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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

CONTENTS

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, February 8, 2023

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Pierre J. Daphond: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(j), I move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practice, for today's sitting, tributes to our colleague the Honourable Senator Dawson be of 40 minutes, not including the time for his response, followed by an additional statement.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE DENNIS DAWSON

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, it is with mixed feelings that I stand here today as we say goodbye to our colleague and my friend and our friend Senator Dennis Dawson.

Although your time with us in this chamber is coming to an end, this is not the end of the road, just simply a turn in it. I will miss your presence here on the Hill, and especially in the Progressive Senate Group, or PSG, but I am happy that you will now be able to spend more time with your family, particularly your new granddaughter.

Dennis, it was great to be at your retirement event last evening at the Métropolitain, with hundreds of your closest friends celebrating your political life as an MP, a political organizer and, of course, a senator. Now, I'm not saying that you spent a lot of time at the Métropolitain, but last night, the owners did present you with a bar stool with a plaque that had your name on it.

Colleagues, Senator Dawson began his career in public life when he was elected as a trustee on the Commission des écoles catholiques de Québec in the early 1970s, a position he held for five years, until he was inspired to take a run at the vacant federal seat which was open in his riding. In a by-election in 1977 — a few years ago — Senator Dawson was elected to the House of Commons to represent the riding of Louis-Hébert under the leadership of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, and he is now retiring under another Prime Minister Trudeau. He was subsequently re-elected in the following two general elections.

This was all before Dennis even turned 30 years old — quite an achievement and commitment to serving the people of Canada at such a young age. I imagine it all must feel like a lifetime ago to you, Dennis.

Honourable senators, Dennis and I have been caucus colleagues for the last 17 years. We have seen and experienced quite a bit of change in the Senate over those years. When we started here, we were part of the government caucus with a significant majority. We then became the official opposition and then the official opposition but with a minority government.

The biggest change came in 2014, with a parting of the ways from our colleagues on the other side, which ultimately led to the formation of the Progressive Senate Group. Well, "parting of the ways" is a nice way to put it. We were actually kicked out of the Liberal Party. I guess that makes us part of an exclusive club, Dennis.

Through all the changes, Dennis has been instrumental in our restructuring, and without him, the Progressive Senate Group may not be as it is today. While Dennis and I both joined an already well-established system when we first started in the Senate, it has been exciting to be part of building a new group from the ground up with our wonderful PSG colleagues.

When I agreed to take on the leadership role of the PSG after Senator Day's departure, I could do so comfortably, knowing that Dennis would be a solid teammate and part of the leadership team.

Colleagues, those early months were a steep learning curve for us as our group continued to find our footing. Senator Dawson has always been there as a strong support, with sound advice and, most importantly, a sense of humour. I have to credit him with helping to foster the supportive, collaborative and collegial team that we have today.

Senator Dawson, after 46 years since first being elected to the House of Commons, you deserve to spend more time with your family.

Through it all, Dennis, it has been a pleasure to work alongside you for the last 17 years, and I have valued without measure your counsel and friendship.

Dennis, I wish you all the best in your well-deserved retirement. I will miss you. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with mixed feelings, I rise today to pay tribute to our cherished colleague Senator Dennis Dawson and to welcome his family here to share this day.

As you know, Senator Dawson first arrived on Parliament Hill at the young age of 27. He was one of the youngest MPs to ever sit in the other place. For nearly half a century now, he has been making the trip from Quebec City to Ottawa. That's a lot of mileage to have put in.

[Translation]

Senator Dawson arrived in the Senate after a successful political career. For a time, he served as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. He also chaired the Quebec Liberal Caucus. After becoming a senator, he continued his hard work by serving as a long-standing member of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. He also served as a member of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and chaired the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications.

• (1410)

[English]

As you all know, Senator Dawson also sponsored many important pieces of legislation, indeed quite recently, but I want to underline the role he played in Bill C-76, which modernized the Canada Elections Act. Several measures of that act were taken from a Senate public bill that he had previously tabled.

This was important work for Canadian democracy. The 2018 changes to the Elections Act not only made future elections more secure and transparent, but also made elections more accessible. To cite just one example, it reintroduced the voter information card as a valid piece of identification, and this is a form of ID that Canadians count on.

As you know, Senator Dawson has been a strong advocate of francophone linguistic and cultural rights, and an abiding champion of LGBTQ2 rights and women's rights. But, again, as we all know, his legacy as a senator extends beyond lawmaking and beyond advocacy.

Senator Dawson has been a mentor to many staffers who have gone on to make their own unique contributions to public service. Recently, when the Senate introduced legislation to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, in Bill S-5, I had the opportunity of working with a former student of the "School of Dawson," who now works in Minister Guilbeault's office.

Dennis, she did a fantastic job. It's to your credit — and hers, of course — but thank you.

[Translation]

Perhaps you envisioned a Senate reform that was different from the one the Prime Minister presented in 2015. You were very frank and open in that regard, but I admire the way you set

aside your personal vision and did everything you could to support the new system. That shows your generosity of spirit and commitment to the common good.

Once again, that is to your credit.

[English]

Your devotion to Parliament has been longstanding, your contributions to Canadian political life too plentiful to list today and your friendship to me and to so many others, very valuable. The Senate is a far better place, Dennis, for your many years of service.

I'm going to miss you. I'm going to miss being regaled by your stories at the Métropolitain. In your dapper ways, you're just always fun to see and to be with.

[Translation]

My friend, I wish you happiness in this next chapter of your life. Thank you so much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I also rise today to pay tribute to our colleague and our friend Senator Dennis Dawson.

Senator Dawson is one of the two remaining senators appointed by the Right Honourable Paul Martin. He has proudly represented the great people of Quebec and of Lauzon, while also strongly advocating for the Liberal Party of Canada. That is until, as has already been mentioned, Prime Minister Trudeau gave up on his caucus colleagues in the upper chamber and gave them the unceremonious boot.

Prior to being appointed to the upper chamber, Senator Dawson, as has been mentioned by his colleague Senator Jane Cordy, had served three terms as a Member of Parliament for Louis-Hébert, from 1977 on. He was also a strategic advisor, who had the ear of Prime Minister Martin, especially on Quebec matters.

Senator Dawson's loyalty, respect for public life and passion for politics are things I have always appreciated and admired.

Even though we have never been on the same team, Dennis, I have always valued your perspective and eloquent ways of speaking to issues important to you and your team.

Colleagues, that is what this chamber is all about — working together from different perspectives to find solutions in the best interests of Canadians.

As I was preparing for these remarks, I went back to your maiden speech of 2006. Allow me to quote you, Dennis:

I, among many others, share the belief that despite globalization and its effects, the political role of a public representative remains a noble and critical service that is essential to promoting and defending the interests of the population. It is still by our political actions that we can make changes and contribute to a better quality of life for our citizens here in Canada and even outside our borders.

Senator Dawson, your commitment to serve and devote all your efforts to fulfilling the duty of sober second thought on behalf of Canadians has been most remarkable and admirable.

Over the years, I must say that some of my favourite memories of us being together come from when you chaired the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, and I had the privilege of being your deputy chair for some time.

Among the many studies we've done together, my favourite was when the committee worked on a road map report of 22 recommendations entitled *Time for Change: The CBC/Radio-Canada in the Twenty-first Century*.

We weren't always on the same page there either, Dennis, but we worked together. I am thankful for the opportunity to work and travel together as it gave us space and time to become friends. I have fond memories of our travels, especially to Estonia and Belgium where you, Dennis, and I went on a bow tie and necktie shopping excursion. Note that Senator Housakos and I are wearing a special bow tie to salute you today.

I must say we even look a little more Liberal today than you do, senator.

Senator Dawson, your loyalty, devotion and commitment to the Liberal Party were recently showcased as you took on the arduous responsibility to defend a terribly flawed bill in this chamber, Bill C-11, the online streaming act. I can't help but wonder if that is what pushed you into early retirement.

Humour aside, Dennis, I want to personally, on behalf of the Conservative caucus, thank you and wish you a happy retirement. Enjoy your time with your family, your loved ones, especially your granddaughter. God bless, Dennis.

[Translation]

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Honourable senators, I also want to pay tribute to a colleague and friend.

Dear Dennis, I would have preferred to give this speech in September 2024, because according to your date of birth, your departure is premature. However, in years of political life, you are part of an elite club of parliamentarians who have lived — although the better word is probably survived — on the Hill for such a long time.

Having won the seat for Louis-Hébert in 1977 at the age of 27, he was the youngest MP in the House of Commons. He earned a number of firsts since then, as my colleagues have mentioned. Of note, he is the only parliamentarian in this chamber to have worked under both Prime Ministers Trudeau.

This clearly demonstrates the breadth of his experience and the scope of his institutional memory, a memory that has helped us on countless occasions to better understand sometimes a context, sometimes the reasons for certain decisions, certain rules. We will sorely miss this memory.

[English]

If I had to describe Senator Dawson, it would be as a connector, someone with charisma, people skills and an innate sense of communication as well as human relations. If you ever met Dennis outside of Parliament, you would notice that he is very rarely alone — actually, he is never alone. He is always surrounded, always deep in a conversation. I even noticed there is a table at the Château Laurier — one right in the centre of the action — where nobody dares to sit unless he is there, fearing to take Senator Dawson's place.

His international parliamentary network is remarkable. In his years as a parliamentarian, he deeply contributed to strengthening Canadian interparliamentary diplomacy. I personally have noticed how respected, esteemed and cherished he is by so many members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Adored by all his current and former employees, he is also known as one of the best people to work for on the Hill.

