



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 106

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Consular Services for Iranian
Students in Canada

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Thursday, October 4, 2012

THE SENATE

Thursday, October 4, 2012

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CONSULAR SERVICES FOR IRANIAN STUDENTS IN CANADA

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. On September 7, the government announced that it was closing Canada's embassy in Iran. I would like to draw the attention of the Leader of the Government to one of the consequences of that decision.

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, more than 3,200 international students from Iran are currently studying at Canadian universities. Alberta's faculty of engineering alone attracts hundreds of students. Of the 1,600 students registered for the master's and doctoral programs at the faculty, 400 have Iranian citizenship. Now that Canada has suspended diplomatic relations with Iran, those students no longer have access to the consular services that are essential for renewing their passports or their student visas, facilitating banking transactions and countless other important services.

Can the minister please explain what mechanism the government intends to put in place to address this problem and allow these students to pursue their studies without having to worry about their status in Canada?

[*English*]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the decision to close our embassy in Iran and expel Iranian officials from Canada has been overwhelmingly supported by members of the Iranian community who live in Canada.

With regard to consular services for students, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has made arrangements through Italy, I believe — but I will confirm that, Senator Tardif — to process student visas and documents on behalf of Iranian students presently studying in Canada.

Senator Tardif: Madam Minister, I was not questioning whether it was a good or a bad decision to have closed the Iranian embassy. I was stating a concrete problem.

In the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Alberta, for example, 25 per cent of the students at the masters and doctorate level are from Iran. This is a concrete problem: What do they do now when they require consular services?

You mentioned that you would check this out, but at this present moment, the dean at the faculty of engineering is waiting for an answer and so are the students.

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I will be happy to confirm this, but I do believe such processes are done through Italian officials. I will confirm that as soon as Question Period is over. I will ensure the honourable senator's office is advised so that she can so inform the head of the faculty at the University of Alberta.