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TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE TERRY M. MERCER

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Statement by:

The Honourable Jane Cordy, the Honourable Marc Gold,
the Honourable Donald Neil Plett, the Honourable Mobina S. B. Jaffer,
the Honourable Larry W. Campbell, the Honourable Dennis Dawson,
the Honourable Leo Housakos, the Honourable Stan Kutcher,
the Honourable Patricia Bovey, the Honourable Pat Duncan,
the Honourable Brian Francis, the Honourable Marilou McPhedran,
and the Honourable Terry M. Mercer

Thursday, May 5, 2022

THE SENATE

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THE HONOURABLE TERRY M. MERCER

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I didn't think it would be this hard. It is a difficult task to sum up into words such a fulsome career as that of Senator Terry Mercer. His contributions over his life in politics to the people of Nova Scotia, and indeed to all Canadians through his work in this chamber, are numerous. I have known Terry for a very long time, and I have always appreciated his insights and, more importantly, his friendship. We will certainly miss his voice in our deliberations in this chamber, and what an unmistakable voice it is, but I am confident that he will continue his advocacy as he turns the page on this next chapter.

Senator Mercer was appointed to the Senate in 2003 by the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien. This appointment came after many years of involvement with the Liberal Party of Canada. He served as Director of Fundraising and National Director of the Liberal Party of Canada. I would have to say that Terry excels when engaging with people. He is what we would call a people person. This is particularly true when engaging with youth. There was no better example than his youth days on the Hill with Senator Munson. These events were a celebration of and for young people, and encouraged them to reach for their highest potential.

No one could accuse Terry of not knowing how to throw a good party, certainly not those of us for whom the annual Mercer Christmas party in his East Block office was a tradition not to be missed. Terry and his staff went above and beyond for these gatherings with plenty of food and live musicians. He always made sure there was a charitable connection too. Whether it was a monetary donation or a gift for those in need, the theme was giving, always giving. Terry is someone who just has a huge heart. I'm sure many of us have stories that highlight this admirable trait.

As Senator Munson wrote to me in reference to you, Terry, and to your retirement, and I'll quote him, this is from Senator Munson:

Terry, you always brought people together and it didn't matter to you who they were, or who they represented. Because it wasn't about politics, it was about people. We lived and worked in a special environment — the Hill — and you understood intuitively, whether someone was working in a cafeteria, or a cleaner in one of our offices who was going home for the night, you stopped and made sure they were recognized.

Senator Mercer was instrumental when we first formed the Progressive Senate Group. As we were figuring out the direction of this new group, Terry took on — without hesitation — the role of caucus chair. When Senator Day retired from the Senate, it was Terry who approached me about leading our group. In fact, as I remember it, he asked me to be the leader saying

Senator Dawson had agreed to be deputy leader with the stipulation that I would agree to be leader. Little did I know, Senator Dawson was informed that I would only be the leader if he came on as the deputy leader. It was a crafty ploy, but it worked.

Terry, as I bring my remarks to a close, I would like to personally thank you for your years of friendship. I want to thank you for all that you have contributed to this place, and I want to thank you for your years of service to Canadians. As you listen to the many tributes to you and your accomplishments — and they are many — it is certainly not the end of your story. I invite you to remember not what you are retiring from but what you are retiring to. You can now dedicate your time to your wife Ellen, your son Michael and daughter-in-law Lisa, and perhaps the two people most excited about time with grandpa, Ellie and Oliver.

Terry, I will miss that wonderful, distinctive voice in the chamber, and I will miss your passion for this job. But most of all, I will miss having you in the Progressive Senate Group. You make things exciting. Best wishes always, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, on behalf of all my colleagues in the Office of the Government Representative, I also want to pay tribute to Senator Terry Mercer. Senator Mercer has represented Nova Scotians in the senatorial division of Northend Halifax for almost 19 years. He has done so proudly, passionately and, on many occasions, unabashedly loudly.

Seriously, colleagues, Terry's efforts with and for many charitable organizations and philanthropic foundations have been both determined and tireless. His interventions in this chamber on behalf of charitable causes close to his heart have shone a light on the work of those charities and on Canadians who need and benefit from their support. The Kidney Foundation, the YMCA, St. John Ambulance Canada and Diabetes Canada are just a few of the causes that have benefitted from Terry's efforts.

As Senator Cordy mentioned, he has experience as a professional fundraiser. That was invaluable when he sat on the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector. He understood as well or better than anybody the sector's struggles and challenges.

Now, I don't know what the statistics are relating to any one senator sitting on the same committee from the day he or she was sworn in until the day he or she retires — and I'm not a betting person — but I would hazard a guess, and probably put a few nickels down, that Terry Mercer's tenure on the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry might be right up there in the top tier. His presence on that committee over almost two decades represents one of the mainstays and strengths of this chamber: institutional memory. Witnesses appearing before the committee knew that when Senator Mercer asked a specific

question, he expected a very detailed and specific answer, especially from government ministers and officials. He knew his stuff and expected the same from all of them.

As a colleague, one never had to wonder what Terry might be thinking on any given issue. He always made his views known, and spending time with you, Terry, was always refreshing. You deserve your retirement. We wish you and your wife, Ellen, health, happiness, new adventures and time with your grandchildren. But you will truly be missed.

Thank you, Terry.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise to pay tribute to my friend, Senator Terry Mercer.

Senator Mercer was appointed, as has already been said, by the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien to represent the great people of Nova Scotia. Prior to being appointed to this chamber, as Senator Cordy already mentioned, Senator Mercer was well known within the Liberal Party of Canada for having been the director of fundraising and the national director.

His loyalty to Jean Chrétien and his party has been undeniable. During his maiden speech, Terry said:

My support for Mr. Chrétien's legacy will be in the Senate not only for the opposition's benefit but also for honourable senators in the caucus. I will remind them not to forget the legacy of Jean Chrétien over the years and those of us who have been sent here by him.

