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SENATE MODERNIZATION

**EIGHTH REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE—
DEBATE ADJOURNED**

Speech by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, November 22, 2016

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[Translation]

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The Senate proceeded to consideration of the eighth report (interim) of the Special Senate Committee on Senate Modernization, entitled: *Senate Modernization: Moving Forward (Broadcasting)*, presented in the Senate on October 18, 2016.

Hon. Claudette Tardif moved the adoption of the report.

She said: Honourable senators, as a member of the Special Senate Committee on Senate Modernization, I am very pleased to participate in the debate on this important issue.

On October 18, following the presentation of the first report of the Special Senate Committee on Senate Modernization, I had the honour of presenting recommendations 13, 14 and 15 of the report, which are as follows:

- That the Senate direct the Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration to ensure that the Government Conference Centre be equipped with cameras, facilities and resources to enable the broadcasting or webcasting of Senate proceedings.
- That the Senate direct the Committee on Rules, Procedure and Rights of Parliament to examine and propose to the Senate any amendments to the *Rules of the Senate* to allow and facilitate broadcasting of its proceedings.
- That the Senate direct the Senate administration to negotiate with the Canadian Public Affairs Channel to provide for more broadcast exposure of Senate proceedings, whether committee or Chamber.

[English]

In making these recommendations, the committee was motivated by a desire that the Senate should be more visible if it is to be seen as relevant to Canadians.

The committee was guided, in particular, by the principles of modernization, accessibility and accountability.

Broadcasting or webcasting of chamber proceedings would give Canadians the opportunity to experience the effectiveness of the Senate and to witness the quality of debate and the crucial topics of national interest that the Senate is widely reputed for. The partially televised medically assisted-dying bill debates of this past spring are a case in point.

Making the Senate more visible also allows Canadians to more closely scrutinize the Senate, thus promoting accountability.

Members of the committee saw an opportune moment to put into effect the desire to broadcast or webcast chamber proceedings. The Centre Block is undergoing a multi-year restoration in conjunction with the restoration of other buildings on Parliament Hill. During the period of restoration, the Senate Chamber will be housed in the Government Conference Centre. The move will occur in 2018.

At this time, I would like to point out a typo in the report, indicating that the move will occur in 2017. The correct date is, indeed, 2018.

The committee recommends that the temporary chamber in the Government Conference Centre be equipped with television cameras and the required facilities, and be provided with the resources needed to enable the broadcasting or webcasting of Senate Chamber proceedings.

This recommendation is the result of a careful weighing of the costs and benefits of equipping the Government Conference Centre as against equipping the current chamber before the move to the Government Conference Centre. The investment in broadcasting equipment and facilities in the new chamber in the Government Conference Centre would last throughout the period of restoration of the Centre Block.

[Translation]

These sums will be paid out by Public Works and Government Services Canada and not by the Senate, because they are part and parcel of the renovations already under way at the Government Conference Centre and the restoration planned for Centre Block.

The committee also recommends that the *Rules of the Senate* be amended in order to give this recommendation full force and effect. Rule 14-7 should therefore be amended.

In addition, as I pointed out earlier, the committee recommends that the Senate pursue its negotiations with CPAC to include Senate proceedings, in addition to Senate committee meetings, in CPAC's weekly timeslots.

Moreover, there is an error in the English version of the report. CPAC was represented as the "Canadian Public Affairs Channel," or *chaîne d'affaires publiques canadienne* in French, when the acronym actually stands for "Cable Public Affairs Channel," or *chaîne d'affaires publiques par câble*.

Regarding the broadcasting of Senate proceedings, the report also indicates that CPAC currently broadcasts only a very small slice of Senate committee work, when in fact, it has always honoured the agreement it reached with the Senate and has always broadcast all Senate committee work that is recorded and that it receives. It also rebroadcasts many meetings according to what best matches the timeslots allocated to the Senate.

Nevertheless, the committee recommendation remains just as valid, and negotiations will be necessary in order to include the Senate chamber proceedings, in addition to the Senate committee meetings, in CPAC's weekly timeslots.

[English]

Honourable senators this is not the first time broadcasting has been discussed and considered for this chamber.

Indeed, prior to this report, there were three other reports that touched on the subject: the *Senate of Canada Communications Functional Review*; the *Working Sessions on Senate Modernization Report*, spearheaded by Senators Greene and Massicotte; and *Working Together: Improving Canada's Appointed Senate* — a summary of the contributions made by five Canadian scholars at a symposium held at the University of Ottawa in 2015 and spearheaded by Senator Joyal — which concluded with 12 proposals for the reform of the Senate with respect to its operations and practices that could be implemented within the present constitutional framework. They acknowledged the fact that the Senate had begun to address public communications as a part of what they referred to as an “institutional weakness.”

“Progress,” they said, “needs to be closely monitored and reported to the public.”

All three reports ultimately recommended moving forward with or taking steps toward broadcasting Senate deliberations, while the first one also led to a major overhaul of Senate Communications, a move that has so far been widely praised by the media and the public.

Additionally, many senators expressed themselves in favourable terms during the consultations that preceded the drafting of some of these reports, and I would like to highlight a few of these quotes, if I may:

Broadcasting in the chamber is inevitable, a necessary evil. It compounds the perception that we are a private club, non-transparent and not accountable, if we don't broadcast.

[Translation]

Might help in communicating our work — and help Canadians to understand our role.

Accessibility and transparency are essential, even if expensive.

[English]

Several expert witnesses who were invited as panellists on the Special Committee on Senate Modernization last April also viewed broadcasting in favourable terms. Errol Mendes, Professor, Faculty of Law, Common Law Section, University of Ottawa stated:

I think it's overdue If the Supreme Court of Canada can televise its hearings, there's absolutely no reason why the Senate itself cannot do that. It reinforces some of the recommendations . . . mentioned in terms of being able to provide the discussion on those areas which the House of Commons doesn't have either the time, the capacity or the expertise to deal with. I think that could be one of the most profoundly important aspects of a modernized Senate to focus on those.

[Translation]

Stéphane Beaulac, a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Montreal, said:

It is in our interest to be transparent by making public all necessary information and trusting the thoughts behind the proceedings.

In closing, honourable senators, I ask you to support the three recommendations in the committee's eighth report. The transition to broadcasting and webcasting the Senate chamber proceedings is garnering considerable support from senators and especially the Canadian public.

I am certain that in the long run, the Senate's renewal will be enhanced by what I consider to be a necessary change. We are living in an age of digital and visual communication, as indicated in the Senate modernization report:

It is crucial that Canadians have every opportunity to observe senators in their roles as legislators and representatives of the regions and of minorities.