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(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 27, 2011

The Honourable NOËL A. KINSELLA
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, October 27, 2011

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

WORLD FOOD DAY

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, October 16 marked World Food Day.

In 1996, Canada joined with 184 other nations at the World Food Summit to set an ambitious target: "To eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015."

It is now nearing the end of 2011, and the number of those who suffer from hunger, far from being cut in half, has escalated. It is estimated that the world population is about to reach 7 billion. The number of those suffering from chronic hunger is nearing 1 billion; 1 out of every 7 people goes hungry. That is a terrible statistic.

We have all seen the soaring prices of basic foods around the world in recent years. Indeed, this year, the theme of World Food Day was "Food prices — from crisis to stability." According to the World Bank, rising food costs in 2010-11 pushed nearly 70 million people into extreme poverty.

Last week, I received an email from Katie Hunt, a student at Saint Mary's University in Halifax. At present she is in China, having been selected as one of four Saint Mary's students to spend this semester overseas on an internship working towards food security. She wrote to me about the challenges facing farmers in that country, and this is what she said:

It is a broken food system that allows us in the global north to suffer from obesity when according to the WFP [the United Nations World Food Programme] 925 million people suffer from chronic hunger, 65% of whom live in only 7 countries. It is immoral that in many cases the very people that feed the world are rural farmers who themselves go hungry. We have the resources necessary to ensure that no one has to worry where their next meal comes from; ending global hunger is not an ideal, it is a necessity.

I agree with Ms. Hunt. There is much we can do as a great and prosperous nation.

I was pleased to see that the Minister of International Cooperation shares this concern. She recently announced that Canada will commit \$350 million in new funding to the World Food Programme over the next five years.

This is not a partisan issue, honourable senators. Prime Minister Chrétien published Canada's Action Plan for Food Security in 1998; Prime Minister Paul Martin doubled Canada's annual contribution to the World Food Programme; and I am happy to see that this government is continuing those efforts.

This is an issue that deeply concerns many of us in this chamber. A year ago His Honour hosted a two-day Speakers' consultation among the presiding officers of the upper and unicameral houses of the G20, and the topic was food security. I attended that meeting, as did a number of senators from both sides of this chamber. At that time it was agreed that the dialogue begun in Ottawa would continue. Senator Kinsella said: "Parliamentary dialogue will be undertaken with a view to implementing the actions needed to alleviate global food insecurity."

Honourable senators, action is more necessary now than ever before. I invite you to join with me in reaffirming our commitment as a nation to the eradication of global hunger, at home and abroad.

HEALTH CARE

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, Canada is experiencing a period of fiscal belt tightening as we deal with these turbulent economic times. The federal government has rightly enacted measures to curb spending and to cut costs by identifying and eliminating inefficiencies across the board. It is well known that health care transfer payments to the provinces and territories make up a large portion of the federal budget. I believe this is an area of spending where huge savings for the taxpayer may be created by establishing the purchasing power for prescription medicine at the national level.

These savings are to be found in the simple cost-saving business practice of buying in volume. Several provinces have signed MOUs with one another on the standardization and collaboration of trade regulations, labour mobility and other common government services such as liquor distribution. This type of agreement, focused on the collective purchase of prescription medicine, would create better value for dollar and net savings to the treasury. Such buying power may also result in a better standardization for what is and what is not covered by drug plans province by province.

Some may be quick to say that the administration of prescription medicine is under provincial jurisdiction; however, the rising costs to administer drug schedules is a major issue in every province across Canada, making it a common national issue. Ample opportunity for discussion between the federal and provincial governments is coming during the months leading up to 2014, when the federal-provincial health care funding formula expires.

Some honourable senators may recall I raised this issue in a similar way nearly one year ago, when I voiced my support for former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's call for an "adult

conversation” on health care. A conversation with the provinces, initiated by the federal government, on more than just funding dollars is necessary if the future of Canadian health care is to be sustainable. I believe we can provide better health care at a savings to the taxpayer by better utilizing our existing resources.

Honourable senators, strategic cooperation among all levels of government is necessary if our health care system is to meet the needs of our rapidly aging population. There is no better time than now for the conversation to begin.

Honourable senators, I may be in conflict because of my age, but that is the message.

MURDENA MARSHALL

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, when I last spoke to you about Cape Breton women I spoke about Ruth Goldbloom and her incredible work helping those who come from elsewhere to navigate the waters and settle into their new home, their new world. But what if the two worlds one must navigate are both found within one place? My next story is about a woman’s ability to do just that. It is her ability to break down barriers and educate those around her that distinguishes her as an influential Cape Breton woman.

Murdena Marshall is a well-known Mi’kmaq Elder and spiritual leader who was born in Whycomagh, Cape Breton. When she was only eight years old, her mother died in childbirth, leaving her to follow the cultural tradition and to go and live with her maternal grandparents. Shortly after, her grandmother passed away, and so it was her grandfather, her aunts and her uncles who raised her.

Murdena’s grandfather, the late Gabriel Sylliboy, was the first elected chief of the Mi’kmaq Grand Council. While he could not read, write or speak English, he was adamant that Murdena and all his grandchildren be formally educated in English while at the same time remain immersed in the Mi’kmaq culture and language. Murdena attended Indian Day School in Eskasoni First Nation, where she still resides today. She then moved to Catholic middle school in Arichat for Grades 9 and 10, and for Grades 11 and 12 she moved on to Saint Joseph’s Residential Convent School for Girls in Mabou. However, she left before completing her final year. After leaving school, Murdena married Albert Marshall and worked as a full-time wife and mother to their six children. In 1978, she lost her young son Tommy. This deeply affected her and was a large reason why she decided that she wanted to teach. She wished to pursue her quest for knowledge and to serve her Mi’kmaq community.

• (1340)

Murdena took courses from the Nova Scotia Teacher’s College in Truro. She graduated in 1984 from the University of New Brunswick with a Bachelor of Education. She furthered her studies at Harvard University, where she earned her master’s degree, also in education. She also has a certificate from St. Thomas University in Mi’kmaq Immersion. Murdena worked as an educator in her community for a period before joining the faculty at Cape Breton University. She has been

instrumental in the development of the Mi’kmaq Studies program at Cape Breton University. She also had a key role in developing the Integrative Science program. This program allows students to study both indigenous and mainstream sciences side by side.

