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## LABOUR

### Museums Labour Dispute

Questions by:

The Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette

Thursday, December 3, 2009

## THE SENATE

Thursday, December 3, 2009

[*Translation*]

### LABOUR

#### MUSEUMS LABOUR DISPUTE

**Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette:** Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Although the Minister of Labour, Rona Ambrose, under the pretext of economy recovery, appointed an arbitrator to resolve the CN labour dispute within three days, the same minister stubbornly refuses to press management at the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Canadian War Museum to resolve the labour dispute that has been going on there for nearly three months.

Would the minister not agree that our public funds are being wasted when employees who are mandated by the government to preserve Canada's history and heritage cannot carry out their duties and provide the services that the public is entitled to receive? I am thinking of all the young Canadians from various educational institutions who have not been able to take advantage of the school programs normally offered by the two museums, because those programs were all cancelled when the strike began.

Would the minister not agree that educating our young people is just as important, economically speaking, as CN's transportation activities? Or, as we have seen in the past, is the Conservative Party's policy to slash everything dealing with arts and culture simply part of its economic action plan?

• (1430)

[*English*]

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)):** The last part of the honourable senator's

question is, as she knows, flat-out false and does not deserve an acknowledgment, let alone an answer.

As Minister Ambrose has made clear, with regard to the strike at the museums, it has always been our hope that the parties will come to an agreement without intervention, as we saw yesterday with the fortunate situation at CN Rail.

The mediator appointed by the minister has been working with the parties on both sides since before the strike began. As I reported in answer to Senator Lapointe, we continue to encourage both sides to find a resolution as soon as possible.

As I also reported to Senator Lapointe, the minister stands ready to name an arbitrator, but an arbitrator cannot be named unless both sides agree.

[*Translation*]

**Senator Hervieux-Payette:** The holiday season is just around the corner and Parliament will be adjourning in two weeks. So that the 400 or so families affected by this nearly three-month-old strike may enjoy Christmas like all other Canadians, can the Conservative government show the same diligence that it showed with the CN dispute in the transportation sector, and introduce a special bill to end this dispute, given that we would be willing to support such a bill?

[*English*]

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, as I said, the minister continues to urge both sides to settle this dispute as quickly as possible. The government is monitoring the situation carefully and, as I reported, an arbitrator would be named by the minister if both sides agreed.

I believe that the mediator the minister appointed before the strike began is working hard to come to that exact conclusion.