



**Manning Foundation Symposium**  
***Whither the Senate? Reform, Abolish or Status Quo?***  
**October 31, 2013 (Calgary, AB)**

## **Remarks by Senator Doug Black (check against delivery)**

### ***Reform from Within: A Senator-Led Initiative***

#### **Introduction**

I first want to thank Preston Manning, Ted Morton and the Manning Foundation for inviting me to moderate today's panel, as well as to my colleagues for joining me here today to share their perspective. Before outlining my specific ideas on how to start reforming the Senate, let me offer some thoughts.

As a starting principle, Senate leadership and individual Senators must start viewing their responsibilities in a more proactive and independent manner. We can't wait for others to fix our problems. We should not be seeking, or waiting for direction, blessing, or approval from the House of Commons, party leaders, or the Prime Minister's Office. We have serious and important responsibilities that we need to own and get ahead with addressing or solving.

If we are to make any headway on the debate over what to do with the Senate, it will only be through thoughtful, informed discussion leading to action.

#### **The Future of the Senate**

Today I've been asked as an elected Alberta Senator to join my colleagues in discussing what can be done to improve the Senate from the inside. As some of you here today may know from my Senate campaign, I am a strong supporter of an elected, accountable and effective Senate. In the long term, I see that as the best way—perhaps the only way—for the Senate to overcome its current problems.

Canadians now have a decision to make about what to do with the Senate. As I see it, there are three directions that the Senate can go:

1. it can remain the same, preserving the status quo and refusing to adapt to the needs and expectations of Canadians;
2. it can be abolished, tossed aside and lamented as a failed experiment;
3. or, finally, and you can probably guess that this would be my preference, the Senate can become what it was always intended to be: a place to integrate provincial and regional views directly into Parliament, and a place to encourage further consideration of legislation.



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Make no mistake, I believe a reformed Senate is worth fighting for.

**7-Point Action Plan**

I've outlined my thoughts on how to start Senate Reform in my 7-Point Action Plan for Renewal, which I announced during the summer. This plan is a series of simple and practical steps that the Senate can take to improve its relationship with Canadians and start moving towards meaningful change.

Firstly, to improve accountability, the Senate should tighten proof of residency requirements, because provincial and territorial representation is one of the core functions of Senators. You can't represent your region if you don't know it—and you can't know it if you don't live there.

Secondly, we should add external members to the Audit Subcommittee of the Committee on Internal Economy, similar to how it's done in the UK's House of Lords. Recent events have actually convinced me that we should also consider adding external members to the Committee on Internal Economy itself, to assist in ensuring that the Senate follows reasonable expense rules and administration procedures.

Thirdly, the Senate must support legislation that would prevent members of parliament and Senators convicted of serious crimes from receiving the public contribution to their parliamentary pensions.

Next, to increase transparency, the Senate must clearly define what constitutes "Senate Business", in its expense policies. Rules must be stringent enough to protect the interests of Canadian taxpayers, but not so restrictive that they handcuff Senators to Ottawa and prevent them from getting out and listening to Canadians.

I also believe Senators' travel and hospitality expenses should be disclosed in greater detail. I was the first Senator to disclose all of my office, hospitality, residence and travel expenses on my website. I made that disclosure the very first quarter that I was in the Senate. During my campaign in the Senate nominee election in 2012, I made a commitment to Albertans to operate my office transparently and I've honoured that commitment—right down to the cost of the coffee machine.

In my 7-point plan, I have also called for the Senate to improve the accessibility and transparency of its legislative function by webcasting live video of debate in the chamber. Senate debates are open to the public. I don't see why a citizen in Ottawa passionate about



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politics and democracy should be able to watch the Senate in action while the same citizen in Alberta cannot.

Finally, the Senate should initiate a two-way dialogue with Canadians to help improve public understanding of the chamber's role in parliament.

My 7-Point Plan is just a start – but I believe that these steps will go a long way in restoring Canadians' trust in the Senate.

Thank you.



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**Biography**

Doug Black placed strongly in first position in the 2012 Alberta Senate Nominee Election, and was appointed to the Senate on January 25, 2013. Senator Black serves on the Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources and the Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce.

Senator Black is Senior Counsel at Dentons Canada LLP, a global law firm. He studied at the University of Alberta, and holds a Bachelor of Laws degree from Dalhousie University in Halifax. Senator Black was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2002 and was named as one of Canada's 25 most influential lawyers for 2012 by Canadian Lawyer Magazine.

Senator Black is deeply involved in his community, and was awarded the Alberta Centennial Medal in 2005 in recognition of his many contributions. He served as Chair of the Board of Governors of the University of Calgary, where he guided the development of the bold and ambitious Eyes High strategy to become one of Canada's top five research universities by 2016. Senator Black is Governor Emeritus of the Banff Centre, Alberta's nationally and internationally renowned centre of excellence in creativity and the arts, and was National Co-Chair of the Centre's successful \$128 million campus revitalization campaign. He has served as Chair of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, which equips disadvantaged youth with the tools to ignite change in their communities through the arts. Senator Black was also the Founder of Lake Crest School in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Senator Black has been a long-time proponent for responsible energy development and an advocate for diversifying Canada's energy markets. He was founding president of the Energy Policy Institute of Canada, a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to the development of a Canadian energy framework.

Senator Black lives in Alberta with his wife Linda, and they have two adult children. Together, Senator Black and his wife are active swimmers, cyclists, and supporters of the arts.

**Abridged version:** Senator Black was appointed to the Senate on January 25, 2013, and serves on the Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources and the Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce. He is Senior Counsel at Dentons Canada LLP, and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2002. Deeply involved in his community, Senator Black was awarded the Alberta Centennial Medal in 2005 in recognition of his many contributions. He has served as Chair of the Board of Governors of the University of Calgary, Chair of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, is Governor Emeritus of the Banff Centre, and was Founder of Lake Crest School in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Senator Black was also founding president of the Energy Policy Institute of Canada, a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to the development of a Canadian energy framework. He lives in Alberta with his wife Linda, and they have two adult children.