Senator Mercer could not have foreseen the kind of strange predicament our institution would be forced into by Justin Trudeau's desire to cut ties in the name of Senate reform. Yet, it remains a testament to Senator Mercer's loyalty to his political party that even after the Prime Minister decided to break his allegiance with the Liberals in the chamber, Senator Mercer's allegiance never wavered. He was a team player from beginning to end.

For many years, Senator Mercer and I worked together on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Even though we were both very partisan senators, when it comes to farming, there is no such thing as a Conservative farming problem or a Liberal farming problem. Farming is farming, and the issues at stake were always the priority.

Senator Mercer and I also served together on the Transport and Communications Committee. Travelling together gave us an opportunity to become good friends. I recall the great times we had in Belgium during a study on wireless technology.

Colleagues, I will share a private conversation I had with Terry Thomas, our research analyst for the study. Mr. Thomas and I were walking down to get some chocolates for my wife, and I asked him to give me his opinion on who he thought were the two most partisan senators in the chamber. Keep in mind that these were the good old days when there were Liberals and Conservatives in the Senate. Our analyst, of course, hesitated in

providing me with the answer, but I insisted. He eventually confessed that, in his opinion, Senator Mercer was the most partisan Liberal and I would take that position for the Conservatives.

I told him I had been hoping for this answer because I wanted to tell Mr. Thomas that Terry Mercer was probably my best friend in the chamber.

Colleagues, may this be a reminder that being partisan isn't a bad thing, and partisan or non-partisan isn't the issue at stake in this chamber; it is the well-being of Canadians. If Terry and I can be friends and work toward a common goal, it is possible for everybody.

Senator Mercer, I want to join the many Canadians in thanking you for the work you have done. But, colleagues, I could not speak today without mentioning that Terry Mercer will forever be known by Conservatives for denying leave, especially when the Liberals held the role of the opposition in the Senate. Many on this side of the aisle will forever hear the soft echo of your voice saying "no" to keep the government in check and ensure it doesn't always get its way.

Terry, you leave big shoes to fill on that front, but I will do my utmost to fill the gap left by your absence and step up my game.

Humour aside, Terry, your retirement is well deserved, and our caucus and I wish you and Ellen the very best.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I have the honour to rise today on behalf of the Independent Senators Group to express our heartfelt gratitude to our colleague Senator Terry Mercer.

Since his appointment in November 2003, Senator Mercer has proudly and faithfully served in the Senate. I am sure you all know the extraordinary role he has played here in the chamber as well as in countless committees. His time in the Senate is a reflection of a life spent in the service of Canadians.

Honourable senators, there is a saying that friends are the family you choose. This is exactly how I feel about Senator Mercer. Ever since I have known him, for over 30 years, he has always been there for me and family.

Terry, Nuralla is here as well today. During pivotal moments in my life, when I was running and serving as vice-president of the Liberal Party of Canada and as president of the National Women's Liberal Commission, Senator Mercer was by my side, always providing me with sage advice and cheering me on from the sidelines.

Senators, as you know, there have been several points in my Senate career where I have felt very lonely. But Senator Mercer has always encouraged me not to stay silent and speak out on diversity issues. He would say to me, "Speak up. If not you, then who?"

His kindness did not stop with me. I remember him becoming a father figure to my son, Azool Jaffer-Jeraj, who was also a vice-president of the Young Liberals of Canada. Senator Mercer encouraged him to remain engaged, reaching out to him, hiring him and taking him under his wing. He did this for several other young men and women from diverse communities, and although many of his efforts went unnoticed, Senator Mercer has very quietly and humbly led the Liberal Party's transformation toward diversity and inclusion. In his own way, he made sure that the Liberal Party belonged to all Canadians.

To close, I want to share a message from your B.C. grandchildren, Almeera and Ayaan, "Now you have time to visit us in British Columbia, Grandpa Terry."

Senator Mercer, as you have dedicated your life to the service of countless Canadians, you well deserve to spend more time with those who you cherish and who cherish you most.

To Ellen, Michael and his family, thank you for sharing Terry with us for so many years.

You will be missed, my friend. I will miss you. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I'm honoured to join numerous others today in celebrating the many contributions in the Senate and the life of our friend and colleague Terry Mercer. Some people won't know this person, but in the immortal words of former senator George Baker, I will be brief.

Stating the obvious — and I don't think anyone other than Senator Plett would be able to state it in better words — Senator Mercer was partisan to the core. The definition of "partisan" is a person who strongly supports a particular party, person or cause. In his case, he hit what is known as the trifecta. He staunchly represents, in all three categories, the people of Nova Scotia, his charity work and the Liberal Party of Canada.

I arrived here 17 years ago, and one of the first people I met was Terry Mercer. I remember former senator Jim Munson coming over and joining the conversation, and being absolutely overwhelmed by what they were talking about. It included his charities and what they were doing. They were going for Rolling Thunder on the Hill, if you remember that event. There was just so much going on, and I was, quite frankly, not sure if I was in the right place. Some would question it even now.

As we have already heard, Terry is devoted to charities. For the majority of us, charities are something that we give money to every once in a while or we might go for a walk for a charity, but until I met Terry Mercer, I never quite understood the depth involved in charities and, more importantly, how charities are so much a part of our Canadian fabric. From him and all of the different organizations that he had served with over the years, I learned that this was, in fact, something that had to be addressed on an ongoing basis by the Senate.

Once upon a time in this chamber, heckling was an accepted art. Senator Mercer was not familiar with the term "sotto voce," or "under your breath." His voice carries like the foghorn at Peggy's Cove. It rumbled and it rolled. Even with a mask on, and even at this distance, I can hear his "no" or "quelle surprise," as he taught me. We both are, of course, fluent in both languages.

