

THE SENATE

Tuesday, March 24, 1992

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.
Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

GENERAL ELECTION

NUMBER OF DAYS LEFT IN CURRENT TERM

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the chronological application of Senator Murray's test for a government is as follows: To apply his test to a government that respects democracy, Canadians will cast their ballots within 242 days, but a government that meets his test of being cowardly and contemptuous of democracy still has another 628 days.

Senator Thériault: Too long; too long.

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL REFERENDUM—COMMENDATION

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault: Honourable senators, a number of years ago, I served as Canadian Parliamentary representative to the Special Committee of the United Nations. In that capacity, I set forth Canadian policy on South Africa and our nation's condemnation of apartheid.

Recently, on my own initiative, I made a private visit to South Africa. While there and without any restrictions, I met with a wide cross-section of the South African community. Individuals I met included representatives of almost all of South Africa's political parties, academic leaders, church representatives, politicians, blacks, whites, and coloureds.

The sea change under way in South Africa is awesome. The consensus from all sides suggests that South Africa is moving inexorably towards adoption of a modern, multi-racial, democratic constitution. Despite the formidable challenges ahead, there is a fundamental optimism shared by blacks and whites alike that the task will be accomplished. All of us should welcome these dramatic and positive developments in South Africa and the beneficial implications that they have for the future of all of Africa, and indeed for the world.

The recent referendum has provided ample evidence that most white South Africans welcome change, and that a solid majority want to put behind them the years of racial separation, discrimination and apartheid. Building a new multi-racial, democratic constitution will not be an easy task. Indeed, Canadians are aware of just how difficult constitution-building can be. One suspects, however, that ultimately, both

in South Africa and in Canada, the common sense of the moderates will prevail as both of our countries seek to rebuild their constitutions.

South Africa is a complex society but the good will is there. On all sides—business, the universities, the churches, the political parties—one theme is repeated again and again: We can build a new South Africa and we intend to do it. Should South Africa be successful in its efforts to establish a democratic, multi-racial form of government, that nation could be a powerful force for good in the effort to bring economic health and prosperity to all of Africa. Indeed, there will be clear economic benefits for Canada when relationships between our two countries have been normalized.

I want to pause and say I think that, by and large, the current government has done a good job with respect to South Africa, just as the predecessor Liberal government did. Canadian initiatives have been positive and helpful; they have contributed toward constructive solutions. In anticipation of an accord in South Africa, some preliminary work should be done now in the area of commercial and economic relations. The fact is that there have been 51 trade missions in South Africa in 12 months. With the exception of one unofficial and informal mission from Canada, all 51 missions—of which several, I understand, were at a high level—have come from other countries. Indeed, the Chinese have established a trade-office in Johannesburg.

Canadians should be prepared to encourage and support the move toward greater democracy in South Africa. Individual visits to South Africa and a greater degree of contacts in all areas, including academic, economic, cultural and sports, can only be helpful at this time. Our Canadian government is now encouraging private visits, as some honourable senators are aware.

When a preliminary constitutional accord has been put in place, it is expected that the Commonwealth sanctions imposed at New Delhi will be lifted. That will be a good day for South Africa and for the Commonwealth. A moment ago, I spoke of visits to South Africa. Apart from constitution-building considerations, the tourist values alone in that beautiful country make any visit worthwhile.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OPEN SKIES TREATY

Hon. Earl A. Hastings: Honourable senators, I wish to underline and draw the attention of honourable senators to a significant and important event today in Helsinki. I refer to the signing of the Open Skies Treaty. Signatories to the