



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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Wednesday, November 4, 2020

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,  
Speaker

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## THE SENATE

Wednesday, November 4, 2020

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

Prayers.

### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, just as a reminder, I will repeat my opening remarks from yesterday.

Today's sitting is taking place with senators across Canada attending by video conference, as well as in the Senate Chamber.

In order to ensure an orderly sitting, I would like to outline a few guidelines to follow.

Senators on video conference are asked to have their microphones muted at all times, unless recognized by name, and will be responsible for turning their microphones on and off during the sitting.

Before speaking, please wait until you are recognized by name. Once you have been recognized, please pause for a few seconds to let the audio signal catch up to you.

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly, at a normal volume, and use the microphone attached to your headphones.

To choose the interpretation for this video conference, click on the globe symbol at the bottom of your screen and select either English or French interpretation or no simultaneous interpretation.

When speaking, please do not speak in English on the French channel, and do not speak in French on the English channel. If you plan to alternate from one language to another, you should turn interpretation off.

Should senators want to request the floor to raise a point of order, please unmute your microphone and say your name followed by "point of order." This process can be used if senators are experiencing serious technical difficulties related to interpretation.

If you experience other technical challenges, please indicate this via the chat function at the bottom of your screen or by emailing ISD using the instructions in the confirmation email.

Please note that we may need to suspend at times as we need to ensure that all members are able to participate fully.

A few words about security. Video conference screens should not be copied, recorded or photographed. You may use and share official proceedings posted on the SenVu website for that purpose.

To avoid any confusion, however, I would ask senators to avoid posting any pictures of the public broadcast of our proceedings while the Senate is actually sitting. Otherwise, there might be uncertainty as to the sources of the pictures and whether

they were from the Zoom conference, which would not be permissible. I know colleagues would not want to cause such confusion.

Please also note that the use of this technology does not guarantee speech privacy or prevent eavesdropping. As such, all participants should be aware of such limitations and avoid the unwanted disclosure of information.

Senators must set up in a private area and be mindful of their surroundings so they do not inadvertently share any personal information or information that could be used to identify their location. Only senators should be visible.

I would also remind senators of subparagraph 4(d) of the hybrid motion. That provision reads as follows:

(d) except when the bells are ringing for a vote:

(i) [senators must] have their video on and broadcasting their image at all times; and

(ii) leave the videoconference if they leave their seat.

If you do not wish to have your video on, please leave the video conference and rejoin when you are able to have your video active.

Finally, to avoid risk of acoustic shocks to people listening on video conference, senators must avoid shouting.

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## SENATORS' STATEMENTS

### CANADIAN SENATORS GROUP

**Hon. Scott Tannas:** Honourable senators, this week marks the first anniversary of the formation of the Canadian Senators Group. At the beginning of this Forty-third Parliament, 13 of us came together around a common set of principles, including robust and respectful debate in the chamber, supported by strong, clear, in-depth research and with an unwavering focus on our job with respect to representing our regions.

• (1410)

We in the CSG all favour being part of a smaller group. Small is beautiful, to our way of thinking. That is why we are committed to capping our membership at 25 senators. We want to have influence, but we have no ambition to control the Senate.

Of course, our first year hasn't exactly unfolded as expected, but CSG operations are now in full swing. Our research bureau has published 36 pieces on a wide range of legislative, fiscal and public policy issues — and has done so in both official languages — and continues to scan the horizon to keep us informed.

Senators, your CSG colleagues are proud to serve with you in the Senate of Canada and we look forward to representing our regions and, indeed, all Canadians in this new era of Senate reform. Thank you.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I'll just remind senators that we have now moved to six senators for Senators' Statements, at three minutes each. When you see the table rise and you are giving a speech, it means you have about 10 seconds to sum it up. We are following it fairly strictly because we've increased the time and the number of senators.

#### WA-SAY HEALING CENTRE

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** Honourable senators, I give this statement on behalf of Wayne Mason, Executive Director of Wa-Say Healing Centre Inc. in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This organization helps Indian residential school survivors and their families to overcome the effects and trauma of the Indian residential school era.

