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Monday, June 22, 2020

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Monday, June 22, 2020

The Senate met at 6 p.m., the Speaker in the chair.

MANITOBA

Prayers.

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

FOOD DAY CANADA

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I rise today as we enter the summer to highlight the importance of buying and eating local food. After months of uncertainty, we're seeing local farmers' markets, restaurants, stores and bakeries opening back up, obviously with strict health measures in place.

Our country has an amazing variety of agricultural products to offer us, from delicious Alberta beef and B.C. wine to hearty P.E.I. potatoes. Here in Ontario, we produce a wide variety of agricultural commodities — over 200 commodities, in fact — including grains like barley; soybeans and canola; fruits, like strawberries, grapes and apples; meat, like beef, pork and chicken; dairy products; and so much more.

Like many of us, our agricultural producers have had a tough few months. With restaurants and school cafeterias being closed, the agricultural sector has certainly taken a hit with respect to a decreased market for their products, a lack of processing capacity and an inability to obtain seasonal workers in a timely manner. But that is now changing and it is time to show our producers and local business owners that we support them.

Buying local can help someone in your community keep their small business afloat, especially during these challenging times. It helps to boost your local economy, meaning more small and family-run businesses can thrive and survive. The pandemic has certainly shone a light on the value of local food and buying local.

One way we can all show our support is by celebrating Food Day Canada on Saturday, August 1. Food Day Canada is an opportunity to highlight and appreciate the diverse and nutritious food products we have access to. Hopefully by August we'll be able to hold picnics and barbeques with friends and loved ones. But even if that's not the case, we can still enjoy cooking and eating these local products at home.

So with that, Your Honour and colleagues, when we do return to our home communities this weekend, I hope you will join me in visiting a local farmers' market and other local businesses to show your support for your local community. I hope you will also eat local on August 1 for Food Day Canada. I'll be posting about my Food Day Canada celebrations on social media and I do hope you will join me. Thank you very much for listening. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Donna Dasko: Honourable senators, I rise to recognize a special anniversary, the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the province of Manitoba joining Canadian Confederation.

Now, yes, I am an Ontario senator and I do love this beautiful and vast province, but today I hope to speak for others like me who were born and raised in Manitoba, who left for other places, but have a big piece of their heart and soul back home, which for me is Winnipeg, my hometown.

Manitoba joined Confederation under the leadership of Métis leader Louis Riel, who launched the resistance at Red River and formed a provisional government. Riel negotiated the terms under which Manitoba became Canada's fifth province in the Manitoba Act of 1870.

My hometown of Winnipeg became a huge polyglot over a century ago, as waves of immigrants from Europe joined the early Ontario settlers and the established francophone and Indigenous communities. Winnipeg was a diverse, multicultural community long before diversity was seen as desirable and long before multiculturalism was embraced. I grew up as the 1950s morphed into the 1960s. It was a time of social change as ethnic and racial minorities, Indigenous people, women and others rejected the stereotypes and discrimination of the past and demanded equality, respect and inclusion.

In so many ways, Winnipeg was a wonderful place to grow up. It was large enough that one could see the exciting things that the world had to offer right at home: a rich cultural life, ballet, symphony, art, theatre, sports, great rock music, excellent post-secondary education and more. And yet it was small enough that a young girl like me and so many others might experience these exciting things and aspire to a better life.

I remember so much from my youth: Burton Cummings, the Deverons, Junior's, Randy Bachman, the Salisbury House, the Winnipeg Zoo, Kelekis, the University of Manitoba, the Paddlewheel Princess; I could go on and on.

Today, I cherish my visits to Winnipeg to visit family and friends. I see my young cousins and the next generation raising their families in Winnipeg. I see fantastic creations like the Canadian Human Rights Museum and The Forks, which were not there in my day. The Jets are a terrific team and the Bombers just won the Grey Cup. Winnipeg has its problems, but forgive me if I leave that conversation for another day.

The pandemic means that the events celebrating Manitoba 150 are now postponed to next year. I will be there and I hope they let me back.

Happy anniversary, Manitoba. Canada is so lucky to have you. *Meegwetch*. Thank you.

SYSTEMIC RACISM

Hon. Peter Harder: It is my honour on behalf of Senator Lovelace Nicholas to read a statement that she would wish to bring to the attention of the chamber and beyond but is unable to do so personally in light of the COVID restrictions.

I am shocked and deeply disturbed that once again Indigenous people die at the hands of police during encounters with my people in this country. I offer my condolences to the families of Chantel Moore, a young Indigenous woman, who was killed by police during a 'wellness check'; and Rodney Levi, another Indigenous man killed by police this past weekend.

Experiencing another walk in memory of Chantel Moore was a painful reminder of those who have also suffered at the hands of police, the police who are responsible for peace and justice in our communities.

Systemic racism in Canada began before Canada became a nation at the hands of those in power. The government's plan to "take the Indian out of the child" led to the implementation of the residential school system, and then the Indian Act that Indigenous people are still living under to this day.

If the head of the RCMP is confused as to whether systemic racism exists, be clear that we, the Indigenous people of this land, are not confused. We have lived it since the beginning of our encounter with the system governing this country and its police.

It is time now for members of our Indigenous community in New Brunswick and across Canada to come forward without fear to share their experiences of unfair actions by the police. It is time now, as it has never been before, to bring light to a painful past of injustice and punitive actions by a system that has treated them with disrespect and ignorance of our culture and spiritual heritage — a call to walk toward truth and justice in our path to equality in this country, Canada.

There will never be reconciliation with government until systemic racism is stamped out. Time's up.

• (1810)

CHARITABLE AND NON-PROFIT SECTORS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize June as Deafblind Awareness Month and to acknowledge the courageous individuals who face incredible challenges every day and

continue to rise above them. The support of the charitable and non-profit organizations and champions of the deafblind community or those who support other deserving groups are essential, all the more during these challenging times.

In 2015, the Senate of Canada unanimously passed a motion to designate June as Deafblind Awareness Month. I wish to once again acknowledge and thank our colleague the Honourable Jim Munson and former colleagues the Honourable Joan Fraser and the Honourable Asha Seth for their supportive roles in ensuring the passage of the motion.

Above all, I would like to recognize the Honourable Vim Kochhar, our former colleague and visionary who is the truest of champions of Canada's deafblind community.

In my home province of B.C., another important charitable organization that is also dedicated to helping those in need is S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Founded in 1973, it has evolved into one of the largest social service agencies in Canada. They offer a wide range of programs and services that promote the belonging, wellness and independence of all people.

For over 34 years, the S.U.C.C.E.S.S Foundation's signature annual Walk with the Dragon has a reputation of being B.C.'s largest family scenic walk and festival, and the foundation's biggest fundraising event for the community. This year, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is determined to continue the tradition. In spite of the COVID-19 crisis, they have worked extremely hard to create an online walk that will include an interactive map and checkpoints to bring together the community virtually for an exciting day to raise much-needed funds for their programs.

Lastly, David Wang is a young B.C. leader who founded the Social Diversity for Children Foundation, SDC, while he was still a student at Richmond Secondary School. His vision was to set up an organization that would help eliminate the stigma endured by children with disabilities. SDC does just that as it aims to empower children with special needs to reach their full potential through programs such as music therapy and painting. Currently, SDC is run by thousands of youth volunteers across the Lower Mainland who believe in the power of youth, love and compassion.

In response to the need for PPEs during the COVID-19 crisis, SDC raised funds to purchase much-needed PPEs and delivered tens of thousands of masks to care homes and senior centres across B.C. These efforts were part of their tenth anniversary as an organization.

Honourable senators, our charitable and non-profit organizations have been hit hard by the impact of COVID-19. Let us thank the selfless leaders, staff and volunteers for their immeasurable efforts to make a difference in the lives of so many people.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, I'm honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of Senator Mobina Jaffer who is unable to be with us here today:

Honourable senators, 20 years ago the UN declared June 20 to be World Refugee Day. And for one day every year we honour all refugees, acknowledging their suffering and also acknowledging their contributions. For one day every year, our social media timelines are filled with messages of support and stories of how much help we had extended.

The rest of the year, though, is another story altogether. The rest of the year, we continue to uphold our Safe Third Country Agreement with the U.S. to deny entry to those seeking asylum in Canada.

Let us remember why people seek asylum, why a family would leave its home behind and escape to a place that is not particularly welcoming. It is not to have a better life. It is to have a life. These are people running to us for safety.

Does anyone imagine what it feels like to live in fear, to live in a state of constant persecution? Can any one of us here imagine what it means to hide with your little children under a fragile roof while fighter jets are flying over your home and bombing your street? Can any of us imagine being hunted by gangs who want to take your daughters to sell them, or who want to kill their father for leaving the gang?

For most Canadians, we are privileged to have never had to live in fear and it is so hard for many of us to even imagine the realities of those seeking asylum.

On World Refugee Day, let's remember that we — Canadians — continue to send the vulnerable, the weak and the persecuted back to the U.S. as we uphold the Safe Third Country Agreement. It is shocking how we are still considering the U.S. to be safe. We all know about the inhumane refugee detention cells, about the 1,500 missing children and the dozens of our fellow human beings who died. By now, we must all know how the U.S. police treat persons of colour.

We have pledged through international treaties, and through our own speeches, that Canada is compassionate and safe. But upholding an agreement that sends a mother and her children back to the detention prison cells in the U.S. is not compassionate, not ethical and falls far from our Canadian values.

I ask you now at this important point in our collective consciousness — what would it take to repeal this agreement?

Thank you.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

JUSTICE

CHARTER STATEMENT IN RELATION TO BILL C-18—
DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a Charter Statement prepared by the Minister of Justice in relation to Bill C-18, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

CHARTER STATEMENT IN RELATION TO BILL C-19—
DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a Charter Statement prepared by the Minister of Justice in relation to Bill C-19, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 14-1(3), I ask for leave to table, in both official languages, an article published in *Policy Magazine* entitled "Collective Rage Requires Collective Action" by the Honourable Senator Bernard.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: Leave is not granted, honourable senators.

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

THIRD REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson, Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, presented the following report:

Monday, June 22, 2020

The Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators has the honour to present its

THIRD REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Tuesday, December 10, 2019 to examine and report on developments and actions in relation to your committee's

fifth report from the first session of the Forty-second Parliament now presents its final report.

Respectfully submitted,

DENNIS PATTERSON
Deputy Chair

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Patterson, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[*Translation*]

THE ESTIMATES, 2020-21

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A)—THIRD REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Peter Harder: Honourable senators, on behalf of Senator Mockler, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance entitled *Supplementary Estimates (A), 2020-21* and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

(On motion of Senator Harder, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO RESOLVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO RECEIVE MINISTERS TO CONSIDER THE 2020-21 MAIN ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A) ON JUNE 23, 2020, AND TO CONSIDER THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN COMBATTING RACISM ON JUNE 25, 2020, ADOPTED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(j), I move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, usual practice or previous order:

1. on Tuesday, June 23, 2020, the business before the Senate at 3 p.m., including the ringing of the bells if then underway, be interrupted for the Senate to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the expenditures set out in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, and in the Supplementary Estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, during which the committee receive the Honourable Bill Morneau, P.C., M.P., Minister of Finance, and the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P., President of the Treasury Board, each accompanied by one official;

2. on Thursday, June 25, 2020, the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole at the start of Orders of the Day to consider the Government of Canada's role in addressing anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and ending systemic racism, during which the committee receive a minister or ministers of the Crown, each accompanied by one official;
3. each committee rise no later than 155 minutes after it begins;
4. during each committee:
 - (a) the witnesses' introductory remarks be limited to a combined total of five minutes;
 - (b) if a senator does not use the entire period of 10 minutes for debate provided under rule 12-32(3)(d), including the responses of the witnesses, that senator may yield the balance of time to another senator;
 - (c) the provisions of rule 3-3(1) be suspended; and
 - (d) the ringing of the bells for any deferred standing vote that would conflict with the committee be delayed until the committee has completed its work;
5. on the day one of the committees is to meet:
 - (a) if a standing vote would take place at the time the committee is to begin, that vote be deferred until after the committee has completed its work;
 - (b) after the committee has completed its work, the business of the Senate resume at the point it was interrupted for the committee, with the times for debate and other proceedings being unaffected by the interruption; and
 - (c) until the committee has completed its work, the application of any provision of the Rules or previous order concerning the time of adjournment be suspended and no motion to adjourn the sitting be received; and
6. Government Motion number 39 be discharged from the Order Paper.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

• (1820)

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Thursday, June 25, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

[*English*]

QUESTION PERIOD

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CONSULAR SERVICES

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate in regard to Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor.

Leader, my question concerns China's decision to charge our fellow Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor with spying, over 18 months after they were unlawfully detained by Chinese authorities. Canada has not had consular access to either Mr. Kovrig or Mr. Spavor since mid-January, not even by video, leader. Minister Champagne once called China a beacon of stability, predictability, a rule-based system, a very inclusive society.

Besides expressing concern and disappointment, what has the minister actually done to try to gain access to the two Michaels in the last few days? Does your government even know if the two Michaels have had access to lawyers since the charges were laid? And after 560 days of their detention, will the Prime Minister now become directly involved in working to secure their release?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):

Senator, thank you for the question. The government remains exceptionally concerned and distressed at the situation that continues to exist with regard to, first, the arbitrary and illegal detention, and now the arbitrary charging. It remains a top priority for this government to seek redress and justice.

With regard to your question, the government is continuously calling for their release. It has been raising it at the highest levels, including interventions directly with the President of China. We share all Canadians' distress that, as the senator mentioned, there has not been access to consular services for many months, since mid-January.

We continue to press the Government of China to grant proper access and for access to legal counsel. I do not have the specific answers to your questions, but I can assure this chamber that the government treats this as the most important priority in respect to its relationships with China.

Senator Plett: Leader, this morning a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson stated:

China urges the relevant Canadian leader to earnestly respect the spirit of the rule of law, respect China's judicial sovereignty and stop making irresponsible remarks.

Canada takes no lessons from China on the rule of law and judicial sovereignty, yet aside from the few usual platitudes he has spoken over the last 18 months, the Prime Minister has not involved himself directly in this case. And it's not just in this case, serious as it is. China targeted our canola exports and now it's aiming at our hardwood and softwood exports. The Prime Minister did nothing in response.

Leader, if the Prime Minister still won't intervene at the highest levels even now, as the two Michaels have charges laid against them, what would make him become directly involved?

Senator Gold: Again, thank you for the question. I think it's important to distinguish, honourable senators, what may or may not be said publicly, whether by the Prime Minister or by other ministers of the Crown, and what may be going on in other ways and through other mechanisms. I do not tire of reminding this chamber how terribly complicated and fraught with danger this situation is.

The government continues at all levels, from the Prime Minister through his ministers, to be actively engaged in the effort to provide for justice and release of the two Michaels who are held arbitrarily by China.

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Leo Housakos: My question is for the government leader in the Senate.

Senator Gold, we've already begun to see the political cost of your government's dogged but doomed quest for a United Nations Security Council seat; Justin Trudeau's failed legacy-building project. We have tarnished Canada's reputation on the world stage as a defender of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and unless your government does the right thing and bans Huawei, we will also damage our relationship with our Five Eyes allies, which are so important for the security of this country.

• (1830)

My question to you is about the actual dollar amount so it should be a simple answer. How much of Canadians' hard-earned money has the government spent since 2016 in pursuit of trying to secure the UN Security Council seat? How much?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank you for your question. Money was indeed expended. I don't have the figures at hand, but I do recall reading in the press. The numbers have been made public. I will certainly get the number and provide it to you.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, unfortunately the amount has not been made public. The House of Commons has been asking for it, and now I'm asking for it. I'm looking for a precise dollar amount. At the end of the day, the government has spent a lot of money since 2016 to lobby for this seat. They organized a lot of snazzy events in order to persuade countries to support our bid. At the end of the day, we all know it was a partisan effort in order to grandstand and upstage former Prime Minister Harper, and I think Canadian taxpayers have a right to know the exact amount. How much has this government spent since 2016 in pursuit of this failed bid to gain a Security Council seat at the UN?

Senator Gold: Thank you. Canadians indeed have a right to know how money is spent, and this government has been quite transparent in many respects. I do not accept the premise that this was grandstanding. Yes, the bid to secure the seat failed and I think we all, regardless of political partisanship or lack of partisanship, should be unhappy that Canada does not have a seat at that table where it could make an important contribution. But again to repeat, I will be glad to make inquiries and report back.

CITIZENSHIP, IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEES

UNITED STATES—SAFE THIRD COUNTRY AGREEMENT

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, I ask this question on behalf of Senator Jaffer. It is regarding the Safe Third Country Agreement Canada has with the United States.

According to the 2004 agreement, Canada and the United States recognize each other as safe places for refugees seeking protection. However, with all the information we have about the inhumane detention cells or cage-like structures used to house people seeking refuge in the U.S.; the thousands of children who were separated from their parents, some of whom went missing; and the problematic way that U.S. law enforcement personnel treat African Americans and other people of colour, it's clear that the U.S. is not safe anymore.

The question is: When will our government stop returning vulnerable people and their children to a place where the persecution they ran away from continues? Their lives and the lives of their children are at stake. Will the government consider repealing or amending this agreement?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. It's an important one. The government has been working closely with its counterparts in the United States to make sure that persons who may be turned away from Canada are treated properly in the United States. No one can be happy with the reports that we've heard about how migrants and others are treated in those detention centres. It is the position of Canada that this is not an acceptable situation and

efforts are being made — and have been, I think, to some degree successful — to ensure that is not the fate that befalls those who may not qualify for admission to Canada.

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question, again on behalf of Senator Jaffer, for the Government Representative. In light of the fact that there are many refugees or refugee claimants presently working as essential home care workers in Canada, which places them at serious health risks during the COVID pandemic, and given the unmet demand for employees in this important sector, will our government favourably consider their applications? Will it also consider creating pathways to permanent residency or citizenship and dignity for temporary foreign workers providing essential services in our agricultural sector?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. There is no doubt that we in Canada benefit enormously, in general terms, from those workers who are here and no less so than during these extraordinary times of crisis. The government is seriously *à l'écoute* to stakeholders and representatives and is looking seriously and responsibly at ways in which to assist those who are here providing such essential services.

