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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the chair.

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):

Honourable senators, I am honoured to rise today to express my deep appreciation to every member of the Canadian Armed Forces who has been helping to support communities across Canada as they grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members of our Canadian Armed Forces have been integral to the first-response effort, particularly through the irreplaceable assistance they have provided in long-term care facilities across the country. Starting in April, members of the armed forces supported civilian authorities in such facilities in both Quebec and Ontario. They worked with medical staff to ensure staff were available to help our most vulnerable citizens. Undoubtedly, some of the people they helped were veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces themselves.

Without operational and medical-care support, there is little question that many of our long-term care facilities would simply have been overwhelmed. Of several thousand military personnel deployed to assist in those facilities, 55 personnel themselves contracted COVID-19. We can be thankful that all of those soldiers recovered and none required hospitalization. Their efforts are a testimony to their bravery and to their deep commitment to help their fellow Canadians.

In other parts of Canada, local response forces have been contributing to community-level efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their own communities. In more remote regions of Canada, the Canadian Rangers have been mobilized to help communities with wellness checks, the transportation and distribution of needed supplies and staffing command posts and emergency centres. The Rangers have performed this invaluable service in Saskatchewan, northern Ontario, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, British Columbia and in Yukon.

In my own province of Manitoba, the armed forces recently provided a multi-purpose, medical-assistance team to support the Rod McGillivray Memorial Care Home in the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in The Pas. That team supported the personal care home with immediate medical care and with broader support related to the functioning of the facility.

All of this support has been essential in dozens of long-term care facilities across the country. These efforts have literally meant the difference between life and death.

Now, our armed forces are helping Canada's Public Health Agency to finalize its vaccine distribution plan. The Canadian Armed Forces are providing their expertise to develop the logistics support plan and to establish the national operations centre that will oversee the distribution of the vaccine.

To every member of the Canadian Armed Forces who has assisted in protecting Canadians over these many months, I say thank you. Once again, you have more than lived up to your proud motto, "We stand on guard for thee."

CANADIAN ARTISTS

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, 2020 has been a tough year, as society and individuals have suffered many losses. Some of those losses, colleagues, have also left us with significant legacies, and while we mourn, I hope we can celebrate their gifts.

"Loss" is defined as a state of feeling of grief when deprived of someone or something of value. "Legacy" is something handed down or received from an ancestor or predecessor. That combined state of loss and legacy is now poignantly evident throughout Canada's creative sector.

A week ago today, we lost Nova Scotian visual artist Peter Gough. I spoke with him only two days before his sudden passing. Fighting cancer, he was in good spirits and full of hope. His art was being recognized in new ways, with a publication on the horizon. His legacy to all Canadians is as one of the instigators of the visual artist laureate bill. May it come to pass. I thank him.

Generous Manitoba artist Peter McConville passed away last week of cancer, too. His unique paintings, on view in many public spaces, will continue to bring joy.

Arts donors alas have also been lost, some passing just before COVID and some from COVID. They include inspiring sponsors and fundraisers, and anonymous, quiet, behind-the-scenes champions. They have made our country and its substance far-reaching and meaningful. I have been privileged to work with many of them over many years. Seeing their joy in netting truly needed significant funds to enable public programming and sharing in their delight in such positive impacts was certainly a gift for me, my organizations and communities.

One was major art donor, Winnipeg lawyer Bob Hucal, who died last month. His prime interest was Western Canada. I can't count the number of times when I would answer my phone and hear "Pat, would you like a work by artist X?" It was always a significant artist. He would tell me the work, the gallery or auction house where it was for sale or if it was from his own collection. Prescient about specific institutional collection needs, he knew Canadian, and especially Manitoban, art history. He enriched the collections of three different Western Canadian

institutions I led. His deep knowledge was matched by his remarkable generosity and joy in seeing the *patrimoine* grow in our public collections.

Bob Hucal was a victim of COVID. He contracted it in hospital when recovering from another ailment.

So did the esteemed curator and art writer Sigrid Dahle, who was at the same Winnipeg hospital while receiving cancer treatment. Her excellent publication and exhibition legacies are truly significant, as was her current work at the University of Manitoba as its curator.

Sigrid and Bob died the same weekend, just several weeks ago. Winnipeg's art community is mourning.

The loss of all these individuals is huge, but their legacies are significant and meaningful. I thank each of them and send my condolences to their families, friends and colleagues. Thank you.

GRAYDON NICHOLAS, O.C.

Hon. David Richards: Honourable senators, Graydon Nicholas has been appointed Chancellor of St. Thomas University. He was born on the Tobique First Nation, a Maliseet reserve, as 1 of 10 children, and he did not speak a word of English until the age of 6, when he began to attend an English school there. That started his lifelong journey and study of duty to others and teaching, both in law and politics.

His desire to accomplish great things had its genesis in his mother, who told her children that the only way to secure a life for themselves and their Maliseet brothers and sisters was through education. His mother's determination and resolve were heartfelt. She sent Graydon's older brother across the province to St. Thomas University when he was just a teenager, where he studied and boarded and eventually graduated. Though Graydon did not attend St. Thomas, his brother's journey began Graydon's own lifelong association with that institution and the people who benefited from its wise liberal arts instruction.

• (1410)

Nicholas demanded of himself what his mother had encouraged, graduating from high school, earning a Bachelor of Science from St. Francis Xavier, a Bachelor of Laws from the University of New Brunswick and a Master of Social Work from Wilfrid Laurier University.

As a jurist, he argued cases at all levels, including in front of the Supreme Court of Canada. He became the first New Brunswick Indigenous provincial court judge and was the first Indigenous Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of New Brunswick.

He was the Endowed Chair in Native Studies at St. Thomas University and co-authored a 1999 report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Issues. He is a member of the Order of New Brunswick and the Order of Canada and has received a senatorial medal. He is also a recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Medal and a pontifical medal presented by the Apostolic Nuncio to Canada in 2008.

A man of deep personal integrity, his faith and unwavering belief have helped him and those who have benefited from his knowledge through many trials. Yet, he has an almost infectious optimism about the world and about God's call to think of others instead of oneself. In fact, I have never heard him speak of his own needs but always the needs of others.

We have a few things in common. We have an almost lifelong affiliation with that small Catholic university, which has nurtured so many well-known Canadians over the years. We both have an unwavering love of hockey and follow the St. Thomas women's team faithfully. Both of us were born two months premature. Graydon was born at seven months when his mother fell through the ice crossing a river. I was born when, at seven months, my mother fell from a porch and landed on her stomach and my head, which might answer more than a few questions some senators might have had about me. But it does cause tenacity and resilience, and Graydon Nicholas's spirit is the embodiment of that. His life has been a noble and illustrious demonstration of it. I know he will do well as Chancellor of St. Thomas University.

CONSUMER-DIRECTED FINANCE

Hon. Colin Deacon: Honourable senators, at times, this job can be intensely frustrating. Last week, one colleague arbitrarily decided that we should quit an hour and a half early. Last night, he denied a tribute to an esteemed colleague. When he doesn't get his way, we get standing votes, and that disrupts and delays our collective ability to do our job, which is to debate, deliberate and decide. So today, I'd like to speak about one of the ways in which the Senate has made an important difference because we debated, deliberated and decided.

In June 2019, the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce released a report outlining the merits of open banking. Senators Marshall, Stewart-Olsen, Verner, Wallin and Doug Black no doubt recall that initially the idea wasn't fully embraced. But after learning from expert witnesses and debating the issue, we unanimously recommended that Finance Canada —

POINT OF ORDER

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Hon. the Speaker: Sorry, senator. I saw a senator rising on a point of order.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Your Honour, as most colleagues should be well aware, during Statements we should not be referring to chamber business, committee business or any legislative business that affect this chamber, and I believe this is what Senator Deacon is doing.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Deacon, did you hear the point of order raised by Senator Housakos?

Hon. Colin Deacon: That I'm not allowed to speak about work we've done in the chamber?

