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## QUESTION PERIOD

**Statement by:**

**The Honourable Claudette Tardif**

**Thursday, March 26, 2009**

## THE SENATE

Thursday, March 26, 2009

### QUESTION PERIOD

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, I am pleased to be working with 18 new colleagues since their appointment to this place in December 2008. However, I am startled by the remarks made by Senator Greene, who, in his maiden speech of February 10, 2009 — only his eighth sitting day — questioned the validity of Question Period in this place.

Further to his comments, Senator Brown jumped on the bandwagon and described Question Period as “of little value” and “of no real purpose.”

I am very disappointed to hear these kinds of remarks from Senator Brown who, in his earlier days in this place, called for the accountability of the Senate and the responsibility of all senators to work for the good of the public interest.

Honourable senators, Question Period has been a fundamental exercise of democracy in this place since 1968. The main purpose of Question Period is to hold the government accountable on public affairs. The opposition has a responsibility to scrutinize the government’s agenda and to occasionally highlight important issues that may go under the radar in the media. Canadians count on us to ensure that the Conservative government remains accountable.

Just as the opposition has the responsibility to ask questions to the government, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, a minister and a member of cabinet, has a responsibility to provide answers to Canadians.

Yet, it appears that Senator Brown is uncomfortable with his leader being questioned and would rather have partisan cheerleaders reciting compliments rather than developing a stronger nation by listening to and acting on the critical insight that the opposition is offering.

The issue of whether the daily Question Period in the Senate has a public audience is irrelevant. Question Period occurs in both chambers regardless of the attendance in the galleries. Is Senator Brown suggesting that Question Period should be cancelled when there is low attendance in our galleries? That is absurd.

The transcripts from each Question Period are put on record, printed and are accessible online to anyone in less than 24 hours. Canadians not only deserve to know how the government responds to important issues, but they have the right to know.

Honourable senators, as Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I commend our Liberal senators for their outstanding efforts in ensuring that this Harper government remains accountable to all Canadians.

**Senator Comeau:** Bring back Mercer as leader.

**Senator Tardif:** The unthinkable abolition of Question Period would certainly decrease the transparency of this already non-transparent government.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

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