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## JUSTICE

Comments by Minister

Questions by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Thursday, March 4, 2010

## THE SENATE

Thursday, March 4, 2010

### JUSTICE

#### COMMENTS BY MINISTER

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, my question is directed to the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

While Parliament's activities were suspended following Prime Minister Harper's decision to prorogue, Minister of Justice Rob Nicholson repeatedly made inaccurate statements regarding the passage of his government's justice bills through Parliament, and particularly through the Senate.

We felt it was our duty to address these inaccuracies with Minister Nicholson. Our leader, Senator Cowan, wrote a letter, supported by facts, to the minister, and also responded to an op-ed that he had published, in order to clarify the content of his statements.

What did the Leader of the Government do to present a factual account on the progress of justice bills through the Senate? Did she set the record straight with her honourable colleagues at the cabinet table and defend the good work of this chamber and all of its members?

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** I thank the honourable senator for the question. I was well aware of the letter and the newspaper columns written by my colleague opposite, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator James Cowan. He presented his perspective of the situation as he saw it. I believe that the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Rob Nicholson, responded with a rather fulsome letter.

I simply say that I am totally supportive of my colleague the Minister of Justice. The government places great emphasis on justice matters, as witnessed yesterday in the Speech from the Throne. Many people are dependent upon the government to have various justice matters passed by Parliament, such as cracking down on violent crime, drug dealers and grow-op

outfits, and many other issues, including violence against women and victims' rights.

Justice matters are very important. Arguing between two parliamentarians on their perspective is not what I am interested in today. We are beginning a new Parliament with a new Throne Speech. We have wiped the slate clean. Let us start working from this day forward to steer through Parliament the justice legislation that Canadians not only demand but support.

**Senator Tardif:** Honourable senators, on a supplementary question, I would like to quote from what Senator Cowan wrote to Minister Nicholson and what appeared in his op-ed:

An honest examination of the record compels one to acknowledge that the greatest delays to implementation of the Government's justice agenda were caused by the Government itself — sitting on bills and not bringing them forward for debate, delaying bringing legislation into force, and ultimately, of course, shutting down Parliament.

Does the minister herself refute these facts?

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, we could enter into a long debate about the various situations that the government faced in the Senate with regard to our justice bills, and about the various amendments and processes in the chamber at second and third reading, as well as in committee.

I believe that the public wants its parliamentarians to deal with the legislation before them and to work in the interests of the public to get this important legislation through Parliament. That is what I intend to try to do as the Leader of the Government in the Senate. That is what my colleagues in cabinet and in our caucus will try to do. Arguing or having bun fights over past events or crying over spilled milk will not serve the purposes of the Canadian public, who want their parliamentarians to work on matters before them.