Terry, you are a fierce partisan. Your passion and positive energy are supreme, but at a different time you were known to actually go and sup with what was known as "the other side" — a much different place then. When the bell rang for an hour, it was an opportunity for friendship to be enjoyed on both sides before we came back in and locked horns.

I do not remember much about the Mercer Christmas parties, quite frankly. Memory has a way of going on you as you get older. But I do know that they were joyous, and I do know that many people and groups in this city were benefited by them.

Terry's love for his family is known throughout this chamber; his love for his children, for his wife and for the people of Nova Scotia. I'm so grateful for our friendship, and I wish you all the best in your retirement. Be well, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, I learned something today. I didn't know about that. Now I understand why he defeated me so often on campaigns.

[*Translation*]

I rise to pay tribute to the Honourable Terry Mercer, who is retiring from the Senate tomorrow. Let me be clear: I want to honour him for the right reasons. I want to wish him well in his retirement and thank him for the positive impact he has made on our institution. I rise not to rejoice in his departure from the upper chamber — as many of his friends who have heard about our skirmishes over the years might have thought — but rather to pay tribute to him.

[*English*]

As some of you might know, we sometimes have painful experiences in politics. Nothing is more difficult in a political party than internal politics. I look at my friend Senator Housakos, who is not necessarily agreeing with all of his colleagues on the leadership campaign. Most of them don't agree with him, but that's another issue. It can lead to serious disturbances that derail our best intentions, objectives and characters.

As we are witnessing in the acrimonious campaign right now, in convention after convention, the potential for internal division is very strong. Yet, the story between Senator Mercer and myself has turned out to be a positive example of what can be achieved when we throw in some goodwill and good faith in spite of the fact we opposed each other for over 30 years.

In and through the Senate, we reconciled. It's a word "à la mode," and I am happy to say that we did. I supported John Turner in 1984; he supported Jean Chrétien. I was against the review in 1986. I supported Paul Martin in 1990; he supported Jean Chrétien. Now I know why I lost. He was doing deals in the back.

These battles were long and painful. Terry and I have always found ourselves on opposite sides of the political fence inside our own political party. The only thing we agreed on was being Liberals. But I am standing up here today to praise Terry. We are living evidence that such divisions can be healed.

Reconciliation has many aspects these days. One modest signal is Senator Mercer and I coming to terms through our best work together and working in harmony to serve Canadians. After 17 years, we're finally sitting beside each other — the day he is leaving.

Senator Mercer: He just wants to be sure I get out the door.

Senator Dawson: Senator Jane Cordy was getting vengeful. She put his name there so that he would have to endure me.

Representing the province of Nova Scotia, he was appointed in 2003. My term came in 2005. The bad blood that had percolated between us over the years, at first it seemed hard — if not impossible — to put it behind, but we did. We made it. I take pride and satisfaction, as I hope he does, in having reconciled and done our best together through addressing so many causes and issues to improve the lives of our compatriots over the years in the Senate.

The creation of the Liberal senators group following our gracious expulsion from the national Liberal Party caucus triggered our determination for renewed cooperation among ourselves. In finding a common approach to working effectively in a united manner, we helped create the Liberal caucus at that time. When the disappearing breed was disappearing, we had to find a new approach. As Senator Cordy mentioned before, the creation of the Progressive Senate Group was another opportunity to put our strengths and drives together in addressing the issues of the day.

Navigating across many changes that the Senate has gone through for many years, Senator Mercer can be proud of his achievements and his formal capacity to make people work together — on philanthropic causes, et cetera — many of which were mentioned before.

Senator Mercer served as National Director of the Liberal Party for over six years. Prior to that, he held various positions in the world of fundraising.

[*Translation*]

Senator Mercer, thank you. The stars were not really aligned for the two of us to collaborate here in the Senate, but I must tell you that I took great pleasure and satisfaction in working with you on the causes we hold dear.

[*English*]

Some of my former Liberal friends and colleagues of past campaigns who were close to those conflicts will be surprised by my comments. But I stand by them, Terry, and I am proud to say it has been a pleasure working with you. I wish you a long and healthy life.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, Senator Mercer — a ferocious, partisan, Liberal senator; fundraiser; bagman; organizer; winner. That's what I always knew and understood and heard about Terry Mercer when I was summoned to this place. I had the pleasure of meeting him only in 2009, but everything I had heard about him was that he was a ferocious, partisan winner; that he believed in causes; that he was an unbelievable organizer and a legend amongst legends in the Liberal Party.

I came here to this chamber, and one of the first committees I sat on was the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, and many of you know I have a dear and fond love for that particular committee. I think it's the best committee in the Senate, in this institution. In large part, I look back and realize I have such fondness for that committee because that's where I met individuals like Terry Mercer.

I realized very quickly, besides the legend of the man in politics, there was a lot more to him than that. He was somebody who was kind, warm, sincere and intelligent. Even though, as you can imagine, colleagues, we rarely agreed on the politics at committee or in this chamber and we always fought on different perspectives, we fought with sincerity, with courage and with respect. Once the cameras were turned off and the mics were done and the debate was over, we spent a lot of personal time together. We did some studies that I think will make a great contribution to society and to this institution.

The times that I spent with Terry are where I saw that you can be fiercely partisan but very human. Because as we all know, in public life, we have moments where you receive some bodychecks. Isn't that the case, Senator Mercer? When those moments happened to myself, believe it or not, Senator Mercer was the first to come over with some kind advice and a pat on the shoulder and to say "hang in there" and to share some experiences. That's something on a personal level you never forget.

Then I delved deeper into the man, and I met people from Nova Scotia and I mentioned Terry Mercer and how ferocious and tough he is. They said, "Senator, he hails from the North End of Halifax. It's the toughest, scrappiest part of Nova Scotia, maybe the country." So I guess that's where you get your toughness from. I know you are very proud of your province and proud of where you come from.