Wa-Say Healing Centre has a long history of providing support and assistance to the survivors of the IRS era and their families. Since the beginning, they have supported thousands in healing from the effects of the cultural genocide that was inflicted upon those who attended these schools where the intent was to "kill the Indian in the child." Numerous reports have documented the violence that has occurred throughout Canada's history towards Indigenous people, including the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the MMIWG Final Report. Indian residential school survivors and families of loved ones who have passed on have identified a pathway that supports the rights and self-determination of nations to provide the space to heal according to their own protocols, including reconnecting to their cultural practices and identities that were disrupted as a result of colonization.

As a centre, they have been assisting IRS and day school survivors before, during and after their application for compensation, and are now providing aftercare with one-on-one counselling and trauma therapy sessions. One of the most important services is providing ceremonies with the guidance and direction of elders, which helps our people recover and reconnect to their culture and address the intergenerational effects of cultural genocide. An increasing number of people are going to ceremony to find their names, colours and clans, which are all a part of reclaiming their identity and healing. When our people who are hurting and

suffering can heal and become well again, this eliminates the negative statistics that are often used to represent Indigenous people.

As Wa-Say says, it is no longer necessary for government to paternalistically dictate how we heal from the attempted assimilation of our people. First Nations have the capacity to capably administer and manage our own programs. We are a nation and we will be self-sufficient.

Wa-Say hopes the federal government will provide long-term funding for First Nations healing centres to sustain their healing pathway. Our collective healing journey can be achieved if they have adequate financial resources to meet the needs of our people who are recovering from the effects of intergenerational trauma. Our ceremonies are about life, and Wa-Say has created a space for people to reconnect to those original teachings of love. Through ceremonies, we teach our people how to live again, and to live life in a good way. Thank you.

#### THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE DONALD MAZANKOWSKI, P.C., C.C.

**Hon. Peter Harder:** Honourable senators, I rise to pay tribute to the Right Honourable Don Mazankowski.

We are a great country because good people have consistently come forward to serve in public office. Maz was just such a good person. He never forgot from where he came or the people he served: Vegreville, small-town Canada, diverse immigrant community, self-reliant yet generous to those in need, optimistic, rural, with an appreciation of cosmopolitan Canada.

Maz embodied that rare and uncommon gift of common sense: Get the facts, learn the brief and find the sensible path forward. Maz earned the respect of his officials and the devotion of his extraordinarily talented staff. He was loyal to them and they returned loyalty to him. We were all in awe of Maz, minister of everything.

In his post-political career, Maz was a sought-after corporate director. I was honoured to both be recruited by Maz and serve with him on a corporate board, where again his common sense advice added to the deliberation.

He was, as has been mentioned, a philanthropist, leading the establishment of the Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute in Edmonton.

After receiving a lifetime achievement award in 2010 from the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, he gave a speech in Calgary, in which he called the House of Commons "a reflection of the legitimate political declaration of our nation."

He went on to say:

I recall my first walk up the steps of the Peace Tower. I was filled with pride, humility and awe. I paused, looked around and said to myself, “Wow, how did I ever get here?” I soon realized it was rooted in a combination of faith, family and friends, blended with a touch of courage, a bit of luck and hard work.

Quintessential Maz. Rest in peace.

### THE LATE PATRICIA GAIL LEESON

**Hon. Gwen Boniface:** Honourable senators, I wish today to honour the life of Patricia Gail Leeson, a vibrant and constant presence in the community of Little Current, on Manitoulin Island.

Gail was born in Little Current on April 1, 1966. Sadly, she passed away earlier this year at the age of 53.

Gail was born with Down’s syndrome, but it never got in her way. She had a strength and kindness that radiated as she made her way through a very full life. She didn’t care what anyone else thought of her or what she wore. She was famous for wearing her “beads” — not a necklace — everywhere she went.

Gail could have set the course for a successful community. She never played favourites; she loved people equally. Her sister Bert says, “She never acknowledged her disability; in fact, she thought the rest of us were disabled.” If anyone said anything negative about a person in front of Gail, she would always respond, “Be nice. We’re all the same.”