FINANCE

SUPPORT FOR BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES

Hon. Margaret Dawn Anderson: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate on behalf of my colleague Senator Bernard:

The Government of Canada named the theme for Black History Month as “Sankofa, Going forward, guided by the past.” In February of this year, the president of the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce (CBCC), Andria Barrett, wrote an article featured in *Toronto.com* about this theme and how it can guide support for Black-owned businesses. She cites the unique challenges faced by Black business owners including inequities in accessing capital. Four months ago, the Government of Canada emphasized this theme of “Going forward, guided by the past,” and the CBCC has made a specific request to assist in moving forward.

On June 3, 2020, the CBCC requested \$165 million from the federal government to support Black-owned businesses in Canada, and they have not heard back. This funding could

allow for as many as 6,000 Black-owned businesses to keep afloat through the pandemic and beyond. The Parliamentary Black Caucus released a statement with a list of calls to the Canadian government including a recommendation to assist Black Canadians in economic prosperity through measures to support Black-owned and Black-run businesses. We heard many senators during the debate last Thursday support the Black Caucus' calls to action.

On June 1, 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed to taking meaningful action to make a difference. He promised young Black Canadians that "your government will always stand with you." On January 30, 2018, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that the Government of Canada would officially recognize the UN's Decade for People of African Descent (DPAD). Adopting DPAD includes committing to each pillar. The third pillar — development — states that the country should "adopt or strengthen national programmes for eradicating poverty and reducing social exclusion" and to work to eliminate barriers in employment. What concrete actions is the federal government taking to support Black-owned businesses at this time to ensure they are included in Canada's post-COVID economic recovery plan?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. The government and the Prime Minister personally, as we know, has acknowledged the systemic discrimination that black and Indigenous people face across many institutions. I have been advised that since May 2019, the government has invested \$6.7 million for Statistics Canada to create and operate a Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion, which will better support disaggregated data collection, including for black Canadians.

In April 2020, during the pandemic, the government established the Canadian Business Resilience Network, which partners with StatCan to launch surveys. A second wave of the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions includes a more expansive demographic question to capture the impact of COVID-19 on businesses owned by members of various communities across Canada, including LGBTQ2 and black-owned businesses.

Last week, in the other place, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates unanimously — and this includes the Liberal committee members — passed a motion requiring Public Services and Procurement Canada to disclose by August 31 disaggregated data related to businesses owned by underrepresented groups: Black, Indigenous Canadians, women, persons with disabilities, which have engaged with the government with regard to the federal response to COVID-19.

With regard to post-COVID-19 relief, the government encourages all businesses, including black-owned businesses, to apply for relief programs that match their circumstances. Thanks to the advance notice of this question, we have already made specific inquiries with the government but have not yet received an answer back. I'll report back to this chamber when we do receive the answer.

[Senator Anderson]

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES-MEXICO AGREEMENT

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: My question is for the Leader of the Government. Senator Gold, in a book recently published in the United States, author John Bolton says that the President of the United States, Mr. Trump, thinks the Prime Minister of Canada is a hypocrite. Leader, the United States is Canada's main economic partner. Does the Prime Minister plan to do something to regain the U.S. President's trust? We need to protect our trade, which is greatly affected by the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, because this agreement is costing a fortune in compensation for our farmers.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank the honourable senator for his question. The Prime Minister and his government worked very hard and successfully reached an agreement with the United States and Mexico that will benefit Canadians and the agricultural sector. In our province of Quebec, against all odds and in spite of what talking heads were saying, we also succeeded in saving our supply management system, which is a significant accomplishment under the circumstances.

• (1840)

The Prime Minister has an effective relationship with President Trump. It is a relationship between two governments that share many common values as well as a border that is extremely important for both countries' economies. The Government of Canada will continue to work hard and do its part to ensure that Canadians' interests are well served in our relationship with the United States.

Senator Dagenais: Thank you. I understand when you say that there is an effective relationship, but that's the first time we've heard that. How can that possibly be the case when the President of the United States is saying that the Prime Minister of Canada is a hypocrite? Is that what constitutes an effective relationship?

Senator Gold: I thank the honourable senator for his question. It would be difficult to separate fact from rumour in a compilation of the President of the United States' tweets and other statements, but what the President decides to send at three o'clock or four o'clock in the morning is not important. What's important is what our two countries actually do and how they collaborate. For example, we have successfully reached an important agreement with the United States about our borders, thereby safeguarding our economic interests and protecting Canadians' health.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

SYSTEMIC RACISM

Hon. Jim Munson: Honourable senators, I have a question on behalf of Senator Lillian Dyck for the government leader in the Senate.

This is a bit of a preamble: The battered face of Chief Allan Adam is still very vivid. It is hard to erase the memory of seeing what happened to him at the hands of the RCMP. Senator Dyck says the sad reality is that Indigenous men, like Indigenous women, face a greater risk of being met with violence.

Senator Gold, Minister Blair issued a statement indicating that Indigenous people, black Canadians and other racialized people far too often experience systemic racism and desperate outcomes within the criminal justice system. He also tweeted, “We are deeply concerned by the incident that took place in Fort McMurray. People across the country deserve answers . . .”

Senator Gold, Indigenous people should not have to wait months or years to fix the long-standing problems of systemic racism within the RCMP. Something has to be done now. It is the responsibility of the government to hold Commissioner Brenda Lucki to account. It is also your responsibility to fix things that are wrong in the workings of the RCMP.

What concrete and rapid measures will you recommend be implemented right now to prevent increased violence towards, and increased incidence of the killing of Indigenous people by the police?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question.

What continues to happen in this country is deplorable and tragic. It would not be credible for me or any representative of a government, or indeed any citizen, to pretend — *prétendre* in French — that the problems of systemic racism that have plagued us in our history can be solved with one fix, or within a day or a week.

First, the government recognizes the problem and does not shrink away from naming it. Second, the government is committed to doing what it can to accelerate the pace of change in the institutions within its jurisdiction. Third, the Senate will have an opportunity, thanks to the motion we passed just a short while ago, to question ministers, including Minister Blair, on what he intends to do to address this tragic, deplorable and shameful situation in Canada.

Senator Munson: Thank you for the answer. I recognize that we will see Minister Blair on Thursday.

Senator, I have another question from Senator Dyck: What will Minister Blair do now, right now, to hold Commissioner Brenda Lucki to account? What actions will he take now? What managerial or administrative directives will he issue to her, to hold her to account?

Senator Gold: Senator, thank you for the question.

With regard to the commissioner, I think we’ll have the opportunity to ask the minister directly within a few short days. He is in the best position to answer what his intentions are.

THE SENATE

DIVESTMENT OBLIGATIONS

Hon. Denise Batters: Senator Gold, as the Trudeau government Senate leader, one of your most important duties is shepherding government legislation through the Senate for sober second thought. In that role, you negotiate legislative timelines with the other Senate leaders.

You told me last week that you have not recused yourself from any of those negotiations, despite your incomplete financial disclosure and divestment process with the Ethics Commissioner.

In the five months you have been government Senate leader, the Trudeau government spending has been fast and furious. On March 13 alone, the new NAFTA bill passed the Senate after only 24 minutes of debate. A \$3.8-billion supply bill passed all legislative stages in 90 seconds. Bill C-11, a \$44-billion supply bill, whipped through here in 46 seconds. That’s almost a billion dollars per second, Senator Gold. Meanwhile, Bill C-12, the special warrant bill, also passed that day and sailed through the Senate in 50 seconds. It was a blank cheque the Trudeau cabinet later filled in, authorizing themselves to borrow \$350 billion.

My goodness, Senator Gold. That was not much sober second thought, was it?

Given you were still working with the Ethics Commissioner to handle your potential conflicts of interest, why didn’t you recuse yourself from negotiations to push through this multi-billion dollar legislation at unprecedented breakneck speed?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question.

There was no necessity for me to recuse. I was not in any conflict of interest. I’m in compliance with the Ethics Commissioner, and we are in regular touch with him.

Senator Batters: Senator Gold, as the Trudeau government Senate leader, you were sworn into the Privy Council. The Prime Minister’s website states that you will be invited to attend meetings of the cabinet committee on operations, one of the most important cabinet committees. Yet you told me last week that during your five months as Senate government leader you have not recused yourself from any of those cabinet deliberations, despite your incomplete financial disclosure and divestment process with the Ethics Commissioner.

Senator Gold, either you took part in cabinet meetings where the design and legislation to implement multi-billion dollar programs were decided, despite your potential conflicts of interest, or the Trudeau government has not invited you to any

cabinet meetings in the last five months, thus neutering the role of the government Senate leader. It is one or the other. Which is it?

Senator Gold: It is neither. I am not in conflict, and there was no need to recuse myself.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I would like to ask a question of the government leader in the Senate going back to the very serious situation on the detention of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig.

These men have been detained in China since December 2018 and today is day 561. I can only imagine what the families must be going through.

I understand Mr. Kovrig's father is quite ill. They have spent nearly two years away from family. For the first year, they were denied legal counsel and questioned three times a day, and left in rooms with lights on for 24 hours. These Canadians have suffered immeasurably under these terrible conditions. I can't help but recall a situation when we were in government, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's leadership, and there was the detention of a Canadian pastor in North Korea. These conditions being described are just absolutely unimaginable and deplorable.

• (1850)

Today, during the press conference on the steps of Rideau Cottage, the Prime Minister said we deplore China's decision and that it is totally unacceptable. We absolutely agree. You have given some assurances, but beyond the Prime Minister's words, leader, what concrete actions will the government pursue in an effort to help the two Canadians who are detained in China?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Again, I thank you for your question. It should be posed regularly because we all care deeply about the fate of our citizens who are being held arbitrarily.

The concrete steps and actions of the government are being taken, but in matters like this — of diplomacy and complicated relationships — one of your colleagues properly noted that this is not the only issue upon which we have great and serious disagreements with China. Our economy is interwoven in increasing ways, as we know, and sectors of our economy are struggling and suffering. It's complicated, and therefore, much of what needs to be done needs to be done behind closed doors, and it is my understanding that the government is pursuing this relentlessly.

However, we should not minimize the difficulty that we're facing in relation to our relationships with China, in the context of the larger issues that our allies are struggling with as well with China, and the positions that we have been put in, given the interdependence of the world's supply chain with China.

[Senator Batters]

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): In another example of authoritarian regimes, it has also been reported that the Iranian regime began a new wave of executions in April, including some who are under the age of 18 at the time of their arrest. This month, there have also been multiple reports of flogging of peace activists and political prisoners.

Senator Gold, has your government had anything to say about this recent surge of human rights abuses by the Iranian regime? When the Prime Minister met with the Iranian foreign minister in February, embracing him and shaking his hand, did he raise the Iranian regime's human rights record or their brutal treatment of protesters?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. Our relationships with Iran are also fraught with difficulty and challenges, including the ongoing challenge of obtaining justice for the Canadian victims of the Flight PS752 tragedy, which occupied a fair amount of attention and continues to.

With regard to your question, the government has long been an advocate, demanding that Iran live up to human rights obligations. We developed the draft resolution at the UN in November 2019, calling on Iran to comply with international human rights obligations. The government deeply opposes Iran's support for terrorist organizations, its threats not only towards Israel, but its efforts to destabilize the region, its support for a ballistic missile program, and of course, its support for the murderous Assad regime in Syria.

I'm advised that the government will continue to promote basic human rights and hold Iran to account for its actions.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the time for Question Period has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 2, 2020–21

SECOND READING

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate) moved second reading of Bill C-18, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

He said: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak today at second reading of Bill C-18, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

[Translation]

Bill C-18 is the government's second interim supply bill for the 2020-21 fiscal year. Esteemed colleagues, I'm sure you remember that, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the first interim supply bill, Bill C-11, received Royal Assent on March 13. Bill C-11 authorized spending \$43.9 billion to cover the government's expenses for the first three months of the fiscal year, April to June.

[English]

On April 20, the other place unanimously passed a motion to temporarily modify Standing Order 81, which pertains to order of supply. The Standing Orders of the House of Commons is the procedural authority that governs the practices of the other place, which are equivalent to the *Rules of the Senate*. This resulted in extending the study of the Main Estimates until December 2020, seven months later than in previous years.

As a result, the government has presented a second interim supply bill to receive Parliament's approval to cover additional spending from June until December.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, it's important to note that Bill C-18 doesn't introduce any new expenditure proposals for Parliament to consider. In fact, these interim supplementary estimates represent part of the expenditure plan presented by the government in the Main Estimates.

[English]

The study of those estimates will continue until December of this year, but during that time, government departments need access to additional payment authority in order to maintain operations and continue delivering important services and programs, as well as payroll. The amount presented in Bill C-18 will be deducted from the full supply amounts to be presented for approval in December.

Extending the Main Estimates until December was an unprecedented step made necessary by the extraordinary circumstances of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Typically, as part of the normal supply process, organizations receive full supply from Main Estimates in June, and a second interim supply is not necessary. If this were a typical year, a full supply bill of approximately \$81 billion would have been presented for approval at this time.

Bill C-18 will provide \$55 billion of the operational funding amounts in the Main Estimates to federal organizations, with a balance to be provided in the December supply period.

Honourable senators, this pandemic has greatly affected Canadians and their families, both directly and indirectly.

[Translation]

At the same time, it's putting real pressure on many federal organizations not only so they can provide the essential programs and services Canadians count on, but also, in many cases, so they can implement social, economic and public health measures to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past few months, Parliament has passed a number of bills giving the government substantial spending powers intended to address the many problems this pandemic has caused in people's day-to-day lives.

[English]

The delivery of services cannot be accomplished with only the three months of supply that was received at the beginning of the fiscal year. It is therefore necessary that Parliament provide federal organizations sufficient funding to continue all of these important functions until the next opportunity for supply this fall.

The proposed \$55 billion in Bill C-18 will provide 122 organizations with critical funding for the six-month period until full supply is studied and passed.

[Translation]

I want to assure all honourable senators that the government does not take the magnitude of these spending needs lightly. The estimates are an essential aspect of ensuring that public funds are used by the government in a responsible and transparent manner. Parliamentarians have the right to know and scrutinize how all public funding is spent and they must be held accountable for that spending.

- (1900)

[English]

That is why the government is seeking approval of the additional interim supply bill in a transparent manner in order for Parliament to take the time necessary to study and vote on the Main Estimates.

Without this funding, many federal organizations would be unable to continue providing the programs and services that are relied on by many. To cite some concrete examples: critical programs providing safe and nutritious food for at-risk populations that may run out of funds in the face of excess demand; important early learning and childcare support that would be cut; and needed support for home care and mental health service programs, just to name a few.

As part of the accountability function I referenced earlier in my remarks, the government has published a detailed listing of the expenditure authorities approved by Parliament through other legislation as well as a complete breakdown of planned expenditures by standard object, such as personnel, professional services, transfer payments and more.

At the end of this fiscal year, the government will report on actual spending through the public accounts. Furthermore, our Standing Senate Committee on National Finance was given an order of reference in March to study the 2020-21 Main Estimates, and is now playing an important oversight role during the COVID-19 pandemic by examining the government's economic response and the spending authorities that were set out in Bill C-13, An Act respecting certain measures in response to COVID-19, and Bill C-14, A second Act respecting certain measures in response to COVID-19.

The current environment is exceptional as Canada and, indeed, the rest of the world, responds to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The government introduced responsive measures to help Canadians, businesses and communities from all regions during these challenging times and is helping Canadians get through the pandemic.

[*Translation*]

The new spending plans proposed in Bill C-18 will continue to provide support to Canadians and ensure stability and predictability in the government's financial operations during a period of economic uncertainty.

In addition to the special measures being put in place to meet these challenges, Bill C-18 will help ensure that Canadians receive the services and programs they expect from the federal government.

Honourable senators, I urge you to pass Bill C-18 and I thank you for your attention.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

Hon. Elizabeth Marshall: Thank you very much, Senator Gold, for your comments on Bill C-18. I must say I have to disagree with some of your comments with regard to transparency, and, as a member of the Finance Committee, I must say that the way we've been treating the money bills the last several months is very concerning to me.

Regarding Bill C-11, the first interim supply bill you referenced in your opening remarks, Senator Batters mentioned it during Question Period, and that one flew through the Senate in March. It was for \$44 billion and there was no debate. As members of the National Finance Committee, we take it upon ourselves to thoroughly study all the money that the government is planning to spend and we never spent a minute on that, and it was assented to. It's \$44 billion, and it's part of the \$300 billion in the Main Estimates, and I know that that \$300 billion is going to be a lot larger by the end of the fiscal year.

Now we have the second interim supply bill, and, again, that hasn't been studied and there has been no debate except what's happening here in this chamber, and that's for \$55 billion.

That's really easy money for the government. They've got it and they're spending it. We haven't had the opportunity to ask what I would call good questions on it. I must say that the way the money bills are being treated is very concerning.

[Senator Gold]

The other point I would like to make is that I spend a lot of time outside of the Senate Chamber reading and going through the finance department's website, the government website and things of that nature to try to figure out what's going on. It's come to the point where government is spending and they're doing so much financially and fiscally that you can't keep track of it. You need a piece of paper and a pencil now to try to figure it out.

This is the second interim supply bill, but I would expect there will be a third because we don't have the report back on Main Estimates until the end of the year, so there will be most likely another interim supply bill. That's very concerning.

The year will be practically over before the Main Estimates are finished reviewing and before we can review back. The money will be spent, so what's the point?

One of the prime purposes of parliamentarians is to oversee government spending plans. What's the point of giving us the spending plan to study once the money has been spent? It just seems like it's a waste of time.

This is all a small piece of the financial puzzle. Like I said, you need your pencil and paper and you need to do a lot of research now to figure out what's going on in government financially.

We haven't had a fiscal update, so we don't know where we are. We don't know what the deficit is. I know the Parliamentary Budget Officer is doing his best. He's giving us some numbers, but we can't figure out the impact on revenues, like the pandemic. What's the impact on expenditures? We have had some departmental officials in to testify, but I find a lot of times that the departmental officials don't provide the information to us. Sometimes I think they have the information, but they're just not providing it. I know sometimes they don't. There are a couple of examples in the past where I know they've had the numbers and they just won't give them to us.

We don't know what the deficit is. The Parliamentary Budget Officer is doing his best. I feel that the Parliamentary Budget Officer is doing things and telling us things that the Minister of Finance should be talking about.

