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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, May 28, 2024

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

Prayers.

THE LATE HONOURABLE JOSEPH A. DAY

SILENT TRIBUTE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is with deep regret that I convey to you the news that the Honourable Joseph A. Day has passed away. There will be an opportunity for us to pay tribute at a later time, but at this time I extend deepest sympathies on behalf of all senators and all others associated with this place to his loved ones.

Honourable senators, I ask that you rise and join me in a minute of silent tribute.

(Honourable senators then stood in silent tribute.)

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

CONGRATULATIONS ON FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, I rise today to honour one of Canada's great post-secondary educational institutions, Concordia University. I am honoured to be among the more than 230,000 Concordia graduates. This year, 2024, marks the university's fiftieth anniversary.

It was in 1974 that Loyola College and Sir George Williams University merged to create Concordia University. In 2024, Concordia was ranked as the number one university under 50 years old in North America.

Today, with its six schools and faculties, the university is home to over 45,000 students. Chief among these departments is Concordia's John Molson School of Business. With its world-class faculty and student-centric approach, this pre-eminent business school continues to be ranked among the top schools worldwide for entrepreneurship studies, helping make Concordia an attractive destination for foreign students.

Indeed, Concordia's student body is diverse, representing Canada's unique tapestry of bold and talented individuals. More than 11,000 international students, representing 150 countries, prove Concordia's attractive qualities and international appeal.

I am particularly impressed with Concordia's Institute for Co-operative Education. Thousands of students have gained meaningful experience by integrating the workplace and

acquiring the necessary tools to be successful upon graduation. I strongly believe in co-op learning and connecting students with prospective local employers.

Centred in the beautiful city of Montreal, the university stands as a bastion of English post-secondary education in Quebec. It is critical that we continue to protect institutions like Concordia and give them every opportunity to grow and attract students from home and abroad.

Thanks to a \$400-million investment, Quartier Concordia is helping renew the city and re-energize the community-wide appeal of our city's core. At the heart of this massive project is the university's pledge of progressive environmental stewardship. Thanks in part to this investment, Montreal continues to be ranked among the best "student cities" in North America.

Concordia is more than just an institution of higher learning and research excellence. It's an important part of, and actively engaged in, the well-being of Montreal's community.

Honourable senators, I hope you will join me in celebrating Concordia University's fiftieth anniversary and all of its faculty, staff and students — past and present — who have helped ensure its success and shape it into one of Canada's most innovative, next-generation universities. I have no doubt its next 50 years will be as bright and promising as its first 50 years. Congratulations to Concordia University. Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

[*Translation*]

ALLISTER SURETTE

CONGRATULATIONS ON RETIREMENT

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Honourable Senators, it is with great admiration that I rise today to pay tribute to a distinguished leader who has dedicated his life to advancing education and serving his community.

I would like to acknowledge the remarkable career achievements of Allister Surette, who is retiring from his position as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Université Sainte-Anne.

Nova Scotia's Université Sainte-Anne is a pillar of francophone education in Atlantic Canada. Founded in 1890, this historic institution has played a vital role in preserving and promoting the French language and Acadian culture in Nova Scotia.

Allister Surette exemplifies excellence and dedication to post-secondary education. During his years of service to Université Sainte-Anne, he guided the institution to new heights of academic excellence and innovation. The university flourished under his leadership, establishing itself as a pillar of francophone education in Nova Scotia and beyond. As a leader, Allister

Surette always put students first. He worked tirelessly to provide every student with the tools and resources they need to succeed. He ensured access to quality education in an inclusive and stimulating environment. His contribution to raising the profile of the Francophonie in the field of education is remarkable as well.

As a fervent defender of the French language and Acadian culture, Mr. Surette played an essential role in strengthening and promoting French-language post-secondary education in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada. He was the president and CEO of Collège de l'Acadie from 1998 to 2003.

• (1410)

Beyond his leadership, Allister Surette has been a model of integrity, dedication and public service. His commitment to his community goes far beyond education, and his positive influence can be felt in all areas of society. I would like to point out that he is currently the Chair of the Organizing Committee of the Congrès mondial acadien to be held in Clare, Nova Scotia, this August.

He also sat on the Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse and was elected to the Nova Scotia legislature from 1993 to 1998 where he held several positions, including Minister of Acadian Affairs.

