



# The Day Report

THE SENATE OF CANADA



WINTER 2010

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Welcome and Recent Events	1
Consumer Product Safety	2
The Pension Crisis in Canada	2
Canadian Blood Services	3
Saint John	
NB Power and Hydro-Quebec	3
Some Thoughts on the Senate	4
Law and Order Legislation	4
Have your say	4
Contact Us!	4

## Fall 2009 recap

### National Finance

The National Finance committee, which I chair, had a very productive fall session. We examined and passed four pieces of legislation and published five reports. In addition, we held several hearings on the complex issue of pensions. We studied two bills relating to employment insurance: Bill C-50 which temporarily extended regular benefits for senior workers, and Bill C-56 which provided employment insurance benefits to self-employed workers. The committee also studied and reported on the second budget implementation bill, which established the Home Renovation Tax Credit, as well as a bill to allow all provinces to implement the HST, should they decide to do so. All the committee's reports can be found online at:

<http://www.senate-senat.ca/FINA.asp>

### Other committee work

The National Security and Defence committee, of which I am also a member, has been busy working on a report concerning the RCMP. I also participated in fact-finding missions to Canada's military bases, touring facilities at CFB Borden, Halifax, Saint John, and the St. Stephen-Calais border crossing.

## Happy New Year 2010!

Hello and welcome to another edition of the Day Report! I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very happy and healthy new year! 2009 was another busy year for the Senate, and I'm looking forward to what 2010 will bring. It has been about six months since my last report, so I'd like to give you a recap of what was happening in the Senate during the latter half of 2009.



Senator Moore, former Mongolian ambassador Dr. Dugerjav Gotov, Senator Cordy, and Senator Day

The Veteran's Affairs committee spent the fall hearing testimony about the implementation of the New Veteran's Charter.

Last year I was also the official opposition critic for a piece of government legislation known as bill C-6. You can read more about it on page 2.

### Parliamentary associations

As the chairperson of the Canada-Mongolia friendship group, it was my pleasure to host a farewell event for former Mongolian ambassador to Canada Dr. Dugerjav Gotov. Mongolia has appointed a new ambassador, Mr. Tundevdorj Zalaa-Uul, whom I am very much looking forward to meeting and working with in the future.

Finally, in September I hosted a delegation of 25 NATO representatives visiting

Canada on a fact-finding mission. I escorted them on visits to CFB Kingston, CFB Trenton, and the Royal Military College, and on to Toronto.

### Looking ahead to 2010

Parliament has been prorogued for the second time in a year by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As a result, the House of Commons and the Senate cannot sit until March. Worse, it will take even longer to reconstitute committees so that they can resume the important work that the Prime Minister has interrupted. All government bills that were not passed were killed by prorogation. They will have to be reintroduced in March. Resulting in a considerable waste of time and effort. We're expecting a budget for 2010-2011 to be tabled in March. The related government spending plan will be studied by the National Finance committee.

**Did you know...?**

**The Maritimes are so well represented in the Senate (24 out of 105 seats) to balance out the fact that we have only 25 out of 308 seats in the House of Commons. That is why the Senate is so important for the Maritimes.**

**Prime Minister Harper has appointed 32 of Canada's 105 Senators in the last year. He has said he needed to do so in order to get his legislation passed. Does this mean that those 32 senators will exercise their independence, or will they feel they must always vote as did the House of Commons? If the latter is true, it's an excellent way to bring an end to the Senate.**

## Bill C-6, The *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act*

Last year, the government introduced a controversial piece of legislation called Bill C-6, the *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act*. This bill sought to modernize Canada's consumer safety regime, making it easier to protect citizens from buying and using dangerous products; this is a very good step to take, and the concept is supported by all members of parliament. However, while I was studying this bill, I came to realize that the legal effect of the bill was very different from the government's stated intentions. As I mentioned, preventing danger to health and safety is extremely important. What worried me

about Bill C-6, is that it gave extreme and unnecessary powers to Health Canada and its inspectors, including the power to distribute confidential personal and business information to corporations and governments, as well as the power to enter private homes without being liable for doing so.

While this bill was being studied in committee, I proposed a number of amendments. The committee adopted my proposals but they were not accepted by the full Senate. Two of my colleagues, Senator Tommy Banks (AB) and Senator George Furey (NF) proposed amendments that were accepted by the Senate in De-

cember, and the bill was sent back to the House of Commons so that MPs could consider the proposals and vote on them.

However, as parliament has been prorogued, MPs were never given that opportunity. All government bills that were not passed will need to be reintroduced in the House of Commons, and start again from square one. That includes bill C-6. Parliament finally resumes on March 3, 2010, and I hope all citizens will continue to follow this issue closely at that time, as it affects all Canadians. For more information on bill C-6, please contact my office.

**Senator Day with two officer cadets and the Commandant of the Royal Military College of Canada, Commodore William Truelove.**



**(L-R) Hugh Bayley, MP from the UK, Vahit Erdem, MP from Turkey, two crew members, and Senator Day aboard a plane at Canadian Forces Base Trenton**

## What is happening to Canadian pensions?

Last fall, global business-services firm Mercer ranked Canada fourth out of 11 countries for our pension system. That may sound positive, but Canada is in the midst of a pension crisis. The recent global economic turmoil drained retirement savings and pension portfolios. Further, more and more companies declaring bankruptcy means more and more workers are seeing their

pension funds slashed, or worse, wiped out. Government-sponsored benefits are not generous, many private sector workers do not have pension plans, and many Canadians do not have enough personal savings to be able to live modestly in their old age.