So we don't know the deficit, the revenues or the expenditures. We don't know the borrowings. What's the government borrowing now? All of this spending, even what is in this bill, that's borrowed money. So how much is the government borrowing? You have to be like a detective. You have to be CSI to try to figure it out because you have to look at what the Crown corporations are borrowing and trying to figure that out. What's the government borrowing?

Now, the government puts out this COVID-19 financial report every two weeks, and they indicate what their borrowings are, but you can't tell if it includes the borrowings of the Crown corporations. There is a total number there, and it is new borrowings plus refinancing of borrowing, so you can't split it out. You can't find out what the incremental borrowings are. I can't find it. Maybe it's there, but I'm trying. I do talk to the Library of Parliament and the Parliamentary Budget Officer, but I can't figure it out.

As I was saying, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has been answering questions that I thought the Minister of Finance should answer. Just figuring out what the government is spending, what they're borrowing and what they're doing is just absolutely impossible to find out.

And some of the sources of information that you go to — I think it's terrible. We should be able to go to the Department of Finance and get the information. We have to go to the reports of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. We have to go to the Bank of Canada website. They provide more information than the Department of Finance.

At CMHC, you're scrounging through their annual reports. You're looking at what the C.D. Howe Institute has on their website, and the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the reports of the International Monetary Fund. I had two part-time researchers hired — one is an IT person and one is a policy person — to try to figure out what is going on financially in the government. I just find that it's a real challenge, and the way the government is not providing information is very disappointing.

We're going to talk about another bill tonight, which is Bill C-19, and that's Supplementary Estimates (A). We've studied them for four hours. I'll talk about them when we get to that.

Minister Qualtrough was testifying this morning, and I had to ask her this because it's been on my mind for a while. The government wants to reopen the economy. We're looking at all these small businesses and the private sector. We have the wage subsidy. We're trying to get people off CERB. Let's get people back into their workplaces. But it seems like the government wants everybody back in their workplaces except parliamentarians.

• (1910)

An Hon. Senator: Hear, hear.

Senator Marshall: I'm absolutely amazed. But people want to see their parliamentarians back at work. Those are just a few remarks; I do have a speech for tomorrow.

When you talk about transparency, I don't agree with you. I find it very difficult. I would like to see the government disclose more. Those are my initial remarks. Thank you.

Hon. Scott Tannas: Would Senator Marshall take a question?

Senator Marshall: I certainly would.

Senator Tannas: First of all, thank you for your comments. All of us here are grateful to you and the other hard-working members of the Finance Committee who spend so much time on this, especially you, Senator Marshall. You're a former Auditor General, and we all understand how much time you put in on this and that you bring your expertise to bear for this chamber and all Canadians.

An Hon. Senator: Hear, hear.

Senator Tannas: I have two questions. First, in your research during these times, is there any country that is covering themselves in glory in the way in which they are disclosing their finances on the fly, or are we all part of a pack that is behaving in the same way?

Second, have your researchers been pointing to anything alarming as to who might be buying our bonds? Who is giving us the money that we are out borrowing?

Senator Marshall: Thank you. I can't answer whether any country is disclosing financial information, but I can tell you that other parliaments around the world are meeting. They're putting on their masks and they're meeting. You can watch TV, the BBC and other countries. At least the opportunity is there to ask questions.

Right now, if I have questions, I have no one to ask. My official sent an email to the Department of Finance for information on some borrowings, but they're busy with COVID-19, so we don't get the answer.

Who is buying our bonds? That's a really good question. I look at the Bank of Canada website and they disclose all the borrowings, and the graph goes up like this. I won't venture to say who I think is borrowing the bonds because it's scary.

The other point about buying the bonds that is we don't pay enough attention to the Crown corporations. CMHC is a big corporation that's borrowing. They borrow a significant amount of money, and they insure mortgages. The last couple of years, I've been asking CMHC about the risk, because there's an exposure there for the government. They're also raising money through the Bank of Canada, so they're borrowing, and that's a concern.

I have to be honest, I haven't got all the pieces. It is a puzzle, and you have all the pieces and you're trying to put it together. I just know that the signs aren't good.

We haven't had Mr. Evan Siddall from CMHC come to our committee yet, but he did testify over at the House of Commons Finance Committee. His testimony was very concerning because they're borrowing money, they're insuring mortgages. He's saying now with high unemployment and the pandemic, right now people are deferring their mortgages. I have a part of my speech talking about this. People are deferring their mortgages, but at some point in time, the deferral will come to an end and they have to start paying their mortgages. Canadians are highly indebted and if people can't pay their mortgages — CMHC have insured a lot of mortgages and they're holding a lot of mortgages. He stated it could be up to \$9 billion that may have to be absorbed by CMHC, which is a Crown corporation. That \$9 billion will roll into the government's deficit.

I can't answer your question directly, but there is enough information there that makes me nervous, but I haven't got it all figured out.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I have a question for Senator Marshall. I too was on the committee meeting this morning and due to some technical difficulties, I know the time with Minister Qualtrough was limited.

As a former Auditor General, if you have been collecting pieces and you're trying to make sense of it, I'm trying to imagine how those of us who are not experts would make sense of this. Are there certain pieces that you haven't been able to find? Are you going to be talking about this in your third reading speech or are there some pieces you can talk about at this time?

Senator Marshall: The borrowings are a concern for me. I'd like a fiscal update, I would like to know about the borrowings and the Crown corporations. I have to say this because I am an auditor; I spent half my career in auditing. I was also a deputy minister for a couple of the government's large departments. What I found when I was with the provincial government — and I probably shouldn't say this publicly, but I will anyway — is that sometimes when governments borrow, you don't want it to show up on your own balance sheet, so you can just maybe it park it over in the balance sheet of a Crown corporation.

You have Export Development Canada, Farm Credit Canada and some of these Crown corporations that are heavily involved in the COVID-19 programs and they're borrowing. How does that fit into the overall picture and how is it going to affect the deficit?

I would like for somebody to come in from the Bank of Canada and explain to us what's happening. We had the governor in, but you almost need something a bit more basic, what's happening at the Bank of Canada? He was saying, "Fear not, everything is good." But when you look at their balance sheet from week to week — and we follow it week to week — the numbers are still going up like that. In fact, it goes up like that.

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Senator Marshall, I really like what you were saying about the debt of the different Crown corporations and the government's debt, and how it's financed. My question might not necessarily be on this bill, but rather a question about the mandate of the Finance Committee.

I'd like to hear your comments. Would it be time to change the mandate of the National Finance Committee to have that committee look at the cycle of indebtedness in this country so that the Finance Committee could get the information back to the Senate and we get a full picture of how Canada's finances are working?

Senator Marshall: I have to go back and look at the mandate of the Finance Committee. I think the existing mandate would cover us off, but it would be an interesting exercise.

However, I find with a lot of those projects, it's almost educational for the members. People keep saying "because of your expertise," but all I do is follow numbers, read articles, read the budget book and things like that, which anyone could do. But, yes, it would be an interesting exercise, and we could come out of it better informed.

• (1920)

Hon. Paul J. Massicotte: When you were looking for information, did you look at the Fasken Martineau report? They issue a report every three months. David Dodge, a former governor of the Bank of Canada, was the principal author of that report. The report basically says there is a lot of debt. We're not bad now, but if we have another occurrence of COVID we're going to have a tough time selling our bonds and we'll have to make them more attractive with a better fiscal plan. Did you take a look at the report? If not, maybe David Dodge could be one a witness at a future meeting.

Senator Marshall: I can't tell you if I've looked at it or not because I've read and looked at so much. If anyone sends something to my email saying that they are issuing publications and it looks like something I'd learn from, then I sign up for it. I've read a lot of articles by David Dodge, and he would be a good witness. I enjoy hearing from people outside of government, because they round things out and give you a different perspective.

I know people are saying we're doing well fiscally, but Newfoundland was doing well fiscally a while back and they are not in good fiscal shape now. The tide can turn pretty quickly. We see how quickly this pandemic came up on us and the way the expenditures are ratcheting up. Things could change pretty quickly.

There were signs that problems were coming. Canadians were highly indebted, and we knew that. People had large mortgages and weren't saving. Even three years ago I was meeting with people like David Macdonald and trying to get a handle on where we were. We knew something was coming — we just didn't think it was going to be something like this, this big or this bad.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time, on division.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator Gold, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 3, 2020–21

SECOND READING

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate) moved second reading of Bill C-19, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise to speak on second reading debate on Bill C-19, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, let me start by thanking the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance for carrying out a diligent and thorough study, under the leadership of its chair, Senator Mockler.

Last week, the committee heard from more than 19 officials from various departments and agencies, including Indigenous Services Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, and Public Services and Procurement Canada, to name but a few.

As honourable senators know, every year, the government tables supplementary estimates outlining its additional planned expenditures. These supplementary estimates are incremental to the Main Estimates.

The supplementary estimates present information on federal spending requirements that were not sufficiently developed in time for inclusion in the Main Estimates or were refined to account for new developments.

[*English*]

These include a summary of the government's incremental financial requirements, as well as an overview of major funding requests and horizontal initiatives.

The information contained in the supplementary estimates ensures continued accountability on the use of public funds to deliver programs and services. The 2020-21 Supplementary Estimates (A), officially tabled in the Senate last week, bring forward \$6 billion in operating and capital expenditures, grants and contributions for 42 federal organizations as reflected in Bill C-19. These supplementary estimates lay out the spending plans to support current priorities.

[*Translation*]

Among the priorities are the economic and public health measures in response to the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The supplementary estimates also include measures to support and provide services to Indigenous peoples across the country, make up the Public Service Disability Insurance Plan deficit, and ensure air transport security.

Taken together, these voted expenditures are 5% higher than those in the 2020-21 Main Estimates tabled last winter.

[*English*]

The 2020-21 Main Estimates requested the authority to spend \$125.1 billion in voted budgetary expenditures and \$87.2 million in voted non-budgetary expenditures. Accordingly, these supplementary estimates include forecasts of statutory expenditures totalling \$81 billion. This includes information on spending that was authorized by parts 3 and 8 of the COVID-19

Emergency Response Act, which were presented, debated and passed by this chamber in March and April respectively. This now well-known emergency spending is helping Canadians across the country in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parliament is not being asked to vote on them again in the Supplementary Estimates (A).

Honourable senators, I believe it is important to outline the distinction between voted and statutory expenditures when going through the supply process. Voted expenditures require annual approval from Parliament through an appropriation bill, in this case Bill C-19. Statutory amounts, on the other hand, in both the main and supplementary estimates, are presented to parliamentarians for information because these have already been approved by both houses through legislation. Of note, these supplementary estimates request \$1.3 billion in new voted spending that responds to the impact on Canadians due to COVID-19, and this accounts for about 22% of the \$6 billion total in voted spending.

Some of the important funding initiatives provided for in Bill C-19 include: \$405.2 million for the national medical research strategy to fund tracking and testing of COVID-19, to develop vaccines and therapies and to enhance clinical trials and biomanufacturing capacity in Canada; \$302.4 million to various federal organizations to support small- and medium-sized businesses, including the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, the Department of Industry, the Department of Western Economic Diversification, Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, and the federal economic development agency for southern Ontario; \$274.5 million for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Department of Industry, the Department of Western Economic Diversification and National Research Council Canada for emergency research and innovation on medical countermeasures; \$87.4 million for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Department of Industry and the Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions and for the Community Futures Network of Canada, which assists small businesses in rural communities; and \$59.3 million to help the Canadian Red Cross support individuals, families and communities during the pandemic.

Other key initiatives support a variety of commitments by the Government of Canada, including reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, supporting and bolstering military capacity, as well as transportation security. These include: \$585.8 million for the Department of National Defence to fund the Joint Support Ship Project to safely replace vessels that have reached the end of their lifespan; \$481.2 million for the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs to fund the Federal Indian Day Schools settlement agreement; \$468.2 million for the Department of Indigenous Services to support the safety and well-being of First Nations children and families living on reserves; \$395.8 million for the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to support the Disability Insurance Plan; and \$312.2 million for the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority and the Department of Transport to fund aviation security screening services. A detailed listing of legislated amounts reported through these estimates, as well as a complete breakdown of planned expenditures by standard objects, such as personnel, professional services and transfer payments, is also published online.

• (1930)

[*Translation*]

Furthermore, every two weeks the Minister of Finance reports to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance to provide an update on the government's main initiatives to help Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic. These updates were provided to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, which plays an important role in overseeing the government's economic response to the pandemic. Additionally, as always the government will present the actual expenditures from the public accounts at the end of the fiscal year.

These new expenditure plans set out in the supplementary estimates will continue to provide relief to those affected by COVID-19 while supporting the strategic initiatives and programs introduced by the Government of Canada. Thank you.

[*English*]

Hon. Elizabeth Marshall: Honourable senators, the Supplementary Estimates (A) were studied by the Finance Committee but only for four hours, which is far short of the time we usually spend. By the time we have studied Supplementary Estimates (A) in previous years, we would have finished our study of Main Estimates. Our questions on Supplementary Estimates (A) usually build on the Main Estimates, but we haven't studied the latter yet, so it's almost like Supplementary Estimates (A) were just dropped into the National Finance Committee, and the building blocks from the Main Estimates just weren't there.

You did mention the bi-weekly reports the government produces and that they provide to the Finance Committee at the House. I read them. I call them "bits and pieces," because that's what they are — just a listing of information. It's not a fiscal update or anything. There are numbers there. When you read the numbers — the example I gave with the borrowing — like, what's in that number? You can't tell, and you can't find anybody to give you an answer. It's okay to get but it's not great.

My last comment on that, Senator Gold — you made the distinction — you were talking about — well, it's \$87 billion, and I think you said around \$80 billion was statutory and already approved, so it's only \$6 billion voted. But the \$6 billion is comparable to supplementary estimates in previous years, but the statutory — the \$80 billion — that \$80 billion — the statute is a new statute. I think it was Bill C-13 that was passed in March or April. So really, the Finance Committee should have really needed more time to get a handle on that \$80 billion. It is a new statute. But I'll have more in my third reading speech. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time, on division.)

[Senator Gold]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator Gold, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

NATIONAL CAPITAL ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—
DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Joyal, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy, for the second reading of Bill S-203, An Act to amend the National Capital Act (buildings or works of national significance).

(On motion of Senator Munson, debate adjourned.)

CRIMINAL CODE IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—
DEBATE ADJOURNED

On Other Business, Senate Public Bills, Second Reading, Order No. 4, by the Honourable Salma Ataullahjan:

Second reading of Bill S-204, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (trafficking in human organs).

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): This is a very important bill to our colleague Senator Ataullahjan. It is at day 15, so with leave of the Senate, I ask that this be readjourned.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon Senators: Agreed.

(Debate postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.)

**COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN
CANADA BILL**

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Rosemary Moodie moved second reading of Bill S-217, An Act to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Youth in Canada.

She said: Honourable senators, it is a great honour to speak at second reading as sponsor of Bill S-217, An Act to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Youth in Canada.

. . . I have been waiting for this moment for a very long time, and I believe most Canadians have been waiting for this moment for a long time as well, the opportunity for Parliament to debate and eventually vote for the creation of a national commissioner for children and young persons.

These words were spoken eight years ago by then MP Marc Garneau when he spoke at second reading on his bill, Bill C-420, An Act to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young Persons in Canada.

Today, I repeat these words to express this same sentiment, but with it, I must express my profound disappointment that almost 30 years after the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we still do not have a commissioner for children and youth, and we have not done nearly enough for children. Today, I will elaborate on the mandate of this office and the value it will produce for all Canadians, but before I do this, honourable senators, I think it's important to speak to you about the need for urgency and why we must make this bill a priority for our children and youth.

Colleagues, Canadian children are in a state of crisis and have been for decades. The data before us are really quite shocking. Accidents are the leading cause of death for our children. We know that thousands of children in Canada die every year due to preventable injuries. We know that the second highest cause of death is suicide. We know that one in three children are victims of abuse and that one in five live in poverty. We know that 1 in 10 children experience food insecurity.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit children are in crisis, as well. A 2019 report by the Assembly of First Nations found that 47% of First Nations children living on reserve live in poverty. When it comes to overall health and quality of life, over 25% of our children and youth are obese. Hospital visits for mental health concerns are rising.

When it comes to the health and well-being of children, our global ranking in Canada has been slipping. We rank twenty-fifth out of 41 OECD countries on measures with respect to the children's health and well-being, according to UNICEF's well-being report card. This represents a significant decrease from our 12th-place ranking in 2007.

• (1940)

One troubling sign is a rising rate of infant mortality. Whereas decades ago we were leaders, today our infants are dying at a rate that is amongst the highest in OECD countries, with Nunavut's

rate being three times the national average. Children are the most vulnerable among us. They must depend on their parents, on their guardians, teachers, coaches and other members of their community to be their voice, and to provide them with protection and care. As parliamentarians, we need to make the well-being and future of children our priority.

Senators, the statistics demonstrate that we are failing, and the image they reveal is quite shocking, but what is more disturbing is our inaction. Each of us know children who are affected, have seen them in our communities, we have heard their stories and we have seen the statistics come to life. These are Canada's children and we can no longer ignore this crisis. It is happening before us and we must ask ourselves how we can act, what we will do in response.

Senators, in this bill I seek to propose a solution that is entirely reasonable, based on a principle that is entirely reasonable. Regardless of where the child is born, their ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, gender or level of physical and mental ability, children and youth are our most precious resource. They are gifts and deserving of every opportunity to grow, thrive and succeed, and we have an obligation to do everything we can to make Canada the best place to be a kid.

So this is where the child commissioner comes in. No, this is not a magic bullet that will solve all the problems that our children face, but it is designed to make immediate and important changes to all policy discourse while we continue to work on the broader systemic changes. The commissioner, as designed in this bill, is to address three main areas of action: To act as an independent officer of Parliament whose role will be to hold Parliament accountable in regards to its obligations for the well-being of children and youth, and to ensure that their rights are respected; to collaborate with various levels of government and communities, to work on behalf of children and youth to advocate for their needs; and to elevate the voice of children and youth in the political discourse.

Honourable senators, it will come as no surprise to many of you that the topic of the child commissioner has long been discussed and debated here in Canada. Unfortunately, for too long, we have shirked our obligations to children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The time has come for change.

