



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 150 • NUMBER 174

**MOTION TO ENCOURAGE THE GOVERNMENT TO
TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE UNITED NATIONS'
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS IT DRAFTS
LEGISLATION AND DEVELOPS POLICY RELATING TO
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT—DEBATE CONTINUED**

Speech by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

THE SENATE

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

[*Translation*]

MOTION TO ENCOURAGE THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE UNITED NATIONS' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS IT DRAFTS LEGISLATION AND DEVELOPS POLICY RELATING TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT—DEBATE CONTINUED

Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to this motion on the 2030 Agenda. I support this motion. However, I should tell you that I will be proposing a friendly amendment that Senator Dawson has told me he agrees with. I would also like to note that I am speaking as an unaffiliated senator from Quebec, not as the legislative deputy.

Before I begin, I want to go over what the 2030 Agenda is. The 2030 Agenda, or the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, is a United Nations program that was adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 25, 2015. This program is the result of years-long international negotiations to secure the participation of all the countries on the planet as part of an unprecedented push to create a global partnership to save the Earth. This holistic approach focuses on the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and is intended to get every person on the planet voluntarily involved in ensuring the economic security and welfare of all human beings and in containing the effects of climate change.

[*English*]

The agenda sets forth 17 sustainable development goals broken down into 169 targets to achieve by 2030. The agenda is based on the idea that sustainable development is not only an ecological and environmental challenge, but also a social and economic challenge. These three dimensions of sustainable development are closely related; one cannot be achieved without the other two.

I would like to thank Senator Dawson for drawing the attention of this chamber to the 2030 agenda, an important and topical issue.

[*Translation*]

The 2030 Agenda is a global response to the world's more pressing problems. It also represents a profoundly innovative interpretation of sustainable development.

[*English*]

It links the fight against extreme poverty to the preservation of the planet in the face of climate change; it brings to all countries of the planet a universal and holistic approach to the issues of sustainable development; and it is the result of unprecedented consultation between civil society, the private sector, local communities, the research community, and the result of negotiations between the states involved.

[*Translation*]

Canada is one of the 193 countries that have made a commitment to work towards the targets of the 17 global goals. Senator Dawson summed them up briefly, but I want to go over them more fully so you can get a better idea of the scope of the challenges.

Goal 1, end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 2, end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Goal 4, ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

[*English*]

Goal 5, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 6, ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Goal 7, ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

[*Translation*]

Goal 8, promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Goal 9, build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

[*English*]

Goal 10, reduce inequality within and among countries.

[*Translation*]

Goal 11, make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

[*English*]

Goal 12, ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Goal 13, take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Goal 14, conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Goal 15, protect life on land.

Goal 16, promote peace and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 17, strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

[Translation]

As you can see, honourable colleagues, the 2030 Agenda has ambitious goals and involves all countries, regardless of their level of development. Given its magnitude, the agenda is about more than just governments. It calls on all levels of government to take action, of course, but also civil society, businesses and community organizations. This agenda calls for engagement on the part of stakeholders around the world.

I can already hear some people saying that this agenda is pure fantasy, that it is wishful thinking, and that the biggest obstacle to achieving it will be financial. Yes, the 2030 Agenda will require huge investments that will need to find funding. How can the business world and especially the financial community be persuaded to become engaged? It is precisely in order to meet this challenge that pursuing the 17 goals must be achieved simultaneously in order to ensure that such collective efforts lead to mutually beneficial outcomes for the entire planet. This will no doubt require a delicate political exercise, and parliamentarians and politicians around the world have a duty to promote this agenda.

Despite the magnitude of the challenges, at least two major international financial institutions have said they are prepared to meet them, specifically, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which work in partnership with private institutions.

The International Monetary Fund is committed to supporting the sustainable development efforts of all of its member states, in the context of its own mission. It has also developed a number of initiatives to significantly increase the support it provides to member states that are making efforts to achieve sustainable development goals.

[English]

The World Bank reaffirmed in 2017 its commitment to the realization of Agenda 2030. I invite all of you to read their recent publication on the subject entitled, *Implementing the 2030 Agenda: 2017 Update*.