Your kindness has also been exemplified through the years through causes, Terry, that you have supported. They are worth highlighting, colleagues. He worked with tremendous fervour to support causes like the Kidney Foundation of Canada,

St. John Ambulance Canada, the Lung Association of Nova Scotia, the YMCA, Diabetes Canada and is currently past chair of the AFP Foundation for Philanthropy – Canada and, of course, he is a tremendous advocate, as we know, for ovarian cancer research.

Terry, you are a wonderful senator. You are a wonderful human being. You have brought honour to politics and to this institution, and you will have left your mark on this institution and on so many people whom you have touched here. Thank you so much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Honourable senators, I rise today to join others in recognizing the contributions made by Senator Mercer during his career in this chamber.

I will focus on Terry the person, for after all, it is who we are as people that underlies how we behave and how we work with others to achieve meaningful goals.

Terry proudly says he represents not just Nova Scotia, but specifically the community in the North End of Halifax that helped form him.

He was the third of five children, which, if anyone is familiar with the “middle child syndrome,” may explain some things. For those who are unfamiliar with that piece of psychological mythology, here are the characteristics that are purported to be present: peacemaker, competitive, team player, independent thinker, friendship-focused and “they act out to get attention.” Each of us can ponder the aptness of that description.

Terry’s father was a chief engineer in the navy in World War II and in peacetime worked in the Halifax dockyard. His mother not only took the lead in raising the children but ran her own catering business, focusing on cakes, cookies and other sweets. That might help explain Terry’s prodigious sweet tooth. Indeed, in pre-COVID days, I could always tell if Senator Mercer had entered a committee room first — all the good treats were gone from the hospitality tray.

His upbringing instilled a strong sense of community and the necessity for working hard to overcome the slings and arrows that outrageous fortune sent his way — and it did. Without going into the details here, Terry did just that.

He attended university at Saint Mary’s where he and Ellen met, beginning their long and mutually supportive life together. When she came down with ovarian cancer, they fought it together, and they continue their work to help find a cure for this terrible disease. They are a team. We acknowledge and celebrate your teamwork. However, I also feel compelled to point out that many who know them both consider Ellen to be the brains of the operation.

Their son Mike grew up in a household where politics was like oxygen. When he answered the phone, it could have been the Prime Minister calling. But Mike used this to his advantage. When he first met Lisa, who now is his wife, he wanted to impress her so much. So on their first date, he took her to

a garden party at 24 Sussex Drive. That seemed to work, and now Terry and Ellen have two wonderful grandchildren, Ellie and Oliver. Terry, now you and Ellen will have more time to spoil them.

Terry respects and cares about the people he works with. David Sheppard, his Director of Parliamentary Affairs, once told me that it didn’t matter who you were; the boss always asked after how you were doing.

After I was appointed to the Senate, Terry was one of the first to reach out and give advice. He said, “It’s not just the position of senator that is important but how you fill that role.”

Thank you, Terry. God bless and may the wind fully fill your sails.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, and most of all, my Progressive Senate Group colleague, the Honourable Terry Mercer, and his family, what a day. After all these years of your serving Canadians as you have, with integrity, honesty and commitment, we in this chamber are going to be bereft of your wisdom, humour, advice, friendship and collegiality. Transitions are hard, so as you transition into the next chapter of your life, think of us transitioning without you in our committees and chamber deliberations.

Terry, in wishing you all the very best going forward, I want to thank you. I have learned so much from you in my few years in the Senate, from your leadership, to your knowledge of how the place works, to knowing all the precedents drawn from your keen archival memory, to having a vision for change and finding better ways to work on behalf of Canadians. You have served on many committees and taken the goals of each to heart, contributing with passion and with your unique sense of practicality.

I remember that bus ride to Kanata a number of years ago, when the Transport and Communications Committee was doing the fascinating study on autonomous vehicles. It was a field I knew nothing about when we began but, as you know, I soon became hooked. But that’s not what we talked about on the bus that day. We talked about charities and the need for a special committee on charities to examine how they work, their particular needs, some of the tax complications and inequities, their governance issues and more. We both had spent much of our careers in the charitable sector, you in the East and me in the West. Despite the geographical distance, it was funny how our perceptions and insights were so well aligned.

The Senate approved that committee, and I applaud the work you and its members did. The charities report the committee produced is truly substantive. It has already made a positive difference and more will come, I know. My disappointment was that I could not be a member as that committee met at exactly the same time as the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic, of which I was a member. However, to see the work progress simultaneously on these two critical needs was wonderful. I congratulate you and thank you for your tenacity in getting that study done.

On a personal note, your Canada Day celebrations sound amazing. Your stories of that annual Mercer celebration almost make me want to be a Nova Scotian. As you herald Canada's history and present in the years going forward, please know I will be with you in spirit, despite my not being a Nova Scotian.

Senator, all the very best. Stay healthy and safe and enjoy that treat of being with your family again for more than the past several decades have allowed you to be. Thank you so much, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, I rise today to honour our colleague, Senator Mercer. Senator Mercer's distinguished career in the Senate, and his contribution to the Senate and to Canada have been noted. I would like to speak from a very personal perspective.

The Honourable Senator Terry Mercer welcomed Senators Anderson, Kutcher, Moodie and myself to this place on February 19, 2019. He acknowledged that we had been appointed to the Senate in a new way and noted it to be a more transparent method, to be sure. Senator Mercer, at the time the Acting Leader of the Senate Liberals, said that, as senators, we alone would decide whom we would sit with — and he did welcome me to the former Liberal group — and how we would do our jobs.