Historically, Canada has been a beacon for human rights internationally. Look no further than our role in establishing the world's first large-scale armed peacekeeping force in response to the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis. This effort was led by Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, and future Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson.

When we think of children's rights, we must shift our focus to another Pearson. One who in her pivotal roles on behalf Canada's children, the honourable Landon Pearson, was the vice-chair of the Canadian Commission for the International Year of the Child, in 1979. Canada was then known as a leader in children's rights.

When the Convention on the Rights of the Child was concluded, we were swift in our adoption and ratification. Following ratification, the UN has come back to us and continued to advise our leadership about the convention and on its implementation. Their advice to Canada was centred around one key recommendation; that Canada establish the role of a federal commissioner. Since these reports were tabled and these recommendations were made some 25 years ago, the critical issues that were highlighted then continue and have gotten worse. We have fallen asleep at the wheel, and colleagues, it is time that we wake up and that we act.

The United Nations has been an important voice in calling Canada to establish a commission for children and youth, but they have not been the only voice. There have been strong and consistent voices from here within Canada, calling for this action.

Honourable senators, within the Senate three of our colleagues, Senators Lovelace Nicholas, Jaffer and Munson, have worked tirelessly to recommend and advance action in this area. Their work as members of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights studied children's rights and published a Senate report back in 2007 titled *The Silenced Citizens*. I will read two excerpts from this report.

The Committee quickly realized that one of its primary proposals should be the establishment of a Children's Commissioner at the federal level in Canada to "promote responsible and good governance, and provide a seamless service delivery to children." Almost every witness who appeared before the Committee, whether independent experts, advocates for children's rights, or those linked to the UN, supported the establishment of such a monitoring and facilitating body.

Such as the commissioner.

Honourable colleagues, for 13 years we have recognized as an institution what we should be doing. Now it is time to act. In 2009, following this report, current Minister Marc Garneau introduced a bill to create a child commissioner. This ended in defeat in the other place in 2012. Understanding the urgency of this unfinished business, other MPs, MP Cotler, Quach and Leitch, all introduced bills that died on the Order Paper. There have been too many failed attempts. Collectively we have failed as Canadians, and this is a stain on our leadership as parliamentarians.

Many in Canada have called for and continue to call for a commissioner for youth and children. As early as 1991, the Canadian Coalition on the Rights of Children called for a child commissioner. In 2010 UNICEF Canada published a report calling for a federal child commissioner. They stated that:

An independent national Children's Commissioner would put children's best interests on the public agenda, encourage different departments and orders of government to coordinate their efforts and promote better laws, policies and services for children.

In 2016 Children First, Canada's landmark report on the state of Canada's children, recommended the creation of a federal child commissioner. In 2018 the Canadian Bar Association wrote

a letter to the Prime Minister proposing the creation of a commissioner. In 2019 the final report of the Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls called for a Call for Justice 12.9, calling for a commissioner in every province, territory and one at the federal level.

Again in 2019, the Canadian Coalition of Youth Advocates, the organization that unites provincial and territorial child and youth advocates across Canada, all called for the child commissioner. In their statement made in March of last year they said:

For years, we have called for the creation of an independent parliamentary officer with a focus on Indigenous children, young people migrating to Canada, and those involved with youth justice, health, and mental health systems. There are still too many children who fall outside of our legislated mandates as they rely on federally-funded services. The lack of rights-based resources for these young people is glaring. This is despite the commitments made to all children in Canada through our ratification of the UNCRC nearly 30 years ago.

• (1950)

May I remind you that in 2021 we face the next review by the United Nations on our implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Many Canadian organizations have shared with us their reports assessing the state of Canada's implementation of the convention, and for all of these organizations the establishment of the commissioner for children and youth is a central and important recommendation. If Canada is to faithfully implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and play its role as an international human rights leader, we must establish an independent voice for children and youth. We have always known this, and now it's time to act.

Honourable senators, this is unfinished business. As we consider our next steps, I urge us to be united in this challenge. As Marc Garneau said in 2012, "There is no room for partisanship today, especially when we are talking about something as important as our children."

Today I propose to you that the commissioner for children and youth should be our first step in addressing the crisis facing children here in Canada.

Here are my reasons: The provinces want this. Individual child commissioners and advocates across Canada, and the Canadian coalition of youth advocates, wholeheartedly endorse the federal commissioner for children and youth. They want a federal partner who can facilitate their communication with Ottawa and help share best practices throughout the country, and they have wanted this for a while. They see the federal commissioner working closely with the provinces and territories to partner on the many issues that face our children in their provincial jurisdictions. They hope that the federal commissioner could help Canada move toward greater equity in terms of the well-being of children and building a sustainable long-term strategy and vision for Canadian children.

In our discussions with them, they said they want the federal commissioner to be their voice at the federal level; to set a national vision to monitor policy; and to provide Canadians with a broader and clearer view of the impact policy-makers have on our kids. Child commissioners and advocates across Canada see the commissioner as partnering with them to help advance best practices and achieve national adoption. They see the federal commissioner as partnering with them to draw attention to national issues that require provincial and federal cooperation. They also see that this partnership can be developed without a federal commissioner encroaching on provincial jurisdiction.

Honourable senators, we know that this level of collaboration can and will be core to this role. It will be extremely powerful and impactful.

Here in Canada, there are many wonderful organizations and individuals who have been champions for children's rights. Every one of these individuals and groups acknowledge that they cannot provide the same level of influence and impact as could an independent officer of Parliament.

We have heard from many of these individuals and organizations who advocate on behalf of children that many Canadians are not aware of the crisis that our children are enduring. They hope that the commissioner for children and youth would be a powerful voice to bring focus to this crisis, to raise the level of dialogue in Canada about the crisis, to amplify their voices and to be an advocate for children — an advocate who would bring focus, amplify awareness, and study and report on issues such as food insecurity and poverty; an advocate who would provide critical analysis of government action as a trusted and respected source; an advocate who would evaluate the impact of policy and legislation on the everyday lives of our children, especially on First Nations, Métis, Inuit and refugee children and youth, who all fall under federal jurisdiction.

They identify the need for an advocate who would highlight the poor outcomes of failed initiatives; an advocate who would provide oversight for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

They point out that, where we worry that Canadians are blinded to the struggle to address the crisis that our children are living, the advocacy of the commissioner would shift the national consciousness toward raising awareness and would make us a more child-friendly country.

They point out that it is unreasonable for us to entrust this responsibility to not-for-profits and civil society. It should be the core responsibility of the federal commissioner for children and youth.

We have heard repeatedly that there is no public officer in our federal government with the obligation to speak to children, to seek their views and to hear directly from them on the issues that affect them and the effect that our actions have on their lives. We heard that we need to establish an effective way for children and youth to share their views and to amplify their voices.

They proposed that an important part of the commissioner's advocacy would be to directly engage with children and youth so we can hear directly from them what they are going through, and

to provide them with a means to raise their own solutions. Children's solutions to children's problems should be heard, considered and, when appropriate, acted upon. This would be a core responsibility of the federal commissioner.

Colleagues, we have a lot of tools, mechanisms and vehicles available within the government that are directly aimed at helping children. However, we know that none of them go far enough, and none of them have enough collective influence or reach to address the issues we face. We have a Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, but we know that, despite their best intentions, policy and direction will be guided more by political obligation to the sitting government and by the mandate shaped by the political leadership than by the pressing needs of Canadian children.

We have the public service but, again, its direction is guided by politically oriented leadership. We have the poverty council, on which there is a seat reserved for a child-focused individual. Again, the lack of reach and limitation of its mandate prevents effective engagement. A federal commissioner would provide a broader mandate, influence and reach in his or her role as an advocate.

The role of commissioner for children and youth would be strengthened by powers appropriate to its mandate: the right to intervene in court on behalf of a child or as a friend of the court; the right to visit, without warning, juvenile centres and other institutions that house youth; and the ability to compel the sharing of information. These powers are fundamental to ensuring that the office of the commissioner can carry out its mandate.

I put it to you that children deserve more than incomplete, fragmented and ineffective solutions. They deserve to be considered as a priority, and we should be building solutions based on a long-term vision and strategy for them.

Most important, colleagues, Canadians have spoken on this. They want a commissioner for children and youth. A recent poll commissioned by Children's Healthcare Canada found that 73% of Canadians support the creation of this role. There is a broad belief in the public that the current system is not serving our children very well, nor is it providing them with a voice.

In our discourse, we also met with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Native Women's Association of Canada, and Métis Nation of Alberta. We have conducted online webinars with youth groups to generate discussion and we have spoken to commissioners in other international jurisdictions. The establishment of a federal commissioner for children and youth is strongly supported and seen by all as urgently needed.

I wanted to provide a living example of how it works. The model of the Children's Commissioner in New Zealand can teach us two lessons. The first is when New Zealand was going through a serious child poverty crisis in the early 2010s, it became clear that discussing the issue was not really the interest of the government of the day. Understanding that there would be no action, the Children's Commissioner then decided to adopt a strategy to address the issue while allowing the political and bureaucratic ranks the opportunity to catch up. The office put in place a campaign to raise public awareness and to make it an

issue that the general public understood and was mobilized on. The issue became a flashpoint for the upcoming election and was adopted by all party platforms. Once the new prime minister was sworn in, the commissioner became the main contributor to the child poverty reduction strategy and was positioned to inform the government. Through his advocacy, New Zealand's Children's Commissioner brought attention to child poverty when politicians throughout the country were ignoring it.

- (2000)

The second example has to do with education reform in New Zealand. In response to issues that were occurring in that country, online consultations were used to target the broader public. Meanwhile, the Children's Commissioner focused on in-person interviews of children from marginalized groups, such as the Maori, the Indigenous people of New Zealand. The children had a lot to say when asked. They spoke about how the current system had failed them. They spoke about racism and discrimination and the impacts of poverty and food insecurity on their education. The final report ended up being the driving force behind education reform in New Zealand, including policies on racism and discrimination, through hearing the voices of children.

I'll spend a few minutes talking about the bill. The role of the commissioner as designed in this bill is to address three main priorities: to act as an independent officer of Parliament whose concern would be holding Parliament accountable in regard to its obligations on the well-being of children and youth and the respect of their rights; to collaborate with various levels of government and communities to work on behalf of children and youth and to advocate for their needs; and to elevate the voices of children and youth in the political discourse.

The most important principle that applies to this role is the principle of independence. It is essential for this officer to be independent, to have the capacity to function independently and to use this independence to achieve meaningful advocacy.

The work of the commissioner should be driven by evidence, not by politics. All Canadians must be able to trust that the government of the day does not have the ability to influence the commissioner and that the commissioner can be relied upon to hold the government to account.

We have examples of commissioners who are independent here in Canada whose independence led to meaningful advocacy; case in point, the Commissioner of Official Languages. We have examples of independence leading to strong accountability; cases in point, the Parliamentary Budget Officer or the Privacy Commissioner.

The commissioner for children and youth should be able to look past the politics of the day to focus on the long-term needs of children and youth and to bring them to the attention of Parliament. For these reasons, the commissioner for children and youth is best positioned as an independent officer. That was emphasized in the 2007 Senate report as well.

Honourable senators, if we are to make sure that this office has the power it needs to operate, it must be an independent office.

Now, the purpose of the office's independence is to ensure it can carry out its function, which includes reviewing and reporting on policy instruments such as legislation. The first and key role of the commissioner will be to exercise oversight on government legislation and to consider the rights and well-being of children in this regard.

I believe we all agree that children and youth are too important to our future as a country to remain sidelined in our legislative process. It is imperative that we develop processes that make sure that children and youth get the proper consideration in the creation of all policy and legislation.

The commissioner would examine every piece of legislation, every change in regulation, every exercise of a policy instrument and, where appropriate, comment or report on the impacts of a specific action on Canadian children.

The child commissioner would also have the mandate to assist the government in drafting legislation and to collaborate with the public service to provide information. The commissioner would be a resource for committees and be present to advise parliamentarians in other spheres of their work, enabling us to receive timely and current evidence and information on the state of Canadian children.

Our own Senate committee report also spoke to this. They stated:

All witnesses in support of such a body emphasized that the Children's Commissioner should conduct ongoing examinations of federal legislation, services, and funding for programs affecting children and their rights — making 'recommendations, assessments and criticisms'

The second key role of the commissioner would be to engage communities and provinces. In this role, the commissioner would advocate, support and expand on the work of provincial partners and would bring to national focus issues that are affecting the provinces, territories and nations.

One of the important aspects of the role would be the mandate to engage with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Our federal government has specific obligations under the Constitution towards Indigenous children and youth, but it has failed in its obligations. The commissioner for children and youth would address this failure, bringing measurable improvements to the nation-to-nation relationship between the Indigenous peoples of Canada and the federal government.

The commissioner would address some of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and some of the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. In this role, the office could provide a bridge to the federal government specifically on children's issues when called upon.

The history of the Canadian government and Indigenous children is filled with tragedies, injustices and violations of human rights that have led to trauma being passed on for many generations. In crafting this bill, it was my intention to stay away from the colonial practices of the past and to move towards a mutually respectful relationship.

We have spent countless hours discussing this bill with our colleagues in Indigenous nations throughout the country to learn their perspectives on this role, and we will continue to reach out more broadly. I look forward to the committee stage to hear from witnesses and to make changes as we see fit.

The bill will guide the interaction of the children's commissioner with all nations and Indigenous peoples. The commissioner will acknowledge nations' independence and assist them when called upon. The commissioner will be knowledgeable about communities, be sensitive to their cultures and practices and will assist communities in the preservation of their culture and languages.

Our expectation of the office of the children's commissioner is that staffing will reflect the diversity of Canadian communities and that First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals will be placed in senior roles within the office. I would even go further and recommend that the government consider appointing an Indigenous individual as the first commissioner for children and youth. The commissioner would be an important voice and a long-lasting partner who could strengthen nation-to-nation relationships.

The third key aspect to the commissioner's role is the elevation of the voices of children and youth in political discourse. Children deserve to be heard, yet their voices are often ignored and forgotten. We must listen to children, hear their problems and their solutions to their problems. We must create a safe space for them to share their concerns, and we must give them access to continuing dialogue about their future.

• (2010)

The commissioner's engagement would include efforts to draw out the issues of concern for young Canadians through online and in-person engagement. The commissioner would go to children to hear their voices, meeting children in difficult circumstances such as juvenile detention centres and other care institutions. The commissioner would interact with those who care for and serve the interests of children to better understand their needs and the issues they face.

The core of this idea of engagement is the core role of the commissioner in seeking children's thoughts on children's issues, to find solutions arising from children. Our children cannot participate or vote in the democratic process. Therefore, a commissioner would be a constant way to make sure that their voice is amplified. When children are allowed to speak, we will relish the sound of their voices.

Colleagues, Canadian children ought to be aware of their rights. The commissioner for children and youth will have the responsibility, not only to educate children on their rights, but will have the responsibility to educate all Canadians on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This would be a core activity for the office's community interactions and also a specific recommendation of the 2007 Senate report.

This, senators, is how we would build a society better suited for our children.

Across our country, Canadians are grappling with a new reality that is rapidly changing our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the issues facing our children and youth into sharp focus. It has unmasked the unique ways that children are made vulnerable, and the urgent need to put in place immediately the resources, supports and protections that have been missing for all Canadian children.

In so many ways, it has deepened the crisis that they face. COVID-19 has only made things worse for our kids. Food insecurity, domestic abuse, interruptions to their daily routines and education are among some of the more severe issues that our children have confronted. But we struggle to know to what extent or what future impact this will have on children because we don't have their voices. We are not listening.

Children, we need a commissioner for times like these so that we can hear your voice and understand the impact of what is happening in your world, on you.

This is why I chose to introduce this bill and to make this speech today. Those who argue that we are currently considering priority emergency legislation alone miss one glaring truth: For all children, this is emergency legislation.

Senators, today we owe Canadian children three things: our obligation, our urgency and our action. We must recognize the power and the responsibility that we as parliamentarians hold to address these problems. This is our obligation. Together, we must realize the urgency of the problems that Canadian children and youth face. And most importantly, together we must move to action.

Today in Canada, we have an opportunity to make sure that every child — every Canadian child — has every opportunity to thrive in this land. Although this bill will not solve all our problems, it would be one of the most significant steps that we as a Parliament will have taken in a long time, and we must take that step together.

This commissioner for children and youth will advocate for our children, hold the government accountable, give voice to our children and work with our communities when called upon to make sure that protections for them are in place.

Colleagues, my team and I have spent months working on this bill — and I thank them — and reflecting on what we have heard. Working with members of our public sector, not-for-profits and civil society groups, we have developed the bill you see in front of you. We welcome the dialogue that we'll have as we examine this bill, and I happily invite your questions, comments and amendments once we get to committee.

I encourage you to vote for this bill and support its passage. Together, let us give children and youth the voice they deserve and need. Let us show communities that we care enough to give them the resources they ask for, for their children. Let us show Indigenous Canadians that we respect them as nations and that we are serious about working towards repairing the harms of colonialism. Let us show the world that we are serious about our human rights obligations. And let us show Canadians that in a true democracy, we are not afraid of accountability, that we welcome honest scrutiny. Let us show children and youth that in

Ottawa, there are people who care and listen, and ready to do what we know — and have known for a long time — is the right thing to do.

This is why I joined the Senate. This is the change that I want to make. Please join me on this journey. Thank you.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette (The Hon. the Acting Speaker): Question, senator? Would Senator Moodie accept a question?

Hon. Jim Munson: Thank you, Senator Moodie. I do have a quick question for you. My goodness, have you done your homework. It is refreshing and wonderful to see.

If there is one thing I would like to see before I leave this chamber in a year from now, it is a children's commissioner. We've been fighting for this since, as you said, our 2007 report. There always seems to be an appetite for a children's commissioner for a while and then it disappears. People become cabinet ministers and sometimes the focus is not there any more. Close to 70 countries have a children's commissioner of some sort.

Just a very quick question and I will speak to this course. Where do disabled children fit in the role of a children's commissioner and their rights?

Senator Moodie: Thank you, Senator Munson, for your question. Part of the role of the commissioner, and an integral part of the role of the commissioner, is to elevate from the provincial level of child advocates and commissioners, the best practices, the best approaches that they can elevate to the national level and, therefore, spread across jurisdictions.

