



CANADA

Debates of the Senate

3rd SESSION

• 40th PARLIAMENT

• VOLUME 147

• NUMBER 3

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

Statement by:

The Honourable Vivienne Poy

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

THE SENATE

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

Hon. Vivienne Poy: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize International Women's Week, which began on Sunday and continues until March 13. The Government of Canada's theme for 2010 is, "Strong Women. Strong Canada. Strong World."

We have recently witnessed the strength of Canada's women as they led the medal count at the Winter Olympics in Vancouver. As the press noted, women, who represented 43 per cent of Team Canada, outperformed men at the recent Olympics. The most motivational story of the games was that of Joannie Rochette, who showed tremendous strength under pressure and triumphed in figure skating despite the sudden passing of her mother. Today I salute the strong women who have made Canada proud through their athletic performance, inspiring a generation of young girls to excel in sports.

In the political arena, we need more women like these athletes so that young girls can follow in their footsteps. The reality is that women continue to make up only about one quarter of Canadian legislators. This number has remained virtually unchanged for

more than a decade, even though we make up about 52 per cent of the population.

According to a recent submission to the United Nations by the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, women are losing ground in Canada. In 2004, Canada ranked seventh in terms of the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. Last year we had slipped to twenty-fifth place. Even among 22 OECD nations, Canada lags behind in measurement of gender gap in wages, in fifth place behind the United States. This situation exists despite the fact that women now make up the majority of students graduating from universities.

According to the report, the closure of 12 of Canada's 16 Status of Women offices, the end of funding for women's advocacy and the loss of the national child-care program put in place by Paul Martin have all contributed to a steady erosion of the quality of life for Canadian women since 2004.

International Women's Week is a good time to remind our government that a United Nations indictment of Canada's record of women's status could cast an embarrassing shadow during the G8 and G20 conferences in Ontario this summer.
