

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A4

June 3, 2010

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

I am writing to correct certain misrepresentations of fact made by your spokesperson, Mr. Dimitri Soudas, in an interview with La Presse, as reported on June 2.

I have never previously written to you about misstatements by your spokespersons. I have always assumed that you are busy with serious matters of state, and that you, as do I, would wish matters involving political staff to be handled directly by them.

However, your new policy of refusing to allow staff to be responsible for their actions before Parliament has apparently emboldened your spokesperson to misrepresent with impunity certain facts about Parliament. Since your new policy states that it is the Minister to whom the staff member reports who is to be held responsible, I feel I have no choice but to write to you to correct the misrepresentations.

In the La Presse article, Mr. Soudas sought to justify the expected rapid appointment of a replacement for retiring Senator Michael Pitfield. He said: "Nous sommes minoritaires au Sénat et depuis que le Parlement est revenu, il n'y a pas un seul projet de loi, incluant le budget, qui a été adopté pour devenir loi par le Sénat."

Prime Minister, it is disappointing that you would try to justify your decision to appoint another Conservative senator by so misrepresenting facts about the current Senate. First of all, as you are well aware, Bill C-9, the budget bill, has not yet passed the House of Commons. It has not yet arrived in the Senate. I am at a loss to understand how the Senate could have passed the budget bill, while it was still being debated in the House of Commons. Furthermore, you are undoubtedly aware that our offer to pre-study the bill was rejected by Senator Gerstein, the Vice-Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance.

Contrary to Mr. Soudas' statement, the Senate has passed six bills this Session. They are:

- Bill S-2, the *Protecting Victims from Sex Offenders Act*;

- Bill S-3, the *Tax Conventions Implementation Act, 2010*;
- Bill C-6, *an Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2010*;
- Bill C-7, *an Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2011*;
- Bill S-210, *an Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act and the Auditor General Act (involvement of Parliament)*;
- Bill S-215, *an Act to amend the Criminal Code (suicide bombings)*;

I am surprised to learn that your spokesperson, and therefore, under your new policy, you as well, dismiss all of these bills as so insignificant that their passage by the Senate did not merit your notice.

Prime Minister, I realize that you have an agenda to promote reform of the Senate. I respect any serious desire to improve governance in Canada, including reforms of the Senate. However, Canadians expect their democratic institutions to be accorded respect, particularly from the Prime Minister of their country. It is unbecoming the office of Prime Minister to blatantly misrepresent the work of Parliament, particularly when those misrepresentations are so clearly motivated by nothing more than callous political advantage.

I was disappointed a few months ago to see the Minister of Justice engage in similar conduct, and on February 4, I wrote to him, a copy of which was provided to you, to set the record straight. I said, "As our country's Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada, your first allegiance must always be to the truth, far beyond any political or partisan gamesmanship. Our system of justice depends upon it." The Prime Minister's duty to the truth is no less.

I look forward to receiving a correction for the record.

Yours very truly,

James S. Cowan

Cc: The Honourable Marjory LeBreton, Leader of the Government in the Senate

*\*For the purposes of this distribution, the English translation of Mr. Soudas' quotation is as follows:*

*"We have a minority in the Senate, and since Parliament has resumed, not a single bill, including the budget bill, has been passed into law by the Senate."*