Apart from those qualities, Dennis is first and foremost a family man. We only have to take a peek at his iPad wallpaper, which always has the most recent picture of his first granddaughter, June Dawson, to know that his family is always on his mind.

• (1420)

He is also very devoted and loyal to his political family. Senator Dawson has never shied away from that fact. Never mind election results, leadership changes or institutional reforms, he is and always will be a proud Liberal.

[Translation]

Dennis, please know that my sadness in seeing you leave the Senate today is mitigated by the knowledge that I am not losing the friend I have known for years, the man with such a charming sense of humour — no, not Senator Dawson, but Dennis, Anne's husband and father to Cindy, Kathryn-Anne and Julian, whom I wish to acknowledge today, and, of course, grandfather to June.

On behalf of all the members of the Independent Senators Group, I wish you much happiness in your retirement. I can only imagine that you will be very active and well taken care of elsewhere and otherwise.

See you soon, my friend.

Thank you. *Meegwetich*

[English]

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Honourable senators, it is my pleasure and honour to rise today to give tribute, on behalf of the Canadian Senators Group, to Senator Dennis Dawson.

Through the years, we have sometimes fondly referred to each other as “the other Dennis.” You know how we are all inclined to perk up and listen when someone calls our names. Invariably, when my name was called and I looked up, it was disappointingly for the other Dennis, who is very active, busy and a hard-working senator.

Senator Dawson is a man who has built his career on service to others. There has been reference made to his five years as a school trustee for the school board in Quebec before becoming a young and then long-time member of Parliament, representing the riding of Louis-Hébert. There was also his service as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and later the Minister of Employment and Immigration. He was appointed to the Senate in 2005, making him currently one of our longest-serving senators. His experience and corporate memory will be missed.

His departure from this chamber will be the loss of a strong and opinionated — sometimes slightly partisan — voice that has always worked tirelessly on behalf of Quebecers and Canadians.

While our politics have not always lined up, I have the greatest respect for how you have worked diligently in the service of the public, forcefully and doggedly defending your convictions.

I should have worn a bow tie today in tribute to you, Senator Dawson. I actually have a sealskin bow tie I should have worn. In that connection, Senator Dawson — and this may be my last opportunity to ask you in this chamber — maybe in your reply you can tell us this: Do you hand-tie all those beautiful, stylish bow ties we will miss seeing?

Best of luck to you, senator, as you move on to your next exciting chapter in life. Thank you.

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a good friend and dependable colleague — Senator Dennis Dawson.

I met Senator Dawson in the Senate. Across the aisle in our former chamber, his bow ties always struck a chord of curiosity with me, and I knew I wanted to meet this fellow. It wasn't until I joined the Progressive Senate Group that I got to know him personally, beyond his notable reputation.

Senator Dawson was drawn to politics at a young age, making waves as one of the youngest MPs ever elected in Canada, at the young age of 27 years old. Voted into three consecutive terms in the riding of Louis-Hébert, Senator Dawson served as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Immigration as well as the Minister of Labour. He also chaired his party's Quebec caucus. Later, he launched and ran one of Canada's leading government relations firms in Quebec City and Montreal.

Long before his appointment to the Red Chamber, Senator Dawson was helping to shape a better future for Canada and applying his political talents with the wisdom and skill of a true statesman. His strong progressive and independent voice influenced the creation and philosophy of the Progressive Senate Group, and his guidance as Deputy Leader is invaluable to all PSG members.

Throughout his entire career, Senator Dawson has been a strong advocate for Quebec and the French language. These core values came into play for Senator Dawson as sponsor of Bill C-11, broadcasting legislation that will play an important role to sustain Canada's minority cultures and languages. As one of this chamber's longest-serving members, Senator Dawson steered the bill with skill and a steady hand on the rudder, making it look almost easy, but that's what comes with conviction and experience; this wasn't his first barbecue or test of standing the heat in the kitchen.

Senator Dawson also made a valuable contribution serving as Chair of the Transport and Communications Committee and a member of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. In addition, he helped sustain Canadian democracy as sponsor of Bill C-76, the Elections Modernization Act, passed in 2018.

Senator Dawson, I will miss your friendship, your advice, your humour and your colourful bow ties that brighten our caucus and these chambers, where you will be missed by many. I trust you will enjoy spending time with your new granddaughter and your family, and I wish you all the best going forward.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Too much to say and too little time to say it in, Senator Dawson. Honourable senators, I want to start off by saying that when I came to the Senate, Senator Dawson was one of the youngest senators here. He was Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, and I don't know if it's just a coincidence that that committee has become my favourite one in the Senate of Canada.

I'll tell you this: Those of you who love the way I chair the committee, bring it up with my professor. Those of you who don't like the way I chair the committee, also bring it up with Senator Dawson, whom I took close notes from during all these years.

Senator Dawson and I have a lot of similarities and a lot of dissimilarities. Of course, our similarities are that we both love Parliament and the political arena and we're fiercely partisan when it comes to our political parties.

One of our dissimilarities is that he actually managed to get elected in the House of Commons, and I never did that. The other dissimilarity is, as you all know, I support Conservative right-wing positions in politics, and he supports all the wrong ones. Despite that, I'll tell you what I learned most from Senator Dawson. Despite the political battles on the floor of this chamber or at committee, he taught me that it doesn't prevent you from becoming good friends. That's what we have become through the years. He taught me that after those battles, you can have a glass

of wine at the end of day — in our case, sometimes two and sometimes three. That's really the most important thing I have taken away from Senator Dawson.

[Translation]

I would also like to point out that Senator Dawson was a great parliamentarian, both in the House of Commons and here in the Senate. Senator Dawson has been and still is a great Quebecer and a great Canadian. He is a role model for me, because he shows us that we can be both at the same time. We can be great Quebecers and support the Quebec nation and, at the same time, support our great country.

Senator Dawson, you are a role model. I have always taken copious notes, and it is something that I will never forget and will always cherish.

[English]

It's important to highlight that in this chamber, there have been a lot of great parliamentarians, great legislators and great orators. Those are all great skills you can develop, but there is an intangible that Senator Dawson has that very few human beings have: He has a huge personality.

Senator Dawson, I'll tell you this: You will never be forgotten, always be remembered in this chamber and in this institution and always missed. I wish you a great retirement. Enjoy your family. I know how much they mean to you. Enjoy the new addition to your family. When you come back, there will be a glass of wine waiting from me to you. We'll miss you, Senator Dawson.

[Translation]

Hon. Éric Forest: Dear colleagues, it is with some sadness that I rise today to acknowledge what we believe to be the somewhat premature retirement of Senator Dawson, an esteemed colleague who has devoted most of his professional career to public service — and especially to resolving the knotty problems in our bills with consummate skill.

• (1430)

As you know, Senator Dawson began his public service career in education as one of the youngest trustees ever elected and later as chair of a school board in Quebec.

He was then elected to the House of Commons at the age of 25, again becoming one of the youngest MPs in Canadian history. He was so young that he had to threaten to set up a tent in front of the East Block in order to get his office, because he wasn't the ideal candidate in the eyes of the then prime minister, the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

It turns out that throughout his distinguished 18-year career in this chamber, Senator Dawson has proudly represented the Quebec City region, Quebec as a whole, and Canada.

I am thinking in particular of his work as sponsor of the important Bill C-11, his contribution to restoring fairness for workers at the Davie shipyard, his ongoing involvement in

international diplomacy, his unrelenting commitment to protecting the French language and to strengthening LGBTQ2 rights.

I got to know Senator Dawson particularly well within the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, at the Board of Internal Economy and at the regular gatherings of our “lunch buddies” group.

When I first came to Parliament Hill, I was fortunate to benefit from his kind advice and extensive experience in Ottawa. His advice was invaluable as I explored how best to focus my efforts in the upper chamber.

I absorbed his wisdom and insight gleaned from time spent in both Houses of Parliament. We are constantly seeking to strike a balance between the need to improve the government's bills and the importance of not taking the place of elected representatives, whose role complements our own.

Ever since Senator Dawson's imminent retirement was announced, his many friends have showered him with well-deserved praise. He built up an extraordinary network of contacts on the Hill, and he was extremely generous in sharing his experience and advice with all his colleagues, regardless of their affiliation.

I often feel that politics has become more divisive and polarizing than ever, largely for electoral reasons. However, Senator Dawson showed us that it is possible to make one's way in Ottawa by being a true gentleman and by focusing on what unites us rather than what divides us.

My hope for all of us, my dear Dennis, is for more men and women of your calibre to contribute to the work of the upper chamber.

Dennis, I look forward to seeing you again and especially to hearing you share your many stories, each one more colourful than the last. I wish you health and happiness in this important chapter of your life. I look forward to our paths crossing again in the future.

Hon. Amina Gerba: I rise today on behalf of Senator Michèle Audette to pay tribute to our colleague, Senator Dennis Dawson, who decided to retire so that he can spend more time in the most wonderful role of all, that of grandfather.

Senator Audette first heard of Senator Dawson when he was a young politician. In fact, he was elected as the youngest member of Parliament in Canadian history.

She finally met him many years later. Yes, the first few times, she thought he seemed like someone with a good sense of humour and who was maybe even a bit of a clown.

A few moons later, their career paths crossed again and she was happy to have a chance to really talk to him and get to know this intelligent man much better. Senator Audette had the privilege of benefiting from his wise and precious advice over the course of many meetings and discussions that were not necessarily all sweetness and light, since it is important to point

out that our dear colleague, although kind and respectful, has a tendency to be rather blunt. She would like to thank him for that advice, because he helped her make some very judicious choices.

On a number of occasions, she and her friend Dennis were on the same flight back to Quebec during the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and those are memorable moments for her.

