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NELSON MANDELA

Motion to Declare Honorary Citizen of Canada

Speech by:

The Honourable Vivienne Poy

Thursday, June 14, 2001

THE SENATE

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NELSON MANDELA

MOTION TO DECLARE HONORARY CITIZEN OF CANADA

Hon. Vivienne Poy: Honourable senators, I rise to speak in support of Senator Cools' motion to declare Nelson Mandela an honorary citizen of Canada. I feel privileged to speak about Nelson Mandela for, throughout his life, he has served as an inspiration to people around the world.

Through his patience and endurance in the face of great oppression, he taught us the value of forgiveness and reconciliation. He showed us that a people's will to achieve freedom and democracy can triumph over all the weapons of an oppressive regime. He fought for the freedom of the human spirit, so Blacks and Whites could live together in peace, and he was prepared to die for his beliefs.

After 27 years in prison, Nelson Mandela was without bitterness or anger. Instead, he was filled with hope for the future of his country. It was hope and love, rather than hatred and revenge, that allowed for an end to Apartheid in South Africa. Despite his many experiences of human brutality, Nelson Mandela has faith in the fundamental goodness of humankind.

Canada has a close and abiding relationship with Nelson Mandela. Long ago, we recognized the injustice that was Apartheid and actively fought for its end. In 1990, when he visited Canada's Parliament, he spoke about the great friendship between our peoples. At that time, he was still denied citizenship in his own country. In 1998, he returned to Canada as the elected representative of South Africa.

This fall, we hope that he will have the opportunity to come to Canada, as a citizen of our country. It is one of the greatest honours that we can bestow, and it is a fitting tribute to such a giant of humanity.
