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## HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Post-secondary Data Collection—  
Scientific Research

Questions by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, October 19, 2010

## THE SENATE

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### HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

#### POST-SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION— SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, this government is trying to prevent any criticism of its policies by silencing the organizations and agencies that compile information on very important spheres of our society.

The Canadian Council on Learning, which compiled and analyzed key information on education in Canada, based on OECD indicators, has become a victim of this government's policies. Earlier this year, we learned that federal funding for the CCL will cease. A few weeks ago, Dr. Paul Cappon, President and CEO of the CCL, indicated that the CCL will remain open but will once again need to reduce its activities until federal funding is reinstated. The organization's financial situation is so precarious that Dr. Cappon and his colleagues have agreed to continue working on a voluntary basis.

In an ever more competitive and global world, education is the key to our success. However, without reliable data, it is very difficult to develop a national strategy on education.

My question is simple: When will this government realize the importance of having scientifically reliable data in order to develop policies for the good of Canadians?

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** I thank the honourable senator for the question. We, of course, value and take great pride in the work of our scientists and others with regard to their work on behalf of their various communities, especially in the areas of science and education.

With regard to the honourable senator's statement that the government is interfering with their right to be heard, this is absolutely not true. Government communication policy applies to all departments of governments and it is a communications policy that the government has followed since 2002. The policy has not changed. Ministers speak for the departments. I reiterate that this is a government communications policy established in the year 2002, which is eight years ago. It is the policy that was followed by the previous government and is continued by this government.

[Translation]

**Senator Tardif:** Honourable senators, the CCL is not the only example of this government's lack of desire to obtain trustworthy scientific data. As I said earlier, it is easier to ignore the facts when there are no trustworthy, credible and representative statistics.

In May 2010, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development announced that the government would no longer fund the Youth in Transition Survey or the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. However, a report put out by the Canadian Federation of Students titled "Public Education for the Public Good" stated that these studies are the primary sources of information on who pursues post-secondary education and who is excluded from it.

Can the government leader tell us how the government intends to obtain the data provided by these two studies?

[English]

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, there are many areas on which the government collects data, including, as I listed before the Thanksgiving break, the 80-some separate surveys that are conducted voluntarily through Statistics Canada.

This is what the government is doing with regard to post-secondary education. We provided \$800 million more for post-secondary education through the CST, up 40 per cent from what was provided by the previous government, who, I might add, cut \$25 billion in transfers to the provinces, including for student funding. That was apparently how they decided to cut the deficit.

Through the Canada Student Grants Program, we have made money available through grants that students do not have to pay back, which means more access and less student debt to repay. We are providing \$250 a month to low-income and \$100 a month to middle-income students. Approximately 280,000 students benefited last year, 140,000 more than under the previous system. The Repayment Assistance Plan increases flexibility for students repaying their loans, making it easier to manage loans by ensuring an affordable repayment amount on a reasonable schedule.

Our government made post-secondary scholarships and bursaries tax-free, introduced the textbook tax credit and the tool tax credit, and provided \$87.5 million for over 1,500 master's and doctoral level scholarships. We created tens of thousands of jobs for students, including supporting student summer jobs through Career Focus, \$30 million; Pathways to Education, \$20 million; and Skills Link, \$30 million. We are providing up to \$4,000 to encourage youth to pursue skilled trades through the Apprenticeship Completion Grant and Apprenticeship Incentive Grant.

All of this is to say that we have used the resources and the data we have collected from many sources to provide increased support for our students, as I mentioned, up 40 per cent from what was provided by the previous government.