When she was appointed to the Senate, he was the second person to call and congratulate her. At first, she really thought she would be part of his group. However, that was not to be. He nevertheless respected her decision, even though he took every opportunity to let her know that his group, the Progressive Senate Group, was the best option in the Senate.

Dear colleague, dear advisor, dear friend, on behalf of Senator Audette, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and I wish you a tranquil and wonderful retirement. You are now part of her circle of *mushum*.

Thank you.

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: I, too, want to pay tribute to Senator Dennis Dawson. Others have talked about his long and successful political career. I want to focus on the Dennis I know, the man who just so happened to become my unofficial mentor when I arrived in the Senate four years ago.

At the time, we were both serving on the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications. We were studying the controversial Bill C-48, designed to ban oil tankers in northern British Columbia. The committee chair was a tough, experienced Conservative senator. I was getting my first taste of politics.

Then there he was, Dennis Dawson, who welcomed me by telling me how the new independent senators had no understanding of Senate traditions, how they were arrogant and wanted to change everything for no reason. That was just my first impression of him, a man with a bit of bluster and an attitude that struck me as slightly paternalistic.

I swallowed, listened, and tried, little by little, to absorb the stories, anecdotes, and advice that Dennis offered as crises arose in the transport committee. It happened often.

At that time, I often watched, from the outside, the male senators going about their business, acting much like a boys' club.

I made some mistakes, of course. Dennis was patient and understanding, and he told me that it takes time to understand this political game. He also stood up for me when my right to speak was not recognized and I was distraught by so many procedural battles. Dennis was available, generous, and I ended up laughing at his gruff approach to all of our exchanges.

The best advice he gave me, and that I still try to follow today, is simple: Choose your battles, set your ego aside and do not waste too much energy on the little things, even if you think you are right. The ultimate goal is to be a good legislator, not to win every battle.

The second important piece of advice he gave me was to maintain relationships, have informal discussions with political opponents, and make compromises to move forward.

Still, we are all human. Sometimes Dennis does not follow his own advice. I have seen him lose patience in committee and fly off the handle.

You know that Senator Dawson has a big heart; I have seen it many times. He is a true Liberal who was hurt to be removed from the Liberal caucus in the wake of the Senate reform, but he overcame that hurt and regained his optimism thanks to the creation of the Progressive Senate Group.

He and I struck a good balance during the study of Bill C-11. I was no longer the new kid, he was calmer; our discussions were no longer one-sided. Dennis can be quite self-deprecating.

For four years he kept telling me that he was ready to retire, but never followed through. I think becoming a grandfather is what did it. He is quite smitten. We look at pictures of his granddaughter together, and Dennis Dawson, the sarcastic, sometimes cynical man, smiles beatifically. Thank you for everything, Dennis, my friend.

• (1440)

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, we all know the depth, breadth and long extent of Senator Dawson's service to Canadians in the House of Commons, as a government relations consultant and especially for us here as a senator. How many of us has he assisted and educated on how the Hill works and the importance of our work, how the legislative process works, and more? He always did so with his strong principles and his senses of purpose and humour.

I didn't know about that at first. Dennis had not yet returned from his successful fight with cancer when I arrived in this place, and I was told to make sure I introduced myself to him as soon as he came back. I was on the Transport and Communications Committee and was daunted because we were studying autonomous vehicles. What did I know about them? But I did soon get hooked. I was told Dennis would help me not only with that, but with the cultural issues on my plate. I was truly daunted talking to him the first time about him and his legacies — legacies from wherever he went. How wrong I was — not about the legacies, but I should have had absolutely no trepidation about his willingness to assist this neophyte. Thank you, Dennis.

Rather than repeat all of Senator Dawson's accomplishments, I thought I would dig to the foundation of those achievements — his name, attitudes and principles. First, "Dennis" is a name with deep historical and international roots that can be traced to France and back to the Greco-Roman era. Dennis is drawn from Greek mythology — from Dionysus, the god of fertility and wine. While I'm not going to talk about his choices of wine, I do congratulate you, senator, on your wonderful, beautiful three-month-old granddaughter. It's clear she already has you around her baby finger. No wonder you are retiring now.

The name Dennis also conveys a highly charged personality that attracts powerful ideas. It carries the virtue of diplomacy, gentleness, cooperativeness, being a gifted storyteller and perhaps even verges on the psychic. It's true, right?

Now to the meaning of the senator's key principle — progressive — which means one believing in moderate political change, especially social improvement, and the implementing of social reform to advance the human condition based on purported advancement in science, technology, economic development and social organization. Think of the Transport Committee's work on autonomous vehicles, the CBC reports and Bill C-11 — I could go on, but you know his history here.

Dennis, in my view, you have epitomized all those dimensions and more through your dedicated service, accomplishments and guidance to others on the Hill, in this chamber, to the Progressive Senate Group and to me personally. I applaud your unwavering focus based on your principles. Thank you. Enjoy your little one, and come back and be with us. I know you have not finished your work for Canadians. Thank you.

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, my arrival on the Hill, like many of yours, was a vortex of confusion: phone calls, endless meetings, signatures, security screenings, group canvassing and an overwhelming sense of dislocation. On day two, while wandering around in a state of disassociation, Senator MacDonald kindly directed me to my hotel on Kent Street. On my way there, I decided to grab a bite of comfort food — spaghetti and meatballs — from the Bier Markt.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a rather dapper gent making his way towards me. Flowing locks and a bright bow tie reflected in the bright sunshine. "Oh, my god, it's Eric Clapton," I thought. You look wonderful tonight. He said, "Hello, senator. I'm Dennis Dawson, one of your colleagues in the chamber. May I join you?"

We spent the next two hours covering a wide array of topics: politics, our role as parliamentarians, the subtleties of the chamber of sober second thought and life in general. The weight of confusion that I was feeling at the time began to dissipate and felt that this moment of serendipity was truly seminal. In the face of my perceived confusion and despair, Dennis had appeared as a compass and beacon in his quiet, unassuming way, a political stalwart who had taken the time to reach out to me with kindness, warmth and camaraderie, his mischievous sense of humour demonstrated repeatedly with a twinkle in those eyes. You held my hand when I most needed an anchor.

In the next chapter of our friendship, I had the privilege to witness his remarkable political skills on the international stage. At an Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in Serbia, accompanied by Senator Saint-Germain and Senator Ataullahjan, I witnessed Dennis seamlessly navigate the complexities of an international parliamentary gathering where contentious issues were debated, and I marvelled as he expertly navigated these issues with aplomb and clarity. He defined and protected the rights of the LGBTQ2S community, supporting universal health access and minority rights.

His passion for his beloved Quebec and his unwavering Liberal roots have shaped a remarkable career. Dennis, my friend, you have impacted and influenced so many of us in this chamber, and I will always reflect fondly on your kindness and generosity to me personally. I wish you nothing but the best in your next chapter. Our loss will be your beautiful family's gain.

[Translation]

Good luck, my friend. Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Anne Laberge, Senator Dawson's wife; Cindy Dawson, his daughter; Julian Dawson, his son; Don Dawson, his brother; and Doris Dawson, his sister. They are accompanied by other family and friends.

On behalf of all honourable senators, I welcome you to the Senate of Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of our former colleague the Honourable James S. Cowan and his wife, Sheila Cowan, as well as Jacques Chagnon, former speaker of the National Assembly of Quebec. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Dawson.

On behalf of all honourable senators, I welcome you to the Senate of Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

THE HONOURABLE DENNIS DAWSON

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, and Your Honour, first of all, I want to apologize. Last night there was a reception for my departure at Métropolitain, as everybody has mentioned. When the Speaker was walking into the room, they said, "The guest of honour has arrived; please be quiet." And he was the guest of honour up until that time, but 30 seconds later, the Prime Minister walked in. Your Honour, I'm sorry, everybody forgot about you, but I still noticed that you were there. So I want to apologize, but I think that you understand it.

I could make a comment to everyone here. As one of the first things I did when I came here, Senator Lapointe, who I did not get along with very much — or at all — had said that these things should last at maximum 15 minutes. We're going for an hour, all right? I was walking in the other place and I ran into Senator Batters and I said, "No, Senator Batters, don't be afraid. I won't use up my full 45 minutes and not give a chance to ask questions because you can't ask questions."

• (1450)

Anyway, I'll come back if I have time at the end.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, my colleagues have heaped so much praise upon me that I'm tempted to reconsider my decision to leave. I will certainly treasure their kind words and trot them out if ever I run for elected office in the future and also to reminisce about the good old days as I grow old, as slowly as possible.

[English]

I have an anecdote to share. A former MLA in Quebec City that Jacques Chagnon knows very well decided to leave his job as an MLA and run for the City of Laval as mayor. Everybody got up in the chamber and started talking. People from the Union Nationale started talking about how wonderful this guy was.

[Translation]

Jean-Noël Lavoie is an extraordinary man.

[English]

But Jean-Noël Lavoie was defeated for Mayor of Laval, so he ran to succeed himself in his own seat. His publicity was based on the things that the nice people at the Union Nationale had said about him. Don't be afraid. Senator Plett, don't be afraid. I'm not coming back as an MP. If I wanted to stay, I would have stayed here. It is a lot easier, and you don't have to go knocking door to door.

This is the last time I rise in this chamber. Listening to a number of farewell speeches from my departing colleagues over the past years, I have drawn the conclusion that the fewer years spent in the Senate, the longer the farewell speech; the longer the term has been, the shorter the farewell speech. After 25 years, I should sit down right away, but I will not leave it that easy for you.

