you've had a budget so tight that such sums of money matter, but I can tell you that most Canadian families working out their budgets will be very happy to get this. It's not a gift, it's a way to reduce their tax burden, and it's money that belongs to them and should not be spent on bureaucracy and paperwork, which is what you're suggesting.

Senator Hervieux-Payette: I would like to make one last point. You're about to give tax gifts to families that are not average. Your fabulous income splitting system will cost billions and will reduce the taxes paid by couples that collect huge paycheques. Even on your side, there are people — particularly your colleague, the late minister Flaherty — who did not agree with this extremely costly measure that will benefit the rich.

• (1420)

I am simply giving you a small example of how you can balance the budget. I am asking you to look carefully at this, and you will see that this measure makes no sense in these times of fiscal restraint.

Senator Carignan: As I said, I can assure you, senator, that cancelling or cutting benefits, returns or increased payments to Canadian families is out of the question. These measures directly target families to help them make ends meet.

You suggested that you plan to be active during the election campaign — I imagine you mean for the Liberal Party — so perhaps you can debate this measure at that time. Perhaps we can even debate it together, for I too plan to be active.

[English]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Government), pursuant to notice of January 28, 2015, moved:

That when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, February 3, 2015 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.)

THE SENATE

ORIGINS, HISTORY AND EVOLUTION—INQUIRY— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Nolin, calling the attention of the Senate to its roots, the history of its origins and its evolution.

Hon. Jim Munson: I would like to take the adjournment of this particular inquiry.

(On motion of Senator Munson, debate adjourned.)

(The Senate adjourned until Tuesday, February 3, 2015, at 2 p.m.)

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