



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 150 • NUMBER 88

TRIBUTES

The Honourable Nancy Ruth, C.M.

Statement by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Wednesday, December 14, 2016

THE SENATE

Wednesday, December 14, 2016

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE NANCY RUTH, C.M.

Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Dear colleagues, being Nancy Ruth, as in *Being John Malkovich*, it's difficult to get into Nancy Ruth's mind, who, as she said, loves to dance, go to theatre and clown around.

Not many people know that before she became a senator, much before, Nancy Ruth was a United Church minister and has a diploma in theology.

I don't know much about Nancy Ruth, but I know enough to stand up today, honourable senators, to tell you how much I appreciated working with her in the Senate and how much I like her. She is one of the most genuine and authentic people I have ever met — and eccentric too.

Yes, she has abandoned her last name. Being herself: That may be one of the reasons why she dropped her family name. Nancy Ruth was born Nancy Ruth Rowell Jackman. I was very impressed and curious about her when she told me, while we were sitting in a Finance Committee meeting, that she is related to Newton Rowell, the famous Liberal politician who co-signed the Rowell-Sirois report in the late 1930s.

• (1450)

As everyone here today knows, Senator Nancy Ruth is a feminist activist who puts her money where her mouth is. As my colleague just said, she has founded or co-founded many women's organizations, and she also likes to give to organizations supporting the equal rights for women enshrined in the Charter

of Rights and Freedoms. She is also a big supporter of the arts and has been the benefactor of several galleries.

She is the kind of person who would sell her Harris or Emily Carr paintings to help community groups that had lost their government funding. I think it was the Kairos Group, in that case.

She was appointed to the Order of Canada in 1994, and to the Senate in 2005 as an independent Progressive Conservative. Independent she has been in all her years in the Senate, and she remains a Red Tory.

Aside from Bill C-210, An Act to amend the National Anthem Act (gender), one of her last battles in the Senate was the assisted-dying bill. She was a member of the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying. She was, and is, deeply convinced that assisted-dying legislation should include provisions for advance notice. She believes that if a proper gender-based analysis had been done when this issue was being considered, Canadians would have understood that women are especially affected by end-of-life issues. They often survive their husbands and are more likely to suffer from dementia. Advance notice provisions would address many of those concerns. She is what she defends.

Dear Nancy Ruth, let me conclude by saying that I share your concerns about gender-based analysis. In fact, I am in favour of using what is now called GBA+ to assess how public policy captures the realities of women and others to achieve the objectives being pursued.

May you enjoy your retirement from the Senate and continue to rock the boat. I will certainly miss you.