In the late 1990s, Murdena retired from teaching at Cape Breton University, but, like the other role models on my list, that in no way slowed down her community involvement. She remains actively involved in a number of organizations, including the National Aboriginal Health Organization, the Unamak’l Institute of Natural Resources, the Elders’ Advisory Group of Mi’kmaqwey Debert Cultural Centre, the Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Association, and the Integrative Science program at Cape Breton University. In addition, she organizes workshops throughout Atlantic Canada.

Murdena received the Outstanding Leadership Award from Eskasoni First Nation in 1989 and the National Aboriginal Role Model Award in 1996. In 2006, she was awarded the Grand Chief Donald Marshall Senior Memorial Elder Award.

The knowledge and expertise that Murdena imparts as an animated speaker at both national and international conferences are invaluable. She demonstrates through her stories the unique understanding and wisdom the Mi’kmaq people have of the world around us.

Honourable senators, Murdena Marshall not only is a master of what she does, but she puts her thinking into action. She is a strong Cape Breton woman.

Honourable senators, I look forward to continuing to share with you the stories of Cape Breton women who have made such a positive impact on the lives around them.

THE POLAR BEAR

Hon. Nicole Eaton: Honourable senators, to borrow a phrase from a popular 1980s TV show, “Picture It”: 19th century Europe — the streets of every major European capital are bustling with fashionistas. And what they are wearing? Well, what fashion conscious trendsetter would be seen in public without their fur hat?

Fur hats were the fashion statement of the day. Canadian beavers bore the consequences. At the start of the craze, there were an estimated six million beavers in Canada. By the mid-1900s, when fickle fashion trendsetters abandoned fur for silk, the Canadian beaver was close to extinction.

Since then, the rodent has slowly recovered and today the population is well into the millions. Not everyone is happy. Many accuse the dentally defective rat of being a nuisance that wreaks havoc on farmlands, roads, lakes, streams and tree plantations, including my dock every summer. Nevertheless, the toothy tyrant received the highest honour ever bestowed on a rodent.

On March 24, 1975, the beaver became an official emblem of Canada. While I would never speak ill of our furry friend, I stand here today suggesting that perhaps it is time for a change. Yes, honourable senators, I believe that it is high time that the beaver step aside as a Canadian emblem or at least share the honour with the stately polar bear.

The polar bear is the world's largest terrestrial carnivore and Canada's most majestic and splendid mammal, holding reign over the Arctic for thousands of years. The polar bear has been and continues to be a powerful figure in the material, spiritual and cultural life of the indigenous people of the Arctic.

Contrary to unsubstantiated accusations, Canada is a world leader in its exemplary system of polar bear management. Our approach features co-management involving Aboriginal groups and government, and a strict system of quotas and tags.

The polar bear survives in the harshest climate and terrain in the world. Our polar bear has to find food in a remote, barren, frozen land and water; find shelter in the harshest of weather; and live alone in an inhospitable setting. The giant panda, on the other hand, spends its days blissfully munching on bamboo and dozing in the afternoon sun.

While I am somewhat exaggerating and being a bit irreverent to the panda, you have to agree with me on one thing: The panda has an enviable image consultant who has turned the derelict diva into the heartstrings-tugging darling of the world. It is time for our polar bear to give the panda and our glorified rodent some serious competition.

A country's symbols are not constant and can change over time, as long as they reflect the ethos of the people and the spirit of the nation. The polar bear, with its strength, courage, resourcefulness and dignity is perfect for the part. Please join me in promoting the polar bear as Canada's symbol for the 21st century.

THE LATE MRS. GULBANU SHERALI BANDALI JAFFER

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to my parents, especially my mother, and to all your mothers. My mother, Gulbanu Sherali Bandali Jaffer, was known to all of us as Mama. She cocooned us with her love and was the sunshine in our lives.

Mama was the first girl in East Africa to pass London Matriculation, which is the equivalent of university entrance, and then she went on to be a mathematician. She was the youngest principal in her school. Often her students were older than she was. She married my father, Sherali Bandali Jaffer, a politician, and as a young bride moved to Uganda. She very quickly embraced my father's work. With his help, she provided sanctuary to unwed mothers in our home. My parents have over 75 children that they have looked after or have been godparents to.

Mama never gave up her love for studying. She continued to study and became a social worker and probation officer in Kampala, Uganda. The Ugandan government sent her for further studies to London, England, and to Kent University in Ohio. While she studied, my father cared for us all.

As a social worker, I have vivid memories of how Mama used to go from shop to shop every month and convince shopkeepers to give her food. Her small Volkswagen was always full of food that she was going to deliver to the needy. Often, when I was with her, I would hear the shopkeepers saying that they had given her

food last month. She would, with a smile on her face and a twinkle in her eye, politely say, "But we have to eat every day. The children are hungry." She often browbeat the merchants into helping her if she did not succeed any other way. They could never say no to her.

As a probation officer, she would act as if every young child who was in trouble with the law was her own. Justice Lule would often say to us that Mama would not take no for an answer. She would always convince the justices to have the young people be personally supervised by her and not sent to prison. Many people now tell us that she changed their lives by standing up for them.

Mama was one of the first people who exposed Idi Amin's atrocities. She told the world how he was torturing and hammering people to death. Mama was fearless.

My parents had to flee Uganda before the Asian exodus because of their activism, and they lost all their possessions and assets. Mama never complained of the finery she had lost. All she said was that she wished she had her large pots and pans so she could easily cook for our large family.

When Mama arrived in Canada, she was immediately given accreditation to work here. The day she got her accreditation she said to me, "You go back to school and get your accreditation. I will stay at home and raise your son Azool."

With the help of Senator St. Germain and former Minister Whelan, my parents are egg farmers in Abbotsford, B.C.

As they were not able to return to Uganda, they started boarding schools in India and made it a point to encourage girls to receive an education. Today, many of those girls live around the world and support their families.

My parents returned to Uganda when they were able. The last trip they returned because they wanted to finish their work of placing computers in girls' schools. They were obsessed with making sure that Ugandan girls were given the same opportunities as girls in Canada.

• (1350)

Mama received many accolades at her funeral, including one that was provided by Uganda's foreign minister, who stated she will be remembered for her selfless service to the young and underprivileged.

Mama has left an amazing husband, six children, five children-in-law, 15 grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Her death has brought darkness into our lives. We cannot hug and call her. For those of you who can, call your mother now. I can never hug or call my mother again.

ONE FREE WORLD INTERNATIONAL

Hon. Don Meredith: Honourable senators, last September I travelled to Iraq as part of One Free World International's fact-finding group, as an observer, and was able to see the courage and commitment of this organization working hard on behalf of Iraqi citizens who have been victims of violence, in particular the attacks on Christians.