Good luck for whatever comes next, Allister. I think you'd be an excellent candidate for senator. Nova Scotia would be lucky to have a second Acadian in its ranks.

Thank you and good luck.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[English]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Harry Flaherty and Clarence Synard of NCC Investment Group, Doug Chiasson of the Fur Institute of Canada and representatives of the Seals and Sealing Network. They are the guests of the Honourable Senators Busson and Duncan.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

NATIONAL SEAL PRODUCTS DAY

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, today is significant: It is National Seal Products Day on the Hill. In May, parliamentarians, seal harvesters, industry leaders and advocates gather on Parliament Hill to showcase a variety of seal goods, including seal fur, seal oil omega-3 pills for humans and pets and authentic Indigenous seal products.

Highlighting Canada's sealing industry annually with this event is critical for coastal communities throughout Canada. For these communities, seals have historically served as an essential source of food, fuel, income and clothing.

If you tuned into the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, or APTN, broadcast of the Arctic Inspiration Prize, you will have seen the incredible, glamorous sealskin cocktail dress worn by co-host Andrea Brazeau.

Highlighting the importance of the sealing industry for parliamentarians and all Canadians extends far beyond showcasing these products and drawing attention to coastal Inuit and First Nations communities. The seal harvest plays an essential role in maintaining the ecological health of Canada's oceans by reducing the overpopulated biomass of seals that are putting fish stocks and marine animals at significant risk.

The Senate has played a pivotal role in ensuring greater advocacy and awareness of the sealing industry with the establishment of National Seal Products Day by Senator Hervieux-Payette.

Colleagues, we must support those who sound the alarm on the critical state of the sealing industry, which has suffered immensely from coordinated misinformation and disinformation campaigns.

Anti-sealing activists have successfully preyed upon the good nature of Canadians, using charged imagery designed to elicit strong negative emotional responses toward the seal harvest. The result has been a dwindling market for seal products in Canada and abroad and little support from Canadian federal governments, past or present, or the larger Canadian food-producing community.

Parliamentarians are in a position to give sealers hope that Canada can revive its sealing industry.

Dear colleagues, your fact-based discussions with Canadians, especially food producers, is critical. We clearly need an increased focus on research, as well as regulatory changes that will result in increased economic viability and foster the development of domestic and international markets.

From coast to coast to coast, seal products provide food, clothing and income support for Canadians. Let us act together as one country, with a Team Canada approach, just as we have supported Alberta beef, P.E.I. potatoes, Ontario and Quebec dairy products, B.C. wine and Saskatchewan wheat.

I look forward to welcoming you to National Seal Products Day in the House of Commons Speaker's dining room tonight, to learn more and taste the seal products on offer. Together, as one country, let us help revitalize the seal industry. Thank you, *gúnálchish, mahsi'cho*.

Some 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 Lisa Dewhurst, Consultant and Indigenous Advisor at the Yukon Arts Centre. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator White.

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 Florence Soares, President of the Canorient Christian Association of Metropolitan Toronto. She is accompanied by board members and volunteers. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Cardozo.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CANORIENT CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

CONGRATULATIONS ON FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, it is my honour today to pay homage to the Canorient Christian Association, which is marking its fiftieth anniversary this year, to salute the pioneers and numerous volunteers who have contributed much over this period.

The association brings together Christians originating in Goa, a former Portuguese colony — as well as those from other parts of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Burma — and focuses on the culture and social well-being of its members.

Being a global community, members of this diaspora also live in many countries around the world, including the U.S., the U.K., Australia, Portugal, Brazil and those in East Africa. Indeed, people from the Indian subcontinent and this global diaspora have settled in Canada since the 1950s.

Among the various objectives of the Canorient Association, three are most important: first, to bring together newcomers; second, to support their legendary Seniors Club; and third, the

immigration program which has brought people to Canada, most notably from Pakistan, helping them leave difficult situations involving discrimination and persecution and settling them here.

The community had the good fortune to settle well in this country due to a high focus on education, family, church, community support, hard work and a strong dedication to Canada.

Some stellar members of the community across the country include Dr. Rhys Mendes, Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada; Merella Fernandez, a lead anchor on CTV; Mr. Justice Andrew Pinto of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice; Alan DeSousa, Borough Mayor of Saint-Laurent in Montreal; Jason D'Souza, host of "All Points West" on CBC on Vancouver Island; and individuals who have sought public office with all three main political parties.