Among my first experiences in doing my job at committee, I replaced another senator on the Charitable Sector Committee. That meeting happened to include testimony from several witnesses, including the former governor general, David Johnston.

Yukoners who ask me about my work at the Senate always ask, "How is the travel? How often do you get home?" And I always reply that I love the work. The travel, not so much. My response about how much I love the work is because of the experiences like attendance at the Charitable Sector Committee; the Banking, Trade and Commerce Committee; and others, and with working with all of you. The witnesses, the information and ultimately the committee reports are so valuable and so important. They are essential to our growth, our future and to the Canada we aspire to be. When we as senators are able to act, following the leadership of Senators Mercer and Omidvar upon the recommendations in the Charitable Sector report and in other reports, I believe Canadians are truly able to appreciate the work on behalf of Canadians accomplished by Senator Mercer and the Senate of Canada.

Senator Mercer also said in his welcoming remarks that the Senate is always in a constant state of change and that, going forward, we are all going to be finding our way around together. It is that "together" that I would like to conclude my remarks with. Senator Mercer, you welcomed me to the Senate family warmly and have never hesitated to share your knowledge about making a life here in the capital city, how best to work with administration and, most recently, in response to my endless lobbying about the lovely Honeycrisp apples from Nova Scotia, to share your secret to the apple pie recipe.

Senator Mercer, personally and professionally, you have given the Senate and Canadians much, representing your beloved Nova Scotia with distinction and honour. On behalf of all my ISG colleagues, may I offer our heartfelt thanks to the staff who have supported you over the years, to your loved ones who have loaned you to us and to you. Please accept all of our very best wishes for a very happy birthday tomorrow and all the best in your retirement. Thank you. *Māhsi'cho. Gūnāłchish.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Brian Francis: Honourable senators, I would like to take a few minutes today to pay tribute to the Honourable Senator Terry Mercer, who I am happy to have called both a close colleague and a dear friend. Terry is rarely soft-spoken — and we've heard that mentioned earlier today by some — but his voice carries with it an enormous depth of wisdom, and his contributions have never failed to bring valuable insight into any discussion. I have always enjoyed listening to him speak, as Terry always brought humour and wit to our work. He has never been too shy to shout out a funny comment or observation and draw out laughter and joy. His easygoing manner made me feel right at home with the Progressive Senate Group.

With honesty, I can say that Terry is an extremely generous person. Of course, he has had a long and distinguished career, most notably in politics, but he has also worked extensively in the charitable sector. As a senator, Terry brought his experience to bear in advocating for and then chairing the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector. But for me on a personal level, Terry has also been incredibly generous with his time and wisdom.

I want to express my deepest and most sincere gratitude to Senator Mercer for taking me under his wing, sharing his wealth of institutional knowledge and helping me find my role as caucus chair. Terry left big shoes to fill, but his generous nature made the transition smooth, straightforward and almost effortless. Terry's door was always open, and he made himself eternally available to me. At that time, I was a relative newcomer to the PSG, but Terry made me feel like I had been a member of caucus for a much longer time, and he made sure I always felt welcome. I will always admire his role as caucus chair of the PSG: how he helped keep the good ship and crew safe through the uncertain waters of those early days of the PSG.

Terry, *wela'lin* and thank you for your guidance, your wisdom, your wit and your friendship.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, gruff, tough and plain-spoken were the characteristics of Senator Terry Mercer perceived in my early days in this place — soon expanded by demonstrations of kindness, generosity and integrity. Please accept my warm birthday wishes for tomorrow. It marks a new chapter in how you are writing your book of life. It is following many chapters of your distinguished years as a senator that we've heard from our colleagues today, and I won't repeat.

Earlier chapters included service in so many forms, including as an Air Cadet, with alumni like Chris Hadfield, Marc Garneau and Lieutenant-Colonel Maryse Carmichael, the first woman pilot of the Snowbirds.

On the recommendation of a young leader from Nova Scotia, Senator Mercer was the first I called for advice on trying to pilot my #Vote16 bill the first time I introduced it. Senator Mercer, you were encouraging, wise and generous, and I thank you. I continue to follow your advice.

You show us how life is a craft that needs to be learned with patience, care and integrity. Longfellow wrote how we are all architects, how all of our days are building blocks of our existence, and how all of our actions, even those that no one else sees, determine the strength of the life we choose to build. We will all miss you. Thank you and *meegwetch* to your family for sharing you. Senator Mercer, you are a *mensch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Honourable senators, many people ask me, when they come to this place, “How do you know that you’ve been here long enough?” I have a standard answer to that, “When you know where all the washrooms are, you’ve been here too long.”

I said that to someone in the East Block one day. And they said, “Well, you must know where all the washrooms are.” I said, “Well, I thought I did, but I found a new one.” I told them where it was, and they said there is no washroom there, and I said, “Well, there is now.”

Anyway, honourable senators, I am actually overwhelmed with gratitude today for all those kind words from you, colleagues. Thank you so much, honourable colleagues. It is very humbling. This is one of the only times in my life that I find myself almost speechless. But don’t worry, Senator Plett, I will get over that.

I’ve lived a wonderful life throughout my many career paths. They all brought me here, to this chamber, where I will walk away knowing that I tried to do some good. I wasn’t always successful, but it was the trying that matters. We are all so privileged to work here in the Senate of Canada.

I cannot help but think of what my parents, Bob and Bessie, would think of me today after serving almost 19 years here. I was fortunate enough that when I was appointed both my dad and my mom were both alive. My dad died before I was sworn in, but my mom was here for that. It is a very important memory to have. As a boy growing up in North End, Halifax, to be standing here is quite a thing. It was a tough part of town. It has become a bit gentrified now, but it’s still a little rough.