Gail loved music and dancing, and brought joy to all who met her. She enjoyed taking trips with her family across Canada, the United States, Mexico and the Caribbean. She loved bowling and her weekly volunteer work at the Manitoulin Centennial Manor, where every resident knew her and she knew them.

A giving citizen, a community volunteer, a loving sister and a beautiful daughter — so important was she to the citizens of Little Current that flags at the municipal office were lowered to honour her life.

Honourable senators, my family feels incredibly privileged to have known Gail. I send my sincere condolences to her mother, Edna; her sister Wilberta, who was her best friend, advocate, and according to Gail, her chauffeur as well. I also offer my condolences to her brother, Perry; her sister, Cheryl; and many nieces and nephews.

In life, you can only wish for one thing: to make a difference. Patricia Gail Leeson certainly did that. She brought joy to all who had the privilege to know and love her. She will be sadly missed. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

### THE LATE ANITA STEWART, O.C.

**Hon. Robert Black:** Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a great “advocate” whom many of my colleagues from the Agriculture and Forestry Committee would know — Anita

Stewart, the founder of Food Day Canada. Sadly, Anita passed away last week at the age of 73, after losing her battle with pancreatic cancer.

Anita was a food activist, a cookbook author, and the first Canadian food laureate at the University of Guelph. She was a champion of local food and of the stories behind the food. I had the privilege of collaborating with Anita a number of times and found her to be a staunch supporter of the Canadian agricultural industry. Her spirit and passion for Canadian cuisine from coast to coast to coast, and the people who grew, harvested and cooked it were unrivalled.

• (1420)

In fact, Food Day Canada, which falls on the August long weekend of each year, was born from Anita’s concern for beef farmers during the 2003 BSE crisis. That year, she organized what she called the “world’s longest barbecue,” where she invited her network of friends, farmers and chefs to share their recipes using Canadian beef. It evolved into what we know today as Food Day Canada, where Canadian food is promoted, celebrated and shared across this great country.

Anita was a trailblazer who made a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of the Canadian food system. She will be missed by all who knew her, but her memory will live on in the legacy of her recipes and cookbooks, her family and in Food Day Canada.

My very sincere condolences are with her children, Jeff, Brad, Mark, and Paul, and their families. Anita, rest in peace. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

### WANITA JOHNSON

#### CONGRATULATIONS ON ONE-HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY

**Hon. Pat Duncan:** Honourable senators, I rise today respectfully speaking from the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council. On Friday, we will honour a special Canadian, Wanita Johnson (née Hovey), who is celebrating her one-hundredth birthday.

Wanita was born on November 6, 1920, in the small farming community of Taymouth, New Brunswick, on the Nashwaak River. Her maternal ancestors were Scottish highlanders who fought with the British army during the American Revolution and were later granted land along the Nashwaak. Her father’s people farmed on the Miramichi River.

Wanita's mother died when she was a young girl, so she was raised by her aunt with a large family of cousins. She completed Grades 1 through 8 in a one-room schoolhouse at Taymouth. At 16, she moved to Smiths Falls, Ontario, to live with another aunt and uncle.

As World War II engulfed the country, Wanita moved to Ottawa to work as a stenographer in the federal government. She met her future husband, Charles Johnson, who came from Manitoba to work in the Department of Agriculture. Charlie joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1942 and, after training as a radio telegraph operator, he sailed off to Europe for four years. The two maintained their relationship through correspondence.

When Charlie returned home, they married in 1947. Following the birth of their daughter, Wanita left her working life behind. When the Korean War started, she went back to work as a secretary in the Department of Defence Production. Wanita continued to work until 1985, a total of 44 years in Canada's public service.

After retirement, she volunteered in neighbourhood schools and at the Ottawa Cancer Clinic, played bridge and travelled around the world. Her Canadian travels included Atlin, British Columbia, to Inuvik, Northwest Territories, and everywhere in between, which is, of course, the Yukon.

The arrival of a great-grandson in Whitehorse provided the impetus for a permanent move to Whitehorse in 2011.