One opportunity for the commissioner is to bring to the bigger forum, to Canada as a whole, opportunities that are not widespread. I think the counter of that would be where very poor conditions exist for a particular group of children, such as disabled children. If this were across many regions, it could become an issue that, it being a systemic issue, that the commissioner could address.

I think there are opportunities on both sides of the coin: to spread the good and to highlight the issues that are occurring.

Senator Munson: I have many questions, but I see we have about three minutes to go in terms of the questions.

Some of the idea of a national commissioner, to use the term "national commissioner," sometimes there has been a little pushback in the province of Quebec of having a national commissioner dealing with the rights of children in the province of Quebec. Have you consulted the Province of Quebec and other provinces that have provincial ombudspersons dealing with children's rights and so on, and has there been a buy-in from all the provinces?

Senator Moodie: Again, thank you for your question. In fact, part of the very deliberate and in-depth work that we did was to speak to every child commissioner that we could get in touch with, and one of the commissioners that we spoke to was the commissioner representing children in Quebec.

[Senator Moodie]

We had a strong level of support across the board. Commissioners feel that this has been that link, that added step, that person that would partner with them to make sure that they were able to bring things to the federal level that they currently cannot. We have strong support, as I said, in Quebec. The folks that we spoke to are currently very supportive of the idea of a commissioner at the national level.

• (2020)

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Senator Munson, do you have another question?

Senator Munson: Yes, we do need a children's commissioner in this country. There is a minority Parliament dealing with these issues and we all want to get involved with the debate. This has to pass here, and then it has to pass over on the House side. Then hopefully it will become law before a minority government falls or lives out its mandate.

Should there be a minister within the context of a children's commissioner? I know the Prime Minister took on youth and there is a Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, but should there be a specific minister dealing with youth so that the commissioner that has to report to Parliament can also deal directly with a youth ministry federally?

Senator Moodie: Again, thank you for your question.

When we look at the state of play across Canada, there are a number of ministries that support and have the responsibility for children as part of their mandate. In fact, there were a number of initiatives over the past few years where children's representatives have been embedded in various groups and committees within ministries to be that voice. Again, the limitation of the individuals in those roles that we found when we looked closely was their mandate, their reach beyond their committee and their reach beyond the ministry. In fact, in doing some of this work, we've reached out across four ministries to talk to people because that's the state of play.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Senator Moodie, your time has expired.

(On motion of Senator Munson, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

**BILL TO AMEND THE CANADA ELECTIONS ACT AND
THE REGULATION ADAPTING THE CANADA
ELECTIONS ACT FOR THE PURPOSES OF
A REFERENDUM (VOTING AGE)**

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Marilou McPhedran moved second reading of Bill S-219, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Regulation Adapting the Canada Elections Act for the Purposes of a Referendum (voting age).

She said: Honourable senators, I rise this evening at second reading of Bill S-219, which seeks to lower the voting age in federal elections from 18 to 16.

This evening is a “herstoric” moment for me because this is the first bill that I have introduced in the Senate. I could not introduce a better bill than this one, which seeks to include young Canadians in our democracy and is the product of several months of cooperation between my team and youth advisors, the Canadian Council of Young Feminists and many other youth organizations across the country. Many thanks to all of them.

[English]

It has now been 50 years since the voting age was lowered from the age of 21 to 18. Today, I am excited to begin second reading of Bill S-219, which would amend the Canada Elections Act to lower the voting age in federal elections from 18 to 16. This bill will also make several minor amendments to the same act to harmonize the logistics of voting to reflect the age of 16.

Honourable colleagues, this is not a complicated bill, but please join me in considering its potential for the revitalization of our democracy. We should lower the voting age to 16 because our young people are mature, informed and engaged enough to vote. Lowering the voting age will increase voter turnout by providing young people the opportunity to vote for the first time in an environment that is supported by their schools, their families and their communities.

Indeed, polling stations are often located in high schools, but most students must watch from afar as others exercise their right to vote. We know that those who vote at an earlier age for the first time are more likely to vote again and again in the future.

Further, young people are so often told they are the leaders of tomorrow, but the truth is that now, today, they are already leaders, genuine stakeholders in the institutions that govern our country, and this is a substantive opportunity for us to show them that we recognize their rights and we take them seriously.

When Canada became a Confederation, the voting age was 21. At that time, only white men who owned property could vote. Women, Indigenous peoples, black and other people of colour, as well as members of certain religions, were prevented from participating in the democratic process.

In 1917, with the First World War raging, the right to vote was extended to all members of the Canadian military, including women, and Indigenous peoples recognized as Indians under the Indian Act.

After certain women in Manitoba were the first in Canada to gain the right to vote, the right was extended to many more women over the age of 21 in 1918, but still not to Indigenous women.

By 1960, the Canada Elections Act extended the vote in federal elections to people recognized as Indians under the Indian Act. Amidst great national debate about how people so young could not possibly exercise such a responsibility, the Canada Elections Act was amended to lower the age of voting from 21 to 18 in 1970. That was 50 years ago.

The arguments today for lowering the legal voting age to 16 echo the debates on lowering the voting age to 18 that occurred in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Today’s common criticisms of youth echo those historic debates.

Young people are collectively charged with being uninformed, unengaged and immature. There is ample evidence to counter all of these claims. Indeed, dear colleagues, the evidence tilts to verify that 16 and 17-year-old Canadians are sufficiently mature, informed and ready to participate to exercise their right to vote in federal elections.

I hope my honourable colleagues will support this bill by engaging our youth in the democratic process for a more effective representation of our society and for the long-term economic and social viability of our country.

Critics argue that 16-year-olds are not mature enough to vote. Let us look more closely at this concept of maturity, which is often equated to age.

In a research paper I received from Manitoba students Sarah Rohleder and Meaghan Rohleder, aged 15 and 16, they made the succinct observation that “Age doesn’t make everyone wiser.”

When we look outside the voting context, Canadian lawmakers have already decided that 16 and 17-year-olds are mature enough to engage in many actions that require maturity and are considered to be well within the realm of responsible decision making.

Canadian society sees 16-year-olds as mature enough to enroll in the Armed Forces under the reserves. We give them the opportunity to shoulder one of the greatest responsibilities one can have — serving your country and accepting unlimited liability imbued with the ultimate sacrifice for one’s country, the principle that you must follow lawful orders even when it may cost you your life.

We believe 16-year-olds are mature enough to drive a car, which is fundamentally a killing machine, on the same roads as everyone else. We trust them to get behind the wheel with judgment and skill in a responsible act that is statistically one of the most dangerous of all our lives. We believe that 16-year-olds are mature enough to provide informed consent to having sex. We believe 16-year-olds are mature enough to enter into a contract of marriage with the consent of their parents. We defer to the maturity of young people to know their bodies and to have the capacity to speak autonomously for what they do and do not want in pursuit of their health. We believe that at age 16 you are old enough to earn an income and be taxed on that income. Governments take money from employed 16-year-old Canadians, and governments create policy and legislation that affects them without them.

• (2030)

In summary, 16- and 17-year-olds are already seen as mature enough to navigate the responsibilities of joining the military, having sex, driving a car, being taxed, being married and being parents. Preventing them from voting on the grounds that they lack maturity contradicts the current responsibilities that our society has placed on their shoulders. Despite being taxed and

being affected by government policy decisions, 16- and 17-year-olds do not have access to the most fundamental and democratic way an individual can engage with issues that matter to them: the ability to vote.

We should not keep young people away from the heart of our democracy, within which the right to vote resides. Instead, we need to invite them in as partners in the revitalization of our democracy. This is an essential opportunity to demonstrate to young Canadians the respect they deserve because they have earned it. They are our partners in the stewardship of our country and the institutions that govern us. Look around you. Although 30 years of age is the threshold to be considered for appointment to the Senate, no one within a decade of that age is a senator.

Now think about the fact that the federal deficit surpassed \$1 trillion last week. It is not our generation that is going to bear the long-term brunt of the long recovery ahead.

Some critics argue that a 16-year-old is not informed enough to cast a ballot. The 16- and 17-year-olds that I know, the 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds who have sent to me research papers arguing in favour of my bill, delivered papers to which I would have happily given a high grade by my standards as a university professor. Based on the evidence, it has been demonstrated that 16- and 17-year-olds are able to make an informed decision based on the values they hold and their vision of the inclusive democracy we all believe in.

Colleagues, my dad first ran as a Conservative at the invitation of the late Senator Duff Roblin, who was then the Premier of Manitoba. I knocked on dozens of doors, beginning at the age of 12, in the first of many election campaigns in which I canvassed for a number of candidates running for a number of different political parties over those years. For those among us who have this experience, we know that there are many voters much older than 16 who are neither mature nor well informed, but we would fight for their right to vote.

A voter does not need to know their position on each issue to be informed and to effectively cast their ballot. An informed voter is one who understands their values and can translate them into their vision of what Canada, as an inclusive democracy, needs to be by casting their vote. An informed voter can be one who feels passionately about a single issue, a cluster of issues or is otherwise able to translate their values into an elective decision on which person they want to represent them at home, in Ottawa and internationally.

I stand here today with this bill to argue that 16- and 17-year-olds are ready to vote. You don't need to take my word for it. Take the evidence of the past decade from researchers who have established that 16- and 17-year-olds are equal or superior to 18-year-olds in ability to vote responsibly, both in terms of the capacity for critical thinking and overall political knowledge.

I'm going to quote from a paper authored by Sarah and Meaghan Rohleder, both too young to vote, where they say that, in fact, in Austria, Malta and Guernsey — all countries that have already lowered the voting age to 16 — their federal elections have seen high participation, at about 70%. Austria even tops the Eurobarometer for voter turnout for 15- to 30-year-olds with 79%, while the average voter turnout in Europe is 64%.

[Senator McPhedran]

A Danish study found that 18-year-olds are more likely to take their first vote than 19-year-olds. The more that months go by in those years saw a decline in first voter turnout. Lowering the voting age will allow people to vote before they leave high school and their homes and establish lifelong voting habits. Evidence from Austria confirms that there is a higher first-time voter turnout that also continues over time. It shows that they are ready to contribute sound decision making and quality participation in democracy. In the words of Sarah and Meaghan the feeling of voting, of stating your opinion, is a strong one. It is a simple act, but one that matters immensely.

In another research paper sent to me by three other high school students, all under the age of 18, several studies were cited, including a study published by the London School of Economics last year that found a voter's first two election cycles are key in determining future voting habits. It increases twofold for every election in which they vote.

In the words of high school students Avinash, Rooj and Shivan, "That is the recipe for a lifelong voter."

These student authors also noted that one kind of cognition is called cold cognition, and that is usually what we think about: attention, memory and everyday types of things. It's really non-emotional cognition. Then there is hot cognition, which is emotional and social cognition. For decisions such as voting, our brains use cold cognition. While hot cognition continues developing until the mid-20s, cold cognition is fully mature and developed by the age of 16.

At 16, they are completely scientifically and intellectually capable of making political decisions — a point also made by the student authors Sarah and Meaghan.

Colleagues, these are rational arguments and evidence that surpass the anecdotal dismissals of young voters I have been hearing from some talk show hosts and other opponents. A study from the American Academy of Political and Social Science verified the adequate level of political knowledge held by teenagers. They found:

On measures of civic knowledge, political skills, political efficacy, and tolerance, 16-year-olds, on average, are obtaining scores similar to those of adults.

Most young people are in high school at the age of 16, which provides a supportive framework to absorb the knowledge necessary to make an informed vote.

At 16 and 17 years of age, Canadians are in a uniquely advantageous position to learn about the political process, the history of our democracy and the importance of voting. They are voters who would be in an environment where they get to spend time exploring the complicated issues that face us today.

In the classroom, young people have a structured opportunity to discuss the different federal and provincial parties, as well as their positions concerning environmental, economic and societal issues of national and global importance. Elections would provide students an opportunity to practise forming and acting on their own opinions, and the school setting provides them the informational resources to make an informed decision when beginning to vote.

Honourable senators, voting is a simple but powerful act. It is an act that recognizes the credibility of the person's voice in making a decision about their community and their nation. It allows citizens to participate in the decision-making process and hold accountable those in power.

Our youth are the citizens who will bear the longest burden of the decisions that are being made by us, by governments, now. Giving young people a mechanism to contribute their views would improve our political representation as the decisions of world leaders of today affect most heavily the world young people will live in tomorrow.

• (2040)

Young people are not only affected by government policy on education and climate change. When a young person looks to moving out of their home, they are impacted by housing policy. When a young person is deciding how to commute, they are affected by transit and infrastructure planning. When a young person is concerned about how they are going to take care of their elders, they are affected by seniors' policies. When young people are looking to enter into the workforce, they are impacted by tax and economic policies. When young people need to buy groceries for themselves or their family, food prices affect them. When looking for medical attention, young people are affected by the funding levels of our health care systems. Many more young people wish to pursue post-secondary education than those who can; they are affected by education funding.

Young people face important serious issues that intersect with the role of government. As of 2018, people under the age of 18 are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as seniors. Historically, youth unemployment has been higher than that of the general population. However, because of COVID-19, the economic disruption is hitting hard on young people. In May, the Canadian unemployment rate rose to 13.7% but youth unemployment ballooned to 29.4%.

With the rising impact and costs associated with climate change, young people are going to pay the most for our inaction on transitioning to a low-carbon economy and the development of infrastructure resilience. The consequences of government action affect a group of people who are mature enough to form an informed opinion but are prevented from being able to exercise democratic rights.

Honourable senators, this bill aims to resolve this democratic slight and improve the representation of Canadian society at the voting booth by bringing in more people who should be able to voice their opinions on how their government is impacting their lives.

Lowering the voting age to 16 will strengthen our democracy by increasing the number of people who will create the habit of voting. Studies have shown that voters who vote in their first election are more likely to continue voting in their lifetime.

Failure to engage youth in the democratic process can have negative consequences on the long-term health of our democracy. Voter turnout in federal elections has not once been over 70% within the past 70 years.

When looking at the demographic breakdown of voter turnout, it is easy to cast a disappointing eye to the 18- to 24-year-olds who are often the least likely to vote. According to Elections Canada, Canadians between the ages of 18 and 24 have shown the least amount of interest in voting with the 2019 turnout only being 57.1%.

The responsibility for engaging young people is shared. There is a degree of responsibility for youth to get involved. Speaking from experience, young people are ready and willing to engage in meaningful conversations about serious issues, and they are ready to take action.

However, there is a reciprocal responsibility on us as a society to create opportunities for young people to participate in the democratic system and develop interest in their community.

Studies of the impact of lowering the voter age to 16 have found that it positively impacted voter turnout, not only within younger demographics, but also had a positive impact on the likelihood to vote of the adults surrounding them. A University of Copenhagen study found that one of the most important relationships that predicted the probability of a first-time voter was the influence of parents and peers. The study empirically contradicted the assumption that younger people vote less frequently, finding that young people who still live at home with one or both parents who voted were more likely to cast a ballot in that election than an 18-year-old who had moved out.

The study also showed that as young people moved out of home for work or higher education, the influence of their peers became equal to or greater than that of their parents. They became less likely to vote than if they were living at home.

In sum, while youth are living at home with support of parents, they are far more likely to vote compared to 18-year-olds who have often moved away from home and are influenced more by their peers than their family.

Another study found that a benefit of parenting a newly enfranchised voter is the parent is more likely to vote in the same election, further increasing turnout. Importantly, they found that the older you become before you cast your first ballot decreases the likelihood you will vote for the first time.

In a study of Austrian elections, voter turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds was almost 10% greater than those aged 18 to 20. The takeaway is clear: Lowering the voting age will allow young Canadians to engage with the democratic process earlier and increase voter turnout in the long term.

Lowering the voting age has been successful in increasing voter turn out in Austria, Scotland and Denmark, just to mention three of many more countries.

In 2007, Austria lowered the voting age to 16. Researchers found that there was a first-time voting boost in the 16- and 17-year-olds that was greater than those between the ages of 18 and 20. They also found that the turnout in the 16- and 17-year-olds was not substantially lower than the average turnout rate of the entire voting population.

It was also found in Austria that those under 18 were able and willing to participate in politics and that their values were able to be effectively translated into political decisions — as effectively as people between the ages of 18 and 21. That study also found that there was no evidence that a lack of turnout was driven by a lack of interest or ability to participate.

Young people are interested. Young people are willing to participate. Let us take a step to strengthen our democracy by increasing participation in our electoral process. Let's bring more people to the table who should help decide important issues on policy and spending that affect them. Let's trust young people and help them develop into the leaders who will soon be at the forefront of the dynamic range of issues facing our society.

Young people are ready and able to vote at 16. Evidence from countries that have lowered the voting age shows that lowering the voting age to 16 has positive effects. We have a block of engaged, interested and mature people who are wanting and should be heard on important issues that face them and their communities.

While there have been previous private members' bills to lower the voting age to 16, they have all originated in the other place. Bill S-219 gives us as senators a leadership opportunity to modernize and revitalize our democracy.

And to those who are concerned that young people's voting will disrupt the current political landscape, let's run the numbers. Lowering the voting age would be giving around 800,000 people the ability to vote. Canada's total eligible electorate was just over 27 million people in 2019. Adding the 800,000 16- and-17-year-olds to the electorate would represent a 2.9% increase to the total number of eligibility voters. This is a fraction of electors to the total amount and will not upset the political competition in Canada.

If critics argue that all the youth are going to vote for one type of party, let us push back against the idea of preventing an otherwise capable person from exercising their political preference. The deciding factor on whether or not to allow someone to vote is whether they have the maturity and social responsibility that earns them the right to vote. We should not extend the right to vote to a group of people because of their political beliefs. Such a notion is antithetical to the understanding of democracy itself, where the voices of the people are the source of legitimate power.

People often say youth are disengaged. That's not what I see. That's not what I hear. Young people are already engaged in their communities. They get involved in their high schools through

clubs and student councils. They are involved in sports teams and drama theatres. They put on fundraisers for community initiatives.

• (2050)

Voter turnout numbers do not immediately prove the idea that youth are politically disengaged. All we know for certain from lower voter turnout is that once you're 18 you are less politically engaged in voting for a period of your life. This does not mean young people are not engaged in political or social causes that echo the democratic sentiment of the power of everyday people using and exercising their opinions, time and effort to shape the society they wish to see.