The Hon. the Speaker: Did any other senator wish to comment?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Pursuant to rule 4-11(3) of the *Rules of the Senate*, points of order should not be raised during Routine Proceedings. I therefore wonder whether this point of order is valid.

[English]

The Hon. the Speaker: You are correct, Senator Moncion, that points of order and questions of privilege cannot be raised during Routine Proceedings. However, they can be raised during Senators' Statements, which precede Routine Proceedings.

Senator C. Deacon: I look to your advice, Your Honour, on how to proceed. I would like to speak about the report of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Your Honour, did you say you're welcoming more comments on the point of order?

The Hon. the Speaker: Yes, Senator Martin.

Senator Martin: The only thing I would raise is that Senator Deacon began his statement referring to something that happened in the chamber. If he has issues with orders that are happening here, he could raise a question of privilege or a point of order, but to do it in a Senator's Statement is something that I have not yet seen.

Hon. Pat Duncan: Your Honour?

The Hon. the Speaker: I thought I called on Senator Duncan but I don't hear her.

Senator Duncan: Further to the point of order, is it not a requirement or a necessity that in referencing a point of order, that there should also be a reference to the rule or item that the member raising the point of order wishes to address or reflect upon? I didn't hear a reference to a particular section in our rules or procedures that Senator Housakos was referencing. I would appreciate that clarification with regard to points of order.

The Hon. the Speaker: I believe that Senator Housakos is referring to rule 4-2(5)(a), which clearly states:

During Senators' Statements, Senators may, without notice, raise matters that they believe should be brought to the immediate attention of the Senate.

Rule 4-2(5)(b) states:

Statements should not relate to an order of the day but should relate to matters of public interest that could not otherwise be brought to the immediate attention of the Senate under its Rules and practices.

So Senator Deacon, did you wish to proceed?

CONSUMER-DIRECTED FINANCE

Hon. Colin Deacon: With the remainder of my statement? Yes, if I could, Your Honour.

I'll start back. As Senators Marshall, Stewart-Olsen, Verner, Wallin and Doug Black no doubt recall, initially the idea wasn't fully embraced. But, after learning from expert witnesses and debating the issue, we unanimously recommended that Finance Canada take urgent action.

The Hon. the Speaker: Again, Senator Deacon, you are now into business that, according to the rule, ought not to be brought up during Senators' Statements. So if you want to proceed under the rule, you may proceed and alter your statement to that effect, but the statement, the way you're giving it now is contrary to the rule.

Senator C. Deacon: I understand now. I apologize, Your Honour. I'll go on and just say, so what is open banking, now called consumer-directed finance? At its core, it is a structure that provides individuals and businesses with the right to safely use their financial data for their own benefit.

But why does this matter? When consumers control their own data and direct their bank to safely share that data with an accredited financial technology company, or fintech, consumers can receive highly valuable insights or services. Here are just two examples:

Precarious workers have incomes that are marginal and variable that is detrimental to their well-being. Fintechs look at data differently from banks so they can provide low- or no-cost short-term loans, an important alternative to high-cost payday lenders.

Second, small businesses can rarely access credit through traditional lenders because they lack the required income or assets. But Senator Wetston and I have found that fintechs use innovative data and methods to uncover highly creditworthy businesses and individuals from within a population that are otherwise invisible to our banks.

Close to 1 million Canadians are unbanked, and 5 million are underbanked. What we found with consumer-directed finance is that marginalized Canadians can very much further their economic well-being because of the use of alternative data.

• (1420)

I'm grateful for the efforts that have been made by many groups to make sure that our new Finance Minister prioritized consumer-directed finance where our previous Finance Minister did not, and, as a result, consultations on this issue restarted on November 30. They are ongoing as we speak and, as a result, Canadian consumers, businesses and banks are all going to be much better off.

MARYAM TSEGAYE

CONGRATULATIONS ON BREAKTHROUGH JUNIOR CHALLENGE

Hon. Douglas Black: Honourable senators, I rise today with some good news — isn't it about time for some good news? I want to recognize the remarkable achievement of an Alberta high school student from Fort McMurray, Alberta.

Last week, an École McTavish high school student, Maryam Tsegaye, became the first-ever Canadian to win the Breakthrough Junior Challenge global science video competition. This challenge is a global scientific competition that aims to develop and demonstrate young people's knowledge of extremely complicated matters. It also aims to generate interest in science careers.

Maryam won this award for her short video on quantum tunnelling. Well, if you're like me, you have no idea what quantum tunnelling is about, but I urge you to check out the video because that is the very point. In a witty and engaging fashion, she explains what this concept is. And in so doing, she beat thousands of entries into this competition to win a \$250,000 U.S. scholarship, \$100,000 for her school and \$50,000 for her science teacher, Kathy Vladicka.

As Maryam said herself, this is not only a tremendous win for her, it's a tremendous win for women in science and women who are interested in pursuing careers in STEM. It is also a tremendous shot in the arm for Alberta.

As I mentioned a couple of weeks or so ago, we had Dr. Michael Houghton from the University of Alberta winning a Nobel Prize, and now we see the generation or two below him doing the same kind of thing. It's an encouraging signal for both Albertan and Canadian innovation.

So, senators, on behalf of the Senate of Canada, I would like to offer my congratulations to Maryam and also to her family, her high school and the community of Fort McMurray. We can all agree that the community of Fort McMurray also deserves some good news.

THE HONOURABLE LILLIAN EVA DYCK

TRIBUTE

Hon. Mary Coyle: Colleagues, to know and to have had the honour of working with the iconic Lillian Dyck is a gift. Senator Lillian Dyck, an award-winning scientist and member of the

Gordon First Nation, is the daughter of Eva McNab, a residential school survivor, and Yok Leen Quon, a Chinese immigrant to Canada who had to pay the head tax.

Joining the Senate in 2005, Senator Dyck would find herself sitting in Senate beside Senator Lovelace Nicholas who had taken on the sexist provision of the Indian Act which had disenfranchised Senator Dyck and her mother.

Lillian helped push the federal government to get the Canadian government to apologize in 2006 for the racist laws that had discriminated against Chinese people, including the requirements to pay a head tax and the subsequent exclusion of Chinese immigrants from 1923 to 1947.

Her magnum opus, though, was her work to remove sexism from the Indian Act and to shine a light on injustices experienced by all Indigenous Canadians, and Indigenous women in particular.

Whether it was the work she did on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the studies on reforming First Nations education and the history of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada, her work on amendments to Bill C-75, pushing for stiffer penalties for perpetrators of violent crimes against Indigenous women, her work on Bill S-3, designed to remove the remaining sex-based inequities in the Indian Act or welcoming Indigenous youth to the Senate, our colleague Senator Lillian Dyck was a steadfast and courageous defender of human rights and a creative architect of a better future for Indigenous peoples and all Canadians.

Colleagues, Senator Lillian Dyck epitomized the word "honourable." Senator Dyck conducted herself in the chamber and as Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples with honour, dignity, respect and decency. I marvelled at her ability to make committee members and our guests feel comfortable and valued.

I was shocked to witness the patronizing and demeaning behaviour she was subjected to while chairing a June 2019 Aboriginal Peoples Committee meeting, but I was not surprised to witness Senator Lillian Dyck handle the tense situation with grace and fairness.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Coyle, sorry to interrupt. There is a point of order being raised that does not need to be raised, because I am going to tell you that your comments about what went on in committee, as we just learned from the previous point of order, are out of order pursuant to rules 4-2 and 4-3.

If you want to talk about anything other than the activities of the committee, please proceed and finish your statement.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, we have an inquiry for tributes to Senator Dyck. She's very important to this chamber, and she has done a lot of work.

I was just wondering, in terms of Senators' Statements, when there are already items on the Order Paper, whether this is also out of order.

The Hon. the Speaker: It is perfectly legitimate for Senator Coyle to have a Senator's Statement with respect to Senator Dyck, even though there's an inquiry. As all senators know, opening inquiries after tributes is our way of saying we didn't have enough time in regular tributes.

