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**Decision Not to Appeal Death Sentence
of Ronald Smith**

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, May 28, 2008

THE SENATE

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JUSTICEDECISION NOT TO APPEAL DEATH SENTENCE
OF RONALD SMITH*[Translation]*

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The Governor of Montana indicated last year that he would be willing to consider commuting the death sentence of Ronald Allen Smith, a Canadian sentenced to death in the United States, if Canada could guarantee that he would be imprisoned for at least five years. Actions and negotiations in Ronald Smith's defence had been underway since 1997, until the Conservative government suddenly called for an end to the efforts of Canadian diplomats in the United States on October 31, 2007.

However, in March, the government supported a motion in the House of Commons, thereby promising in principle to systematically oppose the death penalty, both in Canada and

abroad. How can the government claim that, on one hand, it is against the death penalty all over the world and, at the same time, refuse to intervene to demand clemency for Ronald Smith?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Secretary of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, the government has been crystal clear on this: There is no death penalty. That is the law in Canada and there are no plans to change Canadian laws.

The Minister of Justice has followed a process that has been in place for some time. Where Canadians face the death penalty abroad, the government considers these on a case-by-case basis. There is no change of policy here; that has always been the case.

With regard to the specific case of Mr. Smith, the honourable senator will understand that, since he has instituted a court action, it would be improper for me, as a member of the cabinet, to comment further.