For the young people who have not yet found a channel to contribute to their civic interest, we need to provide them with opportunities to get involved in order to strengthen communities across Canada. Lowering the voting age helps get young people involved by introducing them to the issues in their community, how government interacts with their community and what organizations work to better their community.

Lowering the voting age can expose interested young people to organizations or activities that can produce habits of good civic engagement. Creating more opportunities for young people to be exposed to how they can contribute their time and effort to develop their communities is something worth doing.

When I began working with my youth advisors on the idea of lowering the federal voting age, they made it clear to me that a national campaign galvanized by youth leaders needed to be created. My youth advisors from across Canada have been diligently researching, consulting and proposing outreach strategies to ensure Canadian youth are involved at all stages of the process of this bill. The Vote16 Youth Steering Committee, composed of my youth advisors, has been invaluable to me in providing thorough feedback and youth perspectives through every stage of developing this bill to this point. This has been a long time coming. From my first year as a senator with numerous youth circles across Manitoba and some other parts of the country, I am committed to continuing to consult young leaders as this bill makes its way through Parliament and invite youth, youth-led movements and youth-focused organizations to reach out. They can become a Vote16 Mobilizer and stay engaged in this process.

[*Translation*]

In closing, I'd like to quote the president of the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, an organization representing French-Canadian young women that played a vital role in developing the campaign to lower the voting age to 16. Sue Duguay said, and I quote:

The [proposed] bill puts an issue of utmost importance back on the table. I am pleased that lowering the voting age to 16 is still being considered. French-speaking youth are engaged in their communities, and that means in politics as well, often more than most people. As individuals eager to take a critical look at the Canadian political system, their voices deserve to be heard and considered.

Voting at 16 is a much broader issue than simply exercising one's right to vote. We need to work together, with the provinces and territories, to enhance civic education amongst all young Canadians. We strongly urge the federal government to consider this bill carefully, since it responds positively to an issue that has been a top priority for young people for quite some time.

Once again, it is an honour for me to carry the torch towards a fair and inclusive democracy.

[English]

Our young leaders are mature, engaged and informed members of our society whom we should bring to the decision making table. They are our partners and crucial actors in the long-term governance of our institutions and the revitalization of our democracy, and they deserve the right to vote.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Miville-Dechéne, for Senator Omidvar, debate adjourned.)

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the second report of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, entitled *Consideration of an inquiry report of the Senate Ethics Officer*, presented in the Senate on June 18, 2020.

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson moved the adoption of the report.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of the Standing Senate Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators to speak to the second report of the committee, which concerns Senator Victor Oh.

For some context, in April 2017, Senator Oh took a trip to Beijing and Fujian Province, China.

On January 11, 2018, the Senate Ethics Officer initiated a preliminary review of the trip, and on March 22, 2018, he instituted an inquiry into the matter.

On February 18, 2020, the Senate Ethics Officer provided to your committee his inquiry report. The same day, the inquiry report was tabled in the Senate and became a public document.

In his inquiry report, the Senate Ethics Officer found Senator Oh in breach of paragraph 2(2)(c) and subsection 17(1) of the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code*. He concluded that Senator Oh failed to uphold the principle in paragraph 2(2)(c) of the code by failing to maintain a clear separation between his public and his personal affairs. He also found that Senator Oh breached subsection 17(1) of the code by accepting payment from his sister

for the trip and by attending dinners hosted by Pantheon Asset Ltd., a Chinese investment advisory firm with Canadian operations, and by Xiamen Airlines.

The committee would also like to draw the Senate's attention to certain observations offered by the Senate Ethics Officer in his inquiry report in relation to Senator Oh's credibility and integrity during the inquiry process. Specifically, the Senate Ethics Officer identified a number of areas where Senator Oh attempted to mislead the inquiry, withheld information and gave incomplete testimony.

It should be noted that while the Senate Ethics Officer found breaches of paragraph 2(2)(c) and subsection 17(1) of the code, he did not identify any remedial measures, stating that none were available in this matter.

Nonetheless, the Senate Ethics Officer deemed that Senator Oh's actions during the inquiry constitute aggravating factors that should be taken into account when assessing sanctions and penalties.

Regarding the committee's study and findings, during the consideration of the inquiry report, the committee examined the Senate Ethics Officer's analysis and findings in relation to Senator Oh's breach of the code. The committee also took seriously the Senate Ethics Officer's observation regarding Senator Oh's conduct during the inquiry.

• (2100)

The committee determined that Senator Oh's breach of the code and his conduct during the inquiry do not uphold the standards of responsibility and accountability inherent to the position of senator. The committee was concerned about Senator Oh's apparent lack of candour and his attempt to mislead the Senate Ethics Officer during his inquiry, which impeded and delayed the inquiry process. The committee notes that this conduct does not meet the expectations of how senators should conduct themselves in respect to the enforcement process under the code, and that it constitutes aggravating factors for the purpose of assessing recommended sanctions.

Accordingly, the committee recommends that Senator Oh be censured by the Senate. Censure is a recognized formal expression of a legislative body's disapproval of the conduct in which one of its members has engaged. Adopting this sanction would mean that the Senate agrees with the committee that Senator Oh's conduct fell short of what was expected in this matter and would serve as a reminder of the importance of abiding by the code.

In conclusion, the public imposes a considerable degree of responsibility and accountability upon senators. To maintain and enhance public confidence and trust in the integrity of the Senate, and to provide greater certainty and guidance for senators when dealing with possible conflicts of interest, the Senate adopted in 2005 the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators*. The code establishes standards and a transparent process by which questions relating to the conduct of senators could be addressed.

All senators are expected to understand and uphold the principles of the code and contribute to the proper functioning and integrity of the code's enforcement process; thus, the committee takes this opportunity to remind senators of their individual and collective obligations under the code. Senators are required to continually exercise due diligence, including in matters related to travel and understanding who is paying for their travel.

In this regard, the committee would like to provide clarification on what is expected of senators under subsection 17(1) of the code. Subsection 17(1) prohibits senators from accepting, directly or indirectly, gifts or benefits that could reasonably be considered to relate to the senator's position. Senator Oh did this when he accepted payment from his sister for travel connected to the official portion of his trip. The exception found in subsection 17(2) of the code is that senators may receive gifts and benefits as a matter of protocol or hospitality. The travel accepted by Senator Oh went beyond this, and therefore did not fall within the exception.

Senators will recall that if they are making use of this exception and the gift or benefit exceeds \$500, or the total of gifts from one source exceeds \$500 over the course of a year, this must be specifically disclosed to the Senate Ethics Officer. This is outlined in subsection 17(3).

Beyond the question of travel costs are the activities that occurred on the trip. Senator Oh attended dinners in his honour, sponsored by entities that had interests connected with the senator's position. While attending a dinner as a matter of protocol does not violate the code, accepting a dinner wholly in one's honour where it flows from official meetings connected with one's Senate work crosses the line; it is no longer a mere expression of hospitality that falls under the exception.

Colleagues, we must all be exceedingly careful with any gifts or benefits. In cases of doubt, the committee encourages all senators to seek the confidential advice and opinions of the Senate Ethics Officer to ensure their continued compliance with the code. Even if we are wholly within the rules, it is still useful to consider the perception of Canadians who may feel that groups or organizations are providing gifts and benefits to parliamentarians in an effort to secure access or influence.

Finally, the committee wishes to underscore that it considers any attempt to mislead the work of the Senate Ethics Officer or the work of the committee as aggravating factors in the consideration of sanctions. In that regard, the committee is considering further amendments to the code to underscore the importance of that principle.

It now belongs to each and every senator to examine the inquiry report of the Senate Ethics Officer and the second report of the committee in order to take the appropriate course of action.

Thank you, honourable senators.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 12-30(2), a decision cannot be taken on this report, as yet. Debate on the report, unless some other senator wishes to adjourn the matter, will be deemed adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate.

Is that agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Pursuant to rule 12-30(2), further debate on the motion was adjourned until the next sitting.)

ARCTIC ISSUES

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Bovey, calling the attention of the Senate to the need to renew and further its interest in Arctic issues.

Hon. Margaret Dawn Anderson: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to the inquiry that Senator Bovey launched to renew and further the Senate's interest in Arctic issues through the establishment of a Senate Arctic committee. The committee would continue the integral work of the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic of the Forty-second Parliament.

I want to acknowledge that we meet here today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg. I rise as a member of the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic, as an Inuvialuk from the Arctic and as the senator for the Northwest Territories. The region I represent has a population of 44,895 in 33 communities within an area of approximately 1.3 million square kilometres. It has 11 official languages, and 50% of the population is Indigenous.

In contrast to Southern Canada, in the Northwest Territories, we are grappling with growing disparities in food security, housing, education and health care. We have an overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the justice and child and family services systems. These issues are long standing. They are the legacy of federal colonial policies and systemic racism.

These issues have become even more evident during this period of lockdown and physical distancing due to COVID-19. In all 33 communities, overcrowded housing, limited access to hospitals and specialized health care, a population with overall increased vulnerability to respiratory illnesses, and a reliance on air carriers for community resupply and medical travel made COVID-19 a terrifying prospect.

In order to protect N.W.T. residents, the territorial government closed its borders to all nonessential travel on March 21. The border remains closed, with some exceptions. Mandatory isolation centres, where incoming travellers are required to quarantine for 14 days, were established in Yellowknife, Inuvik, Hay River and Fort Smith to prevent contagion in the smaller, remote communities.

• (2110)

While the lockdown that accompanied these measures has been successful in containing the spread of COVID-19 in N.W.T. — the territory's five confirmed cases have been resolved — it has had significant impacts on the territory's economy. Natural resource extraction and tourism are key drivers of our GDP, and although lockdown restrictions are beginning to ease, both of these sectors operate during our very short, intense summer season, which is already underway. It is unlikely that these businesses will scale up to their full operations before 2021.

I should also mention that even with the gradual reopening of the territory, N.W.T. residents' fears of a global pandemic are by no means diminished. Our elders remember the last time this happened. In the summer of 1928, a Hudson's Bay Company supply ship, the *SS Distributor*, made its annual trip down the Mackenzie River and spread a deadly strain of influenza. The resulting epidemic killed 10 to 15% of the territory's Indigenous population, with remote camps being hit the hardest. According to our stories, in some places there was no one left to bury the dead.

Alongside this new ongoing public health risk, we face rapid changes to our land caused by climate change. Our community members and scientists are reporting the receding and thinning of sea ice, making winter travel unpredictable. Rapidly melting permafrost threatens our communities, our infrastructure, our way of life and the safety of our people. In my home community of Tuktoyaktuk, we are already being forced to adapt our subsistence hunting and gathering lifestyle due to lack of the ice and the abundance of salmon, once foreign to our fish nets, that are appearing in our Arctic waters.

Across the N.W.T. we are already addressing the threats to our community infrastructure. This spring, during the COVID-19 lockdown, Tuktoyaktuk's Hamlet Council had to relocate four privately owned homes because the land was eroding underneath their piling foundations. This is a new reality for Tuktoyaktuk. Sea levels are rising and the land where Tuktoyaktuk is located is subsiding. Projections show the community will be almost completely underwater in 80 years without human intervention.

Across the Northwest Territories, we are seeing shorter winter road seasons; the start of the ice road season is often delayed and the end of the season is increasingly unpredictable. Not only do isolated communities rely on ice roads for their annual resupply, the ice road season is a busy time of travel between communities. However, it is increasingly dangerous. In recent years, vehicles have gone through the ice and travellers have been stranded in the mud, hundreds of kilometres away from any community when the roads have suddenly closed.

The challenges we face are daunting. The lives of the Indigenous people of the Arctic are shaped by a history of colonization, disenfranchisement, suppression and assimilation. Despite this, we have not lost sight of our culture, our creativity, our resilience, our humour, our innovative spirit and our determination. We have always demanded to be active participants in our own narrative, to challenge the traditional image and discourse around the Arctic. We demand to be a part of the solution to bridge the socio-economic gaps within the rest of Canada.

How did the Arctic and North come to be a part of Canada? The Rupert's Land Act of 1868 saw the Northwest Territories bought for £300,000 and 20% of the territory's arable land by the Dominion of Canada from the Hudson's Bay Company. At the time, this area consisted of the Prairie provinces, parts of northern Quebec, northern Ontario, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. By 1870, the transfer became official and the title passed to Canada. The Indigenous people of the land, including the Inuit, First Nations, and Métis, were not consulted.

Interestingly enough, a senator was the impetus for the next stage in Canadian history. In 1888, with the discovery of oil reserves and minerals within the Arctic, Senator John C. Schultz triggered a plan for developing the area to supply the needs of the rest of Canada. At a Senate meeting in March 1888, Senator Schultz moved that a select committee be struck to inquire as to the value of a vast region:

. . . lying north of the Saskatchewan watershed, east of the Rocky Mountains, and west of Hudson's Bay, comprising the Great Mackenzie Basin . . .

Thus began the involvement of the federal government, led by the Senate, in the Arctic and Northern Canada. As a direct result of the findings of the report of the select committee, historic treaties were sought and signed with the Indigenous peoples across Rupert's Land.

Despite this display of interest from the South, federal policy in the Arctic and regarding Inuit in particular was haphazard at best. In 1923, an amendment to the Indian Act brought 6,538 "Eskimo" under the charge of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. Before this time, Inuit had not been under the administration of any government department. By 1930, this was repealed and the Inuit fell under the responsibility of the Department of the Interior, but it was expected that the Quebec government would help to fund relief programming for Inuit, as it was the only province inhabited by Inuit.

In 1935, the Quebec government brought the question of responsibility to the Supreme Court, where it was argued that Inuit were Indians under the Constitution Act, 1867. On April 5, 1939, Inuit were classified as Indians in Canada. For decades, Indigenous people of the Arctic have been subject to legislation and policies developed in the South, which govern our lives and alters our history. It is well past time that Northerners be involved in decisions that impact us.

Honourable senators, towards the end of the last Parliament, it seemed to me that there was a small but growing awareness here in Ottawa of the importance of northern engagement in policy and decision-making on a federal level. The special Senate committee on the Arctic's report *Northern Lights: A Wake-Up Call for the Future of Canada* explicitly highlighted the importance of northern decision-making for Northerners. Canada's new Arctic and Northern Policy Framework was developed with this in mind. Let us not stop at a small awareness; let us move towards active inclusion and engagement.

Both the special committee report and the Arctic Policy Framework take a broad approach to defining the Arctic and Northern Canada. The region encompasses the three territories, as well as the entirety of Inuit Nunangat, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region in the Northwest Territories, Labrador's Nunatsiavut region and the territory of Nunavik in Quebec. Our committee report and the Arctic Policy Framework identify many of the same key priorities, including addressing socio-economic disparity; strengthening infrastructure; building strong, sustainable and diversified economies; aligning science and Indigenous knowledge; strengthening safety, security and defence; addressing climate change; and achieving self-determination.

Honourable senators, these documents contain the voices of those who live, work, survive, fight and struggle to bring equality to the Arctic, the North and its people. As senators, I believe we have an important role to play in listening to and amplifying the voices of Northerners; a role that defies and challenges the historic role of the Senate in Canada's colonial policies. In 1970, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau stated:

We can't in one year undo the injustices or misunderstandings of a hundred or two hundred years of history, and certainly we can't do it alone.

Collectively, we have the power to reshape the way in which the federal government interacts with the North. It is long past time that decision makers in Ottawa not only be concerned with what the Arctic can do for Canada, but what Canada can do for the Arctic and its residents.

Why is it important for the Senate to maintain a focus on the Arctic? First, the Arctic is on the front lines of the socio-economic impacts of climate change and the opening of the Northwest Passage as a result of climate change, which has spurred international interest in our Arctic waters.

Second, the territories alone represent a vast geographic area encompassing 3.9 million square kilometres, making up nearly 40% of Canada's landmass and 162,000 kilometres of its coastline. In this chamber, three senators represent three territories and 66 communities. No matter how loud our voices, this places northern interests at a natural disadvantage when it comes to raising awareness and advocacy on behalf of our vast region.

Third, the Arctic is central to the evolution of government-to-government relationships. The region is home to many modern treaty signatories and several self-government and land claim agreements are under negotiation across the region.

• (2120)

Finally, on a personal note, I can't help being disappointed with the lack of knowledge about the North, its people, our history and our current circumstances. Despite the North being a key piece of our national identity, it is easy to ignore or forget those of us who live there.

[Senator Anderson]

Since my appointment, I have learned that Canada's northern identity is an idea of that North that has been absorbed by the South. When it is reflected back to us, the identity is almost unrecognizable to northerners.

The North feels very different from the South. I can tell you that the disparity between the Arctic and Southern Canada continues to grow. It almost feels like I'm in a different country when I arrive here in Ottawa. I believe this difference is impossible to understand unless you have lived there. This is why it is so important that we create space in Ottawa where northern voices can not only be heard but be an impetus for historic change.

Honourable colleagues, as I stand here before you, I am resolved in my belief that Canada's interest in the Arctic must be reflected in a mutually beneficial relationship between the North and the South. The Arctic is fundamental to Canada's national identity and its residents are critical to Canada's Arctic sovereignty.

Most important, to those who live in the Arctic, it is our home. The Arctic has sustained us for thousands of years and is intrinsic to who we are in all aspects of our lives. This is a reciprocal relationship, and we are as responsible for the survival of the Arctic — its waters, lands, animals and plants — as it is to us.

According to the "Fundamentals of Senate Committees" on the Senate website, "A special committee is established to undertake a study on a particular issue or to study a specific piece of legislation."

Colleagues, we do not need a further study. We need a standing or joint committee that would have a broader lens and allow us to be proactive, to actively seek input from northerners and to apply what we already know and utilize in our work to ensure that all peoples in Canada are treated equally.

If the challenges facing the Arctic are to be addressed, we need to create a space at the federal level to build these relationships and actively seek viable solutions. To do this, there must be true engagement and a concerted effort among federal, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous governments. This includes us.

Ironically, 132 years after Senator Schultz sought a select committee to examine what the Arctic could do for Canada, I stand today seeking support for an Arctic committee that works for both northerners and Canada. We are uniquely placed to be able to create a space for a holistic, inclusive approach to northern issues that can shape our debates and legislation and which, in turn, can positively impact the Arctic, the North, its people and Canada. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past."

