

SENATE



SÉNAT

The Honourable Mac Harb

CANADA

L'honorable Mac Harb

NEWS RELEASE

August 26, 2013

This afternoon, Senator Mac Harb delivered a letter to His Excellency, the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor-General of Canada, to advise that he was retiring today from the Senate of Canada. Senator Harb was appointed to the Senate on September 9, 2003 after serving as a Member of Parliament for fifteen years and three years as a City Councillor in Ottawa. In his letter to the Governor General, Senator Harb wrote,

Reflecting on my 28 year career devoted to public service and to improving the lives of Canadians and those living in the least developed countries, I am proud of what was accomplished. As a parliamentarian, I was fortunate to have several of my private members' bills - primarily those focused on human rights and the rights of children - incorporated into legislation including National Child Day. My efforts on trade issues resulted in lower tariffs to the least developed countries and as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, I steered legislation through the House that ensured Canada took its place as a founding member of the World Trade Organization.

In this public statement, Senator Harb would also like to share a few words about the reasons for his retirement. "I have been contemplating retirement for some time as I personally never considered the Senate to be a lifetime position," said Harb. "These past few months have been extremely difficult for me and my family and caused me to evaluate what more I could contribute in the circumstances. My dispute with the Senate Committee on Internal Economy made working effectively in the Senate unrealistic."

Senator Harb has also decided to discontinue his Court application and reimburse the government in full for all living and expense claims with interest over the last 8 years. Today, notice was filed with the Ontario Divisional Court and Senator Harb delivered a cheque to the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Internal Economy for \$180,166.17, resulting in a total reimbursement of \$231,649.07.

Harb said the Court challenge was never about the money. "The Senate Committee treated me very unfairly, and I wanted to make the point that every Canadian, even Senators, should be entitled to due process," said Harb. "I always followed Senate rules on expenses, and filed my expense claims in a timely and transparent manner. At no time did anyone suggest my claims were invalid or questionable. And from what I could tell, most Senators made similar claims."

Senator Harb welcomes the recent announcement that the Auditor General of Canada will conduct audits on every Senator, and says this was a key factor in his decision to discontinue his Court application. “I have no doubt that the Auditor General’s final report will vindicate me as it will show that many Senators had the same understanding of the rules as I had and made similar expenses claims,” said Harb.

One of Senator Harb’s lawyers, Paul Champ, noted that, contrary to some media reporting, the Deloitte audit commissioned by the Senate Committee did not conclude that Senator Harb was in violation of any Senate rules on expenses, finding instead that the Senate’s rules were insufficiently clear. The Deloitte report also showed that, after excluding days related to Senate business, Harb spent more time in his Westmeath home than in Ottawa. In a closed-door meeting, the Tory-dominated Senate Standing Committee on Internal Economy rejected the independent Deloitte report and retroactively applied its own vague definition of residence, with criteria that are not set out in any Senate rules or policies. Champ added, “It’s sad, but my client became a casualty of the hyper partisan atmosphere that prevails in Ottawa right now.”

With his retirement, Senator Harb wants to thank the many people who supported him over the years. “I remain deeply grateful to the people of Ottawa Centre who elected me to represent them at City Hall and then for four consecutive terms as their Member of Parliament. I have had the ultimate privilege of working alongside many outstanding Canadians, serving in both the House and the Senate. Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank my family, my staff, and my friends who have supported my efforts over the past 28 years and made my public service possible. It was an honour to be able to serve the people of Canada.”

-30-

There will be no further public comment or interviews.

Paul Champ
613-816-2441