However, I do caution the senator to refrain from talking about activities in the committee.

THE HONOURABLE LILLIAN EVA DYCK

TRIBUTE

Hon. Mary Coyle: As her final act, Senator Dyck looked to improve our Senate behaviours and relationships for the betterment of our institution, our reputation and, most importantly, our work for Canadians.

Lillian, you are a remarkable champion for both moving our country and this chamber into the 21st century. After all you have done, you deserve time to rest on your laurels, to smell the proverbial roses and to commune with your avian friends.

Lillian, please know that your remarkable Senate legacy will remain a bright beacon, illuminating the path forward for the rest of us. Thank you, Senator Lillian Dyck.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

REPORT PURSUANT TO RULE 12-26(2) TABLED

Hon. Paul J. Massicotte: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 12-26(2) of the *Rules of the Senate*, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, which deals with the expenses incurred by the committee during the First Session of the Forty-second Parliament.

(For text of report, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 249.)

[Senator Martin]

[English]

COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

THIRD REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Terry M. Mercer, Chair of the Committee of Selection, presented the following report:

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

The Committee of Selection has the honour to present its

THIRD REPORT

On November 19, 2020, the Senate referred motion 19, under Other Business, to the committee for examination and report. The motion concerns the election of the Speaker *pro tempore* by secret ballot. The committee has begun its consideration of the motion, and now presents an interim report.

Your committee recommends the following as an interim measure:

That, until the Senate decides otherwise, the Honourable Senator Ringuette be Speaker *pro tempore* on an interim basis; and

That, for greater certainty, the senator who occupies the position of Speaker *pro tempore* on an interim basis be considered, for all purposes, to be occupying the position of Speaker *pro tempore* as provided for in the *Rules of the Senate*.

Respectfully submitted,

TERRY M. MERCER
Chair

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

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

• (1430)

QUESTION PERIOD

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

COST OF HYBRID CHAMBER SITTINGS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I was troubled by your answers to questions posed by our colleague Senator Batters yesterday. I

want to make some things perfectly clear. First, I agreed to the hybrid sittings of the Senate during this ongoing pandemic and I still do. Second, Senator Batters does not need help from me or anyone else to explain her questions on her behalf. She is extremely capable of raising issues that concern her. It is your job as the government leader to obtain answers for all honourable senators, whether you like the question or not.

We were presented with a \$400,000 budget for hybrid sittings. Since we are only a few days away from this motion coming to an end, I think you should be able to — and I'm asking you to — provide this chamber with a clear update on the costs, as you have been asked to do so twice now by Senator Batters and once by me. This is not irresponsible or a strange request, as you said on Tuesday, it is a fiscal matter and a legitimate one.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, honourable senator. I reread the blues and wanted to repeat what I said in response to Senator Batters' legitimate question; that these are indeed legitimate questions. The record will show that I undertook to endeavour to get the answers. I am also very glad, Senator Plett, that you have repeated your support for hybrid sittings during the ongoing pandemic because, alas, we are still in the thick of it.

I will simply repeat that I believe that hybrid sittings are a necessary institution to allow us to do our work on behalf of Canadians and to protect staff, administration, senators' families and friends from the risks that we might inadvertently pose. That said, I will endeavour to get you the answer as quickly as I can.

Senator Plett: Senator Gold, we are going to be expected to vote on a motion in the near future on extending these hybrid sittings. As we know, it expires on December 18. Whether it is a \$400,000 budget or the hundreds of billions of dollars this government has spent in recent months, we are asking about the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars, period. The government should be able to provide taxpayers with accountability for every dollar spent. It is clear that bean-counting, as you suggested, is of no interest whatsoever to your government. You stopped providing biweekly reports on emergency spending months ago and you haven't presented a budget in 21 months.

Asking questions in Parliament is one of the only ways we have to try to get accountability for taxpayers, as Conservatives like to do. It is part of our job and part of your job; or are you trying to put an end to this as well?

Senator Gold: Honourable senators, I can only repeat, because clearly my attempts at being clear, direct and transparent are not being successful. It is a legitimate question and I will endeavour to get the answer. But the assumptions in your question, honourable senator, are simply incorrect. This government is committed to helping Canadians. The billions of dollars to which you referred to are helping Canadians and Canada weather this unprecedented storm.

When we do emerge from this horrible crisis, thanks to the efforts of all Canadians to obey and follow the rules that are recommended to them by public health authorities, and thanks to the ability — as soon as possible, we hope — of more Canadians to benefit from the vaccines that were procured by this government, and at such time as the economy returns to the

healthy state that it was in when we entered this crisis, all Canadians should be grateful to this chamber, to the Parliament of Canada and to the government for the initiatives that it took to do us well through these challenging times.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

CANADA EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question for the government leader concerns letters self-employed Canadians recently received from the Canada Revenue Agency, telling them to repay their entire CERB payment by the end of the month, which is just a few weeks away. It seems the government has retroactively decided that the CERB qualification of \$5,000 income in 2019 was, in fact, \$5,000 net income. When former Finance Minister Morneau was here in March and April, he referred many times to the \$5,000 requirement, but he never once said that it was \$5,000 net. Although CERB has ended, the application website is still online. If you look, it does not contain the word "net."

So all these months later, why did the government change the criteria for the CERB? Entrepreneurs should not face hardship at this critical time because of an arbitrary decision of your government. Will the CRA stop sending these letters to self-employed Canadians?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. It is not my understanding that there has been a change in the terms. What I do understand is that the government is continuing to try to deal with the payments and the consequences of the rapidity with which the payments went out in a fiscally responsible, but compassionate and sensitive manner. As ministers who appeared before this chamber through the process this summer said, in explaining the speed with which they and their officials put together the programs — in essentially emergency circumstances — there would be inevitable gaps. Inevitably, there would be problems and they would be addressed as they came to light.

My understanding is that the letters do not require immediate repayment; they are simply there to inform individuals that there may be repayments or issues down the road. I will certainly make inquiries, if you can be more specific outside the chamber, if you would like. I will certainly look into the matter that you raised. That's my understanding of the situation.

Senator Martin: That inquiry concerns the word "net," which is key; whether the government will be specific on this criteria and perhaps issue new letters, because there is an expectation for these self-employed individuals to pay back the CERB when that was not their understanding.

• (1440)

Leader, your government knowingly approved CERB payments this spring even when fraud was suspected. Now we have a situation where self-employed Canadians applied for CERB in good faith under the rules as they were at the time. Months later, the government changes its mind on the criteria and demands repayment in just a few weeks. Many of these

entrepreneurs are still facing COVID-related restrictions on their businesses, even if they managed to stay open, through no fault of their own. Would you follow up specifically regarding the amount — the net amount — and correct this error, if the rule indeed is incorrect, because the government was not clear?

Senator Gold: Thank you, senator. I will indeed follow up. I am just not prepared to assume one way or the other whether there has been a change in policy or any incorrect calculation or communication, but I will certainly look into it.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

ICEBREAKER FLEET—DAVIE SHIPBUILDING

Hon. Éric Forest: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

The pandemic poses a serious challenge for the public purse. In order to restart the economy and balance the budget, the government will have to leverage its own procurement activities.

According to a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Ottawa could have saved \$2.7 billion by converting the *Asterix* and *Obelix*, rather than building two new supply ships. Even if there is a way to do more with every dollar spent, we also need to use government acquisitions to get Canadians back to work.

While the Halifax and Vancouver shipyards are always getting more contracts, Canada's largest shipyard is not operating at full capacity. Given that Seaspan was still unable to start building the *Diefenbaker* polar icebreaker eight years after being awarded the contract, Davie told the government that it was willing to take over the order that was rescinded from the Vancouver shipyard in 2019. That contract would create 1,500 jobs and nearly a billion dollars in spinoffs. Unlike Seaspan, Davie, with its pan-Canadian supply chain, is able to begin the work right away.