I look forward to your support moving forward. *Quyainni. Quana.* Thank you.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): That was a phenomenal speech, Senator Anderson.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

THE SENATE

MOTION THAT NO SENATE COMMITTEE BE CONSIDERED A STANDING OR SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CURRENT SESSION—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Pierre J. Dalfond, pursuant to notice of June 16, 2020, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, previous order or usual practice, upon the adoption of this order, and for the remainder of the current session, no Senate committee be considered a standing or special committee for the purposes of paragraphs 62.1(1)(g) and (h) of the *Parliament of Canada Act*.

He said: Honourable senators, I would like to provide some reasons in support of the motion in my name seeking to ensure that no additional salary is paid to chairs and deputy chairs of Senate committees for the remainder of the session until amendments are made to the Parliament of Canada Act.

COVID-19 and the resulting serious economic crisis, including the financially precarious situation of millions of Canadians and the massive deficits in public funds, make it necessary now more than ever for us to question some of our practices, including that of paying additional salaries to chairs and deputy chairs of our standing and special committees.

For example, on March 11, 2020, a motion was passed, in the middle of a pandemic and recession, allowing for six additional senators to benefit from a pay increase of \$12,500 or \$6,200 as chair or deputy chair of a committee, in addition to our current base salary of \$157,600 after the \$3,000 increase of April 1, 2020, that several senators, including myself, decided to donate to charity to help Canadians who are struggling during this time. This March 11 motion brings to more than 50 the number of positions for which any one of 96 sitting senators would be eligible for an additional salary.

With all due respect, I think it is time to backtrack.

Honourable senators, did you know that in 1873, the Act relating to the Indemnity to Members and the Salaries of the Speakers, of both Houses of Parliament, which is known today as the Salaries Act, only provided for additional salaries for ministers, including the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Commons?

Today, the salaries of MPs and senators, as well as both Speakers, are set out in the Parliament of Canada Act. An additional salary for the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons was added in 1906. In 1920, the position of Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons was added, and 50 years later, in 1975, an amendment added the positions of Deputy Chair and Assistant Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House of Commons. It wasn't until 1947 that the first addition was made for the Senate, allowing additional salaries for the Leader of the

Government and the Leader of the Opposition. In 1998, a new amendment provided for an additional salary for the Speaker pro tempore.

[English]

Honourable senators, it is only since 2001 that the positions of chair and deputy chair of the then 15 Senate standing committees entitled the holders to an additional salary, adding about 30 paid positions. Simply put, between 1867 and 2001 — for over a century — these positions did not entitle their holders to any additional salary or, of course, improved pension benefits.

Moreover, in 2001, the situation changed, as I said, adding 30 positions. This was done not at the request of the Senate but only to mirror the proposed additional pay to equivalent positions in the House of Commons. In the other place, that change was moved by the then government in order to add at least 18 new paid positions to be shared among the members of each caucus, in addition to ministers and parliamentary secretaries, for a total of 74 MPs of the governing party receiving additional pay.

This has also meant that 36 new paid positions will go to opposition parties, as there are two deputy chairs for all committees in the House of Commons. There was not much opposition to such an amendment except from one party, the Canadian Alliance party.

In 2003, another amendment extended the entitlement to chairs and deputy chairs of special committees. When this amendment was being considered by the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, former senator Serge Joyal questioned the need — and, indeed, the wisdom — to pay additional salaries to the chairs and deputy chairs of any committee.

On June 17, 2003, he stated:

. . . in practice, this position does not entail many more responsibilities or work than other members or senators who do preparatory work in relation to bills, attend all committee meetings, prepare questions and, occasionally, amendments. . . .

Why provide an additional benefit to someone who is often chosen in a particular way? As much as possible, we must strive to maintain a certain balance of this system and avoid introducing elements that seek to differentiate the work of members and senators. . . .

We are adding a great many names to the list of individuals in Parliament eligible to receive additional remuneration.

Who is not getting a little extra under the current system? The only ones left are the foot soldiers, those without titles, the grumblers and the dragons.

The entire system is designed to provide rewards, which seems to affect how parliamentarians behave. . . .

• (2130)

In fact, the addition in 2001 and 2003 of over 30 paid positions in the Senate resulted in an unnecessary breach of the principle of equality among all senators and strengthened the positions of the leadership of the then two existing caucuses in position to designate those entitled to these positions. With the emergence of new groups, the distribution of chairs and deputy chairs has become the object of intense negotiations where each group fights to have a maximum of paid positions to share among its members. Moreover, this has led to the artificial creation of additional paid positions to please more people.

For example, in the last Parliament, further to an agreement between all groups in the Senate, 10 additional paid deputy chair positions were created to sit as second deputy chair. Senator Day was designated by the leaders to explain the deal in the chamber on November 7, 2017. Following his speech, he was asked by Senator Tardif why only ten committees will have two paid deputy chairs while steering of seven other committees would have a third unpaid member. Specifically Senator Tardif asked, “Do you view this as a fair and equitable away of proceeding?” Senator Day replied:

No. But, like so many agreements, this is a compromise. This has gone through a lot of iterations. I personally started negotiating from the point of view that I thought every committee should have two equal co-deputy chairs, like the House of Commons. There were those around the table who didn’t want any. This is the compromise that we reached.

To say that it’s based on understandable logic would be misleading you. . . .

In other words, it’s not the outcome of logic or of any principle but rather the outcome of a deal.

Senators, the same is true of the March 11, 2020, motion. The motion created six additional paid positions to enforce a deal, the whole notwithstanding the *Rules of the Senate*. Among these six positions, there are the chair and deputy chair of the Selection Committee.

[*Translation*]

The case of the Committee of Selection is of particular interest. Let’s remember that just seven years ago, the *Rules of the Senate* were amended to designate this committee as being neither a standing committee nor a special committee. Senator Carignan proposed this change following a public controversy involving the payment for several years of an additional salary — \$11,200 at the time — to the chair of a committee that had met infrequently.

In spite of these events, the March 11 motion, given without notice of debate, restored additional salaries for the Committee of Selection. Consequently, the chair receives a salary of \$12,500 and the deputy chair receives \$6,200. Furthermore, this motion created a second paid deputy chair position for four committees. Naturally, the addition of six paid positions is better than the addition of 11, as was done in 2017, and yet, it still isn’t good enough. Therefore, if this motion isn’t withdrawn, when we return in September and finally establish standing committees,

some of them will have a steering committee with a third paid member. In most committees, the third member won’t be paid even though they will carry out the same tasks and duties.

[*English*]

The transactional distribution of paid positions is not a good thing. For many, it appears as a kind of culture of entitlement and it is damaging the reputation of the Senate, as we have seen in the media. As the government contemplates amendments to the Parliament of Canada Act to reflect the new reality in the Senate, including the end of the partisan duopoly and the emergence of new groups independent from political parties, there is a need for a policy that is not modelled after the House of Commons but rather is specific to the new Senate. In my view, this policy should be a return to the long-established practice of no additional pay for chairs and deputy chairs. The Senate is made of talented and devoted individuals and I trust there will be many volunteers for these positions of committee chairs and deputy chairs, even in the absence of additional pay.

Indeed, in the U.K. House of Lords, the model for the Senate, the chairs of all the committees, select or special, do not receive any additional compensation. In the U.S. Senate, chair or vice-chair positions do not entitle their holders to any additional remuneration. These positions are considered prestigious and there are no shortages of candidates despite the additional workload and stress that the roles involve.

Speaking of the U.S. Senate, out of the 100 elected senators, only 3 are entitled to a small additional salary, the president pro tempore, the leader of the majority and the leader of the minority. Some may say that the U.S. senators are rich people, much richer than we are, but this is not the principle that answers the issue. In contrast, here in the Senate, we currently have 96 appointed senators and over 50 offices entitling their holders to additional salaries including, further to the adoption of the March 11 motion, 45 chairs and deputy chairs.

Once the audit committee is set up and the special committee on COVID is put in place, there will be at least 4 more paid positions for a total of 49. Incidentally, there are now 21 senators in the Conservative caucus, which as a whole is entitled to about the same number of paid positions under the current act as implemented by our Rules and our motions applying notwithstanding the rules.

With respect, this makes no sense. Going forward, I invite the current government to eliminate extra pay for Senate chairs and deputy chairs when amending the Parliament of Canada Act. The government should limit additional pay to one, two or three persons in the leadership of each recognized group in the Senate, including the GRO.

In conclusion, such changes will bring us in line with the U.S. Senate and will also permanently end the temptation to twist the existing rules to artificially create a standing committee or additional paid positions to be shared between groups — a temptation that seems to be irresistible considering the November 17, 2017, motion and the March 11, 2020, motion.

[Senator Dalphond]

Until the Parliament of Canada Act is amended, I invite us not to remain idle, especially in light of the current economic crisis. Through a sessional order, the adoption of my motion will end the additional pay to all chairs and deputy chairs, and will demonstrate to Canadians that we do our work for them, including as chair or vice-chair, without any additional remuneration.

Thank you very much. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: I have a question for Senator Dalphond.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Dalphond, your time has expired, but Senator Miville-Dechêne would like to ask you a question. Would you like five more minutes? Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Senator Dalphond, thank you for sharing this story, which I had not heard. I must say that I also have some serious concerns about the additional remuneration for these different committees. I have never been a committee chair, but I've heard that the chair does extra work, which warrants remuneration. I would like you to address that argument.

Second, is there such a big difference between the remuneration for House of Commons chairs, who are obviously paid, and that paid by the Senate? That said, in these COVID-19 times, as Canadians are struggling, I think this is the perfect time to ask questions about the additional remuneration. Thank you.

• (2140)

Senator Dalphond: I thank Senator Miville-Dechêne for this question. She is raising an important point.

When we have the opportunity to study this matter further, we will find, for example, that having 50 chair and deputy chair positions represents half the Senate. It's not the same in the House of Commons. In that chamber, the number of chairs, deputy chairs and even second deputy chairs totals just 75 out of the 338 members. The ratio is not the same.

With regard to the work of chairs and deputy chairs, I believe that you were the deputy chair of a committee during the previous session. I saw from attending some of those committee meetings that being the deputy chair of that committee is a tough job. I'm sure that the chair was also very actively engaged with the members of his committee. I know that takes a lot of time and energy because I myself proposed many amendments to a number of bills that were examined by the Legal Committee. It took me weeks to draft those proposed amendments and to send them to my colleagues, including Senator McIntyre, with whom I had an excellent relationship. I worked on about 15 amendments to the Criminal Code. I also sponsored the bill to amend the Divorce Act, which took inordinate amounts of time. I spent days discussing amendments with representatives from the

Department of Justice, reading that lengthy act and so on. All of that was done outside committee meetings, and I did not ask for extra pay.

I think everyone here wants to work in good conscience and in good faith and bring their best effort to the table. Why should some of us be paid more as an incentive to serve as chair or deputy chair? I think that's wrong. I think those positions should be assigned to the people most qualified to discharge the duties.

Plus, it doesn't need to be paid. Many people take on these jobs without remuneration, and many American senators do it as committee chairs too. They spend days working on national security, interviewing judicial candidates, reviewing budgets, and so on. Everything they work on is 10 times bigger than what we work on, and they don't get paid more to do it.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

MOTION TO STRIKE A SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
SYSTEMIC RACISM—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Frances Lankin, pursuant to notice of June 16, 2020, moved:

That a Special Senate Committee on Systemic Racism be appointed to conduct a review of systemic racism in Canada;

That, without limiting its mandate, the committee be authorized:

1. to review the extent and scope of anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and systemic racism in federal institutions and agencies;
2. to review the federal government's role in eliminating anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and systemic racism both within federal institutions and agencies and in Canadian society generally; and
3. to identify priorities and recommendations for government action to combat anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, and systemic racism;

That the committee be composed of 12 members, to be nominated by the Committee of Selection, and that 5 members constitute a quorum;

That the committee have the power to send for persons, papers and records; to hear witnesses; and to publish such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee;

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practices, and taking into account the exceptional circumstances of the current pandemic of COVID-19, the committee have the power to meet by videoconference or teleconference, if technically feasible for any purposes of:

1. the study authorized by this order;
2. an organization meeting pursuant to rule 12-13; or
3. electing a chair or deputy chair if there is a vacancy in either of those positions;

That both senators and witnesses be allowed to participate in meetings of this committee by videoconference or teleconference, with such meetings being considered for all purposes to be meetings of the committee in question, and senators taking part in such meetings being considered for all purposes to be present at the meeting;

That, for greater certainty, and without limiting the general authority granted by this order, when the committee meets by videoconference or teleconference:

1. members of the committee participating count towards quorum;
2. priority be given to ensuring that members of the committee are able to participate;
3. such meetings be considered to be occurring in the parliamentary precinct, irrespective of where participants may be; and
4. the committee be directed to approach in camera meetings with all necessary precaution, taking account of the risks to confidentiality inherent in such technologies;

That, when the committee meets by videoconference or teleconference, the provisions of rule 14-7(2) be applied so as to allow recording or broadcasting through any facilities arranged by the Clerk of the Senate, and, if a meeting being broadcast or recorded cannot be broadcast live, the committee be considered to have fulfilled the requirement that a meeting be public by making any available recording publicly available as soon as possible thereafter;

That there be a minimum of 72 hours' notice for a meeting of the committee by videoconference or teleconference, subject to technical feasibility;

That, the committee be authorized to report from time to time, submit a comprehensive interim report no later than six months after its organization meeting, and submit its final report no later than six months after the tabling or presenting of the comprehensive interim report;

That the committee be permitted to deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, with the reports then being deemed to have been tabled or presented in the Senate; and

That the committee retain the powers necessary to publicize its findings for 60 days after submitting its final report.

She said: Honourable senators, I'd like to extend thanks to Senator McPhedran, who forewent speaking on an earlier motion in order to ensure we had time to get to this and I appreciate that very much.

As we meet today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples, I am honoured to move this motion to create a special committee to examine the years of limited action on anti-black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and systemic racism against racialized peoples. My sincere thanks goes to the members of the African senators working group, with input from some Indigenous senators, for all the work that they have done to create these opportunities for the chamber to engage in these critically important issues at a pivotal time in our lives collectively here.

They have brought forward an emergency debate moved by Senator Moodie, a Committee of the Whole moved by Senator Mégie and this initiative from Senator Bernard on behalf of the group to create a special committee. The emergency debate that took place last Thursday was an opportunity for us to speak with and engage with each other about the tragic events that are taking place and to discuss what role the Senate can and must play in taking actions that can be part of the solutions.

The Committee of the Whole, which will take place Thursday, I understand, provides an opportunity for senators to question the ministers about the government's actions or lack thereof and for the Senate to perform the role of holding the government to account.

The third initiative, this motion for a special committee, is a medium- to longer-term initiative. It is designed to provide an opportunity to examine why, after all of the reports and volumes of recommendations, so many of the recommendations have not been acted upon. The debate on this motion will span a much longer period of time and hopefully allow for many more senators to participate than have been able to attend during the COVID-related restricted numbers in our most recent sittings.

When Senator Bernard reached out to me and asked that I do this, I was hesitant, not because I don't want to participate in this critical debate and not because I don't want to put my views on the record. I do very much. But I did not want to leave the impression that I was in any way appropriating leadership of their work or their communities' voices.

Senator Bernard assured me that discussions had taken place and asked me to carry the introduction of this motion. Senator Moodie echoed this assurance, as did Senator Woo. And so I do so today and it is truly my honour.

There is no question that anti-Indigenous racism exists. There is no question that anti-black racism exists. There is no question that racism against racialized people — Asian, Muslim and others — exists. There is no question, none at all, that systemic racism in our government institutions, our criminal justice system, our health care system, our education system, housing and more exists.

I have sent an email to all of you containing a document prepared by our office, which lists many of the reports over the last number of decades here in Canada that have examined anti-Indigenous racism, anti-black racism and systemic racism, and these are truly just a few of the studies from over many, many years in our Confederation.

I do not have the time available to read all the names of those inquiries into the record, but as I said, I have sent you all an email with that list for your reference. I will simply read the years of the many reports in the last few decades only, so that the listening public gets a sense of how extensive the studies have been.

In dealing, first of all, with Indigenous racism and reports and inquiries looking at that matter, in 1996 there were two reports, and subsequent reports in 2001, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2015. In 2017, there were two reports. In 2019, there were two reports.

In just my own province of Ontario, reports that have a special focus on racial profiling were published in 1975, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1985 and 1989. In 1992, there were five different studies. In 1995, there were two. There was one in 2002. In 2003, there were two studies.

In reports that specifically were looking at anti-black racism, there were two in 2016. In 2017, there were four separate reports. There was one in 2018, two in 2019 and two in 2020.

With respect to broader and more systemic racism, there have been many, many reports over the years as well. I will only highlight a couple that are relevant to the Parliamentary Precinct here and those people who engaged in it. In 2009, a Senate standing committee published a report called *In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*. In 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage released a report called *Taking Action Against Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia*. And in 2020, this year, Senator Vernon White, Senator Percy Downe and I had the opportunity to participate in the writing of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians report for 2019, which was filed in the House of Commons and the Senate earlier this year. One of the chapters is a baseline study of diversity and inclusion and numbers and statistics and metrics and programs in the security and intelligence community of departments; so Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, Canada Border Services Agency, to name just a few. It's notable because it finds some problems in the consistency in the collection of data, consistency in the monitoring, consistency within departments and across departments.

• (2150)

I commend that study to you for your reading. It is the first time a baseline study of this nature has been done with respect to these particular security and intelligence departments. We know that many of those departments have had problems, including lawsuits and including notable cases. So again I commend that to you for your reading.

The purpose of this motion is not to study the question of the existence of racism yet again. There is no question. The purpose of this motion is to create a committee that can examine the volumes of reports and recommendations, and get at the reasons so many have never been followed through with. What is the problem? What are the barriers?

The purpose of this committee is to build upon the voices demanding immediate change and to reignite the fire of action. People are so very tired of inaction. We are part of the Parliament of Canada, and it is our job to push, prod and provoke action from the highest political leadership of our country.

This committee is an opportunity to create a united Senate voice, in solidarity with Indigenous, black and racialized voices calling for real change now.

As cautioned by our colleague Senator McCallum, we must not conflate the issues at the roots of racism against different groups of people. We must understand what their experiences share in common and what the differences are. The committee must sift through the volumes of reports and multiple hundreds of recommendations, and hold all of us to account.