My visit to Iraq in September of this year coincided with consultations on the creation of an office of religious freedom in Ottawa, announced by the Prime Minister during the election. Minister Baird met with caucus members and key stakeholders, including representatives of religious communities from across Canada, to seek their views and recommendations.

One Free World International's mission encompasses advocating on behalf of religious freedom before governments and international and multinational human rights bodies, through humanitarian work and advocacy, awareness campaigns, seminars, research, and fact-finding. One Free World International is guided in its work by Christian principles and has as its primary focus combatting the persecution of Christians and anti-Semitism.

The international work they undertake is in the spirit of promoting tolerance, understanding and respect for diverse religious beliefs through humanitarian work. Around the world today, honourable senators, as we see countries emerging from decades of tyranny and making steps to claim their emancipated future, I am proud to recognize a Canadian organization such as One Free World International, one that offers spiritual leadership and moral guidance by standing with people in need, in faith and solidarity, and serving as a beacon of hope to others around the world. One Free World International speaks for people who are persecuted or denied the freedom to follow their beliefs, thereby denying them the very essence of what it is to be human.

One Free World International is committed to building a better world in which people are free to choose and express their religious belief system in accordance with their conscience, without fear, and with full equality and dignity, while fully respecting the corresponding rights of others.

Honourable senators, I would like to bring to your attention that in less than a week's time, the One Free World International conference on rebuilding Iraq will be held in Ottawa on November 2 at the Government Conference Centre. This is an important event that signifies the renewal and reconstruction that is ongoing in Iraq, from the ground up. The conference will bring together people committed to helping the Iraqi people move forward.

The path forward is not an easy one, as highlighted by some of the stories we heard while in Iraq. There is much work to be done. The Iraqi people will be looking to international bodies, as well as to Canada, to stand with them and support their recovery process. This is important economically, socially and spiritually, as Iraqi people experience what it means to live in a democratic society. Canadian know-how and expertise will be needed to repair roads and factories, to build schools, as well as to build capacity and governance, en route to creating a more open, tolerant, democratic and free society where people can exercise their freedoms, including choices about religious beliefs, without fear of reprisal or imprisonment.

As honourable senators are aware, Canada did not participate in the war on Iraq. In fact, we invested \$300 million in the reconstruction of Iraq. I strongly believe that Canadian firms have a tremendous opportunity to assist in the rebuilding of Iraq. Canadian firms investing in Iraq will create jobs for Canadians, as well as inspire a better quality of life for the people of Iraq.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of honourable senators to the presence in the gallery of members of the Canadian Ski Cross Team: Marielle Thompson, Stan Rey and Georgia Simmerling. They are guests of the Honourable Senator Raine.

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

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT AND PRIVACY ACT— 2010-11 ANNUAL REPORTS TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2010-11 annual reports, pursuant to section 72 of the Access to Information Act and section 72 of the Privacy Act, concerning the administration of these acts within the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

PUBLIC SAFETY

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE— 2010-11 ANNUAL REPORT TABLED

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, pursuant to section 53 of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2010-11 annual report of the Security Intelligence Review Committee.

[English]

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. David Tkachuk, Chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 27, 2011

The Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration has the honour to present its

SECOND REPORT

Your Committee recommends that the following funds be released for fiscal year 2011-2012.

Banking, Trade and Commerce (Legislation)

Professional and Other Services	\$ 0
Transportation and Communications	\$ 0
All Other Expenditures	\$ 7,300
Total	\$ 7,300

Legal and Constitutional Affairs (Legislation)

Professional and Other Services	\$ 42,500
Transportation and Communications	\$ 0
All Other Expenditures	\$ 7,000
Total	\$ 49,500

Scrutiny of Regulations (Joint)

Professional and Other Services	\$ 1,200
Transportation and Communications	\$ 3,600
All Other Expenditures	\$ 2,250
Total	\$ 7,050

Respectfully submitted,

DAVID TKACHUK
Chair

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Tkachuk, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE SERVICES AND TRAVEL—STUDY ON POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN BRAZIL—SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 27, 2011

The Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade has the honour to present its

SECOND REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Tuesday, June 21, 2011 to examine and report on the political and economic developments in Brazil and the implications for Canadian policy and interests in the region, respectfully requests funds for the period ending on March 31, 2012 and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered:

(a) engage the services of such counsel, technical, clerical and other personnel as may be necessary; and

(b) Travel outside Canada

Pursuant to Chapter 3:06, section 2(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

RAYNELL ANDREYCHUK
Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix A, p. 285.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Andreychuk, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[Translation]

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE SERVICES AND TRAVEL—STUDY ON EMERGING ISSUES RELATED TO CANADIAN AIRLINE INDUSTRY—SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Dennis Dawson, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 27, 2011

The Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications has the honour to present its

SECOND REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Wednesday, June 15, 2011 to examine and report on emerging issues related to the Canadian airline, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012 and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered:

(a) to engage the services of such counsel, technical, clerical and other personnel as may be necessary;

(b) to travel inside Canada; and

(c) to travel outside of Canada.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:06, section 2(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

DENNIS DAWSON
Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix B, p. 292.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Dawson, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE SERVICES AND TRAVEL—STUDY ON CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE OF ENERGY SECTOR—SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Grant Mitchell, Deputy Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 27, 2011

The Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources has the honour to present its

SECOND REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Thursday, June 16, 2011 to examine and report on the current state and future of Canada's energy sector (including alternative energy), respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered:

- (a) to engage the services of such counsel, technical, clerical and other personnel as may be necessary;
- (b) to adjourn from place to place within Canada;
- (c) to travel inside Canada; and
- (d) to travel outside Canada.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:06, section 2(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

GRANT MITCHELL
Deputy Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix C, p. 300.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Mitchell, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE SERVICES AND TRAVEL—STUDY ON ISSUES RELATING TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT AND EVOLVING POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING FISHERIES AND OCEANS—FOURTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Fabian Manning, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 27, 2011

The Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Your Committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Sunday, June 26, 2011 to examine and to report on issues relating to the federal government's current and evolving policy framework for managing Canada's fisheries and oceans, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered:

- (a) to engage the services of such counsel, technical, clerical and other personnel as may be necessary;
- (b) to adjourn from place to place within Canada; and
- (c) to travel inside Canada.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:06, section 2(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