Again, I want to quote our former colleague Senator Baker — his wife died last week — who was my first seat mate when I walked into the House of Commons 45 years ago. He was sitting beside me there. He was always practically as colourful as Senator Manning, but certainly more interesting. I offer Senator Baker my sympathy for the passing of his wife. As some of us have heard him say so often, "I will be brief." Senator Baker's speeches were always a treat to listen to for his gift as a speaker. His wit and clever humour were unparalleled. He was a great inspiration. But today is my turn to be brief and, trust me, I will be.

[Senator Dawson]

[Translation]

As the great Québécois singer-songwriter Jean-Pierre Ferland put it, Anne, light the fire in the hearth; I'm coming home. I'm going home to Quebec City after 45 years of splitting my time more or less evenly between there and Ottawa. After two years of hybrid sittings and no need to travel to Ottawa, I've decided it's time for me to go home. Mandatory full-time attendance in Ottawa only forced my hand. Plus, Air Canada cancelled direct flights to Ottawa.

[English]

Everything was blowing in the right way for me to retire. I'll go back to my speech now.

Over all those years in Ottawa and through many ventures across Canada, I have made lots of friends and acquaintances who have become dear to me. In fact, many have become very good friends here in Ottawa. But I'm going back home to Quebec City.

[Translation]

I have made many friends and few enemies, to the best of my knowledge. I have had the opportunity to meet a lot of people over the years, in Ottawa and across the country. However, I decided to focus on Quebec City, my home town, my birthplace, where I could be close to my family and lifelong friends. I cannot leave this chamber without saying a heartfelt thank you to all those who, from near or far, have been important to me throughout my years in the Senate, in particular.

I have had quite a few assistants and staffers. Some of them are in the gallery and several were at last night's event. Many have moved on to other positions in the political world or in other fields.

[English]

Since Senator Gold talked about one of my former assistants — we're not supposed to name people in the tribute, so I won't name her, but Kate is up there anyway — Kate did something this morning that I really appreciated. She posted the first speech I made in the House of Commons 40-odd years ago. The problem is that you'll all see that I haven't improved much since then. People can go back and listen to it and say, "My God, he hasn't improved at all."

I have other staffers here: Arlene, Daphne, Stephen and, finally, Jérémy. They have always managed to make me look good. That's what we need in staffers. In fact, that's their first mandate: Make us comfortable, obviously, but make us look good.

[Translation]

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart for putting up with me through all the ups and downs of parliamentary life in the Senate. I also owe a big thank you to some of my Senate colleagues. I have spent many happy years here since my

appointment in 2005. I have not developed a deep bond with every single one of my colleagues, but I have come to know and appreciate many of you.

[English]

I have worked closely with many of you over the years. I found in most of you, if not all of you, a genuine drive to serve our compatriots with dedication and to contribute to making our country one of the best in the world. It's not broken. It might need a little fixing and a little love but, trust me, it's not broken.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Dawson: That's about as partisan as I'll be.

[Translation]

Many senators in this chamber, from all political backgrounds, have actually become friends.

[English]

Mohamed, I share that precious moment. It was an opportunity for me to try to — I didn't succeed in convincing you to join our caucus, but, as Michèle Audette learned — and I'm saying this in front of everyone — even if you have been in the other caucus, you are always welcome in the Progressive caucus.

[Translation]

I consider myself very fortunate to have worked with such talented men and women who make an important contribution to public life and the advancement of matters in their province or territory and at the federal level. There have also been some not-so-happy years since I was appointed, but that has nothing to do with my colleagues. There have been less propitious events that greatly affected me, mainly our expulsion from the Liberal caucus in February 2014, whose anniversary is approaching. I did end up making peace with this decision, but I did not always agree with this approach and I still haven't changed my mind.

[English]

I had the opportunity last night to have the Prime Minister come to my farewell party. I might have mentioned to him that, even many years later, I did not really appreciate getting thrown out of my political party. I announced to him that I'm going to the Liberal convention in the month of May as a liberated senator that is allowed to have partisan opinions.

[Translation]

The list of people I want to thank after a 45-year career is very long — it could be really, really long. I began my public life at the age of 22 as a school trustee, then as chair of the school board, but I will focus on my final years in the Senate.

The first person I have to thank is the Right Hon. Paul Martin, a friend, a mentor and a guide, who addressed those present at the event organized in my honour last night. He had the excellent idea of appointing me to the Senate in 2005. This was obviously one of his better decisions and I will be eternally grateful to him for that.

[English]

I owe him for having had the privilege of sitting in this house and I thank him for having given me this opportunity to serve my fellow citizens. I wish and I hope that I have met his expectations and have made him proud of the confidence he put in me when he appointed me to the upper chamber.

[Translation]

By appointing me to the Senate, he gave me the opportunity to once again contribute to public life in Canada and Quebec. He also made it possible for me to continue serving my fellow citizens, this time in this august institution, the Senate of Canada. I have always considered Paul Martin to be an exceptional individual, the type of person we need in politics, because the only objective guiding those people is public service and improving the economic and social situation of their fellow Canadians.

That said, I took my role seriously, and I consider myself as a senator who truly tried to contribute to parliamentary life. I am proud of my participation in our debates as a legislator.

I made it a point of honour to interact productively with my Senate colleagues in the process that lets us bring a "second sober thought" to the bills and various initiatives that come to the Senate for study and debate.

I want to especially highlight the friendship and support of former senators Serge Joyal, who was my mentor when I was appointed to the Senate, and Francis Fox, a long-standing faithful friend who was appointed to this place at the same time I was.

[English]

Jim, I know you are here somewhere. My friend Jim spent 14 years as my leader, although I might have been a pain for him at times because I've been known to have independent opinions. It was a pleasure serving with you, with Serge and with all of my colleagues. Earlier, somebody mentioned in one of the speeches that I was one of the last — and that's true — I started politics with Trudeau the first and I'm finishing politics with Trudeau the second. As we like to say, "from one Trudeau to another." I have to admit that I'm also the only person in Parliament who is still here — that is, for the next few hours — who has served with both of them. When I leave, he's going to have to find somebody else to complain about.

• (1500)

But I have to tell you, I'm also the only person in the House of Commons or in the Senate who —

[Translation]

— in French I say that I voted for the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,

[English]

— and as I say in English, I voted for patriation. I just hope people don't need the translation to understand that one is liked and one is less liked, whether it's speaking to the rest of Canada or it's speaking to Quebec. That's my political instinct.

I can't speak about everybody, but I will go over the list of people that made comments. I did joke about Senator Batters not wanting me to speak for 45 minutes. Jane, one of my great accomplishments — and I did an interview with the Senate communication services — was the creation of the progressive caucus. Obviously, we were looking out for ourselves, and I think that we and Terry succeeded in making a successful group. I encourage people to understand that having more caucuses in this place will make it a better place. I'm asking you to understand that. I think we should work on that.

Marc, yes, I have had wonderful staff, but I have to say you have been well served. A lot of people in your office, including your deputy leader, make you look good. So we have to take that.

Senator Plett, yes, we did some shopping in Brussels, I think. I was buying bow ties, and he was buying ties. However, that was probably the only occasion when we had fun because a lot of the times we were more in conflict than anything else. CBC is a very good example of where there was no reconciliation possible. The reality is that he wanted it to disappear. I wanted it to stay. You know what? It's still there. Senator Plett, it's going to stay there.

Like Raymonde said, we have known each other for many years. Her husband did law with my wife. Even though we are in different caucuses, we cooperated often in the past. I really appreciate your comments. My son played in kindergarten with her son. It has been a long tradition. My son is now the one with the beard and long hair — where did he get that? I don't know. Senator Plett and Senator Housakos, he makes his own bow ties too.

Senator Patterson, you were late when I did a demonstration on how to make a bow tie earlier. I won't do it again because I don't want to push my luck.

Senator Klyne and Bill C-11 — I had a new colleague sitting with me on the committee, and we prided ourselves on having very independent opinions. We didn't always get along. But I knew that, in the end, I could always count on his support.

Leo, I was comfortable knowing you were going to speak because I ran into your wife, who was on the Hill, and she told me, "Dennis, don't be afraid. He is only going to be saying nice things about you." So that means I don't get to do any snide remarks about you because you were too nice to me.

[Translation]

Éric Forest is my friend, and now he's my neighbour in Quebec City. He lives very close to me. I'll probably have the opportunity to see him more often in Quebec City than I did here in Ottawa.

[Senator Dawson]

[English]

Amina and Michèle, somebody is going to have to tell me what a *mushum* is. I'll ask Michèle to describe it to me. I hope it's a compliment.

[Translation]

Julie, I am so proud of you. I know I sponsored you, but I think you are an excellent parliamentarian. I'm very proud to have contributed to your career.

[English]

Patricia, you're my cultural instructor. Patricia and I were on the Foreign Affairs Committee doing a study on culture. She was my adviser on the subject that I should have known more about. I learned a lot from Patricia.

Mohamed, yes, I ran into you on the street, and you looked lost. I don't know if it was because you're from Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't know what you were looking for, but I really felt that I could be a little bit of an inspiration. Yes, when we went to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I did try to introduce you to that world, and it's a wonderful world.

Raymonde also came with us to some of these conferences.

[Translation]

I know it may not seem like it, René, but I have advocated for the LGBTI community at international conferences. When I was in Djibouti, Foreign Affairs officials told me not to talk about the subject.

[English]

But a right is a right is a right, and I'm going to say it in Djibouti where it's prohibited to be homosexual. Then a year later, I went with Raymonde and Mohamed to an Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in Qatar, and it's illegal to be homosexual in Qatar. I made my speech, and I said, "A right is a right is a right." I have always done it my way. I've always been proud of having done that.