Does the government recognize that we need to make use of government procurement in order to support the economic recovery and create jobs? Is the government prepared to clearly demonstrate that by granting the contract for the *Diefenbaker* icebreaker to Davie, the only shipyard that can begin work immediately?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank my colleague for his question.

In order to reinforce the Canadian Coast Guard's capacity to meet growing demand related to its operations in Arctic waters, the government is considering various options to get an icebreaker built quickly, efficiently and in a way that gives Canadians the best value for money.

I've been informed that all Canadian shipyards had the opportunity to respond to the request for information that closed on March 13, 2020. No decision has yet been made about which shipyard will construct the polar icebreaker you mentioned. The responses received by Public Services and Procurement Canada

and the information collected through this process will enable the government to decide how best to proceed to ensure that the icebreaker is delivered as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Forest, do you have a supplementary question?

Senator Forest: Yes, please, Your Honour.

It's a well-known fact that, when it comes to maritime procurement and the current situation in Canada, order books at the Irving and Seaspan shipyards are full. I don't understand the approach taken by this government, which wants to continue to analyze the situation and give a contract back to a supplier that already has its hands full.

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. As you know, the Davie shipyard has been awarded \$2.1 billion in contracts under the national shipbuilding strategy. That shipyard is currently refitting three icebreakers for the Canadian Coast Guard, and is on its way to becoming the third partner in the national shipbuilding strategy.

That said, no final decision has been made regarding which shipyard will build the *Diefenbaker* polar icebreaker.

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PERSECUTION OF BAHÁ'Í MINORITY

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: My question is also for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, I've been requested to ask you this question on behalf of many Bahá'í Canadians in our communities. They are concerned with what Iran is doing to its Bahá'í citizens. The persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran has increased, and at this terrible COVID time, it is particularly disturbing, given the deadly spread of coronavirus in Iranian prisons. The Iranian government has continued to arrest and detain Bahá'ís on baseless charges. Hooshmand Talebi and Mojdeh Eghterafi, an Iranian Bahá'í couple with family in Canada, were recently arrested and had their belongings confiscated, including a piano played by their daughter.

Leader, the Canadian government has always stood up for Bahá'ís in Iran. May I ask if the Canadian government will do so once again?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, thank you for your question and for shining a light on this disturbing and, unfortunately, ongoing situation for the Bahá'í community in Iran, a long-standing community that has made a great contribution not only to Iran but throughout the world.

Canada is challenged on many fronts in its relationship with Iran but places human rights considerations and the concerns of Iranian citizens at the heart of its foreign policy engagement with Iran. I don't need to remind this chamber of the challenges that

we face in dealing with the regime, but I can assure this chamber that the situation of individuals and communities within Iran remains of great concern to this government.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Jaffer, did you wish to ask a supplementary?

Senator Jaffer: Yes, please, Your Honour.

Leader, thank you for your response. I am very much aware, as are Bahá'í Canadians, of the challenges with the Iranian government. Leader, the Canadian government has always stood up for the Bahá'ís, and it is crucial that we protect the Bahá'ís and all the minorities. I ask if the Canadian government will join other governments in speaking out for the rights of the Bahá'ís. We have always done this. Will we do it again?

Senator Gold: Thank you, senator, for the follow-up question. Canada's approach to issues like this in Iran and in other countries is to work with our allies. Our voice is stronger when we join with like-minded countries. Canada remains committed to insisting that countries live up to their human rights obligations. Indeed, that's why Canada led a resolution earlier this month calling on Iran to comply with its international human rights obligations.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS—SECURITY

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Honourable senators, I have a question for Senator Gold on the planned takeover of TMAC Resources Inc. by Chinese state-owned Shandong Gold Mining Co., Ltd., one of the world's largest gold producers.

Retired Major-General David Fraser cited security concerns including the mine's proximity to Canada's early warning radar facilities in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, as well as the mine's use as a port in Hope Bay, which has serious strategic and military value. Former CSIS director Richard Fadden shares the same concern. In fact, there are myriad voices saying there is a lack of Canadian leadership on economic infrastructure and security in the Arctic — issues with icebreakers and deep-water ports, and little industrial development in stark contrast to both Russian and Chinese investment and preparedness in the region.

• (1450)

Major-General David Fraser said, and these are his words, not mine:

If you look at what they have done on the South China Sea to extend their area of influence – what's to stop them, once they get squatter's rights and get into this port, of doing the same thing . . .

Senator Gold, the government has recently ordered that the security review be extended by 45 days. Can we please stop stalling, take a stand on this and on Huawei, as our allies have done, to stop China's encroachment on our sovereignty and security, and make our concern over the two Michaels extraordinarily clear?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator, for raising those issues, all of which are matters that engage not only this government but all parties and all Canadian citizens.

The study and the review to which you referred is ongoing and not completed. When it is, an announcement will be made. I can assure this chamber that efforts to secure the release of the two Michaels, and indeed, to provide for the appropriate compassion and treatment of other detainees held by China is an ongoing preoccupation of this government.

Senator Wallin: I want to remind everyone that the FBI director stateside, Chris Wray, recently stated publicly that he opens a China-related counterintelligence case every 10 hours. There is evidence of covert operations here. We have acknowledged coercive diplomacy on the part of the Chinese, as we learned during the pandemic in terms of access to drugs and PPE. Those were withheld.

Why do we not follow the lead of our allies — I'm thinking of Australia but also the U.K. and the U.S. — and invoke some strong economic and diplomatic responses to China's despicable jailing of the two Michaels? It will be, as you well know, two years tomorrow.

Senator Gold: Indeed. Let me refer back to part of an earlier answer. Canada is working closely with its allies on these and many other fronts, as it is the position of this government that working with our allies is the best and most effective way for Canada's voice to be heard and to be amplified.

I also refer back to observations that were made in this chamber most recently about the complexity of foreign relations. As Senator Boehm correctly pointed out, these issues are more complex than can sometimes be captured in the context of a parliamentary question and answer period. But again, I assure this chamber that the government is well aware of the importance to the two Michaels, to their families and to all Canadians, to see them released and is doing everything it can to secure that end.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

CANADA EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Further to Senator Martin's questions, Senator Gold, we all have seen cases where CRA is asking for full repayment of CERB by December 31. It involves self-employed individuals whose work has been, or continues to be limited, or completely ceased because of COVID. Many represent the lowest-paid people in this country: the working poor.

I too am told that the “net versus gross” did not appear on the application form. I’ve been receiving myriad messages expressing heartbreaking situations. One came from a 77-year-old self-employed man without a pension, who obviously continues to have very little income, as the pandemic continues to curtail his ability to work. He told me, “My government has gone from benefactor to Grinch in one fast train ride.”

Senator, for those affected by this, who earnestly applied and were encouraged to do so, is the government considering their plight? Is the government considering these cases in light of the confusion some have experienced with their CERB applications?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. Of course the government is considering this. Everything that the government did in each of its programs was to benefit Canadians. The last thing that this government intends to do is to punish Canadians who acted in good faith. That said, as I said in response to Senator Martin’s question, I will certainly look into it to make sure that I have a proper grasp of the details before I finalize a response here in this chamber.

I do need to remind the chamber that what is being described in the letters is that recipients are being advised that there may be a requirement to pay amounts received. It has suspended collections activity on any new debt during the crisis, and it will only resume collections when it is responsible to do so, and that’s in general, and in particular with regard to CERB payments.

I also advise that the government has been making every effort to work with taxpayers to resolve their debt and to do so in an appropriate and compassionate way. The government encourages recipients to contact the agency to develop a suitable arrangement based upon their ability to pay, if indeed repayment is required.

Senator Bovey: Thank you for that, senator. I am aware of people selling cars and remortgaging their houses to try to deal with this.