FABIAN MANNING
Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix D, p. 312.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Manning, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

• (1400)

NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE SERVICES AND TRAVEL—STUDY ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICIES, PRACTICES, CIRCUMSTANCES AND CAPABILITIES—SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Pamela Wallin, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 27, 2011

The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence has the honour to present its

SECOND REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Wednesday, June 22, 2011, to examine and report on Canada's national security and defence policies, practices, circumstances and capabilities, requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered:

- (a) to engage the services of such counsel, technical, clerical and other personnel as may be necessary;
- (b) to travel inside Canada.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:06, section 2(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

PAMELA WALLIN
Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix E, p. 320.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Wallin, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO TRAVEL—STUDY ON SERVICES AND BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS AND VETERANS OF ARMED FORCES AND CURRENT AND FORMER MEMBERS OF THE RCMP, COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES AND CHARTER—THIRD REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Pamela Wallin, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 27, 2011

The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence has the honour to present its

THIRD REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Wednesday, June 22, 2011, to study issues concerning veterans affairs, requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered to travel inside Canada.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:06, section 2(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

PAMELA WALLIN
Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix F, p. 331.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Wallin, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON PARLIAMENTS, MINORITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, OCTOBER 31–NOVEMBER 3, 2010—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Donald H. Oliver: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the International Parliamentary Conference on Parliaments, Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Effective Participation in Politics, held in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico, from October 31 to November 3, 2010.

PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS, MAY 7-8, 2009—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Donald H. Oliver: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the Parliamentary Conference on the Global Economic Crisis, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from May 7 to 8, 2009.

THE SENATE

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE SPEAKER OF THE SENATE AND THE GOVERNOR OF THE BANK OF CANADA TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and pursuant to rule 28(4), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, correspondence between the Speaker of the Senate and the Governor of the Bank of Canada concerning the motion adopted by the Senate on March 8, 2011, dealing with the inclusion of the name and title of Her Majesty, when appropriate, on bank notes.

Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

CANADA'S INNATE NATIONAL MODESTY

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Tommy Banks: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the importance of Canada's innate national modesty.

QUESTION PERIOD

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I wonder whether we should not move immediately to Senator Banks' inquiry.

In any event, I want to return to the topic I pursued yesterday, as we all did, with respect to the nomination of the Auditor General and the job posting for the vacancy, which said that proficiency in both official languages is essential. It now appears that the Prime Minister is nominating a person who is a unilingual anglophone but who intends to become proficient in due course in the other official language.

In view of the fact that he is to appear before Committee of the Whole here on Tuesday, I asked the leader if she would inquire into the circumstances surrounding this change of position on the part of the government. Is she in a position to report to the house today?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, first I want to make it very clear that the government sought bilingual candidates. After a very thorough process, the successful candidate was determined to be far and

away the most qualified. Mr. Ferguson has undertaken to become proficient in both of Canada's official languages and has indeed already begun training in this regard.

Senator Cowan: That is the same answer the leader gave yesterday, but it does not answer the question. The wording is very clear. Yesterday she was saying that there seems to be confusion between the notice and the law. This is not a question of confusion between the notice and the law. I am reading from the government's own notice, which says: "Proficiency in both official languages is essential."

I drew the leader's attention to another notice for a job vacancy, which was in the same issue of the *Canada Gazette* that the Auditor General posting appeared, and there were the words "proficiency in both languages would be strongly preferred." I am sure the leader, in view of the position that she held in Prime Minister Mulroney's office, is well aware of the care with which these job postings are made. These words were chosen deliberately by the government. It is not a question of law; it is a question of the posting.

I want to know, which the leader undertook yesterday to ascertain, when was the change made and why was it made?

Senator LeBreton: I think in answer to the honourable senator's first question, Mr. Ferguson has indicated that he will meet the essential requirement.

Senator Cowan: I would suggest to the leader that the phrase "proficiency in both official languages is essential" means not at some time in the future but at the time of application.

As my colleague Senator Banks pointed out yesterday, if he or any other unilingual Canadian were to look at that job posting, he or she would say, "I cannot apply because I am not proficient in both official languages." Therefore, someone somewhere changed the criteria for the job, and I want to know when that happened and why.

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I will again repeat that the government sought bilingual candidates. After a thorough process, the successful candidate was determined to be far and away the most qualified. Mr. Ferguson has undertaken to become proficient in both of Canada's official languages and has begun this process.

I want to read something into the record. In New Brunswick, Liberal leader Victor Boudreau — the honourable senator's colleague — is confident Mr. Ferguson is up to the task. He said:

Ottawa is a step up, of course. But at the end of the day, what Mike Ferguson will face in Ottawa as opposed to Fredericton will be simply a few extra zeroes at the end of the numbers. The same skills and the same types of experience will count in both jobs. And Mike certainly knows all about bureaucracy and government financial systems.

• (1410)

The former provincial finance minister said that Mr. Ferguson "has the toughness and cold-eyed precision an auditor general needs."

He continued to say the following:

“As Finance minister, I have to be frank,” he said with a chuckle. “I didn’t always look forward to his reports. But however stern he might be, he was always fair and always principled. And you can’t argue with his main message to any government of the day — that government must be as open and transparent as possible when dealing with taxpayers’ money.”

That is a quotation from the Liberal leader in New Brunswick, the former Liberal Minister of Finance, about the competency of this individual. Mr. Ferguson will be appearing before the Senate and, quite clearly, is fully confident that he can meet the bilingual requirements of the position.

Senator Cowan: Honourable senators, my quarrel is not with Mr. Ferguson, and I am sure that apart from the linguistic qualification or lack of linguistic —

Senator LeBreton: I am listening.

Senator Cowan: The leader was not listening when I asked the question because she did not answer it.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh.

Senator Cowan: My quarrel is not with Mr. Ferguson or with his qualifications to be the Auditor General of Canada or Auditor General or deputy minister in New Brunswick, except with respect to his linguistic qualifications or lack of linguistic qualifications.

My question is with respect to the process. The government stated in the notice of job posting that proficiency in both official languages is essential — not preferred, but essential.

I would like to know why and when and who changed that qualification. That is a simple question.

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, as the senator keeps saying, bilingualism is essential, and Mr. Ferguson has indicated that he will live up to the essential requirements of the position as bilingual.

Senator Cowan: That is why I drew the attention of the leader to the difference between that job posting and the other job posting for the position of President of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. There it said that proficiency in both official languages would be strongly preferred.