I lost my place in the speech again.

I'll just take the opportunity — Pierrette and I have something in common. Josée too, I think. There are a few people here that have sat in both houses. When you leave the other place, and you're defeated, they don't give you the chance to say thank you for having served. You don't have that opportunity. Since I have an opportunity today to thank the people of Louis-Hébert for having elected me in 1977, re-elected me in 1979 and elected me again, I want to thank them for having had confidence in me. In 1984, I have to admit that they made a decision I have to live with. It's such a small world that the person who defeated me was Suzanne Fortin-Duplessis. Later, she arrived here in the Senate, and she was still in front of me as an opposition senator.

I'm jumping over a lot. I did have a long speech — I'm looking at Paul Massicotte and Senator Greene — about the reform of this place because I do believe it needs to be reformed. A lot of improvements have to be done. However, I think it's not a time to — I won't do it. I'm probably going to publish in *The Hill Times* what I think should be done to improve things, including the fact that there is not only a half kilometre between the House and the Senate, we are now miles away from one another. We don't contact one another, and we don't share information. We don't have relationships. I have often given as an example the fact that when you go to the Office of the Prime Minister, or PMO, they have a desk for LGBTQ, western development, economic development, foreign affairs and American-Canadian relations, but they don't have a desk for the Senate. Therefore, there is no person to go to at the PMO or the Privy Council Office, or PCO, when you have a senator issue. I think that could be improved.

He said that we're an independent senate, but he still names the Speaker, and he still names the Leader of the Government, obviously. He is going to be naming the next Clerk. If we're independent, I would hope that we could have that power. But again, I'm not going to do all those things because I said I would try to shorten my speech. I'll take those pages away.

This is the part where I take out a box of Kleenex — I've got one here. You know that I have spent the — Anne and I have been together for 40 years. In political life, that's only 20 because I was gone half the time. She endured those days. Cindy, my daughter — who lives here in Ottawa — has been my constant dinner companion. I'm going back home, but I'm going to miss having these dinners with my daughter. That's the Kleenex, I'm just taking it in case.

[Translation]

I told them that I love them and I look forward to spending more time with them, especially, as has been said many times, with my granddaughter, who joined our clan just a few weeks ago.

Before I leave the Senate chamber, I'd like to share some thoughts about this institution.

[English]

That's the part I'll be jumping over because I was going to give you advice. With regard to the Massicotte-Greene report and Senator Bellemare's efforts at the Rules Committee — all of these things — it's nice to talk about them, but we have to act on them because this place does need —

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Dawson: I did criticize the fact that we were thrown out of caucus in 2014. I actually mentioned it to the Prime Minister last night in a very impolite way — well, a polite way, but not respectful of the fact that he is the Prime Minister and I'm close to being a former senator. However, I did feel that I understand why it was done, but the follow-up and follow through and how — I remember when I arrived when the new independent senators had six independent senators and three government representatives. Now we have 55 independent

senators, and we still have three government representatives. The work they have to do to handle all these committees and all these members just means that the PMO and the government have not understood that they also have to adapt for the fact that —

[Translation]

— when you bring someone into the world, maybe you should listen to them.

[English]

So, when you give birth to someone, which is the independent senate, you have to listen to what the Senate is saying. The senators are saying, "You have to modernize the rules. You have to help us make this a better place." It took six years for the Parliament of Canada Act to be changed. I'm very happy for you, but the only thing it meant is that you're getting money. For the rest, the rules were not changed. It just means they are respecting the fact that if you have a mandate, then that mandate should be recognized. Apart from that, a lot of modernization has to be done. However, if you want to go to the PMO and ask them who will do it, there is nobody in that office mandated to deal with the Senate. I think that's wrong.

• (1510)

Anyway, there are a lot of things about the reform I would like to get into, but I'll just jump over those points. I could talk about the appointment process — I think Paul Martin had a good one, and I certainly can't contest his judgment.

When I was thrown out of caucus in 2014, I really did feel like I should leave. I had a Liberal career, and I believed — and still believe — in partisan politics. I didn't leave because, after that, we basically recreated the Progressive Senate Group.

I'm looking at the clerks, the Speaker and all the people who have worked in the Senate for the few years I've been working on the Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration Committee — I have learned to admire the work they do. It has been a very challenging and interesting experience for me. That's one of the things I will miss; the Long Term Vision and Plan Subcommittee, the Joint Interparliamentary Council — I will miss those things. There are a lot of things I won't miss, but I will miss those. I want to thank the people who supported us. I'm looking at Gérald, whom I have known for a long time — I will miss you too, but I will miss these people who are in front of us.

The only thing that was left was the timing of my departure; a lot of things happened. I joked about the fact that there were no more — I had to come back here all the time because they have hybrid sittings in the other place. I don't understand why they can have hybrid sittings and we can't; I don't even understand why they have hybrid sittings. I was there for many years. I was always proud to sit in the House of Commons — I would rather sit in the House of Commons than be on a Zoom committee. They made their decisions.

[Translation]

This isn't the time to go on and on, but I do know that, throughout my years in Canada's Parliament, I truly believed I was always serving the interests of our country and our fellow citizens.

[English]

I am proud of my years as a senator. Those years have been wonderful in spite of a few bad curves. I wish the best of luck to those of you who will continue to be part of this institution, but it is time for me to go home to my wife, my family and — yes, I will repeat — to my daughter. I'm quite proud; I am anything but bragging. I am humbled by what I have heard here today. I think I have tried to live up to the fact that Paul Martin named me. My problem now is to try to live up to everything that was said.

[Translation]

Once again, I want to thank the people who gave me the opportunity to play an active role in making Canada one of the best countries in the world. I did so humbly but with great conviction and determination. Canada is still the best country in the world.

[English]

Thank you. I will be back every once in a while, but as a tourist.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Michel Wong and Suzanne Wong. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Gerba.

On behalf of all honourable senators, I welcome you to the Senate of Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Ms. Kerline Joseph. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Mégie.

On behalf of all honourable senators, I welcome you to the Senate of Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Mayor Corrie DiManno, Town of Banff and Mr. Kelly Gibson, Town Manager. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Sorensen.

[Senator Dawson]

On behalf of all honourable senators, I welcome you to the Senate of Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Kwame McKenzie. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Omidvar.

On behalf of all honourable senators, I welcome you to the Senate of Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[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, February 14, 2023, at 2 p.m.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

SERVICE CONTRACTS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, I want to return to a topic I raised briefly yesterday, which is the McKinsey consulting firm issue. McKinsey has long-standing and extensive ties to the Liberal Party of Canada.

Leader, McKinsey has received contracts worth at least \$120 million from the Trudeau government. At least 18 contracts were sole-sourced, and one of the contracts given to McKinsey for IT services doesn't sunset until the year 2100 — 77 years from now.

All of that has occurred at the same time that this government has greatly increased the size and the cost of public service.

Leader, the Prime Minister said his government would look into those contracts — he has had several weeks now to look into them. Why will he not tell Canadians the total amount his government gave his friends at McKinsey? Will McKinsey keep raking in taxpayer dollars for work of lesser quality than the work Canada's public service could do?

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

If I understood one aspect of the question, allow me to correct the record. The contract to which you refer, Senator Plett, which is going to be “sunsetting,” as you said, in 77 years, or something like that, is not a contract at all; it's a supply arrangement. It doesn't guarantee any monetary arrangement. It is simply a pre-selection of supply. Hundreds of suppliers have arrangements of that kind. It's a long-standing government practice that aims to expedite the procurement process.

I could go on, but I'll turn to the other aspects of your question.

Indeed, lots of contracts with McKinsey and others have been undertaken by this government. Such services are used to complement the services of our very able and professional public service. They meet unexpected fluctuations in human resources and workload or, as is often the case, where special expertise is required, and it would be imprudent to bring on new full-time employees for work that has a more fixed timeline.

As we know, colleagues, the Prime Minister has asked Minister Jaczek and Minister Fortier to review the matter, take a closer look into the numbers and look into the circumstances of all those contracts. The government is looking at this matter to make sure that everything was done in the right way.

• (1520)

I understand that the focus of the Treasury Board rests on the policy underlying the granting of such consultancy contracts, while PSPC — Public Services and Procurement Canada — will focus on the circumstances surrounding those contracts. The government looks forward to the results of those inquiries and to sharing that with the public.

Senator Plett: It is amazing how this Prime Minister always looks into issues after he has messed them up, then he has people looking into it.

For almost two years, leader, since March 2021, I have had written questions on the Senate's Order Paper asking for information regarding the vetting process for Mr. Dominic Barton's appointment as the Chair of the Trudeau government's Advisory Council on Economic Growth. Mr. Barton is a former top executive with McKinsey and the Trudeau government's former ambassador to China. The Prime Minister has publicly called him a friend, despite whatever he says now.

As well, for over two years, since December 2020, I have had a question on the Senate's Order Paper asking the Trudeau government to provide information on how much it paid all consultants in relation to its COVID-19 response program.

Leader, neither of these questions has been answered. At this point, it's clear your government doesn't ever want to answer them. Why is that, leader? Why is your government hiding this information?

Senator Gold: I'm sorry, senator — and thank you for your question — but I don't accept the premise. Mr. Barton appeared before a committee in the other house. I know the focus of much of the questioning from members of the opposition was to try to depict his relationship with the Prime Minister in terms that, as it turns out, are not at all correct. It's unfortunate, as there are more important questions about how we can improve and what the right balance to be struck between our professional public service and consultants is going forward as the world changes, and as human resources are challenged.

