

Editorial ? Hard cheese!

The Canadian Senate has been coming under a great deal of scrutiny lately, and not much of it positive. One would think this would be a time when sensible senators would be on their guard, trying to avoid saying or doing anything stupid.

Thus we are giving our heads a shake at the silly remarks attributed last week to Senator Nancy Ruth. She was facing questions about why, on an airline flight, she passed on the food provided and instead filed a breakfast expense claim. She evidently had problems with the quality of the food, stating the camembert was 'ice-cold' and the crackers were broken. There are probably many culinary experts around (none, alas, working for this community newspaper) who could tell us the proper temperature at which camembert should be served. And it's a safe bet that most of us prefer whole crackers to cracker crumbs. But there comes a point at which people should either just suck it up (or eat it up), or use their own money to get something else. Upgrading on the taxpayers' dime should not be an option. And certainly don't start complaining about broken crackers when there are microphones present. This senator is no rookie, and she knows scrutiny is focused on her and her colleagues these days. We have to wonder that she really didn't think the better of it before speaking.

No matter how silly this all looked, we hardly think it's going to make much of a difference, either in the career of this senator or the Senate as a whole. In the great scheme of things, the incident was relatively minor, although it did cause some embarrassment. In the aftermath of these comments, there have been some calling for the abolition of the Senate. We have heard them before and will hear them again.

The fact is the Senate does perform an important role in our federal government, helping to bring regional balance to the legislative process. And the fact is the Senate is not going anywhere. Although there is certainly room for some tweaking of the way it operates, to do away with it completely would require a Constitutional amendment, with the support of the provinces, and that's not going to happen any time soon.

Despite its faults, the Senate is too valuable to be brought down by cold cheese and broken crackers.