As Senator Downe was discussing with the leader yesterday, and as she knows from her position before, this is not a question of law. This is a question of the posting that the government decided.

At some point someone decided that he or she would broaden the search and would include as qualified candidates those who did not meet the government’s own criteria. It is a simple question: Who made that decision and when?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, as I said yesterday, and I made that commitment yesterday, if there is information with regard to that, I will be happy to share it with honourable senators.

Senator Cowan: The leader says that Mr. Ferguson will be here on Tuesday, and that is why I asked yesterday if she would undertake to make these inquiries and provide this information before Tuesday. We can ask Mr. Ferguson that question, but he cannot answer that question. He can answer as to what he did, but he cannot answer for the government. That is the leader’s job.

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I will repeat what I said: The government sought bilingual candidates. After a thorough process, the successful candidate was determined to be far and away the most qualified. That is Mr. Ferguson. He has undertaken to become proficient in both of Canada’s official languages, and I do believe, in all fairness — and he will be here next week — that we should take him at his word.

Senator Cowan: Does the leader want us to believe that there was not one bilingual qualified accountant in this country? I cannot believe that. At some point, the criteria must have been changed. That is the point. This is not about Mr. Ferguson or any other applicant or potential applicant for the job. This is what the government did. The government could have said, if it were so minded, that proficiency in both official languages would be strongly preferred. It could have said that, but it did not, so at some point the government changed its mind.

It is not for Mr. Ferguson to answer that; it is for the leader to answer that.

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I think yesterday I was chastised by someone on that side for referring to the position of Auditor General as merely that of an accountant. The honourable senator now seems to think the position of the Auditor General is something that could be filled by a large number of people.

Obviously, this is a very important position. I will repeat that the government sought bilingual candidates. Mr. Ferguson, through the process that was conducted in senior staffing, proved to be the most qualified candidate, and I do believe, according to Mr. Ferguson’s own commitment, that he will meet the requirements for bilingualism.

Senator Cowan: When did the government decide and who on the part of the government decided that proficiency in both official languages is essential, that is, mandatory? When and who decided that that was not and no longer mandatory? That is what we need to know.

Senator LeBreton: First, I would like to see the whole notice. What does the next sentence say? I do not know.

Senator Cowan: I have it here. I have even underlined it.

Senator LeBreton: I will read it. However, as I indicated yesterday, honourable senators, senior staff in the Privy Council handled this. They sought bilingual candidates, and they went through the whole process. They found that Mr. Ferguson was the most qualified, and he has indicated that he will meet the bilingual requirements.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh.

Hon. Tommy Banks: Honourable senators, the minister is trying to flim-flam a bunch of old flim-flammers. The leader has made the question very clear. She is obliging us to ask these questions of Mr. Ferguson. We will have to ask the questions of Mr. Ferguson. I remind us all that on a previous occasion in Committee of the Whole when we failed to be assiduous in our questioning of an officer of Parliament, we made a mistake. There was an error of omission, the result of which is that an officer of Parliament was appointed with the approval of this place because we did not do our job.

We will have to ask Mr. Ferguson these questions. No one on this side has ever questioned any of the intent or the auditing qualifications of Mr. Ferguson or anything in his past. However, we must now ask if he is able to read English, because a normal, reasonable person who reads English and who read the application notice, which is before the leader on her desk at the moment, would see the word “essential,” which is unequivocal. It does not mean “maybe” or “perhaps” or “at some later time.” A normal educated person reading that notice would say, “Oh, functionality in both official languages is essential. Therefore, I do not qualify even to apply, let alone to succeed in the application.”

Do we have to assume either that Mr. Ferguson cannot read English or that, as the leader has suggested, someone in some place changed the rules?

Why, after reading that notice, would Mr. Ferguson apply for that job?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, Senator Banks is quite right. These are not questions Mr. Ferguson would necessarily have to answer. When he appears before the Senate, it will be up to the Senate to decide whether he is qualified to serve as the Auditor General of Canada, as an officer of Parliament. That will be our job. Senator Banks cites a case of the Committee of the Whole in one other instance that turned out not to be the right person. I happened to be one of the ones who voted against the appointment of that person, if we are thinking about the same person; but the fact of the matter here is that we have an individual who, by all evidence, is extremely well qualified for this position and, furthermore, went through a selection process in the Privy Council Office where they sought bilingual candidates and were unsuccessful.

• (1420)

Clearly, of all the people who applied for the position, Mr. Ferguson was far and away the most qualified. For the honourable senator to suggest that Mr. Ferguson should not have applied is highly insulting. He probably applied because he believed he could be proficient in both official languages.

Senator Banks: Honourable senators, we all know how this works. We all know how this works. There is a funnel into which all the applications go. There is a screen, and the screen takes out unqualified applicants for a position for which the qualifications are listed, among which is an essential capability in both languages.

Why was the screen removed in this case?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators can ask me the same question 500 ways and I will give the same answer. The government sought bilingual candidates. After a thorough process, the successful candidate was determined to be far and away the most qualified. We have the words of the present interim leader of the Liberal Party in New Brunswick who is also the former Liberal finance minister under whom Mr. Ferguson served as one person, among many, who have attested to his qualifications to be the Auditor General.

Mr. Ferguson has undertaken to be proficient in both of Canada’s official languages. He worked in New Brunswick and was a deputy minister and former Auditor General in Canada’s only officially bilingual province. I cannot answer for Mr. Ferguson, but I would imagine he applied because he felt he met the criteria.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, the minister says that Mr. Ferguson served for several years as the Auditor General for New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province in Canada.

She says that he was the Deputy Minister of Finance in the same officially bilingual province, the only one in Canada. Had he truly wanted to learn French as a second language, should he not have learned it by now?

Are we to suppose that his past good intentions are a portent of his future good intentions? In my opinion, if he did not learn French in the past, I do not see why he would learn it in the future.

[*English*]

Senator LeBreton: Senator Dawson is supposing a lot. I already indicated in my answer to Senator Banks that obviously Mr. Ferguson applied for this position because he believed he met the criteria. It would be unfair for you or me or any of us to judge what he believes is his own proficiency in the other language.

[*Translation*]

Senator Dawson: We will have the opportunity to hear from him in Committee of the Whole. If he interpreted an official document of the Government of Canada in that way — that is to say incorrectly, because bilingualism was required — can we trust him to audit the government’s books for the next ten years?

Madam Leader, I have my doubts.