I spent a fair bit of time yesterday providing answers to a large number of questions, both written and oral. I'll continue to make my best efforts to get answers in a timely fashion.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

LEGISLATION ON ONLINE STREAMING SERVICES

Hon. Leo Housakos: My question is for the government leader in the Senate. Government leader, yesterday, I asked you a question in regard to the Trudeau government's censorship bill, Bill C-11, and the fact that Minister Rodriguez sent a letter to the chair of the CRTC — a chair he appointed — asking her to make sure she takes into consideration the rights and freedoms of Canadians when implementing Bill C-11. Your response yesterday, government leader, was the following:

... it's the responsible thing for any government to ensure that those who are charged with enforcing the law — once this law does come into force — understand their obligations to respect our fundamental freedoms as guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The question is the following, government leader: Why does Minister Rodriguez have to write a letter to the chair of the CRTC when the bill is still before Parliament and he can write into that bill his exact wishes in black and white, so that regardless of who the chair of the CRTC is, there will be no ambiguity and neither Prime Minister Trudeau nor any other government will have the right to tell Canadians what to watch or post on the internet?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Well, I have nothing to add to my reply, because it is sort of Legislation 101 or Constitutional Law 101 that the Charter has pre-eminent force over all pieces of legislation.

But, Senator Housakos, this bill, which, respectfully, you have continued to mischaracterize as a censorship bill, is nothing of the sort, no matter how many times it's repeated. History teaches us, alas, that one can continue to repeat things that are not true, and people may come to believe them, but it doesn't make them any more true.

The fact is that there is a great deal of disinformation, misinformation and misleading information being circulated for purposes that have nothing to do with the bill, but only with political and partisan considerations.

The Charter of Rights governs all of our actions in this chamber and the interpretation and application of the law by all public officials, as it should.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, you have to admit, it's highly unusual for a minister of the Crown to feel compelled to write a letter to the chair of the CRTC asking her to respect Canadians' rights and freedoms in regard to a law that hasn't even gotten out of the door of the House of Commons. Clearly, even the minister himself felt compelled to have to do that. That in itself should raise some questions.

Senator Gold, yesterday, I asked you about the taxpayer-funded CBC announcing plans to move its operations entirely online. Senator Gold, the CBC can, to use your words, "speculate" and "anticipate" all it wants about the future but receives funding now to provide a service now to all Canadians in all regions.

My question is a simple one and one that we should all want an answer to: Would the aforementioned minister responsible be willing to write another letter in his nifty letter-writing campaign to the CRTC chair to ask her to guarantee that CBC funds are being used properly in alignment with their licensing obligations, or is it a one-letter-a-week policy by the Minister of Canadian Heritage to the CRTC?

Senator Gold: The role of the CBC is an important one in this country, despite the constant attacks, which, I gather, did not date from just yesterday from the opposition. It's a serious role. I'm going to try to answer in a serious way.

The CBC provides an essential and important service to Canadians, has done so in the past, continues to do so in the present and, for many Canadians, will continue to do so in the future.

It is an institution that has helped bind our country together. Reasonable people can disagree about whether market forces alone should govern broadcasting in Canada. I know there is quite a difference of opinion within this chamber, and I respect that in a democracy.

But the denigration of the contribution that the CBC makes to Canada as a whole, and that Radio-Canada makes to our Province of Quebec and to francophones outside of Quebec in giving them the ability to have a voice and a vehicle and a platform for the expression of identity and culture, is what makes this country distinctive and without which this country would not be the great country that we so properly celebrate here.

I would ask colleagues to take a moment before trotting out, dare I say — I apologize if that was disrespectful — the ideologically driven talking points that have less to do with the reality of what the CBC and our public broadcasting does for the benefit of Canadians, and think about the quality of life that has been created thanks to our national institutions, a central one of which is Radio-Canada and the CBC.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EARTHQUAKE IN TURKEY AND SYRIA

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Senator Gold, let's shift once again to Global Affairs, and put our eyes outside our shores to the very tragic situation in Turkey and northern Syria. More than 11,000 people have now been reported to have fallen victims to the earthquake. I want to, first of all, congratulate the government, and please do convey this to them, on the quick announcement of \$10 million of aid to the earthquake victims and then, shortly following that, a pledge to match the donations of Canadians who are opening their hearts, minds and wallets through the Red Cross. That's really good news.

I met today, however coincidentally, with the Red Cross. They are here in Ottawa for International Development Week. They alerted me to the fact that getting aid to Syria is more complex, partly because of what they have been through in these long years of war and partly because we have imposed sanctions. Some of these sanctions prevent aid from getting to the people in need, almost like what is happening in Afghanistan.

I want to ask you to please make the government aware of this issue and ensure us that they will consider this as they flow their aid to Syria. Thank you.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you. What is happening for the individuals in these countries is a tragedy. Whatever one thinks of the actions of governments or groups that are in control of territory, people are suffering. I'm glad our country has responded. Thank you for acknowledging that, and I'll pass that on.

I know the government is looking at ways in which to continue to assist. The challenge, as you properly mentioned, in Syria, as it is in Afghanistan, has to do with the natures of the regimes and the odious things that they do to their citizens and, indeed, beyond. The government will continue to do what it can to assist those who want to assist the people of Syria and Turkey.

• (1530)

Senator Omidvar: Thank you, Senator Gold. I'm curious as to why the government, however, chooses to match the donations of Canadians only to the Red Cross. The Red Cross is a wonderful organization. I give to them. Many of us give to them. They deliver on the ground. But this is such a complex situation, and there are wonderful organizations such as GlobalMedic, Médecins Sans Frontières Canada and World Vision. I'm just

wondering why there is this sole-source contract, if I may call it that, to the Red Cross, as opposed to a diversity of investments to deal with the problem that is so tragic. Would you look into that?

Senator Gold: I'll certainly look into it. I'm tempted to speculate, and that's not my job to do. I will make some inquiries and be happy to report back.

HEALTH

HEALTH CARE TRANSFERS

Hon. Brian Francis: Senator Gold, yesterday, it was announced that the federal government will provide \$2 billion over 10 years to:

... address the unique challenges Indigenous Peoples face when it comes to fair and equitable access to quality and culturally safe health care services.

In light of the criticisms from Indigenous leaders, who were excluded from discussions on health care funding, could you please provide us with a detailed list of all the "Indigenous partners" your government plans to work with to prioritize investments, as well as with a detailed breakdown of how — and how much of — this funding will be disbursed directly to First Nations, Inuit and Métis across all provinces and territories?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. It's an important one. Clearly, I don't have the answer. Part of the reason is that the government is going to be working with Indigenous leadership and communities to make sure that the money — and this is a historic and first-time initiative, which the government is proud of — is allocated in the right way that meets the needs.

In fact, a number of us today had lunch with, at his invitation, the Minister of Health and also Minister Bennett, and this subject was discussed. One of our colleagues — who is not in the chamber so I should not mention her name — raised this directly, and there was a clear commitment and understanding on the part — I'm looking for colleagues who were there to verify what I'm saying.

Senator Plett: We weren't invited.

Senator Gold: You were not invited. It wasn't me who extended the invitation, Senator Plett.

But what I'm saying is that those who were there I think can attest to the fact that the government is committed to working in a serious partnership way with the communities, and it's going to take some time to develop those plans and make sure that the assistance the money can provide meets the needs of the individual communities.

I'll make some inquiries. I don't think I'll have an answer quickly. Thank you.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

Hon. Robert Black: On Wednesdays, the Canadian Senators Group directs questions to committee chairs. Therefore, my question today is for my honourable colleague Senator Omidvar, the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.

Senator Omidvar, I and many Canadians are interested in your committee's study on suicide prevention and how it might benefit rural areas and the first responders that continue to serve and protect our smaller communities. As we know, mental health challenges affect people of all ages, education, income levels and cultures. In any given year, one in five Canadians will personally experience a mental health problem or illness.

We also know that rural communities often have issues accessing many services, including the health sector. Witnesses have come forward in your committee study that continue to drive this narrative. In many cases, mental health-related services and supports in rural communities are less comprehensive, available and accessible than in urban areas.

What is your committee hearing from witnesses that will help address the difficulties rural first responders face in mental health resource access Canada-wide, and how will your committee continue to support rural first responders for the benefit of all Canadians? Thank you, *meegwetich*.

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Thank you, Senator Black, for that question. It's a timely one, as we are almost ready to complete our deliberations. Sadly, as you know, suicide does not recognize boundaries of a city or a town. It lives within the boundaries of the mind. But unfortunately, it is part of our national narrative regardless of size and region.

We have heard from a number of witnesses, Senator Black, on the issues that you have raised. On the one hand is the imbalance, I would say, between the need for services and the access to resources. We heard, in particular, from remote northern communities and we heard about the Inuit and Indigenous realities. We also heard from a medical professional with an interesting framework addressing the questions that you have put on the table in terms of rural responders and access.

We have also had some discussions on the higher incidence of firearm ownership in rural communities and the link to suicide, as suicide by firearm is far more lethal than other means. However, our study is not a study about suicide. It is a study that evaluates the national suicide prevention framework. It's therefore a big-picture look at the troubling rate of suicide and what the framework needs to do to address its priorities, actions, outcomes and reporting going forward.

I hope the chamber will welcome the report that we will table not too far off in the future and look at its proposals that we are making to the Government of Canada. I hope that answers your question, Senator Black.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

TRADE PROTECTIONISM

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, in light of last night's State of the Union Address, President Biden stated:

. . . I'm also announcing new standards to require all construction materials used in federal infra- — infrastructure projects to be made in America. . . . Made in America. . . . Lumber, glass, drywall, fiber-optic cable.