The Minister of National Revenue has the authority to cancel or waive penalties or interest under taxpayer relief provisions, and the criteria for granting such relief, according to the CRA website, include extraordinary circumstances, actions of the CRA, inability to pay or financial hardship, or other circumstances.

As I have said, we are still dealing with COVID-19 across the country and the situation for many of these people in my province is dire as we are still under lockdown and will be into January.

Canadians were told that such misunderstandings made in good faith would be rectified at income tax time, which is March and April 2021, not Christmas 2020. Will the minister use

her authority to grant some relief to those who realistically cannot generate such income in several weeks, especially in parts of the country where COVID-19 remains rampant?

Senator Gold: Again, thank you for your question. I will make inquiries and do my best to get an answer in a timely fashion.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

CHILD CYBERSEX TRAFFICKING

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, we have long known that pornography and the sexual exploitation of minors is a growing problem in Canadian society. These crimes have seen a sharp increase over the past few decades. Recently, the Government of Quebec has taken this problem much more seriously than the government of Prime Minister Trudeau by creating a special commission, which tabled a report last week. The report included 50 or so recommendations and called for the government to make drastic decisions to end this scourge.

I would like to remind you that, since last spring, many Canadian parliamentarians and members of a multi-party, non-partisan group on sexual exploitation twice asked the Prime Minister of Canada to take measures against Pornhub. No action has been taken by the government to date except for comments made publicly or in the other place. We know that the recent article in the *New York Times*, which has been read around the world, is what triggered the reaction from the Justin Trudeau government.

However, Mr. Trudeau’s statements remain evasive and vague. He never speaks of this scourge that affects young minors in Canada, especially in Quebec. My question is as follows: MindGeek is based in Montreal and we have known for several months that the website is hosted in that region. Why has the Government of Canada not intervened in the activities of this company to hold it accountable? Why is it not taking action to put an end to this scourge?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for this question, dear colleague. First, allow me to state unequivocally that the exploitation of children and sexist and sexual violence in all its forms are unacceptable. We must implement the measures required to put an end to this appalling conduct.

• (1500)

Thank you for your question, Senator Boisvenu, and I also want to thank all those who are committed to the cause. In particular, I want to thank our colleague Senator Miville-Dechéne for her hard work on and commitment to this issue, and for introducing a bill that has been well received in the Senate.

Dear colleagues, this issue has many facets. The position of the Government of Canada is that our laws and the Criminal Code are there to protect the victims of these unacceptable acts. That

said, the government is looking more closely into regulations to better address the problems associated with sites like Pornhub and others because, even though Pornhub is the one making the news, it is far from an isolated case. Tragically and unfortunately, this is a much bigger problem.

However, another aspect of this issue has to do with prosecutions under the Criminal Code. As you know, dear colleagues, the Constitution sets out that provincial attorneys general are responsible for administering these prosecutions. Under the Criminal Code, the Attorney General of Canada has a very limited role in these types of crimes and issues. As always, there needs to be some coordination at the federal and provincial levels.

In closing, there is no doubt that this is a growing problem. To give just one example, just two years ago, the RCMP dealt with seven times more cases on this issue than it did in 2015. That's over 100,000 cases, which is shocking.

In summary, Pornhub is a problem, but it is not the only one.

Senator Boisvenu: Senator Gold, Minister Steven Guilbeault said that he would take action by introducing a bill next spring. Next spring ends on June 21, 2021, which is seven months away. In the meantime, we are seeing children, teenagers and rape on this website, which is unacceptable.

Senator Gold, you are a lawyer and, under the Criminal Code, anyone who is responsible for distributing child pornography or, more specifically, making it available is committing a criminal offence. What is more, under An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service, which was passed in 2011, if internet service providers are informed of a publicly accessible website that is posting child pornography, they are required to report it. However, that hasn't been happening.

I'd like to remind you that, in 2018, Prime Minister Trudeau pressured his Minister of Justice to interfere in the SNC-Lavalin case to save his friends. Why is he not as quick to protect children and teenagers from crime?

Senator Gold: My dear colleague, although I don't agree with your description of past events, I will answer your question.

There are sections in the Criminal Code, and you mentioned some of them. As I said, there are other regulations and a bill currently being studied. However, there's a difference between a section of the Criminal Code and a decision made by a provincial attorney general. There must be enough evidence to prosecute.

Unfortunately, the wheels of justice — like many a Senate debate — tend to turn slowly. Fortunately — although the word seems inappropriate for such tragic circumstances — things are starting to happen because senators, parliamentarians, citizens and the press are bringing this problem to light.

We can only hope to achieve progress as soon as possible. I saw that Pornhub announced changes to its protocols in an effort to convince us that everything will be fine and that they are

taking this problem seriously. I can't say whether their intentions are good, but I think this shows us how pressure from the public, the Senate and other quarters can bring about change.

We need to roll up our sleeves and keep doing our job.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-13(3), I would like to inform the Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate will address the items in the following order: consideration of the second report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, second reading of Bill C-16, second reading of Bill C-17 and Motion No. 22, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

THE ESTIMATES, 2020-21

MAIN ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B)— SECOND REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the second report (interim) of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, entitled *The expenditures set out in the Main Estimates and the Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021*, tabled in the Senate on December 8, 2020.

Hon. Percy Mockler moved the adoption of the report.

He said: Honourable senators, I must admit that I'm a little nervous today.

This morning as I was preparing for my day in the Senate, I started thinking about my past. I have to admit that I'm quite nervous, because I never imagined that I would one day speak as a Canadian parliamentarian, a member of the Senate of Canada, on the same plot of land, but in a different house than the one I came from.

On top of that, honourable senators, I have to tell you that growing up in that other house, where we lived on social assistance, or welfare as they say, with my single mother and my sister, I never would have imagined that I would one day be sitting in a very different place and speaking to you, and least of all, discussing two very different budgets with you, from the welfare budget we lived off of in our little house, to this one, the budget of the Government of Canada.

How my life has changed, honourable senators, and I am grateful to Divine Providence.

[English]

Honourable senators, in my more than 35 years as a parliamentarian, both provincially and federally, I have learned that people do not care who we are until they know what we care for.

On November 18, the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance received from the Senate of Canada the Main Estimates and the Supplementary Estimates (B) for the year ending March 31, 2021. As part of our mandate — with a very short timeline in order to table the report this week — the committee held 3 meetings and questioned 40 officials from 14 organizations. We heard from Minister Jean-Yves Duclos from Treasury Board and also from the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

• (1510)

In total, honourable senators, they were looking at requested appropriations of approximately \$16.7 billion in the supplementary estimates, which is 80% of the total voted expenditures, as requested.

Honourable senators, the Main Estimates 2021 set out \$125.1 billion in voted budgetary expenditures, and \$179.5 billion in statutory forecasts, for a total of \$304.6 billion, which is an increase of \$1.6 billion from the previous year's Main Estimates.

The Supplementary Estimates (B) 2020-21 requests Parliament's approval for \$20.9 billion in voted budgetary expenditures, and increased forecasted budgetary statutory expenditures by \$58.3 billion, for total budgetary expenditures of \$79.2 billion.

Non-budgetary statutory expenditures are forecast to increase by \$1.3 billion. Of these authorities, approximately \$15 billion, which represents 74% of the voted requirements, and \$57 billion, which represents 96% of the statutory forecast, are related to the government's response to COVID-19, this incredible pandemic.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance invites you to take the time to read the document.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the employees who support our work, including the clerk of the committee, and acknowledge their professionalism and work ethic because they allow us to do our jobs as Canadian senators.

Honourable senators, as the chair of the committee and on behalf of my colleagues, members of the steering committee, Senator Forest, Senator Klyne and Senator Richards, I want to thank all members of the Standing Committee on National Finance who have consistently attended the meetings and helped draft and approve the report. I also want to thank the other senators who contributed to our work.

[Senator Mockler]

[English]

Honourable senators, as parliamentarians we are all in this together, and there is no doubt we have the same common objective and denominator. It is about transparency. It is about accountability. It is about predictability and also reliability.