[*English*]

Senator LeBreton: That is truly disgusting. The fact is, even by the evidence of his own colleagues — not of the political stripe of the government, by the way — he was an extremely qualified person. The senior staff of the Privy Council Office interviewed all of these individuals. Of course, I do not know about Senator Downe, but I was never privy to those kinds of appointments when I was in the Prime Minister’s Office. They were left to expert

people who were dealing with specific, very detailed requirements for officers of Parliament positions. Obviously, Mr. Ferguson, by evidence of people in New Brunswick, is very qualified. For anyone to suggest that because he was in New Brunswick where he was apparently a very successful auditor general and a very successful deputy minister of finance, that somehow or other he is unqualified, that is just beyond the pale, to say the least.

Hon. Grant Mitchell: Honourable senators, the leader has said that Mr. Ferguson has made a fundamental commitment to become bilingual. Could she tell us whether he has made a commitment to a date by which time he will be bilingual, who will hold him accountable to becoming bilingual, and what will happen to him if he does not do it?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, Senator Mitchell made outrageous comments yesterday. At least, he has toned it down a bit today. I think we are all doing Mr. Ferguson a great disservice by making all these wild-eyed accusations and not giving him a chance.

We are looking for an auditor general. Obviously, he is qualified. Obviously, he will be serving in the capacity, if approved by Parliament, as an officer of Parliament. Obviously, he understands the importance of our linguistic duality and the Official Languages Act. However, I am not going to be the one who will suggest that he is taking on this job in a position of lack of faith. I do not think that is appropriate. He will be here on Tuesday and I am sure will acquit himself very well.

Senator Mitchell: Honourable senators, maybe the first thing he should do is an audit of the government's hiring process.

Could the leader answer one other question, or at least give some effort to answering one other question? Were there any other unilingual applicants for this job? Were there any other people who misread that application and proceeded to apply even though they were unilingual, too?

Senator LeBreton: Again, as I have reported in the last few days, I can also speak from experience. Positions such as this are handled by the senior staff in the Privy Council Office. I would not know, nor would I want to know, how many applicants there were, or who was on the list and not on the list. Therefore, I will not agree to even try to find out that information.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the appointment of a unilingual anglophone auditor general calls into question this government's commitment to the linguistic duality of our country and the application of the Official Languages Act.

Not only will the nominated Auditor General not be able to communicate with the members of the public he meets, but his appointment also calls into question the application of Part V of the Official Languages Act, concerning the language of work. Federal employees and officials who wish to communicate with the Auditor General during working meetings will not be able to do so in French.

[Senator LeBreton]

How can the minister justify the violation of parts of the Official Languages Act and the lack of respect for the French-speaking citizens of Canada?

[*English*]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, that is an outrageous statement and the actions of this government have proven otherwise. The honourable senator is doing a great disservice to Mr. Ferguson to suggest that he will not be able to perform his functions with regard to both official languages. He did work in New Brunswick. He worked in an officially bilingual province. He was the Auditor General of that province. He was the deputy minister of finance of that province. It is quite a leap to suggest, sight unseen, that he would not be able to deal with his position in both official languages.

Hon. Joan Fraser: Honourable senators, the Leader of the Government in the Senate has said that Mr. Ferguson has undertaken to become proficient in the French language. I would like to know how the government defines "proficiency," because in the French version of the job posting and of the selection criteria, the requirement for competence in both languages was even stronger. In the French version in both the job posting and the selection criteria the phrase is "La maîtrise des deux langues officielles est essentielle" — "la maîtrise," the mastery of the two official languages is essential.

• (1430)

Any of us who has attempted to learn a second, or third, or fourth language knows that it is no small task to master another language. The Auditor General of Canada is going to have very demanding work facing him. How proficient does the government expect him to become and, to echo Senator Mitchell's question, by when?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, the honourable senator is making the assumption that he has no proficiency at the moment. As I have said, Mr. Ferguson has worked in the only officially bilingual province in the country as a deputy minister of finance and also as the Auditor General. I believe that his level of proficiency is something that we will absolutely be able to determine. His qualifications appear to be exemplary. I am sure that when this position was posted and he made application, he took that into account. I will not predetermine or try to ascertain before the fact that he is starting at zero, because I do not believe that is the case.

Senator Fraser: To repeat my leader's repeated point, this is not about Mr. Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson maybe cannot read in English or French, but the people who drew up the job posting and the criteria can presumably read in both languages. It is very clear that a very high degree of proficiency was part of the essential requirements for this job. Someone in the vast governmental apparatus changed their mind, but I am trying to ascertain how far that change has gone. When and to what degree can we expect this new officer of Parliament to be able to communicate properly with Canadians whose mother tongue is French?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I absolutely cannot definitively give an answer to that.

An Hon. Senator: It's not about Mr. Ferguson.

Senator LeBreton: The honourable senator says it is not about Mr. Ferguson, and I do understand the concerns about the job posting, but the fact of the matter is that the honourable senator is making assumptions about Mr. Ferguson that may turn out to be entirely untrue.

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I have a very warm spot in my heart for accountants. I am married to an accountant, and my daughter is an accountant. I love them both dearly. I have never met Mr. Ferguson. I am sure Mr. Ferguson is a very nice person. Mr. Ferguson is probably a very qualified accountant, but Mr. Ferguson is not qualified to be the Auditor General of Canada. The posting clearly said that one had to be proficient in both official languages. Is the leader suggesting to this chamber that there is not one qualified bilingual accountant in all of Canada?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, it is quite a mouthful to say that he is not qualified to be the Auditor General of Canada. I regret that anyone in Canada would say that someone was not qualified for a position that they obviously applied for, went through a rigorous process and came out as the top candidate. It is very presumptuous for us to ever make the statement that any individual who is put before Parliament as a possible officer of Parliament should automatically, before they even have a hearing, be rendered not qualified.

Senator Cordy: Is the leader suggesting that the posting for the position of Auditor General should not indicate that the person be fluently bilingual?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I am suggesting that the government sought bilingual candidates, but, after a very thorough process, as I have said before, the successful candidate, Mr. Ferguson, was determined to be far and away the most qualified person to serve as Canada's Auditor General. I do not know how many people were in the mix, whether it was 5, 10, 15 or 20, and I do not know if they were unilingual English or unilingual French or bilingual. All I know is that the selection process produced the name of Mr. Ferguson as the most qualified individual to be our auditor general. I trust the process, and I believe that Mr. Ferguson would not have applied if he did not think he met the criteria.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE SENATE

MOTION TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL SUICIDE STRATEGY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Dennis Dawson, pursuant to notice of October 5, 2011, moved:

That the Senate agree that suicide is more than a personal tragedy, but is also a serious public health issue and public policy priority; and, further, that the Senate urge the

government to work cooperatively with the provinces, territories, representative organizations from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, and other stakeholders to establish and fund a National Suicide Prevention Strategy, which among other measures would promote a comprehensive and evidence-driven approach to deal with this terrible loss of life.

