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THE SENATE

MOTION TO AFFECT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP— MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Speech by:
The Honourable Patricia Bovey

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MOTION TO AFFECT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP— MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, I hesitate to jump into this debate because so much has been said already. I agree with much of what has been said in every quarter of this august chamber.

I want to say that we all, every single one of us, represent Canadians. We represent our regions. We are here to do work on behalf of Canadians and on behalf of our regions.

Senator Housakos, I agree with you; we've completed some amazing inquiries. I've been privileged to be part of a number of them, and it has been very rewarding work.

I feel very strongly — and I'm in agreement with Senator Bellemare's amendment to the motion — that if members of this chamber move from one group to another, they should be able to take their committee seats with them. We've had rulings from prior Speakers on this. I go back to June 9, 2007, long before I was in this chamber, where that was upheld by the Speaker in a ruling.

I do feel very strongly, though, that every senator in this chamber has a right to speak their mind and have a vote. With that, Your Honour, I hope we can have this vote next week when the hybrid model is up. I appreciate that some of our colleagues are not able to be here because of health concerns or health concerns in their communities or rules in their communities, and we should give them the opportunity to participate.

Senator Saint-Germain spoke of the principle of fairness, and I applaud the principle of fairness. I think this enhances the principle of fairness. We've talked about the principle of equality. I believe having the vote when everybody has an opportunity to speak and to vote is that equality.

I do not accept this motion, as originally presented, as one of equality, and I do not happen to see the motion, as originally put

forward before the amendment, as one of modernization. Quite frankly, I see it as regression. I don't understand how denying individual senators their right of individuality is constructive reform. If we're really talking about reform, we have to talk about what the roles of senators are. So I can't accept the original motion, but I certainly accept the amendment.

Some countries are building walls. Let's take a look at those walls. I don't believe walls encourage debate. I don't believe that walls encourage understanding. I don't believe that walls encourage arms out around the world to make this place a better place. In fact, for me, walls do not conjure positive meaning at all.

I worry that, without Senator Bellemare's amendment, we're beginning to build walls in this place, and I don't think that helps us do the work of Canadians. I would hope that the Senate of Canada would not consider building this wall but would instead consider building a positive environment in which we all can do our work constructively.

I came here to work across the aisle. We've managed to do so. I'm proud of the ad hoc groups we've had during the pandemic and I think that has shown the collegiality in this place. At the same time, groups of us from all over have been able to draw attention to regional and sectoral challenges during the pandemic we face.

Colleagues, I feel now is the time to underline the principle of fairness, equality and the freedom of association enshrined in our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It's a fundamental right for all of us to be able to have freedom of movement, and if we as a chamber can't enhance and live up to that freedom of movement, I don't think we're giving the proper tone to our colleague Canadians.

I agree with the words that Senator Cordy wrote in *The Hill Times* article, and I do feel that Senator Bellemare's amendment will help us and will ensure modernization underlining equality, fairness and proportionality. Thank you.