I cannot thank everyone in my family enough for their support and their wisdom. To my siblings Colleen, Bob and Paulette — and my brother Gerald, who is now gone — and to their spouses Bob, Robert and Bonnie, and my brother’s late wife Dot, I say thank you as well. I thank you not only for your sound advice but for your constructive criticism — sometimes too much of it —

for that is how we learn to be better. Politics around the kitchen table was always interesting in my house and in my family, to say the least. It was almost a contact sport.

My path to the Senate was an interesting one, as many of you know. I would like to mention the late Walter R. Fitzgerald, who was the Minister of Labour and Minister of Housing in Nova Scotia and several times the Mayor of the City of Halifax. He gave me my first real political job as his executive assistant, and this is where I started to hone some of my political skills. But the voters of Nova Scotia would decide the next path in my career, as our government lost the next election in 1978 and I ended up unemployed.

I turned to the charitable and non-profit sector. The Kidney Foundation at the time was looking for their first executive director in Nova Scotia. I took the job and operated the office out of the basement of my house. I had an assistant who lived in another city and did the paperwork. It was a great learning experience, and it welcomed me to the charitable sector. I had been a volunteer in politics for most of my life up until that point, but it was here that I learned just how much more volunteers do and how they and the donors are the backbone of the sector.

After that, and a brief stint as executive director of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party, I would go on to work with the Lung Association of Nova Scotia; the St. John Ambulance, Nova Scotia Council; the Metro Toronto Branch of Diabetes Canada; and the YMCA of Greater Toronto, which, by the way, is the third-largest Y in the world. That was where my career took a major professional turn. The Y demanded professionalism and made sure that you had it. They also helped introduce me to the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

For 60 years now, the AFP has been the standard-bearer for professionalism in fundraising, and I was honoured to be endorsed as a Certified Fundraising Executive. The AFP has been paramount to my professional development, and I thank all the people I have worked with over the years for their support.

It was also during this time that I continued my involvement in the Liberal Party of Canada. Indeed, while I was vice-president of the YMCA of Greater Toronto, I joined a leadership campaign. I became part of the Chrétien leadership team. Believe it or not, as a guy from North End Halifax, I was responsible for all of West End Toronto and part of the suburbs. We did quite well there, and I won’t tell Dennis my secrets of that time, but I know he has heard about them. Eventually I was asked to head the fundraising for the party, and within a year I became the national director.

Words can’t express how much I respect Jean Chrétien. As a matter of fact, I had a phone call from him last night. He was unable to be with me last night because he was away, but he did express his good wishes. I was so proud to have him do that.

There are far too many people to thank at the party office from when I became national director. They were some of the best staff that I have had the pleasure to work with.

I always made a point to support the Young Liberals of Canada and the Nova Scotia Young Liberals, as our youth are the future of our country, not only in the Liberal Party but in all political parties and movements. Young people have a dogged determination and drive to make a difference, and we would all do well to continue to support their efforts regardless of our politics.

Honourable senators, I recall vividly the fateful day in November 2003 when the then-prime minister called me in my Liberal Party office — it was about seven in the evening — to ask me if I wanted to sit in the Senate of Canada. I don't think I have ever said "yes" to a question so quickly. I remain deeply honoured to have been asked to sit and to have sat here in the Senate for almost 19 years.

Throughout my Senate career I have sat on many committees, and I learned much about various aspects of governing in this country.

I initially sat on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, which was supposed to be temporary. Well, when I leave this place, I will have served there for the entire time, including as deputy chair for a time. For a city boy like me, it was an eye-opener. I have a great deal of respect for all the people who are in the industry. Canadian farmers and all the people who support them are bringing Canadian products to the world. I hope we continue to sell ourselves to the world with the amazing products we produce.

I also enjoyed my time on the Transport Committee with Senator Dawson, the Special Senate Committee on Aging and the Library of Parliament Committee.

Don't ever forget about the Library of Parliament Committee. During one term, a certain government didn't want the Parliamentary Budget Officer to report, and he reported through the Library of Parliament Committee. They've changed that legislation now, and he reports. I kept trying to get him to come as a witness, and I would go to the meetings all set to the move the motion and, as soon as the chair was elected, someone would move the adjournment of the meeting and I'd never get it done.

Then I went on to become chair of the Selection Committee at one time. While I was a bit reluctant to take on that role, senators like Senator Plett put their faith in me, and I thank them for that now. I wasn't very thankful at the time.

It is in the work of our committees where we senators shine, but we only can do that with the help and support of staff who make our work possible. I've had the pleasure of working with many clerks over the years, and I thank them all. I did work with some for a long time, and I would like to thank specifically Jessica Richardson, Adam Thompson, Keli Hogan, Kevin Pittman and Shaila Anwar for your support of our work and the work of the Senate over my tenure.

Committee travel is so essential to get out and meet Canadians. Take the Senate on the road again as soon as you possibly can. The people and staff are always on hand to make sure those trips are successful.

One of the greatest achievements I have ever accomplished will forever be the Senate Special Committee on the Charitable Sector. It took several years and lots of convincing, but we made it happen. The result was a report that I believe will help the sector continue to grow and flourish, because we need it. I would like to thank Senator Omidvar and Senator Martin for their support and diligence in making the report a reality, and our researchers Havi Echenberg and Nicole Sweeney, and Annie Trudel and our staff.

Every day, the lives of Canadians from coast to coast to coast are touched by the sector and its volunteers. I would like you to join me in thanking the millions of volunteers who make a difference in their communities. Thank you.

I was also especially proud to be able to have legislation passed to officially recognize National Philanthropy Day — the first of its kind in the world, by the way. We were the first country ever to do that.

According to Imagine Canada, the charitable and non-profit sectors contribute \$192 billion in economic activity to Canada annually, which accounts for about 8% of our country's GDP. The sector employs 2.4 million people, which is more than the mining, oil and gas sector, or agriculture, transportation and retail. Think about that. That's why philanthropy is important, and that's why we should recognize it and the volunteers who serve it.