He said: Honourable senators, I am going to talk about a national suicide prevention strategy. Before I began writing my notes for this speech, I went over the remarks I have made in this chamber about this subject. I will certainly come back to it, but I found that I had forgotten the reason that motivates me to keep repeating myself on this subject: people I knew personally who committed that act, and the dozens of friends who have lost a loved one to suicide or whose loved one attempted suicide. I could name several dozen, but even if I tried to protect their identity, I still might cause them pain. It is that pain that I seek to diminish in moving a motion attempting to reduce the number of suicides in Canada.

Allow me to reread the motion that was moved in the other place and introduced here two weeks ago:

That the House agree that suicide is more than a personal tragedy, but is also a serious public health issue and public policy priority; and further that the House urge the government to work cooperatively with the provinces, territories, representative organizations from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, and other stakeholders to establish and fund a National Suicide Prevention Strategy, which among other measures would promote a comprehensive and evidence-driven approach to deal with this terrible loss of life.

• (1440)

I would like to remind honourable senators that the other place was nearly unanimous in adopting the motion in question earlier this month, on October 4.

For me, introducing this motion is the culmination of a process that really began a few years ago when I first spoke in this chamber about the issue of suicide, particularly in Quebec.

This motion also flows logically from the study of mental health in Canada undertaken by this chamber and the 2004 Kirby report, which looked at the relationship between mental illness and suicide. This report was the first step toward a political discussion on the issue. The creation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada in August 2007 and the publication of its report in 2009 were added to the list of concrete actions taken by the government to shed some light on the correlation between depression and suicide.

Honourable senators, we have to do more. Suicide is a subject that has been too often overlooked by Parliament and too often seen as a family and personal problem rather than as a growing social problem in Canada. This issue must now be more seriously addressed at the political level.

This motion grew from the evolving understanding and awareness among federal parliamentarians that suicide has now become a national priority that the government must address with seriousness, conviction and political will.

This motion recognizes that suicide is the responsibility of all Canadians. It recognizes that systems must be put in place by the government, in cooperation with the provinces, to prevent deaths by suicide. It is by researching and analyzing this problem in vulnerable groups that we will find effective solutions that we can adapt to each type of person at risk.

In the House of Commons, the debate on this motion lasted nearly four hours. It brought together all the parties, who expressed their strong general agreement — a phenomenon that is rare in the other place these days — to implement a national suicide prevention strategy. Members from all parties shared their personal experiences and knowledge about suicide before the House of Commons, and suggested key points to consider in the possible development of a national strategy. Some speeches were very sad, honourable senators. Of the various speeches made in the other place, I would like to share those that seemed particularly relevant or that were particularly touching.

First, I would like to emphasize the importance of the discussion we had in this chamber before adopting Mr. Bob Rae's motion.

[English]

Mr. Rae said:

We all have friends who have died in this terrible way and we wonder what could have caused them to do so. What we do know is there are things we can do. It is not a hopeless situation. We have to take what my grandmother used to call "the human footsteps." Every day we need to move forward by taking the human footsteps that will lead us to the progress we must make as Canadians and as a society. This is a frontier we must cross together.

Furthermore, on behalf of the Conservative Party, Mr. Harold Albrecht, of Kitchener—Conestoga, made a remark in the other chamber that depicts the situation in Canada today, and the lack of intervention from the federal government in the process of suicide prevention in Canada, from the moments before, during and after a person commits suicide. Mr. Albrecht said:

As our colleagues have pointed out today, the numbers are truly appalling. Over 300 people every month end their lives by suicide, or the equivalent of the number of passengers in one large airliner.

Later, in the same debate, Ms. Libby Davies, from Vancouver East, for the NDP, talked about an important element to take into consideration in the drafting and implementation of a national strategy on the matter.

The bill also talks about the need to establish national guidelines for best practices in suicide prevention and to work with communities to use culture specific knowledge to design appropriate policies and programs. That is a very important element. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It is a matter of understanding what is going on in a

particular community, whether it be in a geographic sense, to understand those cultural specific risk factors and issues that are at play.

[Translation]

We need to consider studying the topic, researching it and possibly spending money on it if we want to help prevent one of the leading causes of death among some particularly vulnerable groups: military personnel, youth and Aboriginals.

I do not want to overwhelm you with numbers, but I would like to highlight some of the most tragic ones. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. Each day, more than 10 Canadians commit suicide. In the past 30 years, more than 100,000 Canadians have taken their own lives. According to a health report from Statistics Canada, Canadians are seven times more likely to commit suicide than to be victims of a homicide. According to the World Health Organization, the suicide rate in Canada is 15 people in 100,000. And according to this same organization, there are at least 20 attempted suicides for each death. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth aged 18 to 24, according to the Canadian Psychiatric Association.

Passing this motion, honourable senators, will obviously be too late for those who have already taken their own lives. But it is not too late to protect those who are considering that act. It is time for the federal government, in partnership with the provinces, to implement guidelines to coordinate efforts in local communities across the country in order to prevent suicide. We need to eliminate the current gaps in program implementation, particularly when it comes to the most vulnerable groups.

I would like to speak about the situation in Quebec in more detail. It goes without saying that I cannot talk about a national suicide prevention strategy without talking about Quebec's fight to prevent suicide, a cause that I am quite involved in. I would like to provide some statistics by way of illustration. These numbers demonstrate the gravity of the situation.

Every day, three Quebecers are lost to suicide. On average, 30 people a day are in mourning because of suicide. They suffer because of another person's suicide. Every year, more than 20,000 people call the suicide prevention centre in Quebec City to ask for help. This shows that there are ways to help people. Of the calls received, 48 per cent are from men. In 2008, there were 1,100 suicides in Quebec; 76 per cent of those were men and 24 per cent were women. Suicide is a phenomenon that affects all age groups and social classes to varying degrees. The age group most affected is 35- to 49-year-olds, and men in particular. Suicide is one of the primary causes of premature death in Quebec. The suicide rate is twice as high as the traffic-related death rate, and we know how much money governments spend on trying to prevent traffic-related deaths. There really is no comparison if we look at what is spent on suicide prevention. It is estimated that a suicide costs society about \$900,000, including the direct costs for health care, the autopsy, the funeral and police investigations, as well as the indirect costs in terms of lost productivity.