And on my watch, American roads, bridges, and American highways are going to be made with American products . . .

If this comes to pass, leader, Canadian businesses and Canadian workers will be shut out by the Biden Administration. It will have an extremely negative impact on both of our countries due to the integration of our economies and supply chains.

Senator Gold, what specific actions are being taken by the Trudeau government today to counter this latest "buy America" threat?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. Yes, the relationship that Canada has on trade with the United States is a long-standing one, a productive one and a mutually beneficial one, but it has never been without these tensions, regardless of who occupies the White House or who is in control of Congress. The fact is that there has been a strain of protectionism in the United States that is long-standing, and we have our own issues as well that we feel are important to protect the interests of our own consumers and our own producers.

Canada has been very successful historically in prosecuting its interest in relation to United States protectionism and we will continue to do so. This is not a punctual issue. It's an ongoing regular part of Canada's relationships with the United States, has been since before the State of the Union Address yesterday and will continue to be so afterwards. Our track record is pretty good at defending our interests in relation to trade with the United States, but it would be folly to assume that these issues will ever go away. And in this case, I think it's fair to say the United States is in, yet again, a cycle of perpetual electioneering and politicking.

When we put all of those factors together, speeches are made, legislative initiatives are being contemplated and the Canadian government has been working on this for months, if not years, behind the scenes, as it typically does and has done with great success and will continue to do so.

Senator Plett: You are right, leader. The track record for Canada on working with the United States has been exceptionally good, especially under the prime ministership of Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper. To a lesser extent, Jean Chrétien got along fine with Bill Clinton. It's this Prime Minister who is having a problem with the United States, now under two different presidents. We can no longer blame the previous president; he is having problems with this one.

• (1540)

When the Obama administration brought forward similar Buy America provisions in a stimulus package in 2009, the previous Conservative government worked diligently to secure an exemption. Thirteen years ago, in February 2010, we signed an agreement with the U.S., and Canada was the only country in the world to obtain an exemption.

In contrast, a few days after the Prime Minister and President Biden had their first face-to-face meeting, the U.S. doubled the softwood lumber tariffs. Two weeks ago, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced plans to extend these tariffs. As well, our seed potato farmers in Prince Edward Island still cannot export to the U.S. under Trudeau's watch. I could go on, leader.

Why has the Trudeau government failed to move quickly on trade protectionism from this Biden administration?

Senator Gold: Senator Plett, your loyalty to your former leader and nostalgia for those days are actually quite touching.

This government, like all Canadian governments, works tirelessly with its American counterparts to pursue our interests and the interests of our workers and consumers. It has been successful. This government was remarkably successful during the period of the Trump presidency, especially when that president decided to renegotiate a free trade agreement. Canada did exceptionally well.

We have a strong team, both political and in the public service, and we will continue to benefit from the strong leadership of this government in protecting Canadian interests against those who would challenge them.

[Translation]

HEALTH

HEALTH CARE TRANSFERS

Hon. Claude Carignan: Honourable senators, the first ministers' meeting on health care took place yesterday. Prime Minister Trudeau had announced that he would make a substantial offer to premiers with respect to increasing health transfers in light of current needs. He offered \$4.6 billion a year over 10 years. That's only 16% of what the provinces and territories were asking for. That falls far short of being a substantial offer and is nowhere near the type of funding that would help support health systems and address the issues they've been having.

Leader, I understand that in a negotiation some strategists may decide to start off with a low or ridiculous offer, but that is rarely met with success. Don't you believe that the federal government, by offering 16% of the funding requested, is sending a message to the provinces and territories that 84% of what they requested isn't needed to maintain and improve health care?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The answer is no, senator.

First, I do not want to engage in partisanship, but it is important to point out that your leader, Mr. Poilievre, did not say anything while waiting for the meeting to begin. He very quickly said, "We are going to honour it", which is what Mr. Harper also did the last time. That is a good political move and I commend him for that.

However, as you well know, the fact that the provinces asked for a certain amount of money, while completely ignoring the tax points transfer, does not necessarily mean that the amount they requested was appropriate. It also does not mean that the provinces expected to get everything they asked for. As you said, there are ways of negotiating, and that is true on both sides.

The federal government's response is meaningful and responsible. More money will be transferred to the provinces. As I mentioned before, for the first time, \$2 billion will be allocated to address challenges uniquely faced by Indigenous peoples. Given the context in Canada and around the world and given that we have an economy that has just come through a pandemic, this is also a very fiscally responsible decision.

The Government of Canada showed that it has been accountable to Canadians in regard to health care. It has been equally accountable to the provinces, which have exclusive jurisdiction over the management of the health care system, meaning that they ensure that the reforms work for their citizens. For the first time, thanks to the data sharing approved by Premier Legault, Premier Ford and others, we will be able to exchange information and know where the money given to the provinces is going. If we give \$1 billion to the provinces, it doesn't mean they're going to spend it on health care. That game has been played for a long time by the provinces, and the money with no strings attached often ends up in the general revenues.

For the first time, through data sharing and bilateral agreements, we will have the means to follow the money to see if it's actually having an impact. This is a step in the right direction.

[English]

DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table the answers to the following oral questions:

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on December 1, 2021, by the Honourable Senator Bellemare, concerning employment insurance reform.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on December 2, 2021, by the Honourable Senator Martin, concerning the funding for equitable library access.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on May 19, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Francis, concerning the Canada Emergency Response Benefit — Canada Revenue Agency.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on May 19, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Francis, concerning the Canada Emergency Response Benefit — Employment and Social Development Canada.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on June 7, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Bovey, concerning the Canada Disability Benefit.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on September 28, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Housakos, concerning Canada-China relations.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on October 18, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Francis, concerning support for victims of Hurricane Fiona.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on October 20, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Loffreda, concerning the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on November 17, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Deacon (*Nova Scotia*), concerning the Strategic Innovation Fund.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on November 22, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Duncan, concerning employment insurance regional boundaries.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on November 29, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Seidman, concerning drug shortages.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on December 13, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Bellemare, concerning employment insurance reform.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Diane Bellemare on December 1, 2021)

The Government recognizes that the Employment Insurance (EI) program needs to keep pace with labour market shifts and the changing nature of work. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted program gaps. To address these and better understand the needs of employers and workers, the Government undertook consultations with

Canadians and stakeholders on modernizing the EI program, as committed in Budget 2021. These consultations are now complete.

They were held over two phases (August 2021-February 2022; April 2022-July 2022), and included stakeholder roundtables, written submissions and an online survey. Topics included EI access and simplification, benefit adequacy, supports for workers experiencing life events, workers in seasonal industries, supports for self-employed workers, the Premium Reduction Program, and EI program financing. “What We Heard” reports from both phases were published online (Phase 1 report – April 2022; Phase 2 report — September 2022).

Based on consultation feedback and lessons learned from the pandemic, including the EI temporary measures, the development of a long-term plan on EI modernization is being finalized. The Government will release its overall EI modernization plan once the work is complete. At this stage, it would be premature to speculate on the timing of EI modernization and its content.

FUNDING FOR EQUITABLE LIBRARY ACCESS

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on December 2, 2021)

Since 2015–2016, the Government of Canada has provided funding to initiatives that support access to reading and published works for Canadians with print disabilities. In support of this objective, Budget 2022 announced \$25 million over five years to support the following measures:

- the production of alternate-format materials by the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Services (NNELS);
- research and a survey of persons with print disabilities;
- a new Equitable Access to Reading Program to boost the production of accessible format reading materials through innovative partnerships.

To support development of the new program, the government is taking steps to determine the current and future needs of persons with print disabilities in a meaningful way that is effective and responsive. In addition to the survey, the government will also include stakeholders, persons with print disabilities and industry leaders in accessible technology in these critical conversations.

FINANCE

CANADA EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Brian Francis on May 19, 2022)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY (CRA)

The COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for many Canadians. The CRA remains committed to being compassionate, flexible, and supportive during this challenging time. While there will not be any penalties for those who applied for these benefits in good faith, individuals will have to repay benefits payments they received that they were not entitled to receive.

Starting on May 10, 2022, the CRA began sending Notices of Redetermination to individuals who received a payment but were later determined to be ineligible for one or more benefit periods received. The CRA will work with all impacted individuals to ensure that any questions they may have about these letters are answered using a compassionate approach.

Individuals may find it challenging to meet their financial obligations. To help impacted individuals, CRA agents will work with them on a case-by-case basis to resolve any issues. Expanded provisions are available to help individuals meet their tax obligations, including flexible payment arrangements. Detailed information is available on the Canada.ca website for those who want to resolve their debt or explore payment options. Individuals are also encouraged to contact the CRA by phone to discuss their options with an agent.

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Brian Francis on May 19, 2022)

We recognize that this is a difficult time for many individuals. That is why the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), which is responsible for collecting these debts owed to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), has designed expanded payment terms to provide Canadians with more flexibility for repayment. No penalties or interest will be charged on the emergency benefit overpayment. Canadians will not be put into financial hardship by having to repay emergency benefits they received.

ESDC and CRA have worked together to streamline the financial hardship process to make it less onerous to individuals that have been impacted. Flexible repayment options are available. Clients are encouraged to contact the CRA to establish repayment schedules based on their ability to pay and their financial situation. This will take into account the personal and financial circumstances of the person, in order to determine the best approach.

Each case will be reviewed on its own merit. Depending on the debtor's ability to pay, appropriate recovery action may include renegotiation of a payment arrangement, suspension of collection activity, and/or other suitable measures.