As I have watched with all of you the horrors of treatment and killings of black, Indigenous and Muslim Canadians and Americans, I have been thinking a lot about the people from my life. I have been thinking of Dudley Laws, and his leadership of the Black Action Defense Committee. His voice came to prominence when he called on police to account for a number of shootings of young black men in Toronto in the 1980s. Dudley passed away from cancer in 2011, but his words and actions remain strong within my head and within my heart.

I have been thinking about Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré, the first black woman dean of law appointed to a Canadian university, in 1996, and subsequently the first black woman appointed to the Court of Quebec, in 1999. Prior to this, in the early 1990s, she became the Employment Equity Commissioner for the Province of Ontario, when that position was established. Hers was a strong voice speaking truth to power who helped us establish the Anti-Racism Secretariat and actions, only to see all of her efforts shredded with the change in governments; the Employment Equity Act repealed, the Anti-Racism Secretariat dismantled.

I have been thinking about the Youth Challenge Fund, a \$50 million-plus partnership between the Ontario government and the United Way of Toronto to bring resources for black youth programming to under-served neighbourhoods in Toronto, following the 2005 "Summer of the Gun." I have been thinking of the secretariat that supported the YCF, staffed with black community leaders and black youth, and the board to which we

recruited “Pinball” Clemons as the chair, and their meaningful efforts to help shape a different future for so many black youth. There was such hope.

Closer to home, I have been thinking of my daughter-in-law, Lily Couchie, a member of the Anishinaabe Nipissing First Nation, which is near to my home. Lily works at the North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, leading programs and support of elder Indigenous peoples from across the north of our province. Every day, she comes face to face with people suffering the painful legacy of residential school and the horribly damaging loss of culture, language, family and lands. I think of what she suffered herself from the daily experience of racism growing up. I desperately hope it will be different for my Indigenous great-granddaughter. And I suspect it will. Why? Because she has fair skin and she has blonde hair.

Unless we accomplish the changes so urgently needed, it will be tragically no different for her cousins, though. I think about Rose Désilets, who is part of our Senate office team. Her father was from the Dokis First Nation, also close to the village where I live. My village carries Rose’s dad’s family name of Restoule. Her mother was from Mattagami First Nation, near Gogama. When Rose was born, CAS stole her from her mother’s arms in the hospital. Rose is a child of the Sixties Scoop. Rose grew up in a loving foster home and was adopted by her foster parents, but that didn’t protect her from the long and insidious reach of discrimination. She came home from school one day at the age of about five. Her adoptive mother found her scouring her skin with an eraser. Rose was crying to her mom that she needed to have a bath. Her mother asked why. Rose, from the depths of pain of a child who didn’t yet know what the word racism meant, sobbed, “Because the kids at school say I am dirty, Mom.”

It wasn’t until her mid-teens that she learned she was Indigenous. It wasn’t until her late teens, early 20s, that she began to learn about her culture and customs when she worked at the Native Friendship Centre in Val-d’Or. So much time, so many traditions, and the love of family stolen from her and so many others.

As I have been thinking of many other people, I have also been thinking of all the opportunities over the years to make the changes needed to eradicate the scourge of racism. I have been thinking about how we who are white — I point to myself — have failed our brothers and sisters of colour. In these later years of my working life, I think about how I will bring the relative privileges that have shaped my life — because of the colour of my skin — to bear on being part of the solutions. I think about how I can and will follow the leadership of my Indigenous, black, Asian and Muslim colleagues in the Senate of Canada, and the voices of so many united in protest in the streets of Canada, the US of A, and around the world. I am an ally, and I commit to those colleagues, and to the young people who are struggling to build a different future, that I can be counted on to follow your leadership, to stand by your side and to raise my voice with yours.

I’m thinking of one more person, a young man I met in Toronto when I was with United Way. His name was Junior. He fled a wartorn part of the Congo as a child after witnessing the slaughter of his family. When I met him, he was so desperately happy and grateful to be here in this country, to be a Canadian

and to have largely grown up here, with the opportunity to dream of a future, he told me. He told me his father always told him to dream, and to dream big dreams, for small ones have no magic.

Colleagues, can we, together, bring every effort to bear, every tool we have, including this committee, every opportunity we can seize, to contribute to the truly big dreams that we are hearing from hundreds of thousands of young people around the world today? In my opinion, we owe them no less. Thank you very much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marty Deacon: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support of the motion to strike a special committee on systemic racism. I want to thank, from the bottom of my heart, Senator Bernard for encouraging us to undertake this important initiative, and Senator Lankin for introducing the motion on her behalf. I also thank every one of you who spoke on the matter of racism this last week. Your words were deeply impactful and inspired me to share my voice this evening.

When we are vulnerable, when we can share part of our narratives, that is when we can do great work together. Every story, every experience was an eye-opener. As I listened though, I also felt frustration. The debate was important and educational, but I think we can all agree we need to see action. This special committee will be one step toward that.

There is no question that systemic racism exists in Canada, in our economy, in our prisons, in our health care, in our schools and learning institutions. We know this, but why are we still here?

As has happened all too often, we have had a light shone on us. We are again uncomfortable with what we see. But we need to feel uncomfortable. As a white Canadian, I have to admit I am somewhat uncomfortable speaking today. Like many of us who have never had to worry about the colour of our skin, I wonder what it is that I can add to the national discussion and action we must have.

• (2200)

I cannot demonstrate the pain felt by racialized Canadians. In my past, I have had glimpses of what it feels like to be invisible, to be targeted, to understand discrimination as it relates to my gender, but not race. I don’t know what that deeply feels like.

When I first heard the term “white privilege,” I also felt uncomfortable. It was hard for me to accept that by virtue of my race, I had advantages over others where I hadn’t seen them before.

Like all of you, we know the hours we’ve put in to get where we need to go. We know we have sacrificed. We know the bumps in the road we have encountered and even some tragedies along the way.

“White privilege” is a term that is difficult to hear. It is upsetting to be racialized, to be identified as “white” because, quite frankly, I’m not used to it. Therein lies some of the

privilege — to be completely unfamiliar with being viewed through the lens of racialization or dealing with the burdens that come with it.

It is that realization — accepting that white privilege exists and coming to terms with it. That is why these conversations are so important, and why we all need to keep them going and strong.

Moreover, it was hard for me to accept that by virtue of who I am, by what I look like, I have likely unwittingly contributed to a system that is inherently tilted against my friends and colleagues.

This was even harder to accept as a former education superintendent, where we did our best to implement policies to combat conscious and unconscious racial bias. We hired equity and inclusion officers that advocated for the needs of black, Indigenous and Asian students. We worked with authors and book publishers to ensure these issues were included in the materials used by our young students. We worked closely with all levels of community services to serve these students the best we knew how.

But while these and other approaches are needed and useful, it's clear to me now that we were merely treating the symptoms of an underlying system that was and is still broken.

I have been called a racist, and it was both a deeply troubling and an incredibly enlightening experience.

It came after years of working with high school students, their families, community partners, leading restorative justice circles to deal with conflict, racism, drugs and violent incidents. I thought I had seen most of it.

I became a principal of an elementary school, and in the first month, after witnessing a fight resulting in injuries between some Grade 3 boys, I met their parents. As I met with the third student and his father, and before I could start the conversation, the father picked up his son, looked me straight into the eye and said, "This fight never happened. You are a racist." He removed his son and walked out.

That was a shocking and very informing moment for me. "Not me," I thought, "I'm not racist." In time, I got to know this family well. I came to realize the frustration they felt, dealing day in and day out with varying degrees of systemic racism.

As a principal of their school, I was representing this system. For so long I was keeping a lookout for overt racist acts, but those problems run so much deeper than that, and they still do today. If you want to be an ally and if you want to confront systemic racism, simply not being a racist is not good enough.

If we go about our work knowing these things, knowing that the deck is stacked against such a large swath of Canadians, but do nothing to try to change that, we are complicit in its perpetuation.

This and other experiences are part of my narrative. They have taught me many things, including the importance of empathy, listening while moving to common ground and, most importantly, that we must meet people where they are.

I learned through working with our Indigenous populations and consulting with them, that supporting and understanding must be done in their communities — on their land, in their homes, where we experience their lives and traditions — before we can try to improve what we think is change. This proposed special committee can be a vehicle for that, as we set out to create that change.

Colleagues, when I came to this chamber, it was with a few, admittedly broad, goals in mind: to help make our country better, healthier, more hopeful and more connected.

To do that, we have to confront the reality that Canada has an urgent racist problem, and we need to put in the work to begin to dismantle a system that has seen racialized Canadians be very disadvantaged. This will not happen overnight, of course. It will take constant vigilance to see that any successes from this project remain.

However, it cannot go one more generation. It just cannot. We have to start doing the work now and seize this moment, this momentum, to put in motion reforms that won't peter out when the next event happens, and when society gets distracted by something else.

We need to look at changing fundamental structures, seeing if undertakings, like a universal basic income, can somehow contribute to levelling things, even slightly.

We need to look at revisiting mandatory minimum penalties or criminal record reform as potential avenues of change.

We need to listen to the work of groups in this chamber, like the Parliamentary Black Caucus and the Indigenous senators working group. We need to strike this special committee to keep the conversation and action moving.

The worst result of all this is if we take our eye off the ball for one second, for one day, and if we come to this chamber sometime down the road to deliver platitudes and words when tragedy yet again shines a light on systemic racism in this country. This is the way to do our longer-term work.

In hearing many of you speak these last few days, I trust and deeply hope this cannot and will not be the case. I look forward to giving everything I have to putting in the work needed, and it's in the work with all of you to help create the change that is needed. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, I rise to speak in support of Motion No. 54, introduced by Senator Bernard and Senator Lankin and supported by our black and Indigenous colleagues and other racialized members of this and the other place, to appoint a special committee of the Senate to conduct a review of systemic racism in Canada.

These past weeks, with many in the streets risking their health and well-being to demand change, with too many others living and dying as a result of the health and racial and economic inequalities that COVID-19 has laid bare, we joined together in this place to commit to meaningful, concrete action, to do our part to create an anti-racist Canada.

As Senator Bernard and Senator Lankin and the members of the Parliamentary Black Caucus, and so many others of you have made glaringly clear, we do not need more recommendations that will sit unimplemented in the fine print of our Senate Hansard while injustices persist. We have the benefit of countless reports, as Senator Lankin pointed out to us: studies, commissions, inquiries and recommendations by exemplary experts, phenomenal thinkers and inspirational leaders, calling out systemic racism and calling on us to do better.

As Senator Francis so powerfully reminded us this week, we have to be allies. To be allies, we must do the work of learning, gaining understanding and taking action, no matter how uncomfortable and daunting, because failing to act is no longer an option.

This special committee will have the challenging but very necessary task of building on the comprehensive body of knowledge that is already available to us, by developing a plan for the implementation of long overdue federal government measures, and for the ongoing oversight of this implementation by the Senate. The job is, in short, to blaze a trail for senators to work together toward equality.

Where do we start?

How about, for example, the implementation of the decarceration call of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? We must eliminate the mass incarceration of racialized groups, one of the many travesties in the ongoing legacy of colonialism and racist policies in Canada. Last week's statement from the Parliamentary Black Caucus likewise calls on us to address the overrepresentation of black and Indigenous peoples in prisons.

Between 1980 and 2020, the proportion of Indigenous peoples in federal prisons increased from 10 to 30%. Meaningful action is imperative.

One suggestion is that we reduce the representation of those who are racialized in federal prisons by 5% per year. This would mean working to ensure each year that at least 15 Indigenous women, 177 Indigenous men and 63 black prisoners be released. Using conservative estimates, such a measure would save approximately \$10 million per year. That is \$10 million that could instead be invested in health, including mental health, trauma-informed and addition services, housing, education and other vital supports for those released, as well as many other members of the community, especially those who are most marginalized.

• (2210)

Honourable senators, prisoners are among those most vulnerable in this pandemic. Despite international calls for depopulating prisons, and in the face of advice from prison-based medical professionals to release as many people from the prisons

as possible, Canada not only neglected to do so, but Correctional Service Canada locked down prisons and relegated most prisoners to conditions of isolation and confinement that have been deemed unlawful by Canadian and international law.

This time last year, we were debating whether to accept the government's rejection of our amendments to Bill C-83 regarding solitary confinement. The Senate amendments would have provided important oversight and accountability mechanisms as well as greater impetus for, and expansion of the use of, available release options to help decrease the numbers of Indigenous and black prisoners, as well as those with mental health issues. Particularly in this moment, I trust we will not repeat mistakes of the past.

Consistent with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and social determinants of health, we must reverse and remedy the trends that have created this national shame: our racism, our inadequate health services, our lack of affordable housing and the abuse of invasive and disruptive state powers that we have provided to those who police or otherwise control the lives of those who are most marginalized, from social services to child welfare and health providers, to police and prison authorities. These are all our problems, and yet most of us here in this place do not bear the burden of the consequences of our collective inaction.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to allow trial judges to depart from mandatory minimum penalties and restrictions on the use of conditional sentences. This call was echoed by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and reiterated by the Parliamentary Black Caucus last week.

Department of Justice research in 2018 and the final report of the expert panel on sentencing reform recommended the Minister of Justice engage in broad-based sentencing reforms, including the type of exemption clause that Bill S-208 introduces. The Supreme Court has also recommended such steps in light of the growing number of mandatory minimum penalties that have been found unconstitutional.

Mandatory minimum penalties prohibit judges from considering the context in which a crime has occurred. The result is that increasing numbers of the most marginalized people are imprisoned without any examination of the role of racism, sexism, poverty, intergenerational trauma and abuse in the circumstances that give rise to their behaviour or the harm done. Mandatory minimum penalties ignore the role of historical and systemic bias in the mass incarceration of Indigenous and black peoples.

Honourable colleagues, Bill S-208 would allow judges to examine such circumstances when sentencing. I look forward to working with all of you to ensure that we turn this bill into law.

Another Call for Justice from the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was that the federal government review and reform the law with respect to sexualized and intimate partner violence by utilizing and incorporating the perspectives of feminists and Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people.

In 2018, the federal government failed to do this when they rejected the Senate amendments to Bill C-51. These amendments aimed to protect victims of sexual assault from judges who misunderstand the true meaning of capacity to consent, as they often do. Such amendments would have gone a long way to addressing this issue. The government committed to doing more. Now is the time for them to adopt the changes called for by women advocates and women survivors of misogynist violence.

The Inquiry for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls also underscored the grave shortcomings laid bare during this pandemic of current health, social and economic safety nets in this country and called for the establishment of a guaranteed annual livable income. Such an initiative could be one vital component of a more comprehensive strategy to address many of the issues highlighted in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report.

Honourable senators, a guaranteed livable income could also help to address one of the Calls to Action that was put forth by the Parliamentary Black Caucus regarding economic measures to assist businesses owned and operated by black Canadians. A guaranteed livable income could help provide people the resources and safety net needed to innovate and launch new enterprises. Resources are also needed for those who are struggling without access to paid employment as well as those who are in insecure work situations.

We must also listen to Black Lives Matter organizers as they call for the end to racist, anti-refugee, anti-black, Islamophobic exclusion of migrants and refugees and immigration detention, as well as the demilitarization of police and allocation of resources to community and community-based and directed social, economic, health and educational supports and the provision of immigration support and security for migrant workers.

Honourable colleagues, we must also look inwards and address the racism and sexism that runs rampant in this institution. For too long, the Senate has played a role in approving legislation that has had detrimental impacts on the lives of Indigenous and black peoples in Canada.

We have a responsibility to do right by Canadians, which includes an obligation to adopt a feminist and critical race lens when studying and creating legislation. We must take our own responsibility when we have failed to do so in the past and commit to no longer passing bills that are likely to disproportionately and negatively target the health, safety and well-being of black and Indigenous peoples.

For instance, we could pass Bill S-214 to remedy the failures of Bill C-93 and alleviate the barriers associated with having a criminal record related to cannabis, a matter that

disproportionately affects black and Indigenous peoples. We could also insist on the legally binding funding framework that was absent when we passed Bill C-92. Such a framework could have ensured that services for Indigenous children and families would be properly funded. We must also adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Too many pieces of legislation that reinforce racism and sexism have made their way through this chamber. Now, in addition to listening to the issues that black and Indigenous peoples face, we must demonstrate our learning by acting to create and pass legislation that shows that we have heard.

Furthermore, the Parliamentary Black Caucus addresses the need to transform our Public Service. I absolutely agree and think we must transform Parliament, including staffing here and in the other place.

On Friday, June 19, Fregine Sheehy, former parliamentary intern and current member of our office, was awarded the Hales and Hurley prize for her paper called "Where are all the Racialized Staffers?" As a component of her work with the Parliamentary Internship Programme in 2018-19, Fregine sought to understand why staffers working in backbench MP Ottawa offices seemed to be predominantly white. She found that while they play a significant role in Canada's parliamentary democracy, there is virtually no information regarding the racial makeup of staff, nor the hiring policies that MPs must follow in their Ottawa offices except that such policies mostly do not exist.

She argues that systemic racism is deep-rooted on Parliament Hill. Therefore the Hill is both a space that is not easily accessible and an environment in which racialized and Indigenous peoples might not feel welcome.

If we hope to eradicate racism and sexism here, mandatory anti-racism and unconscious bias training is a necessity for MPs, senators and all who work in and around both chambers. So, too, is race-based data regarding who is working in MPs' and senators' offices. Without such information, how can we officially know who is helping to shape Canadian policy and legislation?

Honourable colleagues, as we modernize our institution, enacting anti-racist policies and practices could help ensure that we are fulfilling the obligation we have toward all Canadians.

I will quote a Gangalu elder, whose words were first shared with me by a proud Chinese-Canadian woman who was then isolated in a segregation cell in a federal penitentiary and who is currently in long-term care as a result of dementia and Parkinson's. That is another problematic area of concern highlighted during this pandemic, but I digress.

• (2220)

When I asked what I should do and promised to act, she said, "Okay," and then quoted Lilla Watson:

If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

Colleagues, eradicating racism is the responsibility of every single one of us, so let's waste no more time on empty promises. Let's demonstrate our commitment with concrete action.

Meegwetch. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Dasko, debate adjourned.)

(At 10:21 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

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