Honourable senators, the story of Wanita's life speaks to me of what it means to be a Canadian, from the East to the West, living in the North, especially a working life in the public service of Canadians.

At 100, Wanita retains her zest for life. Her recipe? "Enjoy your family and friends, be kind to people and do the best you can each day."

Wise words, Wanita. Thank you. On behalf of all my Senate colleagues, may I wish you a happy one-hundredth birthday.

Thank you. *Mahsi cho.*

[Translation]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### 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 Tuesday, November 17, 2020, at 2 p.m.

[English]

### INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

#### NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO MEET BY VIDEO CONFERENCE OR TELECONFERENCE

**Hon. Sabi Marwah:** Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

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 Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration have the power to meet by videoconference or teleconference;

That senators be allowed to participate in meetings of the committee by videoconference or teleconference from a designated office or designated residence within Canada, that they be considered, for all purposes, to be meetings of the committee in question, and senators taking part in such meetings be 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 meet by videoconference or teleconference:

1. members of the committee participating count towards quorum;
2. such meetings be considered to be occurring in the parliamentary precinct, irrespective of where participants may be; and
3. 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, subject to variations that may be required by the circumstances, to participate by videoconference senators must:

1. use a desktop or laptop computer and headphones with integrated microphone provided by the Senate for videoconferences; and
2. not use other devices such as personal tablets or smartphones;

That, when the committee meet 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; and

That, pursuant to rule 12-18(2), the committee have the power to meet on any day the Senate does not sit, whether the Senate is then adjourned for a period of more or less than a week.

But freedom of expression is not without limits. We owe it to ourselves to act with respect for others and to seek not to arbitrarily or unnecessarily injure those with whom we are sharing a society and a planet.

This week, President Macron of France, who full-throatedly defended freedom of speech in the wake of Mr. Paty's slaying, personally called Premier Legault of Quebec to thank him for his unequivocal support for free expression.

My question to you, Senator Gold, is this: Have you heard from the PMO or any source as to whether the Prime Minister got a call from President Macron thanking him for his support of France in regard to Mr. Paty's beheading, and if not, why do you think that is?

• (1430)

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Senator, thank you for your question, and it's a pleasure to see you with us. The Prime Minister condemned, as we all do here, the horrible, grisly and unacceptable attack that took place in France. The Prime Minister recently reaffirmed his government's commitment to freedom of expression and spoke at length about the importance of promoting freedom of expression and the right of all to speak freely even on sensitive topics, and he did so without qualification. I'm not aware of whether or not he has spoken with Mr. Macron, but the Prime Minister in his remarks did underline the close collaboration that he has and continues to have with the Government of France on a broad range of issues.

**Senator Frum:** You say, Senator Gold, that the Prime Minister spoke without equivocation. I'm not sure that is true. He did say freedom of expression is not without limits, although I do agree with you that he then recalibrated those statements yesterday. But would you agree that when there is an episode of jihadi violence, as there was in France last week, that it is inappropriate to suggest that the victims themselves are somehow to be blamed?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you, senator, for the question. I don't believe that that was the intent of the Prime Minister's first remarks, and I think it would be a mistake to take them that way. The issue of freedom of expression and its limits in Canada and elsewhere is complex, and we in Canada, for example, have laws protecting against hate speech that are sometimes criticized in other quarters for being unnecessarily restrictive of freedom of speech. However, many communities, including my own community, the Jewish community, the Muslim community and others, have strongly supported those limitations on freedom of speech for the protection of our communities.

## ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### CARBON TAX—CARBON EMISSIONS

**Hon. Larry W. Smith:** Thank you, Your Honour. My question is for Senator Gold. In a delayed answer to a question I asked in February, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change made it known that the federal government's carbon price framework beyond 2022 is yet to be determined. We also

## QUESTION PERIOD

### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, before we proceed to Question Period, please note that after a senator has asked their question and received a response, I will ask that senator if they have a supplemental question before proceeding to the next questioner on my list.