In 1998 in Quebec, politicians looked at the abnormally high suicide rate among young people. The province created awareness programs in the schools to get young people talking about suicide,

[Senator Dawson]

without any taboos or prejudices. Training and prevention programs were also created with special funding. The suicide rate in Quebec has dropped dramatically over the past 10 years.

According to the AQPS, the Quebec association for suicide prevention, the number of requests for help is inversely proportional to the decrease in the number of suicides, proving that help and support from the government produce results.

The creation of help lines and support lines has had a positive effect: from 2001 to 2010, the number of suicides in the Quebec City area dropped from 156 to 95. During that same period, the number of requests for help that were answered went from 12,000 to 20,000.

There is still work to be done. We will not stop there. That is the message that must be drawn from this, and it is the message that the AQPS sent during Suicide Prevention Week in February 2011.

• (1450)

I would like to read the statement that was issued:

Because today, three of our fellow citizens will die by suicide, joining the 12,988 Quebecers who have died by suicide during the last 10 years, and these deaths have left behind more than a quarter of a million grieving people;

Because suicide is a leading cause of death in this country and it affects all regions;

Because we believe that, through concerted, coherent and intensive action, we can combat this phenomenon by making sure that all people in need have access to the effective resources they need;

Because we do not want suicide to take away any more of our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, other relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbours or students;

We believe that when it comes to suicide, education and awareness are everyone's responsibility. If we take a stand, we can make a difference.

The AQPS's message was this: "You are important to us. Suicide is not an option!"

This positive example of a concrete solution to curb suicide does not reflect the reality facing remote communities across Canada. These communities are all too often overlooked when it comes to providing services to improve awareness and support and to prevent suicide. Furthermore, vulnerable groups see suicide, more than ever, as a solution to their distress, be it psychological, emotional, physiological or socio-economic. This is true of First Nations people and veterans — two well-known, concrete examples that illustrate the urgent need to take action on suicide prevention.

Take, for example, the extent of the problem among Aboriginal people. I know that some honourable senators wish to address this aspect in particular during the debate on this motion. We have known since the 1995 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that the suicide rate among Aboriginal people is alarming. In fact, according to the Aboriginal Healing

Foundation, the overall suicide rate for First Nations people is almost twice that of Canada's general population. The rate of suicide among Inuit people in particular is about six to eight times higher than the Canadian average. For Aboriginal youth, the statistics are bleak: the suicide rate is five to seven times higher than for non-Aboriginals, and eleven times higher than the Canadian average in Inuit regions.

The government's National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy is a step in the right direction, and I applaud that. However, it is not enough to curb the staggering suicide rates in First Nations communities. According to a number of studies, a different approach adapted for Aboriginal communities that takes into account biological, physiological, developmental and socio-historical factors is needed. The role of the federal government should not be limited to providing medical services as a means of preventing suicide in these communities.

We should talk about the growth of this phenomenon among the military. I am sure that Senator Dallaire will speak in more detail about this. The suicide rate for members of the Armed Forces is almost three times that of the general population. There is a mental health crisis among veterans that must be addressed.

Let us talk about solutions. The Kirby report . . .

The Hon. the Speaker: I regret to inform the honourable senator that his time is up.

Senator Dawson: May I have five more minutes?

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Dawson: The Kirby report, produced by a Senate committee in 2004, stated the following:

[English]

Suicide is a stoppable problem. It is an action, not an illness.

[Translation]

It is from that perspective that we should view the role of the federal government in dealing with suicide in Canada. Constitutional authority over the First Nations, the Inuit, the Canadian Forces, veterans, the RCMP and public service employees belongs to the federal government. Suicide prevention among these at-risk groups is a responsibility of the Government of Canada, but has not, so far, been an explicit objective with regard to each of these groups. This might change one day.

[English]

As the Honourable Bob Rae said last week in the House of Commons, we have to make a difference by debating it.

L'Association québécoise de prévention du suicide is an example of success in elaborating a support system for people and their families. If we start by offering the help services needed, by addressing mental health illness issues related to suicide, as well as continuing the national discussion on social and financial problems that are directly and indirectly the underlining factors of

suicide in Canada, we will achieve the reduction of suicide rates all across the country. There are ways to face and tackle problem. It is us who need to find those solutions. It is our responsibility. The provinces are lacking funding. That is where the federal government comes into play and must become an actor in the implementation of a real solution for the problems in Canada.

Honourable senators, I mentioned before in this chamber that the subject of suicide is taboo. I invite you to search how many times suicide has been mentioned in this room and you will probably be surprised the few times that it has been done. It turns people off. You do not win votes talking about suicide. Frankly, you do not want to make people sad. You do not want to make people sad when seeking their electoral support.

I know that I am part of the group in this chamber that has a slight partisan streak, but the objectives behind this motion are by far, in its nature, very non-partisan.

I appeal to members on both sides of this house to support the motion but, more importantly, to talk about this subject — not necessarily here, but bring this subject to the forefront so that it will get the attention it deserves. How we have traditionally hidden the details of suicides in the media because we are afraid that it will encourage others. We have been silent on the sites that are used because we think it will encourage others. We must talk about the subject. No matter how dramatic the numbers are already, we all know that many more suicides are hidden as accidents or natural deaths.

[*Translation*]

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the chamber will support this motion, which, as you know, was adopted in the House of Commons almost unanimously. The question now is the following: what concrete measures can we adopt to reflect this political will? The majority of the stakeholders applaud this initiative by the House of Commons, but they are left wondering what concrete measures the government will adopt. I will let the government answer that question. Nonetheless, I believe that we, the Senate of Canada, can mandate the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to conduct a study and, as it did in the case of mental illness, advance knowledge on the subject and

help Canadians understand the importance of taking action in order to eradicate — or at least diminish — this scourge.

[*English*]

My friends, I count on you to support this motion to show we care and to show that we can address this subject in a serious way and talk publicly of what has not been addressed enough by any level of government. We, the Senate, can continue the public debate on this serious issue.

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

[*Translation*]

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Leave having been given to revert to Government Notices of Motions:

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 58(1)(h), I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn until Tuesday, November 1, 2011, at 2 p.m.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(The Senate adjourned until Tuesday, November 1, 2011, at 2 p.m.)

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