Another way to provide service to our country is through blood donation. National Blood Donor Week is legislation that I sponsored and, with the help of all parties, we passed it to recognize and celebrate volunteer blood donations across Canada. It happens every June.

These donors give the gift of life — the ultimate gift of all — and I thank all of the donors who have and will continue to give that precious gift. My father was a blood donor all his life.

Honourable senators, throughout my years here, I have had the opportunity to celebrate many occasions. Famously, former Senator Munson and I were asked by former senator Landon Pearson to take over National Child Day, which she had started. By the way, I can hear and see all the women in the room saying, "Yes, that's right, they had to get two men to do the job of one woman." We got the message right from the start, Senator Munson and I. We had a good time.

Every November, we would have National Child Day. We would invite hundreds of young people into the chamber, and we would have performances on the floor of the chamber. Sometimes we didn't necessarily tell the Speaker all of what was going to happen. To give you an idea, the famous Canadian group Barenaked Ladies performed in the Senate of Canada in front of the Speaker's chair and did a couple of numbers. The kids went wild, of course. I'm not sure the Speaker of the day was as happy to hear them. But anyway, it was a lot of fun.

I thank Senator Landon Pearson for encouraging Senator Munson and me to do that. And it wasn't just Senator Munson and I that did it. We had help from former Senator Cochrane and current Senators Martin and Gagné to make it happen. I thank them for their support.

Former Senator Rompkey also started me on a push to host Navy Day on the Hill. From its humble beginnings — I'll tell you how humble it was. We said we were going to have this day to celebrate the Canadian Navy and the Coast Guard. We had no budget, but we knew we wanted to have a party. So a bunch of volunteers and staff went out to the local brewery and made beer. They also went to a local winery, and they made wine. So we have a party on the Hill to celebrate the Royal Canadian Navy and the Coast Guard with wine and beer made by volunteers, which we found some money to pay for.

The party was a huge success. It is now considered one of the premier social functions on Parliament Hill — when we can get back to having those types of functions on the Hill. I would encourage that when we can, we get back to doing it. You will be amazed at the turnout that will show up for Navy Day on the Hill. It is really absolutely terrific, and as the son of Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class Bob Mercer and the father of Lieutenant Michael Mercer, who is up in the gallery, I would hope that you would support the reinstatement of Navy Day on the Hill. One of my many volunteers from my office and friend Jerrod Riley was instrumental in planning the further development of this event. I thank him and the many other volunteers who made it all happen.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the work I also did with CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, supporting university students in their endeavours, and with SOCAN, supporting Canadian artists who provide so much to the culture and diversity of our country. Thank you to them.

Honourable senators, we would not be able to do our jobs if it were not for our staff and volunteers. I have had the pleasure of working with many summer students, and when we get back to normal — whatever normal is anymore — I encourage you to hire some summer students. I have had Katherine Donovan from New Brunswick, Michael Power from Ottawa, Julianna Kelly from Manotick, Nat Atherton from Ottawa, Jennifer Johns from Ottawa, Jessica Burkhardt from Ottawa and Michel Naubert from Gatineau.

I know the experience they gained working in the Senate has been invaluable to them. It certainly was to me, and I would like to thank them on the record today.

The many other staff that we have had in our Senate office over the years have been the best I have ever worked with, including some who have been with me my entire tenure. I would like to thank Lisa Thibedeau, Melanie Nicholson, Heather Forsyth and Caitlin Gropp for your support, especially as we navigated our way through the creation of the Progressive Senate Group.

I would also like to thank Archie Campbell and Dave Murphy who were also on hand to help with the annual Senator Mercer tree-trimming party. When I came back a couple of weeks ago and was looking towards the end, I said I wanted to do something special to be remembered by. I almost did it, but I pulled back because I knew I would get in a lot of trouble. I was going to

have my tree-trimming party last week. Well, my tree-trimming party usually involved the traipsing of 100 or so people through the third floor of the East Block in front of my office, and we had live music, which we didn't pay for — it was volunteers. We had volunteer bartenders. Then we had all kinds of great food, mainly supplied by my staff. I'll talk about them in a minute.

To all the staff at the Progressive Senate Group, thank you for all you do for your senators. Keep up the good work and make sure they have a little fun, too.

The Parliamentary Protective Service, maintenance services, client services, ISD, property service, committee attendants, multimedia services — including Pedro Peres — the interpreters and all the support staff throughout the entire Senate: Thank you for your service. You were the ones who helped keep this train on the tracks. Thank you also to the Parliamentary Associations and groups and all the staff we have to help promote Canada to the world.

There are two people who were indeed with me for my entire Senate journey and whom I cannot thank enough: Sherry Petten and David Sheppard. Sherry had terrific experience and had worked in the deputy prime minister's office when Herb Gray was deputy prime minister. She then worked for the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Sharon Carstairs. She was in Sharon's office when I was appointed. I was lucky enough to get her out of Sharon's office and get her to come work for me. We had a deal, though. Sherry is almost exactly 10 years younger than I am. That was the deal. She would turn 65, and I would turn 75. This was great; we would leave together.

But Sherry decided that she would leave a few years ago and is having a great retirement. I continue to think that Sherry's job was to keep me out of jail and out of trouble. Well, I have never been in jail, so that part worked, and the trouble that I've gotten into has been stuff that I have done on my own. Sherry would try to talk me out of it sometimes.

David Sheppard, on the other hand, I have known for a long time. He was a Young Liberal in Nova Scotia. When I was appointed, David was working for the party in Nova Scotia. I enticed him to move from Nova Scotia to Ottawa. It has been a wonderful partnership between David, Sherry and me. I would suggest that I have been blessed with the best staff in the Senate office for years, and I have been successful because of their support.

