



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

---

1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 150 • NUMBER 71

---

## **SENATE MODERNIZATION**

Point of Order

Statement by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Tuesday, November 15, 2016

## THE SENATE

Tuesday, November 15, 2016

[Translation]

### SENATE MODERNIZATION

#### POINT OF ORDER

**Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, I wish to raise a point of order. More specifically, I found the comments Senator Cowan made about me today and last week to be very offensive. I consider his remarks to be an attack on my integrity as well as inconsistent with the chronology of events that led me to become an independent senator.

Senator Cowan is constantly and contemptuously reminding the chamber that I abstained from voting during a vote on Bill C-525 in December 2014, even though that was an important aspect of my separation from caucus. I chose to separate myself from all partisan caucuses.

When I came to the Senate in September 2012, I was very pleased to join the Conservative caucus. I was always loyal to the party, but I still came to take certain positions which asserted my independence. This happened for the first time on Bill C-377 in May 2013, and again, during another battle, when I tried to convince my colleagues that changes needed to be made to Bill C-525. In the end, I abstained from voting out of respect for my caucus; my speech can be found in the *Debates of the Senate*. After that, I further separated myself from my caucus on Bill C-377. I was even excluded from caucus as a result of some of the positions I had taken in this chamber against that anti-union legislation. I then returned to caucus, only to later decide, on March 8, 2016, to finally become an independent senator.

Senator Cowan continues to insinuate by the way he talks about me that I could not stand up to what I believe. I am of the opinion that he has attacked my integrity; that is how it feels to me. I don't think senators have the right to attack other senators in such a personal manner in their remarks in the Senate. That is why I am raising this point of order.

[English]

**Hon. James S. Cowan:** I certainly never intended to insult Senator Bellemare or impugn her integrity. I simply said the other day and I repeated again today that this arose out of her suggestion that somehow her abstention was really — I think she described it as a “soft no.”

Her abstention was an abstention, and I simply suggested to her then, and I repeat the suggestion today, that we make choices and we have to take responsibility for choices. I've abstained in the past and I took responsibility for that. When I vote “yea,” “nay” or I abstain, that is a personal choice. All I'm suggesting is that we ought not to hide behind the Rules or some other means as being a shield for the actions we take.

We are independent here. We ought to act independently, not of each other — that's not what we're about — but of outside influence. If we don't, then that is not an institutional failing; that is a personal failing.

But, certainly, if anything I've said was taken by Senator Bellemare to be impugning her integrity, that was not my intention. I was simply stating the facts as I saw them. She voted the way she did, she took responsibility for that and I respect that. I took a different choice and I ask her to respect that.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators will know, of course, that Rule 6-13(1) states:

All personal, sharp or taxing speeches are unparliamentary and are out of order.

I would therefore ask senators to avoid unnecessarily impugning motives to senators who enter debate. That has no place in debate; we are debating the substance of motions and bills, not what goes behind any particular senator's personal reason for doing it.

I therefore ask and urge all honourable senators to use tempered language and decorum in all debates.