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

#### CANADA-FRANCE RELATIONS

**Hon. Linda Frum:** Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Senator Gold, a few weeks ago in France, a school teacher named Samuel Paty was beheaded on a street by an Islamist extremist for showing a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad to his class. He was teaching them about the importance of freedom of expression.

Prime Minister Trudeau took 12 days to comment on that grisly terrorist crime. Last week, when he was asked about the right to show a caricature of the Prophet Muhammad, he said that:

We will always defend freedom of expression.



know that according to Environment and Climate Change Canada the government will fail to achieve its 2030 emissions reduction targets under its current policies, falling short by 77 megatonnes of emissions. A recent Parliamentary Budget Officer report offered additional carbon pricing tools that will fill in the 77-megatonne gap. In some cases, we can see an explicit carbon tax of \$239 per tonne of GHG emissions and a GDP reduction of 0.62% in 2030. Senator Gold, for a policy initiative of this magnitude with far-reaching consequences for businesses and consumers, why hasn't the government developed a comprehensive plan for achieving its 2030 targets?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. The government remains committed to fighting climate change by meeting and indeed exceeding the 2030 targets and achieving net zero by 2050. And notwithstanding the pandemic, the government continues to work on this file, conceding, of course, that there is much more to do. I'm advised that in the coming months the government will table net-zero legislation and will work to update Canada's climate plan to make sure we meet those ambitious goals. Carbon pricing is one of many tools that responsible legislators and policy-makers would use in order to achieve these targets.

**Senator Smith:** Thank you for your answer. Of course, the problem we have as the opposition is that we hear all these plans that never come to fruition. Senator Gold, when can we expect a carbon price framework or plan beyond the year 2022?

**Senator Gold:** The challenge for the government, senator, is that it needs to make policy in a responsible way, taking due account of all the stakeholders, including those of provinces to whom the resources belong, and when the government is ready to announce its framework as I announced it is planning to do, I will advise this chamber.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### CANADA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

**Hon. Tony Loffreda:** My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, the world is watching what is happening with our neighbours to the south. Here at home the final results can have a considerable impact on our relationship with our biggest trading partner and the world's largest economy. Is the government ready for either outcome, especially if the U.S. election is contested? Are there any areas of concern, and do you foresee our relationship changing based on either outcome?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. The Government of Canada, of course, continues to pay close attention to the election process unfolding in the United States, but our relationship with the United States is forged by many things: a shared border, common interests, deeply personal connections and, of course, powerful and enduring economic ties. Indeed, our cooperation during this pandemic has shown the strength of that relationship. The Government of Canada awaits the outcome of the U.S. election and will continue to work with whomever the American people elect as their next president.

**Senator Loffreda:** Thank you, Senator Gold, for comforting Canadians. Regardless of the outcome, there is some concern within the business community, and this concern revolves around the new protectionist measures that may be adopted and that could impact Canadian business, especially during our economic recovery. Is this an area of discussion and/or concern within our government?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you, senator, for your question. Any measure that would have a negative impact on our economic relationship and our industries is, of course, a concern to this government.

The government will continue to track any measure and impact that would have the effect of restricting market access and will continue to stand up for Canadian interests as it has done, for example, in maintaining supply management under the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

### VICTIMS' RIGHTS

**Hon. Marilou McPhedran:** Thank you, Your Honour. My question is to the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, I was pleased to serve on the Standing Committee on National Security and Defence when Bill C-77, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, was studied. A key component of Bill C-77 was the creation of a statutory declaration of victims' rights within the National Defence Act to provide essential support to those who have been victims of an offence by individuals subject to the Code of Service Discipline. Regrettably, the implementation of those rights has been delayed because the military legal branch has not yet drafted regulations in support of the legislation.

Senator Gold, while it is important that the military lawyers do their due diligence in drafting these regulations, it is equally important to understand that rights delayed are rights denied. This is true especially for military members who have experienced sexual assault and harassment, many of whom still struggle to receive support for their claims from their leadership and must navigate the military justice system as victims without sufficient resources, information or guidance. When asked, DND's legal branch indicated that they were consulting with stakeholders including victims' rights groups.

