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THE SENATE

MOTION IN RELATION TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP ADOPTED

Speech by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Tuesday, November 7, 2017

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[Translation]

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Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable colleagues, I too would like to comment on Senator Day's motion about committee membership for the rest of this session.

I am very happy that representatives of recognized parties and parliamentary groups, as defined in Appendix 1 of the Rules of the Senate, have reached an agreement on the matter.

As you know, all senators like working on committees because they can get personally engaged, and all of the groups can bring projects to fruition together.

I would, however, like to bring to your attention certain consequences of this motion that bear mentioning. Rest assured, I will not be proposing any amendments to this motion, nor will I oppose it, because it is a sessional order that all of the recognized parties and groups have agreed on.

Nevertheless, I want to emphasize that this motion raises issues around respect for one of the Senate's basic operating principles: equality among all senators. This agreement is silent on the subject of current and future non-affiliated senators, who cannot sit as regular members of a committee if they are not affiliated with one of the three groups. I understand that this motion is the result of negotiations that prioritized the principle of proportionality over that of equality among all senators.

Accordingly, as you all know, the new rule 12-1 states that, for the purpose of committee of selection membership, non-affiliated senators are to be treated as if they were members of a separate group. By extension, it recognizes the right of non-affiliated senators to be members of a committee. This motion does not mention that.

I do not want the motion we pass to set a precedent and I hope that, in the near future, all senators will be treated equitably, as provided for in the new rule 12-1 of the Senate, because it is certainly in the spirit of Senate modernization to treat all senators equally.

[English]

After all, a senator is a senator is a senator.
