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COMMENTS OF MINISTER OF JUSTICE ON CRIME RATES

Statement by:

The Honourable Larry W. Campbell

Thursday, June 15, 2006

THE SENATE

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Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, two weeks ago the Honourable Vic Toews made questionable comments regarding crime rates in general, and crime in Vancouver in particular. Although the Minister of Justice has intimate knowledge of the justice system, having been charged and convicted of an offence in Manitoba, he clearly has no knowledge or experience in gathering statistics or applying them in an appropriate manner.

Not only did he inaccurately compare crime in Vancouver as similar to crime in New York City, he reached such a conclusion by comparing data that does not align. Violent crime statistics per 100,000 people were used to compare the two cities. However in B.C., all assaults, levels one to three, are calculated into violent crime statistics. Conversely, New York City statistics include only aggravated assault. Furthermore, Vancouver violent crime statistics include all levels of sexual assaults, levels one to three, while New York City statistics include only forcible rape.

In addition to relying on faulty statistics to form the bulk of his argument, comments made by the Minister of Justice unfairly

painted the city of Vancouver as a place where “people like to come because the weather is fine and the sentences low.”

Considering that Vancouver was rated in the top three of the most liveable cities in the world for the last four years, unlike Winnipeg, and that numerous statistics and analyses over the years seriously contradict Mr. Toews’ remarks, I bring into question the veracity of the Minister of Justice’s statistics.

It is both unstatesmanlike and in poor judgment for the Minister of Justice to launch this uninformed attack on one of Canada’s cities particularly as Vancouver prepares to host the world in 2010. This misinformation hurts our business, our law enforcement agents, local elected officials of all stripes and our tourism trade. I would urge all members of the House and Senate to use caution when making such salacious comments. I call on the minister to publicly retract this statement. Vancouver is not only one of the great cities of North America, it is also one of the safest.

The next time Mr. Toews visits Vancouver, I urge him to spend time talking to, rather than maligning, the law enforcement officers there, and recognize it is they who work tirelessly to make Vancouver a truly great city.