Senator Gold, what is the status of these consultations? And how much longer must members of the Canadian Armed Forces wait for rights they have been promised more than a year ago in the new Declaration of Victims Rights?

• (1440)

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you, senator, for your question and for your support for the bill when it was introduced in the last Parliament and committee.

I have been following the news about the time that it's taking to draft the regulations, as well as the news from Statistics Canada and internal DND reports to the effect that sexual misconduct continues to be a problem, requiring cultural change within the Canadian Armed Forces.

The government has been doing the consultation that Minister Sajjan promised to do when he appeared before the Senate committee in the last Parliament, and I have been advised that at this point, the government has consulted federal partners, including the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre, whose counsellors provide victims 24-hour, seven-day-a-week support around the world, counselling assistance and information. The government wants to take the time to get things right for and by victims.

**Senator McPhedran:** Senator Gold, it has been brought to my attention that in some cases of harassment, and not necessarily sexual misconduct only, there is a de facto double standard that is resulting in civilians working for the Canadian Armed Forces being told they are not entitled to the same protections under Operation HONOUR in their workplace, as members who are enlisted. Could you please report back to clarify if the Declaration of Victims Rights is going to correct this grievous discrimination against civilian employees?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you, again, for your question. I will certainly look into this matter and report back as soon as I can.

[Translation]

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

**Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais:** Honourable senators, my question is a follow-up to Senator Frum's question.

After being criticized by French President Emmanuel Macron, Quebec Premier François Legault and many other politicians for his position on limiting freedom of expression, it seems Prime Minister Justin Trudeau flip-flopped yesterday in the other place, even though he still isn't ready to clearly denounce Islamist terrorism.

Could you tell us, Mr. Leader, whether the Prime Minister gave in to religious pressure when he spoke about the limits that should be imposed on cartoonists? Also, what is Mr. Trudeau's real position on freedom of expression and Islamist terrorism? Do you fully agree with everything he has said on the subject over the past few days?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for the question. In this capacity, it is my duty and my honour to represent the government in the Senate. As I indicated, the Prime Minister recently clarified his position. I don't have the text of his statement in front of me, but he once again expressed his and the government's support for complete freedom of expression.

**Senator Dagenais:** Getting back to my question, do you fully agree with his position on the issue these past few days?

[ Senator Gold ]

**Senator Gold:** Senator, as you know, I'm the Government Representative in the Senate, but I'm not the government. I can answer your questions in my capacity as the Government Representative. My personal opinion on any particular subject is not relevant in question period here today.

[English]

## HEALTH

### COVID-19 PANDEMIC—LONG-TERM CARE

**Hon. Patricia Bovey:** My question is for representative of the government in the Senate. In Winnipeg, like hospitals, the number of COVID-19 cases in care homes is rising. Media reports 336 cases and 35 deaths in 16 of these homes as of November 3. Parkview Place alone has had 138 cases. These outbreaks are similar to what happened in Ontario and Quebec, which have been detailed here by Senator Seidman and Senator Martin, and are putting many of our elderly and staff in a perilous situation. People are frightened.

The Premier of Manitoba called for volunteers to pitch in during this rise in COVID-19 cases, which is putting such a strain on the province's health system. Some 7,000 people have signed on to help. This shows the generous nature of Manitobans, and I salute their spirit.

Senator Gold, today we learned that the Red Cross will be assisting in two of the larger care homes and that military assistance has also been discussed between the province and the federal government. Can you tell us whether the Canadian military will also be providing support to alleviate the dire situation in Winnipeg care homes?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Senator, thank you for raising this issue with me. I've been advised that the government is currently reviewing the request from the Province of Manitoba for Canadian Red Cross support. Your advance notice of the question allowed me to inquire with the government, and I have been told that, at least to date, Manitoba has not requested assistance from the Armed Forces, which would be a precondition for the government to move forward. But the government remains committed to assisting both the provinces and the territories when requested to do so, so that we can provide care for the most vulnerable.