In fact, as explained in this publication, the sustainable development goals are aligned with the World Bank Group's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. The World Bank Group is working with client countries to deliver on the 2030 agenda through three critical areas — finance, data, and implementation — supporting country-led and country-owned policies to attain the sustainable development goals.

[Translation]

To those who believe that these objectives cannot be met, I say that the current reality of a great number of human beings on earth requires that we do all we can to achieve the impossible.

Agenda 2030 identifies the universal aspirations of every human being and presents 169 specific targets to be achieved by 2030 by each signatory country. These goals and targets will solve the problems that threaten the sustainability and prosperity of the planet and all those living on it.

Yes, it is an ambitious program, but it is necessary.

Let us now talk about Canada. What progress has Canada made towards achieving these sustainable development goals?

There have already been some studies to ascertain Canada's progress relative to that of other countries in achieving the sustainable development goals. According to a 2017 United Nations study entitled Sustainable Development Goals Index and Dashboards Report 2017, Canada is ranked 17 of 157 countries studied. Canada is ranked just behind the United Kingdom with a score of 78. Sweden had the best score, 85.6, and was followed by other Scandinavian countries. The United States had a score of 72.4 and is ranked 42nd.

According to this study, Canada has achieved very good results with regard to goals 3, 4 and 7, or those objectives pertaining to health, education, and accessibility of green energy. However, Canada has much work to do if it is to achieve the other goals. There is a significant discrepancy between the current situation and what we want to achieve, particularly with regard to goals 12, 13, and 15, those concerning responsible consumption and production, action to combat climate change, and preserving terrestrial ecosystems.

As you know, the current federal government is working to achieve sustainable development goals. With regard to the environment, the government adopted a federal sustainable development strategy in 2012. That legislation underwent a comprehensive review in 2016, and the government introduced a bill in Parliament, Bill C-57, to amend the existing legislation to make it more consistent with the approach set out in the UN's Agenda 2030.

The federal government addressed the UN's High-level Political Forum 2017 in July in order to describe the operational approach it will be taking to contribute to Agenda 2030. I encourage you to read that document.

It is clear that the federal government cannot act alone. It must urge other Canadian governments, municipalities, and all Canadians to participate.

Dear colleagues, I also think that, as senators, we have a role to play in Agenda 2030. That is why I am proposing an amendment to Senator Dawson's motion, with his consent. He even suggested a very simple way to word that amendment. I would remind senators that the current motion reads as follows:

That the Senate take note of Agenda 2030 and the related sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations on September 25, 2015, and encourage the Government of Canada to take account of them as it drafts legislation and develops policy relating to sustainable development.

The amendment that I am proposing be made to the motion involves making a few minor changes so that the motion reads as follows:

That the Senate take note of Agenda 2030 and the related sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations on September 25, 2015, and encourage Parliament

and the Government of Canada to take account of them as they draft legislation and develop policy relating to sustainable development.

If Parliament commits to this, we as senators can advance the sustainable development goals in Canada. Because the Senate is not subject to electoral cycles, its stability and institutional memory make it the ideal body to follow through on the goals.

In addition to supporting the motion as amended, I encourage my honourable colleagues to put the sustainable development goals front and centre in their work. Senators can give speeches, bring inquiries, propose committee studies, move motions, introduce bills, organize activities in every province and speak to the media.

We might create a synergy between the local stakeholders, representatives of provincial and municipal governments, as well as union and management representatives, because there are

disagreements on the approach to take to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda. We must take all their comments into consideration so that Canada can adopt effective strategies for meeting these targets.

[English]

I also encourage senators to work in collaboration with parliamentarians in the other place on issues related to this agenda and to act as a bridge with the provinces to contribute to and establish constructive federal and provincial relations.

Honourable senators, we are at the beginning of 2018. Let us think of the future of our country and find the means to improve the chances of all Canadians to prosper in a sustainable environment.

In conclusion, let the 2030 Agenda channel our energies so that Canada can participate sustainably to the building of a better world.
