



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 150 • NUMBER 90

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE JOHN D. WALLACE

Statement by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Tuesday, January 31, 2017

THE SENATE

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Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a colleague that I respect so much and that I will certainly miss.

I got to know Senator Wallace when I was appointed to the Senate in the fall of 2012. Both of us belonged to the same Conservative caucus. I have always been impressed by his thoughtful remarks.

When John addresses a question, be assured that his view is well-considered. Senator Wallace has never been an impulsive person. This is what I like the most about him and his integrity. You cannot take his arguments lightly.

So when I learned on TV on November 8, 2015, that John changed his affiliation to become an independent and non-partisan senator, I was not too surprised. John has always been an independent senator, and he did show it on many occasions. For instance, he voted against Bill C-525 and against Bill C-377, but he will not be there to support me on Bill C-4, which I sponsor.

In the midst of the debate that intensified in 2015 — that is the debate for having a more independent Senate — Senator Wallace was one of the first senators to leave a party-affiliated caucus. Others followed, like Senator Jacques Demers, Senator Pierrette Ringuette, Senator Rivard and myself, who joined him and

created, with the already independent Senator Elaine McCoy, what we called the Working Group of Independent Non-partisan Senators. That group was created on March 10, 2016. It was stipulated that the members of this working group are committed to:

... number one, carrying out their Senate duties and obligations, including their review and revisions to legislation received from the House of Commons, on an entirely independent, non-partisan basis, as was originally intended by the Founders of Confederation; number two, ensuring rights of equality for all senators in the performance of their diverse Senate duties, regardless of their political or non-political affiliation; and, number three, restoring the reputation of and public confidence in the Senate as a necessary and vital institution within our Canadian parliamentary system.

Time passes quickly in the Senate. For me this group was formed long ago, but it was just last year. Many new senators have been appointed to the Senate since March 2016, and independents now have a plurality in the Senate.

I want to thank Senator Wallace for presenting motions and initiating debates around the changes in the Rules that he felt were necessary to enable each senator to exercise their parliamentary role in an independent fashion. Perhaps we're not there yet, but we are headed in that direction thanks, in significant part, to the work of Senator Wallace.

John, I sincerely wish you a happy retirement, and I hope we'll have the opportunity to meet again. In the meantime, enjoy life.