**Senator Bovey:** Thank you. I appreciate that the discussions have been held and a request has not formally been made. How quickly would the Canadian Red Cross or Canadian military respond if a request was made?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for the follow-up question. I don't know how long before an answer on the Red Cross, or how long a response would take, were a formal request to be made. Judging from past experience during the course of the pandemic, the government was able to respond quickly because the government understands how important it is to provide help to those most vulnerable.

[Translation]

[English]

## JUSTICE

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

## CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. In the wake of the scandal surrounding the government's judicial appointments, we learned recently that a number of people were being asked to make comments and recommendations on whether or not certain people should be considered for judicial appointments. For instance, when a lawyer from Drummondville named Christine was being considered to fill a judicial vacancy, the former Liberal member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Nicola Di Iorio, strongly opposed the appointment because, according to him, Christine was a separatist born into a family of separatists. As for her legal expertise, Mr. Di Iorio didn't appear to have anything bad to say in that regard.

Do you think it's appropriate that judicial appointments, an essential pillar of our justice system, are being considered in a context of discrimination based on the political convictions of candidates to be appointed as judges by the Minister of Justice?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for the question. As a lawyer, I have full confidence in the Canadian justice system and the process that was put in place to ensure that those who are appointed to these positions are people who are qualified and of great integrity. As I already explained in this chamber just two days ago, the Minister of Justice has stated several times that he has never been pressured to make a judicial appointment. The decision is his alone. What he takes into consideration when it comes to appointments are the qualifications of the candidates, the legal skills, the needs of the court and of course the importance of diversity on the bench.

**Senator Carignan:** Let's not be naive. The minister may not have been pressured. However, if there is bias against the people on the short list submitted to the minister, and if their political persuasion is the basis for the decision, the process is flawed and discriminates against the candidates.

Do you know whether there was bias in the case of Christine from Drummondville, because her husband was a former Conservative candidate in the riding of Drummondville?

**Senator Gold:** Once again, senator, I can only repeat that the government has full confidence in the process. Judges are appointed on the basis of their legal skills.

**Hon. Leo Housakos:** My question is for the government leader in the Senate. Senator Gold, three weeks ago, China's Ambassador to Canada warned us against helping Hong Kong asylum seekers, issuing not so much a veiled, but a very direct threat against the 300,000 Canadians currently in Hong Kong.

Senator, considering the fact the two Michaels have been in Chinese custody for almost two years now, without your government's ability to resolve this issue and liberate them, what assurances of safety do other Canadians in Hong Kong have, especially in light of the draconian national security law now being imposed? What assurances do they have that the Trudeau government will protect them?

• (1450)

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. The Government of Canada is very aware of the situation of the large number of Canadians resident in Hong Kong. I think, as was also made clear, it will do everything in its power to provide easy facility to them should they wish to return home, and is working with its consular officials abroad to secure their well-being and safety.

**Senator Housakos:** Government leader, we're all aware of what is going on in Hong Kong. The question is: What will the Government of Canada do? The government talks a good game about opening Canada's doors for asylum seekers and you put on a good show, showing up at airports for photo ops whenever there is a rare opportunity, but what about pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong wishing to claim asylum? They can't do so at our consulate in Hong Kong. With COVID, even those who are relatives of Canadian citizens can't board a plane to Canada, and a simple asylum claim here in Canada won't work either. We have seen other western democracies put in place robust policies and legislation to accept asylum seekers from Hong Kong. Why does Justin Trudeau not do the same to expedite and give a hand to Canadians in Hong Kong who so desperately need one?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you again, honourable senator, for your question. There are separate aspects to your question, one which I answered in the first part having to do with Canadians that are here. With regard to asylum seekers, the Government of Canada stands in solidarity with Hong Kong and shares the great concerns of its allies in the international community over China's national security legislation. It will continue to support the many connections between Canada and Hong Kong and stand up for the people. Our immigration system is based on many principles, including compassion, efficiency and economic opportunity for all, and I have been advised that all eligible asylum claimants receive, and will continue to receive, a full and fair hearing on the individual merits of their case before the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

## HEALTH

## FOOD SECURITY

**Hon. Bev Busson:** My question is for the Government Representative, the Honourable Senator Gold. At the end of September, the organization Community Food Centres Canada produced an extensive report entitled *Beyond Hunger: The Hidden Impacts of Food Insecurity in Canada*. Food insecurity is something we usually associate with foreign developing countries, failed states and the work of the United Nations World Food Program, but the reality is that it is unfortunately a feature of Canadian society as well. Even before the pandemic, millions of Canadians were unable to find enough food, or were worried about running out of food because of a lack of resources. This affects the physical and mental health of individuals as well as families, and contributes to social isolation.