I have the honour to be the first parliamentarian of Goan origin and, as such, it is a pleasure to pay tribute to the association in this august chamber of the Senate of Canada.

[Translation]

Colleagues, there are myriad associations that help with the settlement and integration of newcomers, that serve Canadians of many different origins and play a key role in the history of our society.

[English]

Community organizations such as the Canorient Association are true nation builders in the society and story of Canada. Congratulations on your first 50 years, and all the best for the next 50. Colleagues, I invite you to meet members of the community in room 903 of the Victoria Building this evening from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Thank you.

Some 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 Caeden Tipler and Sage Newcombe-Garrett. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator McPhedran.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

VOTE16 SUMMIT

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, I wish to thank my colleagues in the Conservative caucus for sharing statement time with me.

My guests in the chamber today are Pentiction, B.C., high school student Sophie Robinson and her teacher Michele Cumberland, joined by Caeden Tipler and Sage Newcombe-Garrett, here from New Zealand, or — as they taught me earlier today — in the Māori tongue, Aotearoa.

Sophie is part of a B.C.-wide movement reaching out to the B.C. legislature and municipalities to embrace Vote16.

• (1420)

Caeden and Sage are national youth leaders of a growing movement to lower the voting age to 16 in New Zealand. Working over years, they have developed a grassroots network which includes community groups and young leaders. They joined together in a series of court challenges that went all the way to their supreme court which, in 2023, found in their favour, ruling that preventing 16- and 17-year-olds from voting is unjustified age discrimination in breach of the New Zealand Bill of Rights.

Unfortunately, a bill to enact these changes died with an election call, and the current government has not yet complied with the court's ruling.

Colleagues, all of us involved, in many countries, know that Vote16 is a long game, but I know Sage and Caeden and young people all over the world are not giving up. My guests are here to help us make history tomorrow at the first national Vote16 Summit here on Parliament Hill on May 29, with more than 200 registered participants including experts, politicians and young leaders from across Canada and many parts of the world such as New York, England, New Zealand and Brazil.

I invite all senators to engage with these amazing young leaders in democratic reform. The summit begins at 2 p.m. and is followed by a networking dinner and — most importantly — our parliamentary reception at 7 p.m. in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, where we will hear from youth leaders, parliamentarians and civil society stars who all support the international Vote16 movement.

The evidence is clear: vote young; vote long. A lowered voting age increases voter turnout and instills lifelong voting habits that strengthen our democracy. It's a growing wave. It hasn't crested yet, but it will. I truly think parliamentarians and political parties have the opportunity to show national leadership and get ahead of this wave so that we can potentially direct and inform its trajectory positively.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Senator Robinson's sister, Deborah Annear, and her niece, Cora Annear.

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 the McNeely, Sarin and Wiens families. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Omidvar.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

JUSTICE

CHARTER STATEMENT IN RELATION TO BILL C-64—
DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a Charter Statement prepared by the Minister of Justice in relation to Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare, pursuant to the *Department of Justice Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. J-2, sbs. 4.2(1).

[*Translation*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE CANADA INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BOARD REGULATIONS, 2012

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-58, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Canada Industrial Relations Board Regulations, 2012.

(Bill read first time.)

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

(On motion of Senator Gold, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, in 2017, the Trudeau government announced it would cut chronic homelessness in half by 2027-28. Instead, the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that the number of chronically homeless people in Canada has increased by 38% since 2018. As well, the number of people living in unsheltered locations such as encampments, parks and transit stations increased by 88%, leader.

Spending the most money to get the absolute worst results is a hallmark of this Trudeau government in this regard and in many others.

Leader, do you as a government accept the findings of the Parliamentary Budget Officer? If so, how do you explain the failure of the government's plan?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and also for underlining the real, serious problem that too many Canadians face.

Everyone in this country has a right to housing, and it's unacceptable that Canadians are sleeping in the cold, or living rough, as we say. Of course, the Government of Canada has enormous respect for the Parliamentary Budget Officer and his findings.

The fact remains that this government has made considerable investments to address this issue. It has doubled federal funding to help communities tackle homelessness, and this past winter announced a major investment to help protect the most vulnerable in 85 communities across the country.