This pandemic, the COVID-19 situation, requires action and answers in order to protect Canadians from coast to coast to coast in their quality of life. This is our objective.

Let me share with you some of the committee's observations. It is imperative that the federal government should provide clear and consistent monthly reports on the cost and performance of all its COVID-19-related programs. It is imperative that the federal government should continue working with the provinces and territories to ensure timely access to sufficient medical supplies from coast to coast to coast.

[Translation]

It is imperative that Indigenous Services Canada recognize its responsibilities in health and that it ensure that the COVID-19 vaccines are distributed quickly to Indigenous communities. The pandemic is exposing them to a disproportionate risk in the country, causing disastrous consequences to their health and that of their children.

[English]

Honourable senators, we believe that the federal government should work with provinces and territories, as well as regional and mainline air carriers, to develop support measures for the air transportation sector that require cooperation, rather than competition, and ensure continued services for all Canadians, regardless of where we live.

I believe, however, when I look at the Main Estimates and Supplementary Estimates (B), that we have dropped the ball. Honourable senators, I want to bring to your attention, to the attention of the Senate of Canada, a group of Canadians labelled "the forgotten poor." I do not see them in the government Main Estimates and supplementary estimates. Please bear with me. This is a subject that must be addressed.

There is little doubt that the last year has been very difficult for all Canadians, and there are still many more months of difficult times ahead, honourable senators. Food banks across the country have been at the front of this fight, helping to provide a lifeline to members of their communities when people have nowhere left to turn. They have done this even though they faced a drop in food and fundraising, a drop in volunteers due to health guidelines and having to adapt their procedures to ensure the safety of everyone coming through their doors.

They have implemented delivery services outside distribution centres, with safe dispensing and all kinds of innovative ways to keep their doors open and members of their communities fed. I believe that is one of the great stories of the pandemic, when communities come together to help each other through difficult times.

As Food Banks Canada's latest report shows, the early months of the pandemic were loaded with anxiety and a lot of worries about their ability to serve Canadians. Fortunately for most food banks, the CERB and the Canadian child benefit boost helped the most vulnerable people stay afloat.

Unfortunately, honourable senators, not all Canadians were spared. As the report points out, 36% of new clients in food banks during the first few months of the pandemic were single adults — more than any other demographic during that time. There's no doubt in my mind, this is a group that was left behind in government policies, even before the pandemic, and they seem to be falling even further behind now. This is not the Canada that we know.

Little, if anything, has been done to address poverty and low incomes among adults who live alone.

Honourable senators, close to 4 million Canadians fall into this category; being an adult under the age of 65, living alone, and a third of them — 1.3 million — live below the poverty line with average incomes of around \$10,000 a year.

Over the past 20 years, the number of single adults needing help from food banks has almost doubled and now account for half of all food bank clients in this country. This group of people can be called the forgotten poor, and government policy and the pandemic have only made their poverty deeper.

Now, as we look at an economic recovery over the years ahead, it is more important than ever that government policy takes into account how it can support the forgotten poor, because I believe they can be a big part of Canada's recovery.

These are people who may have lost a job or work in low-income, precarious employment, with little education or training, or none. Now many of them will be forced to struggle by with Employment Insurance if they are lucky, or scratch by on low wages in a difficult economy until they have no choice but to turn to provincial social assistance, welfare, and fall entirely out of the labour market.

• (1520)

Honourable senators, once this happens, it is often too late. We know that when someone falls into social assistance, it is incredibly hard to climb out.

Honourable senators, I believe that with good government policy this doesn't have to happen. Whether it is through an expanded Employment Insurance system that extends how long a person can receive training opportunities — I believe it's about education and training — financial supports and job opportunities, this group can remain in the labour market. They can help build back our economies from coast to coast to coast with jobs of tomorrow, and they can be part of an economic recovery where they no longer rely on food banks to make ends meet.

It is urgent. We need action. Government policy can no longer ignore this group of vulnerable Canadians simply because they live alone. Instead, I believe we should be developing programs that open the doors to new opportunities and to make sure that

they are never forced to leave the labour market but remain a part of the solution of the Canada of tomorrow that we need to build. Thank you, honourable senators.

[Translation]

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, it is common wisdom that to know where you are going, you must know where you came from. We must acknowledge that our colleague, Senator Mockler, has not forgotten his roots and everything that contributed to his values.

Honourable senators, I would like to take the opportunity of the tabling of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance's report on the Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, to draw your attention to some of the issues highlighted by our study.

In the current supplementary estimates, 92% of the budgetary expenditures are, as you will imagine, related to COVID-19 measures. Thus, there was a great deal of discussion about the different measures implemented by the government to address the economic and health impacts of the pandemic.

First, with respect to accountability, although the committee recognized that Canadians needed help quickly during this terrible pandemic, it noted that the government provided too little information to parliamentarians to adequately monitor spending.

In short, we have a government that is generous when it comes to helping workers, but miserly when it comes to providing information about where the money went.

We deplore the fact that the government stopped providing bi-monthly reports to Parliament on COVID-19 spending.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer rightly noted, and I quote, that:

... the amount of information that is publicly available to track this spending is lacking, thus making it more challenging for parliamentarians to perform their critical role in overseeing Government spending and holding it to account.

... there is currently no public document published by the Government which provides a complete list of all measures announced to date, or updated cost estimates.

As parliamentarians, we must hold the government to a higher standard with respect to program costs and effectiveness.

As for the difficult matter of dividends, during its study of the supplementary estimates, the committee members were able to hear from representatives from the main departments involved in implementing the pandemic-related measures to support workers and businesses. I was particularly struck by the government's hesitation to tighten up the screening process to prevent the abuses that have been identified in recent months.

I understand that swift action was needed at the beginning of the crisis, but the government has since had ample time to adjust its programs.

For example, we were asked to vote several times to amend the wage subsidy rate and eligibility criteria. The government could have easily taken the opportunity to ban companies that are receiving the wage subsidy from paying dividends to their shareholders. Let's remember that, over the past few months, we've learned that at least 68 publicly traded companies paid their shareholders \$5 billion in dividends, while receiving \$1 billion in wage subsidy payments. Eleven companies even increased their dividends while they were receiving the wage subsidy.

A program of last resort designed to support workers should not be used to make shareholders richer. In my opinion, these companies are abusing the program and I don't understand why the government refuses to take action in this case.

Sector-specific plans are needed.

During the supply process, the committee met with representatives from six regional development agencies. These agencies are responsible for taking more specific action to help sectors that are not adequately covered by the more general assistance programs, such as the wage subsidy and credit facilities.

For example, under the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund, the federal government provided \$1.5 billion to help SMEs that were unable to receive emergency aid. The committee found that that was not very much given the needs.

Consider the restaurant sector alone. Half of all restaurants are at risk of closing for good in 2021.

To guard against entire sectors of our economy being destabilized by the pandemic, the committee is calling for enough funding to help businesses in hard-hit sectors, such as tourism, hospitality, food services, culture and retail.

For an optimal recovery, the National Finance Committee spent the past few months studying the government's pandemic response programs. We met with the government officials who developed these programs. We also met with people who represent the organizations and workers targeted by these programs. We made recommendations that will enable the government to adjust these programs quickly.

However, we will soon have to shift our focus to economic recovery because, despite the imminent arrival of the vaccine, many of the jobs done by young people, women and seniors will not be coming back.

Downtown cores are now deserted. In the future, only a small percentage of the people who used to work there may continue to do so. Imagine the consequences for nearby businesses and the drop in revenue for landlords and municipalities.

Furthermore, the municipalities, which are the prime proponents in most public infrastructure projects, will have to be called upon to help stimulate our economy. Many have already

designed a number of projects that are just waiting to be financed, particularly in the social housing, public transit and local infrastructure sectors. Payment and accountability mechanisms are even already in place. Some examples are the gas tax program, the Green Infrastructure Fund and the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund. The municipalities have already made it clear that they want to be true partners in the recovery. It'll be important to ensure that these essential partners are heard by the government, and that the government draws on their expertise.