Now, I did want to stop and tell you a story. Senator Plett was very kind in his remarks and talked about how friendly we have become. I consider Senator Plett one of my closest friends in the Senate.

The Agriculture and Forestry Committee was on a tour. We ended up in northern New Brunswick with Senator Mockler. By the way, Senator Mockler doesn't know that he doesn't have to get elected because anywhere you went in northern New Brunswick with Senator Mockler, he was shaking hands. I've been on a lot of campaigns, and Percy kept shaking hands with everybody that was there.

Anyway, so we're in Saint-Léonard, I believe, and we stopped. Senator Plett and I were on the committee. We were relatively new. I was a little more experienced on the committee than Senator Plett, because he had just recently been appointed. So we went out to dinner as committees do. At the end of the night, we had sat down to have a glass of wine, and everybody else went to bed. There we were: Senator Plett and I sat there stuck with only each other to talk to.

So we had another glass of wine, maybe two glasses of wine, and we discovered something. When we weren't being partisan about the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party, we actually liked each other, and we built on that relationship. It has helped sometimes in this chamber — not all the time — but Don and I have a relationship where I know I can always go talk to him and he knows he can always come and talk to me. Sometimes it has been helpful; not all the time because sometimes things get in the way. He is a stubborn guy.

However, our small but mighty caucus is making the Senate a better place, I think. The Progressive Senate Group is made up of senators with different backgrounds, shared values and at times differing opinions. We all bring something to the table, and I look forward to watching the group grow and continue to improve.

I just realized that I forgot to finish my Don Plett story.

The Transport Committee was on another trip. Don was on that, along with Dennis. We went to Estonia for part of our study, and then we went to Brussels for the second part. It happened to be in November, and Wednesday of that week was November 11, so I went to the clerk of the committee and said, "Well, we're not working on Wednesday." He said, "Well, why?" I said, "It's Remembrance Day. You have to find a place for us to commemorate Remembrance Day."

They organized it with the embassy in Brussels, and we went to Ypres where the Menin Gate is. It's only a few miles from Passchendaele. The part about Plett was later on when we went back to Brussels. We're out at night and suddenly these guys — Dawson and Plett — decided that they wanted to go shopping. Not far from the hotel was a shop that only sold ties. There were long ties and there were bow ties.

Senator Dawson: He still has it.

Senator Mercer: At the end of the evening when we left the tie shop, Don had 15, 20 ties — I can't recall, but there were a lot of ties — and Dennis bought a few bow ties. I was just so amazed; I didn't buy anything. Number one, these guys were buying high-end ties, not like me. Although this tie today, for those of you who are tartan lovers, is a Cooper tartan. My mother's maiden name was Cooper, and on any special occasion in this place I wear it in honour of my mother.

Anyway, that was Plett and Dawson shopping for ties. A couple of weeks later I asked Don, "What did your wife think of all the ties?" He said, "She didn't say anything about the ties, but she did ask about the big charge on the Visa card."

Anyway, thank you all again. I would like to thank my caucus colleagues, Margaret Dawn, Diane, Wanda, Pat, Jane, Dennis, Pierre, Brian, Amina, Clément, Peter, Marty and Sandra. I will miss our weekly chats and sometimes weekly debates.

Finally, some parting advice for all of you. Please remember that you are all politicians. That's it. So many of you came here saying you never wanted to be one, but you're all politicians. It could be a big "P" or could be a small "P," but you're all politicians and don't forget it. That's not a bad thing. The work of a senator is demanding and extremely satisfying, especially when we work together with like-minded colleagues in caucuses or groups, but especially with each other. I mentioned before the work of the committees when we travelled, and I already told you the story about Mockler campaigning in northern New Brunswick and Don Plett and me meeting in the bar.

In any event, build friendships. Go meet with people. This is the problem with the pandemic. We don't have any social events these days when we get together. When they come back, go to these things. Meet your colleagues; make sure you meet someone on the other side or in a group you have no affiliation with. Guess what? You will build those relationships, and those relationships will make committees work better, make this place work better and will make the legislation better. That will serve Canadians better, and it will only happen if you do it together.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Mercer: Get to know your colleagues on both sides. You will all be better off.

In this chamber we can debate and argue, disagree and agree. But out there, outside, remember that we are all people who can celebrate friendships, regardless of where we are on the political spectrum. The grand experiment of the Prime Minister is still just that: an experiment.

What will happen in the future? It's up to us — really to you now — how to navigate it and what changes to keep. What the Senate will look like in the future is up to you. Please do not forget the past, and please do not think that the past was so horrible, because you may end up going back to it.

My prediction has always been that eventually this place will evolve back to where it was. There will be a group sitting over there as the opposition and there will be a group sitting over here as the government, and I would suggest there will be several other groups like we have now. But I think that's how the place will evolve. You'll all figure that out on your own. I won't be here to guide you, although I would be happy to give you advice.

Honourable senators, I would like to thank all of my family and friends, too many to mention, who have been extremely supportive through the good times and the bad.

My cousin John is in the gallery with his wife, Neena. Without them, Ellen and I would not have been able to transition to Ottawa when we first moved here, and we thank them for that. It made our lives so much easier.

To my wife Ellen, whom I recently celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary with, words are not enough. I wouldn't be here today without you. You are my rock.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Mercer: To my son, Michael, and my daughter-in-law, Lisa, who is at home with the grandchildren, I look forward to spending more time with you and our two wonderful grandchildren, Ellie and Oliver. Thank you for enriching our lives.

Honourable senators, that finishes the first half of my speech. I actually thought, before I came in to give this speech today, that I would come in with a much thicker pile of paper just to show Senator Plett that I could speak for an hour and a half too.

Honourable senators, thank you for your kind words. Thank you for your support, and please continue your good work. Canada needs you. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.
