



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 149 • NUMBER 34

NATIONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS DAY BILL

Second Reading of Bill S-211—Debate Continued

Speech by:

The Honourable Larry W. Campbell

Tuesday, February 11, 2014

THE SENATE

Tuesday, February 11, 2014

NATIONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS DAY BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Raine, seconded by the Honourable Senator Gerstein, for the second reading of Bill S-211, An Act to establish a national day to promote health and fitness for all Canadians.

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-211, which is sponsored by Senator Greene and seconded by Senator Gerstein.

First, I would like to say that I'm pleased to be speaking to this bill and following such two icons of fitness in the Senate, Senator Gerstein and Senator Greene. I'm also pleased —

An Hon. Senator: Greene Raine.

Senator Campbell: I'm sorry, I'm old. You always have been an icon, senator.

I am pleased to announce that the City of Vancouver has endorsed National Health and Fitness Day. As you know, I had the honour of being the mayor of that city, and I don't think I have to tell anyone here about the parks and playing fields we have, probably more than any other city in Canada. On top of that, we have the miles and miles of beaches, the miles and miles of bike ways, and the miles and miles of trails —

Senator Cowan: And rain.

Senator Campbell: — with occasional rain; I will be the first to admit that.

We are among the healthiest and most active of Canadians, but as is happening everywhere, there is a rising rate of inactivity resulting in a number of people struggling with their weight and with health issues.

Rising rates of obesity, especially in young children, are a cause for serious concern. Doctors say the child who is obese at the age of six or seven is headed for a life of ill-health and unhappiness. Currently, over 50 per cent of our school-aged children are overweight, and 16 per cent are obese. Sadly, 6 per cent of children under the age of six suffer from obesity.

The problem is not just inactivity, though this is certainly a factor. We also are faced with a plethora of fast food, convenient foods, many of which are manufactured without regard for nutrition. I personally have sampled many of them on occasion and have found them less than nutritional. For instance, when the serving size on a bag of chips says "seven chips," does anybody stop at seven? I think not.

• (1610)

An excellent book was published last year called *Salt Sugar Fat*, and it is a real indictment of the food manufacturing industry. They're using the latest brain-scan technology to develop foods that light up the so-called bliss points in the brain, the same part of the brain that reacts to heroin for an addict. These addictive

foods are heavily marketed, and all you had to do was watch the Doritos ads — not that I'm against Doritos — during the Super Bowl coverage.

All of us wish we lived in that perfect little world that we grew up in, with the picket fence; down on the corner was the skating rink; in the summer, you played baseball; there was camping; you went to cottages; and there was no fear. I don't know how many times I remember my parents saying, "Just go outside and come back around dinner time." And we did.

Unfortunately, times have changed. We live in a different era. We live in an era of fear — fear for our children, fear for what's going on outside — just generally a sense of fear. So this is going to be a difficult situation for parents to adjust to, but I'm suggesting that parents get over their fear and that parents realize, like in many of the small communities where the white picket fences still are, that somebody is not hiding behind every bush in the park, that the coaches of our teams are honourable and hard-working citizens of our community, and that our children have to be allowed to go outside and understand exercise, as well as play such as kick the can and hide-and-peek.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Campbell: Where have we ever heard of that?

It's great to see that Canadian corporations are coming on board to help promote this active and healthy lifestyle — and kudos to those companies — but, at the end of the day, it will be the parents who are responsible for this. It will be the parents who are trying to move our children from our electronic age out into what were most assuredly simpler times.

National Health and Fitness Day is the first Saturday in June. It's only one day, but it will focus the public on the education that we need to do to save not just the next generation, but generations after that. It's a good choice of a date because it's leading into the summer season, when families need to focus on their children's activity. Many municipalities across Canada have recreational facilities and offer a variety of physical activity programs. Some of these programs have seen declines in participation.

The thing that I like most about this motion is that it doesn't tell anybody to do anything. It asks municipalities to get involved, in whatever manner that may be, from opening up all of the exercise centres and the community centres for one day free, so people can try them, to just ensuring that their communities are aware of the importance of exercise.

I would ask every senator here to help get the municipalities in their regions to support this motion. I encourage them to organize events and promotions of their choice on National Health and Fitness Day.

The alternative to not getting our children back on track is increased health care costs, fewer people in the workplace and generally a downsizing of who we are as Canadians. God knows, given our age, we do not need any more health care problems or stress on the system.

When you go home on this break, I ask you all to talk to your municipalities and get them on board for this.