To jump-start the economy, the federal government will also need to leverage its own procurement activities. One example is the construction of the *Diefenbaker* icebreaker. This \$1-billion project could create 1,500 jobs but has been stagnating for eight years because successive Liberal and Conservative governments have become embroiled in unnecessarily complex and partisan procurement policies.

• (1530)

This project is already in the budget, and a shipyard is ready to start on the work immediately. Why not move forward with a project that would make a significant contribution to the economic recovery? In short, we must reflect on all these questions and ensure that we support the government to the best of our abilities.

We know that the Government Representative in the Senate is proposing to establish a special committee to study all aspects of the COVID-19 crisis. A review of the management of administrative, economic and health aspects is necessary. However, I believe we should let the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance look to the future and specifically study the economic recovery.

The government established the Industry Strategy Council, chaired by Monique Leroux, to study the changes that will be required in response to this crisis. The House of Commons will certainly make its own recommendations.

However, I believe that the Senate, and especially the Finance Committee, has a role to play in the post-mortem that will be conducted when we emerge from this crisis, primarily to ensure a more fair, supportive, green and sustainable recovery. I hope that this chamber will agree to give the Finance Committee such a mandate.

In closing, I'd like to thank my colleagues on the Finance Committee as well as all of our support staff for all of the work that has been done. I also thank the 14 organizations that participated in our study of the supplementary estimates.

In the interests of all Canadians, and contrary to the skepticism expressed by some colleagues, I think that we need to extend the authorization for hybrid sittings so that we can continue our work here.

I want to say that we particularly appreciated the participation of the President of the Treasury Board. That goes to show that our work here is important.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 5, 2020-21

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

SECOND READING—DEBATE

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to, on division, and report adopted.)

[English]

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 4, 2020-21

SECOND READING

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) moved second reading of Bill C-16, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

She said: Honourable senators, as the Senate sponsor, I will be reserving my comments on the substance of the legislation as well as the more detailed breakdown of the various expenditures for my remarks at third reading, which I hope will be tomorrow.

I wish to briefly acknowledge the work of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance for their thorough review and consideration of the estimates and their detailed observations. Their work over the years has served as a useful reference point for colleagues in better understanding the intricacies and importance of the estimates process. I hope you will join me in supporting Bill C-16. 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.)

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

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

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) moved second reading of Bill C-17, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

She said: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak at second reading of Bill C-17, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, which we are now considering.

I will speak to this bill at greater length when it is at third reading stage, and I very much look forward to continuing debate on these two bills. Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, I want to start by thanking Senator Mockler and Senator Forest for their heartfelt comments about the forgotten poor.

The federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic so far, including the measures set out in the Supplementary Estimates (B), has repeatedly emphasized the importance of human, health and economic terms in addressing economic marginalization and inequality as part of a successful post-pandemic recovery. Over the past nine months, COVID-19 has hit hardest those who are most marginalized, those most systemically excluded and those with the least.

Indeed, the Fall Economic Statement stressed:

And, recent data from Toronto Public Health shows that people with lower income levels and racialized communities experience higher rates of both contracting and being hospitalized for COVID-19. . . . Black, Latin American, Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian people are at least seven times more likely to contract COVID-19 than non-racialized people in the city. Across Canada, Statistics Canada data shows that communities with the highest numbers of racialized Canadians had the highest mortality rates during the first wave of the pandemic.

While COVID-19 is an unprecedented situation, the stark link between income and health highlighted by this pandemic, however devastating, is not new. Over the past nine months we have witnessed how providing direct income support to people benefits not merely those in need, but all of us. Income support measures like the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit helped some Canadians to be able to afford to stay home from work, follow public health guidelines, get the supplies and treatment they needed and keep themselves, their families and all of us safe.

The CERB and other direct support to individuals during the pandemic have also helped the economy. They helped to stabilize demand for goods and services and sustain a rebound in commercial spending. This should come as no surprise. Canada is deriving economic benefit as a result of guaranteed-income type measures such as the Canada child benefit. Those economic contributions represent 2.1% of Canada's total GDP and generate \$1.97 in economic activity for every \$1 disbursed to families, in addition to keeping 277,000 families out of poverty.

As the report just issued by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis emphasized, a national guaranteed liveable income, if adopted, would in five years contribute 1.6 to 2.4% of Canada's total GDP, create more than 300,000 or 450,000 jobs and lift at least 3.2 million families out of poverty.

• (1540)

The Fall Economic Statement cautions that traditional economic measurements such as gross domestic product alone do not give a full picture of Canada's quality of life, acknowledging that COVID-19 recovery requires:

... thinking holistically about factors like health and mental health, communities and culture, safety and human rights, job quality and opportunity. It also means thinking inclusively about the distribution of outcomes.

The report concludes that inequality makes our economy less resilient, which is why a robust and complete recovery must leave no one behind. All of us stand to benefit when we move forward together and refuse to leave others behind.

It is painfully clear that COVID-19 responses encapsulated in the supplementary estimates and summarized in the Fall Economic Statement do, in fact, leave people behind. Worse still, despite many promises, the government has yet to provide adequate supports to more than 3.5 million people in Canada — those living below the poverty line. Those with the least have been excluded from income support measures like the CERB and enhancements to EI. Only those who have earned at least \$5,000 per year qualify for the CERB or its successors. Unintuitively, outrageously and incomprehensibly, this has created a system, where, in a time of need and crisis, emergency income support systems are actually turning people away on the grounds that they have too little. They do not have enough income to qualify for help.

Colleagues, this is wrong, and we should not once again turn away because the government continues to say, "Not yet."

In most provinces and one territory, income supports like the CERB have been clawed back from those on social or disability assistance who do qualify for them. For those who do not qualify, the alternative is to try to weather a pandemic on social or disability assistance that, in every provincial and territorial jurisdiction, is not merely too meagre to meet basic needs, but is criminally low, and our passing these estimates makes us complicit.

Colleagues, among the more than 3.5 million who are still waiting are those who are disproportionately women and racialized people who lost a job and were not eligible for EI prior to the pandemic, or were working multiple inadequately waged gigs but were still not able to make \$5,000.

It includes people who were in the process of starting new businesses or were self-employed or living contract-to-contract in fields like the arts.

It includes seniors in need who applied for the CERB, which will then result in decreasing the amounts they will receive from the Guaranteed Income Supplement in the future.

It includes people, especially women and racialized women, who, pre-COVID, were doing unpaid work caring for children and/or elderly loved ones with disabilities.

It includes people with undiagnosed disabilities themselves who were not working or were in hospital or in recovery.

It includes people who, before COVID-19, could not afford the transportation, childcare or clothing to look for work.

It includes people not working because they are unable to afford losing the pharmacare benefits provided through social assistance schemes.

Of the \$407 billion COVID-19 response plan, those with the very least have, at most, perhaps received a one-time payment of \$400, and only then if they were on the CRA rolls and registered for the GST tax credit.

Conversely, during the pandemic, the total wealth of Canada's 20 richest people — who were already billionaires — has grown by at least \$37 billion, while one in five households with children has become food insecure.

At the outset of the pandemic, those who were low-wage workers were more likely to have lost work: a 38% decline in employment compared to 13% for higher-waged workers, and a 41% decline for low-wage women workers in particular. For the most marginalized and those in precarious or service delivery or hospitality sectors, their low-paying jobs have been slower than other jobs to re-emerge, and less likely to be able to be accomplished through telework.

Colleagues, just because the stigma and lack of resources that render so many below the poverty line is of limited significance in the other place does not allow us to also render them voiceless. We have an obligation to represent minority interests, so let's do our job. We need measures to ensure that all make it through this crisis and to counter increasing economic inequality and marginalization that amplifies vulnerability to the continuing crisis and future waves of this or the next health, environmental or economic crisis.

