



CANADA

Debates of the Senate

2nd SESSION

•

36th PARLIAMENT

•

VOLUME 138

•

NUMBER 4

OSTEOPOROSIS MONTH

Statement by:

The Honourable Vivienne Poy

Tuesday, November 2, 1999

THE SENATE

Tuesday, November 2, 1999

OSTEOPOROSIS MONTH

Hon. Vivienne Poy: Honourable senators, November is Osteoporosis Month in Canada. Osteoporosis is a debilitating condition that causes bones to thin and weaken, leaving them vulnerable to fracture. The prevalence of the disease among our citizens is a matter of great consequence and importance to this country. Approximately 1.4 million Canadians currently suffer from osteoporosis, and another 2 million are at risk of developing the disease. It afflicts one in four women over the age of 50 and one in eight men in the same age group. Treating osteoporosis costs Canada \$1.3 billion a year.

Osteoporosis is a disease in which education and prevention can make a profound difference. Because of a lack of public awareness and education, many people do not know they have the disease until it is too late. Loss of bone density can occur silently over many years before it becomes evident. By the time bone fractures occur, the damage is already severe and can result in serious spine, hip and wrist injuries. Much of the damage is irreversible. Osteoporosis-related injuries are commonly disabling and diminish the quality of life significantly among those afflicted.

Today, we know more than ever about preventing osteoporosis, and the disease is internationally recognized as a significant health issue. Building strong bones early in life is one of the most important things we can do. Ensuring that we have

enough calcium in our diets is also important, as well as regular exercise, especially weight-bearing sports like walking, running, tennis and badminton. There are now tests available for early detection for those at risk. We can significantly reduce the number of people who will develop osteoporosis if preventive measures and public education are undertaken.

Canada needs to show leadership by developing a comprehensive framework for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of this debilitating disease. The kind of leadership I am talking about is consistent with the strategy outlined in the Throne Speech last month calling for the establishment of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. These institutes are to bring together researchers who have an impact on health and to undertake shared research priorities.

Osteoporosis needs to be among our health research priorities if we are to improve the quality of life of Canadians, especially in the face of an ageing population in the coming decades. The incidence of osteoporosis can be greatly reduced if we take a long-term view of prevention.

Honourable senators, in the spirit of raising awareness of this important health issue, I invite all of you, along with our colleagues in the other place, to join me and the Osteoporosis Society of Canada tomorrow afternoon between 4 and 6 p.m. in Room 237-C here in the Centre Block for a bone china tea.