Food insecurity is not a question of availability or distribution of food, but it is mostly about poverty. The number of fellow Canadians experiencing such food insecurity has now skyrocketed by 39% due to COVID-19. As has been the case with the pandemic statistics themselves, the impact is most significant for marginalized and racialized Canadians, and those in the North. While there is much attention being paid to the matters of accountability for past COVID-19 spending and fiscal management of a recovery, these social and human costs could fall by the wayside. Does the government have a national strategy or plan, or are they working on one, to confront the effects of food insecurity made worse by this pandemic?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you, honourable senator, for raising this issue. The government knows that food systems are integral to the well-being of individuals, families and communities and, indeed, the strength of our economy. Even before the pandemic, in June of 2019, the government launched Canada's first-ever food policy to serve as a road map for a healthier and more sustainable food system and supported it with a significant investment of \$134 million in Budget 2019. It's a collaborative, coordinated approach between government stakeholders and community efforts in a number of different areas to support, generally speaking, food security both in northern and Indigenous communities.

To help address the food insecurity that has been made worse by the pandemic, in April the government invested \$100 million for food banks and other local food organizations. More recently, in October it added another \$100 million because the government acknowledges and understands the demand is high.

**Senator Busson:** Senator Gold, all solutions to public policy problems need to be evidence-based. Therefore, to obtain the most accurate understanding of the state of food insecurity in Canada today, would the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development consider instructing Statistics Canada to explore the creation of a targeted basket of statistical indicators to define, measure and track food insecurity for analysis?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you, honourable senator, for your question, and for the advanced notice that you provided my office for this question. I was able to make inquiries, but have not yet received a response. When I hear back from the government, I will report back.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC—DISINFORMATION

**Hon. Stan Kutcher:** My question is to the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, we are increasingly witnessing the spread of conspiracy theories related to COVID-19. A recent study conducted by Carleton University found that almost half of Canadians believe one or more of these conspiracy theories. These beliefs underlie destruction of property, such as the burning of cell and communication towers, and threats to life, such as the armed intruder arrested on the grounds of Rideau Hall.

According to Professor Timothy Caulfield, an expert in this area, conspiracy theories are spreading rapidly and represent a threat to the health and safety of Canadians. Sadly, some provincial politicians have promoted one such theory that the Government of Canada is setting up internment camps for people who have COVID-19. To counter this falsehood, the Prime Minister and the federal Minister of Health had to speak out publicly against them.

Senator Gold, remembering how pernicious and damaging conspiracy theories have been historically — for example, the anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that helped bring down the Weimar Republic and unleashed horrors on innocent people — what is the Government of Canada doing to actively combat these dangerous threats? If steps are being taken, does the government know how effective those interventions are?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Senator, thank you for raising this question. The government is certainly concerned about the spread of disinformation generally, and around COVID-19 in particular, and a concerted and global response based on science is essential. Now more than ever I think individuals need access to reliable and truthful news and information. That is why, since May, the government has invested \$3.5 million dollars through Heritage Canada's Digital Citizen Initiative to enable several organizations to help combat false and misleading COVID-19 misinformation, as well as the racism and stigmatization that often accompanies that.

More generally, it is the position of this government that it is not about controlling what Canadians read. We are a free society. It is about providing people with the tools and skills to think critically about the information that they find online. That's why much is done and must be done in civil society by organizations that are independent of the government. In that regard, the government also encourages Canadians themselves to help fight disinformation and fraud by only relying upon and sharing trustworthy information from trustworthy sources.

(At 3 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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