Last April, 50 of us joined together to call for the evolution of the CERB into a guaranteed liveable basic income, accessible to all in need. In July, the Senate National Finance Committee called for priority consideration of a guaranteed basic income program. Not only would such a measure allow people to definitively leave poverty behind, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the then governor of the Bank of Canada were just two among the chorus of experts emphasizing that such a measure could better position Canada to respond to the next emergency we face.

As we near the holidays, the winter and the end of 2020, the devastating impact of the pandemic continues with absolutely nothing — as in zero; none — in terms of support measures on the horizon for those who need it the most.

The federal government has been clear that Canada's COVID-19 response cannot afford to leave anyone behind. For nine months, we have urged measures that would make that true, and instead, we have watched program after program roll out ignoring the 3.5 million people in most desperate need.

Some would say a pandemic is not the time to risk bold change for the better. Colleagues, if not now — when inequality and marginalization have disproportionately pushed poor people, many of whom are women, racialized and living with disabilities, to the brink of illness and even death — then when?

We have seen the government make bold changes quickly through measures like the CERB to assist in protecting middle-class folks from being plunged into poverty. We need equally bold measures to ensure that the working poor and others struggling to survive in poverty are provided with measures that will allow them to not only climb out but to emerge from and rebound from poverty.

To the credit of the government, Bill C-17 contains \$20 billion to fund laudable measures to fight COVID-19 and to protect many of those living in Canada. However, because the COVID-19 response has continually and systemically left out those most in need, these measures come to us at the expense of and, therefore, on the backs of those most marginalized. We should not let this happen. For too long we have lamented and empathized with the plight of those living below the poverty line, while spending on programs that do not allow them to get out of poverty or, worse, entirely leaves them behind.

We have a chance to make a difference for them. What I am asking of us, colleagues, is a bold but vital step. As unelected senators, it is not within our power to legislate the kind of spending that we would like to see. As the chamber of sober second thought, however, it is our duty to keep a clear and unflinching eye on the long-term best interests of Canada, in particular, for the marginalized groups that we are mandated to

represent. We cannot, in all good conscience, leave it too late to build guardrails for the more than 3.5 million Canadians plummeting off the cliff into the chasm of poverty.

MOTION IN AMENDMENT—SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Hon. Kim Pate: Therefore, honourable senators, in amendment, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-17, *An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021*, be not now read a second time because the Senate is of the view that it does not include sufficient expenditure to reduce the effects of poverty in Canada, which is currently experienced by more than three and a half million people whose lives have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including high infection rates and ensuing serious illness and death."

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

• (1550)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators will know that this is a rarely used procedure, which is referred to at page 133 of *Senate Procedure in Practice* and is known as a reasoned amendment. The motion allows a senator to outline the reasons for opposing second or third reading of a bill. It puts on the record a statement or explanation as to why a bill should not be proceeded with. The motion can be debated, amended and adjourned.

Honourable senators will also know that if a reasoned amendment is adopted, the bill is defeated.

That said, it was moved by the Honourable Senator Pate, seconded by the Honourable Senator McPhedran, that the motion be amended — may I dispense?

Go ahead, Senator Woo.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, those of us in the chamber have the benefit of having the document in front of us. I understand that Senate Administration has emailed the same document to colleagues who are on video. For those who have not been checking their email, could Your Honour please read the motion in amendment in full?

The Hon. the Speaker: For all honourable senators who have joined us virtually, the motion has been emailed. I am proceeding to read the motion, but the only effect that will have is to open it for debate. I saw a number of honourable senators rising, so I am sure you will have an opportunity to read it. If not, please raise your hand to let me know, and we will provide the time.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, Shakespeare had one of his characters, when looking upon the ghost of his father, speak of a “countenance more in sorrow than in anger.” My countenance registers a bit of shock.

I will speak against this amendment. I applaud Senator Pate for her ongoing activism and advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable. Regardless of the issue, Senator Pate remains committed, *c’est tout à ton honneur*.

That said, with respect, I cannot support this motion, and I urge you all to reject it. This is, in fact, a dilatory motion that would delay the implementation of this legislation for a prolonged period of time. Given the time of year we’re at and the crisis we are in, as the Speaker properly pointed out, if it is passed, it would kill this legislation.

I have no doubt of the sincerity with which the motion is presented — for the benefit of those vulnerable who, it cannot be denied, have not fully enjoyed the benefits of our economy and perhaps have not shared, as the senator would have them share, in the programs that the government has put in place to help Canadians through this crisis.

But to defeat this legislation or to pass this amendment would have serious financial and operational consequences. Although I do not deny or doubt the good faith behind it, you will permit me, perhaps in my shock, to say that the effects would be cruel. The defeat of this bill would make it impossible for the government to continue to provide the services and programs it needs to provide for the benefit of Canadians.

It would get in the way — indeed, it would slow down if not stop, in some cases — important programs and measures to continue to fight the pandemic. It would get in the way, colleagues, if not stop outright — and time is not our friend when we are fighting a pandemic as relentless as COVID-19 — the development of Canadian manufacturing capacity, to secure our capacity to deal with this and future pandemics, the development of Canadian-made vaccines or to assist essential workers who are putting themselves and their families at risk every day for the benefit of the most vulnerable in this society. It will simply make it impossible for this government, democratically elected, to do its work in all respects — not only in this — on behalf of Canadians.

It is an understatement, dear colleagues, to say that the adage of “let not the best be the enemy of the good” applies here so dramatically, with such clear consequences.

But I’m going to calm down and just remind us of our responsibilities as senators, in addition to our responsibilities as citizens. The bill deals with monetary measures. This is a clear confidence measure, but we are not a confidence chamber, as the senator pointed out indirectly. This was a clear confidence vote

in the other place, and it was not simply a vote that the government, of its own, put forward. It was supported by not only the Liberal Party but the NDP, the Bloc and the Greens; parties that represent a significant majority of those who voted in the last election.

If my mathematics fell short, the principles I am standing upon are rock solid. This was a confidence vote in the elected house to provide funding for the government to continue to do its work — work it is entitled to do, as it is entitled to govern. Indeed, as the opposition in the House and in this chamber are at pains to remind us — properly so, and it is to their honour — it is one thing to raise, question, demand and hold to account a government. It is another thing to refuse to allow the government to govern. The effect of this bill would be to do precisely that.

I have enormous respect for the Senate and what we can contribute by way of debate and critical review, but to do this is to overstep our role and to do so in a way that hurts Canadians. I cannot for the life of me support this, and I urge you not to.

The Standing Senate Committee on National Finance did its work, as it always does. It did its due diligence. We heard its report. We heard the concerns that we know are shared by Senator Pate and those who, like me, are concerned about those who are left behind in our economy. But this is not the way in which the Senate should be doing its job.

With all respect, this is an irresponsible amendment that cannot be supported by the government and I hope not by any or all senators. Thank you for your attention.

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Dupuis, do you want to ask a question or make a comment?

Hon. Renée Dupuis: I wish to raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Hon. the Speaker: Go ahead.

Senator Dupuis: I want to be sure that I understand the rules of the Senate. When an amendment is proposed does it have to be presented in both official languages?

The Hon. the Speaker: Yes, absolutely.

Senator Dupuis: May I ask why would we should consider this amendment at this time when we have not received the French version?

• (1600)

[English]

The Hon. the Speaker: My understanding, Senator Dupuis, is that the amendment was sent to all senators who joined us virtually through their emails in both official languages. I know it was received in the chamber in both official languages. I’m looking at the email now, Senator Dupuis.

In any event, it will be a matter for tomorrow. I'm sorry, Senator Dupuis. If you check and find you have not received it, would you please let my office know and we will figure out what happened.

[*Translation*]

Senator Dupuis: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I received the amendment in English only. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Hon. the Speaker: That will be addressed. My apologies. It ought to have gone out in both official languages.

(At 4 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on October 27, 2020, the Senate adjourned until 2 p.m., tomorrow.)

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