Last year the Department of Finance established a research working group on pensions, and the Senate committee on

National Finance will also consider starting a study on pensions in the new parliamentary session.

There is much debate on how best to secure the future of Canada's pension plans and how to ensure retiring Canadians are adequately protected. We need to be addressing this issue now.

## What is best for New Brunswick?

### The sale of NB Power to Hydro-Quebec

There has been a lot of media coverage over the last few months about the proposed sale of assets of NB Power to Hydro-Quebec. The revised deal, announced by Premier Shawn Graham on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010, would see New Brunswick retain control of the power lines and the transmission and distribution network, while selling the generating facilities to Hydro-Quebec. The sale is worth \$3.2 billion, and reduces NB Power's debt to \$1.55 billion.

As a citizen of New Brunswick, I believe this is an interesting possibility for our province. There are many examples of services that were once provided by governments but were successfully divested from the governments. In New Brunswick, we can point to how NBTel evolved into a merged entity with telephone compa-

nies in Nova Scotia, PEI, and Newfoundland and Labrador to create Aliant Inc. in 1999, and Aliant's subsequent merger with Bell Canada in 2006.

There is also the Port of Saint John which was once operated by the government and is now run by a not-for-profit board. At the national level, examples include Air Canada, CN Rail, and Petro Canada, all former Crown Corporations which have all branched out and found success while still maintaining affordable quality services for citizens.

The government helped get these companies going, but as long as services are being provided to people in the best possible way, the government doesn't have to continue to own the companies providing the services. This is exactly the test we should apply to the pro-

posed sale of NB Power assets to Hydro-Quebec.

Is the agreement in the best interest of the people? Will rates locked in for five years be reasonable thereafter? We must recall that future power sources must include green energy. This change would be very expensive for New Brunswick to undertake alone, but will be easier with assistance from Hydro-Quebec.

After the initial shock about the sale of the assets of NB Power, citizens are able to look more objectively at the proposal. The test we must all apply is will this be good for the future of New Brunswick and New Brunswickers. I know that an independent panel has had the opportunity to study the proposed agreement and that they believe it is in the best interest of the province.

#### Did you know...?

**2010 marks the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy, for upcoming events, check out: <http://www.navy.forces.gc.ca/centennial>**

**2010 also marks the 40th anniversary of Canada-China relations! Pierre Elliot Trudeau was the first Prime Minister to visit China**

#### Canadian Blood Services in Saint John

I recently wrote an opinion piece about the closure of the production/distribution facility of the Saint John branch of Canadian Blood Services. It was published in the Telegraph-Journal on January 12, 2010. If you missed it, feel free to read it anytime on my website.



**Senator Day visits Sonja Travis's Grade 12 Law Class at Hampton High School**

## Thoughts on the Senate

Recently, Liberal Senators have been criticized in the news for obstructing the government's law and order legislation. This is not true. Please check my website for a letter from Senator James Cowan, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, to Justice Minister Rob Nicholson explaining how the Senate is doing the job it is expected to do.

Recently there has been a lot of discussion about Senate reform which leads one to a discussion of the role of the Senate. The Senate is a legislative body, like the House of Commons, but our purposes are very different. The Senate's primary role is to review legislation passed by the House of Commons. Often, legislation is hastily written, and/or has not received thorough study in the

House of Commons. The Senate and its committees study the legislation and make amendments to improve the bill. We ensure that policy is correctly translated into law.

Another issue to consider is accountability. Senators are always accountable for their actions, and every citizen has access to information such as Senator's voting and attendance records (check the *Jour-*

*nals of the Senate* at <http://www.parl.gc.ca> ), as well as their office budgets and spending (check the *Public Accounts of Canada*, which are available on the Public Works and Government Services Canada website at <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca> ). The Senate has nothing to hide and Senators are proud of the contribution they make to the political process.

### Have your say!

There are very few rules governing the use of prorogation. Traditionally, proroguing government was left to the discretion of the Prime Minister. He or she chose when to start a new session of parliament, typically waiting for old business to be completed.

Prorogation ends the current session of parliament, dissolves

Senate and House of Commons committees, and kills all government bills and all private member's bills in the Senate which have not yet been passed. All these bills will need to be re-introduced when the new session begins.

Parliament has been prorogued two times in the past year. It is rare for a Prime Min-

ister to decide to prorogue so often, and rare that in each case it was for an extended period of time. Old business was not yet finished when parliament was prorogued in December. Many bills died on the order paper, and many committee studies had not yet been completed. I am interested in hearing your opinion on the following question:

**Do you agree that we should have rules about when and how the Prime Minister can prorogue parliament? Or should we continue to rely on future Prime Ministers to exercise this power reasonably and sparingly?**

Feel free to respond using the provided insert.

Senator Day wants your feedback!

Please take a few minutes to comment on the Day Report, the Senate, or any other matter of concern using the insert provided. No postage is necessary!

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