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Patricia Bovey on June 7, 2022)

On June 2, 2022, the government tabled Bill C-22, Canada Disability Benefit Act, to establish the Canada Disability Benefit. The intent of the proposed benefit is to reduce poverty and support the financial security of working-age Canadians with disabilities by supplementing existing income support measures, such as provincial and territorial social assistance. The bill received unanimous support at second reading, and was reported back to the House of Commons on December 14, 2022, after being studied and amended by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Given the critical role provincial and territorial governments play in providing benefits and supports to many Canadians with disabilities, the government will continue to engage jurisdictions on the design of the benefit, including through the Forum of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services and through bilateral meetings. Through these discussions, the government will work with provinces and territories as they determine how to treat the proposed Canada Disability Benefit and will seek to ensure persons with disabilities are better off as a result.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Leo Housakos on September 28, 2022)

Public Safety Canada (PS)

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is aware of and is investigating allegations of unauthorized police presence in Canada. Since the investigation is ongoing, there will be no further comment on the matter at this time.

Generally speaking, Canada has seen an increase in the frequency of foreign interference, perpetrated by hostile state actors seeking to advance their political, economic and security interests to the detriment of Canada's. As noted in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's 2021 Annual Report, these activities are sophisticated, persistent, and pervasive. When such threats are observed, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the RCMP apply the full measures of their mandates to investigate and mitigate where appropriate.

To address emerging and persistent threats, our government is always looking for ways to enhance the measures already in place and to bolster the toolkit through new approaches to confront foreign interference. This may include, for instance, consulting with Canadians on potential solutions to ensure that legislative frameworks evolve alongside the threat, and aligning with international best practices and the approaches of our closest like-minded partners and allies.

PUBLIC SAFETY

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF HURRICANE FIONA

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Brian Francis on October 18, 2022)

Public Safety Canada (PS)

Our government recognizes the significant loss and hardship that Atlantic and eastern Quebec residents have suffered due to Hurricane Fiona. That is why we stepped up to deploy the Armed Forces in the immediate aftermath, launched the \$300M Hurricane Fiona Recovery Fund, set aside further disaster recovery funding for provinces under the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA), as well as agreeing to match donations to the Red Cross's response.

Donations to the Red Cross's appeal is supporting a range of emergency services for those in need. This support has come in many forms including interim housing, clothing, food, and other essential supplies. The government and the Red Cross are working together to finalize accounting of all matching-eligible donations and aim to share the final amount raised soon.

At the same time, the Red Cross is working closely with provincial governments in Quebec and across Atlantic Canada to meet the needs of impacted residents. This includes delivering financial assistance on behalf of some Atlantic provinces. The Government of Canada remains committed to work closely with both the Red Cross and with the provinces to help ensure the immediate needs of residents are met effectively and their longer-term recovery is supported.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Tony Loffreda on October 20, 2022)

In Budget 2022, the Government of Canada announced its plan to implement a Trusted Employer Model that reduces the administrative burden for return employers who have demonstrated a history of Temporary Foreign Worker Program compliance.

The Government of Canada takes its role in protecting temporary foreign workers seriously; ensuring the health and safety of these workers is a key priority. The Trusted Employer Model is being developed alongside a series of other measures that will provide additional benefits for both employers and workers, including a new Agriculture and Fish Processing Program, rebuilding the inspection regime, and establishing new housing standards for employer-provided accommodations. More details will be provided as soon as they become available.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC INNOVATION FUND

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Colin Deacon on November 17, 2022)

The Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) is working to position Canada as an innovation hub and an attractive, globally competitive investment destination. In line with the government's first-ever Intellectual Property (IP) Strategy, SIF was allocated \$250 million to support IP-rich firms. This funding is seeing high demand. Public announcements occur once a contribution agreement is signed, and thus do not reflect the totality of negotiations under way. Recent announcements include the \$40 million investment to Xanadu Quantum Technology, \$15.9 million to EXFO Inc., and \$30 million to Sanctuary Cognitive Systems Corporation. Announcements will continue on a range of exciting projects, and SIF expects all funds under the IP-rich stream to be fully subscribed. SIF's standard contribution agreements include a clause retaining project IP ownership within Canada. These can be adjusted to deal with unique circumstances or to ensure Canada's offer is competitive relative to other jurisdictions. All companies have the full ability to benefit from their IP creation, as long as they anchor their business in Canada.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REGIONAL BOUNDARIES

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Pat Duncan on November 22, 2022)

The most recent employment insurance (EI) boundary review, which commenced in the fall of 2018 and concluded in June 2021, analyzed the homogeneity of the unemployment rates and labour market conditions in all EI regions. These homogeneities were determined by comparing the unemployment rates and labour market conditions in the Statistics Canada census geographic units that comprise each EI region.

For Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.), the review found that combining the province's current two EI regions into a single EI region would result in a reduction in both the unemployment rates and labour market condition

homogeneity of the regions. The province and its two regions would go from being among the most homogenous in Canada to being the least homogenous.

The report on the results of the 2018-21 boundary review was shared with the committee by the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion on December 15, 2022.

HEALTH

DRUG SHORTAGES

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Judith G. Seidman on November 29, 2022)

Health Canada

Drug shortages are a global problem, with countries around the world experiencing increased frequency and duration. Health Canada has dedicated drug shortage management resources in place and has implemented new regulatory tools and programs to support the management of shortages and help Canadians access the drugs they need. To help mitigate and prevent drug shortages, the government continues to support domestic manufacturing, working to develop a national strategy for drugs for rare diseases, and ensuring the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board (PMPRB) has the tools to improve access to quality medicines. The development of an essential medicines list is one of several options the department is currently exploring. Essential medicines lists are used by other regulators as a way of defining which drugs must be available for citizens. Health Canada is considering lessons learned from other countries that have developed these frameworks and put them to use. Adapting an essential medicines list to the Canadian context involves a series of considerations. The first is determining which of the over 9,000 prescription drugs authorized for marketing in Canada should be on the list, and whether and which over-the-counter drugs should be listed. These and other questions are currently under review by Health Canada.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Diane Bellemare on December 13, 2022)

Moving forward with Employment Insurance (EI) modernization continues to be a key priority for the Government of Canada (GoC). Modernizing the complex EI system that serves millions of Canadians each year is a serious undertaking that requires significant consideration. The GoC is taking the time necessary to get it right.

The government undertook comprehensive consultations with Canadians and key stakeholders on modernizing the EI program, as committed to in Budget 2021. The consultations were held over two phases (August 2021 to February 2022;

April 2022 to July 2022), and included stakeholder round tables, written submissions and an online survey. The “What We Heard” reports from the first and second phases of the consultations were published online, at [what-we-heard-phase1.html](#) and [what-we-heard-phase2.html](#)

The GoC is developing and will release its long-term plan for the future of EI modernization in the near future. This plan will be informed by what we heard during the consultations, longstanding issues with the program and lessons learnt from the pandemic.

Departmental officials are aware of Bill S-244, *An Act to amend the Department of Employment and Social Development Act and the Employment Insurance Act (Employment Insurance Council)*, and will be considering it further as it advances through the legislative process.

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-13(2), I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(At 3:50 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, February 8, 2023

	PAGE		PAGE
Business of the Senate		Foreign Affairs	
Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond	2883	Earthquake in Turkey and Syria	2896
		Hon. Ratna Omidvar	2896
		Hon. Marc Gold	2896
<hr/>		Health	
SENATORS' STATEMENTS		Health Care Transfers	
Tributes		Hon. Brian Francis	2897
The Honourable Dennis Dawson		Hon. Marc Gold	2897
Hon. Jane Cordy	2883	Social Affairs, Science and Technology	
Hon. Marc Gold	2884	Business of the Committee	
Hon. Donald Neil Plett	2884	Hon. Robert Black	2897
Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain	2885	Hon. Ratna Omidvar	2897
Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson	2886	International Trade	
Hon. Marty Klyne	2886	Trade Protectionism	
Hon. Leo Housakos	2886	Hon. Donald Neil Plett	2898
Hon. Éric Forest	2887	Hon. Marc Gold	2898
Hon. Amina Gerba	2887	Health	
Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne	2888	Health Care Transfers	
Hon. Patricia Bovey	2888	Hon. Claude Carignan	2898
Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia	2889	Hon. Marc Gold	2899
Visitors in the Gallery		Delayed Answers to Oral Questions	
The Hon. the Speaker	2889	Hon. Marc Gold	2899
Distinguished Visitors in the Gallery		Employment and Social Development	
The Hon. the Speaker	2889	Employment Insurance Reform	2899
The Honourable Dennis Dawson		Funding for Equitable Library Access	2900
Expression of Thanks		Finance	
Hon. Dennis Dawson	2889	Canada Emergency Response Benefit	2900
Visitors in the Gallery		Canada Disability Benefit	2901
The Hon. the Speaker	2894	Foreign Affairs	
		Canada-China Relations	2901
<hr/>		Public Safety	
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Support for Victims of Hurricane Fiona	2901
Adjournment		Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Notice of Motion		Temporary Foreign Worker Program	2901
Hon. Raymonde Gagné	2894	Innovation, Science and Economic Development	
		Strategic Innovation Fund	2902
<hr/>		Employment and Social Development	
QUESTION PERIOD		Employment Insurance Regional Boundaries	2902
Public Services and Procurement		Health	
Service Contracts		Drug Shortages	2902
Hon. Donald Neil Plett	2894	Employment and Social Development	
Hon. Marc Gold	2895	Employment Insurance Reform	2902
Canadian Heritage		Business of the Senate	
Legislation on Online Streaming Services		Hon. Raymonde Gagné	2903
Hon. Leo Housakos	2895		
Hon. Marc Gold	2895		