



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION

• 41st PARLIAMENT

• VOLUME 148

• NUMBER 56

SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES BILL

Allotment of Time for Debate—
Motion Adopted

Speech by:

The Honourable Larry W. Campbell

Thursday, March 1, 2012

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ALLOTMENT OF TIME FOR DEBATE— MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on the government motion to limit debate on Bill C-10. The role of the Senate is to provide sober second thought, but this government is limiting our ability to fully consider important pieces of legislation.

Due to the time constraints this government has imposed on the study and debate of this bill, we have not been able to look at all the required information needed to pass this legislation in good conscience. This bill includes nine separate pieces of legislation and covers a huge variety of subject areas. From terrorism to drug crime to pardons to immigration issues, there is a dog from every kennel in this bill.

The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs held 11 days of hearings to cover every part of this bill. How can this government possibly believe that this is enough time to properly hear crucial evidence and testimony regarding this bill?

The part of this legislation that deals with increasing and creating a new mandatory minimum for sex offenders, as well as creating two brand new offences, was dealt with in a day. Proposed amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act were given hardly any consideration at all. The committee heard from two panels of witnesses and from the minister and officials — less than one day of study.

The International Transfer of Offenders Act amendments were addressed by only two panels of witnesses, for a total of about two hours. The changes to the Young Offenders Act — 27 clauses — were also dealt with in a day. Proposed amendments to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, which constitute over 50 clauses of this bill, as well as changes to the pardon and parole system and the curtailing of the availability of conditional sentencing were not given thorough study. They were looked at for approximately a day and a half.

Senator Tardif: Shame!

Senator Campbell: These are complex amendments with far-reaching implications. They deserve proper consideration, which they were simply not given.

Many organizations and groups asked to be heard before this committee but were unable to be heard due to the ridiculous time constraints. Furthermore, by limiting debate on this bill, the government is effectively slighting the witnesses who did travel here to speak to the committee and explain their views. We do not have adequate time to ensure that their voices are properly heard.

Time allocation was imposed on every level of house debate. It is an abuse of power that has, unfortunately, become a commonly used tool for this government. The message they are sending is clear, as it has been from the introduction of this legislation: They do not care about evidence, they do not care about witnesses' testimony, and they do not care about sober second thought.
