



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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## TRIBUTES

The Late Honourable Pierre Claude Nolin—  
Speaker of the Senate

Statement by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Wednesday, April 29, 2015

## THE SENATE

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[*Translation*]

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THE LATE HONOURABLE PIERRE CLAUDE NOLIN—  
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Diane Bellemare:** Dear colleagues, I recently had the opportunity, along with some colleagues, to accompany Speaker Nolin to the House of Lords as part of a mission on Senate reform. That was a few weeks ago, and I never saw him again.

I already miss him.

[*English*]

Today I want to thank Senator Nolin for being a great senator, a model of what a genuine senator is and should be.

[*Translation*]

On February 16, he shared some of his thoughts about the Senate, in both official languages, in a video that is on my website.

When I watched it again, I realized that his vision of the Senate is not just a theory. In fact, every day Senator Nolin put into practice what he said, believed and thought.

For example, in the chamber, he listened to his colleagues, not just his Conservative colleagues, but his opposition colleagues as well. To my mind, this attentiveness was indicative of his deep belief that the Senate is a place of debate and that debate requires listening to the other side in order to have a constructive conversation that improves our understanding of the issues and, ultimately, fosters change.

Senator Nolin belonged to the Conservative family, but he was also an independent thinker and a free spirit, as he liked to say. He believed that a senator can and must reconcile belonging to a political party with independent thinking.

• (1420)

He encouraged the upper house and senators to be independent from the House of Commons. Senator Nolin did not want to be

someone who rubber-stamped everything. He had strong convictions and listened to his conscience, and so he always voted the “right” way, meaning that he voted based on the merits of bills and Canada’s best interests. The Honourable Senator Nolin sought to promote this difficult balance between independence, autonomy and partisanship in this chamber, and I agree with him.

Senator Nolin also leaves behind as a legacy a practical approach to guide us in reforming the Senate. He did not have the opportunity to implement it, but one of the important elements of that approach involves breaking down the barriers between the Senate and Canadians.

According to Senator Nolin, Canadians are always right. After all, isn’t the Senate’s legitimacy dependent on the trust people place in this institution? For that reason, the Senate must always take public criticism seriously and find the right solutions.

In that regard, he encouraged all senators to know their history, the history of the Senate, the history of Canada. He gave several speeches on that subject. It is important for us to reread them because in order to know where we want to go, we need to know where we have been. Most importantly, Speaker Nolin encouraged every one of us to meet with the people we represent, armed with that knowledge, and share that knowledge with them. He was convinced that a knowledge of history and the facts would make it possible to confound demagogues and find practical solutions.

To conclude, Speaker Nolin was an exceptional man, as everyone has pointed out, who was both loyal and independent. He had a deep, intimate understanding of the role that a senator can and should play in Canadian politics. If we all had that same understanding and put it into practice, I truly believe that all Canadians would be proud of their Senate.

I will draw on his ideas to move forward with his desire to reform the Senate. That was his great plan, and it is still alive and well. He can count on me. I offer my sincere condolences to his family.