This has borne important results, but far too many Canadians still find themselves without adequate shelter. This government is committed to continuing to address that real challenge.

Senator Plett: In fact, it has been a total, abysmal failure. Why don't you admit that? In 2022, the Auditor General, or AG, said the Trudeau government would miss its own target to reduce homelessness. She also said that they didn't know if the \$1.3 billion they had already spent had any impact on homelessness — good or bad.

The government refused to change course, and 18 months later the results are in. The Auditor General was right: The Trudeau plan failed. Leader, why does your government always think they have the answers? Why didn't you change course when the AG sounded the alarm bell that your plan would fail?

Senator Gold: The Government of Canada continues to apply itself to this serious problem, working in collaboration with provinces, municipalities and other stakeholders, and will continue to do so because this is an unacceptable situation.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CANADA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Gold, two weeks ago the International Criminal Court equated our friend and ally Israel — which is facing an existential crisis for their survival — to a brutal, terrible terrorist organization like Hamas. They've also issued an arrest warrant against Prime Minister Netanyahu. We're still waiting for a clear answer from the Trudeau government with regard to how you will respond. Furthermore, we want a clear yes or no answer. What will the Trudeau government do if Prime Minister Netanyahu decides to visit our shores? Will the Trudeau government welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu, yes or no?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. First of all, let's establish the facts. The prosecutor, Mr. Karim Khan, has applied to the court for arrest warrants. They have not been issued. The court will consider the application, and in considering the application — for those of you who are interested in the facts and the law — the court must consider, first, the evidence to support these. The evidence has not been provided, and therefore there's no ability to comment on the adequacy of that evidence.

• (1430)

More importantly, colleagues, the court will also have to examine whether the actual legal criteria that govern the work of the International Criminal Court, or ICC, have been satisfied. It is understood — and is in the legislation governing the court — that it is to be a court of last resort. There have been no examples where a democratic country with a vibrant legal system such as Israel has ever been subjected to warrants of this kind. Therefore, it is hypothetical to speculate on any matters unless and until the —

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, the facts are that the International Criminal Court cannot execute warrants, and you know that. They have come out with a judgment asking for warrants to be executed, and Canada could, as a sovereign state, execute those warrants.

The question is this: Will Canada exercise those warrants against Prime Minister Netanyahu if he comes to our shores, yes or no? We have been completely silent on the issue, and now you are trying to skirt the facts, Senator Gold.

Senator Gold: With the greatest of respect, you are incorrect, Senator Housakos. There have been no warrants issued by the ICC.

My answer is this: It is a hypothetical situation, period. The court will have to evaluate the adequacy of the evidence that the prosecutor brings forward and analyze its own legislation to see whether it has the jurisdiction to even issue the warrants under the circumstances.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

SEAL HARVEST

Hon. Iris G. Petten: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, on National Seal Products Day and with the recently released report entitled *Sealing the Future: A Call to Action*, the topic of seals is on the minds of many Canadians, especially those in my province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Just a few days ago, the provincial Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, Elvis Loveless, said he is open to exploring more market opportunities for this vital resource. How is the federal government going to support my province in that endeavour?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question and for the excellent work done by the committee. The government looks forward to engaging with the ideas and recommendations in the report.

It is the position of this government that any actions taken to control the seal population must be done with social and economic objectives in mind. That having been said, my understanding is that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, or DFO, and the Canadian Coast Guard are exploring opportunities with stakeholders and partners, including other government departments and agencies — and, of course, stakeholders in your and other coastal provinces — to further develop the market for Canadian seal products while continuing to advance its scientific research on seals at the same time.

Senator Petten: Senator Gold, there are a number of Indo-Pacific markets where there are no unreasonable and prejudicial bans on seal products. What is the federal government doing to promote Canadian seal products in those markets?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question, senator. As I mentioned — and I will repeat — the department continues to explore opportunities to work with stakeholders to further develop the market internationally for Canadian seal products and advance its existing research on seals.

FINANCE

CANADA STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS

Hon. Marty Deacon: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, regarding Budget 2024, the Canada Student Loan forgiveness program has been expanded to include dentists, physiotherapists and psychologists, a move that should

be commended. I wonder, however, why the government stopped there. Why did the government not include medical professionals such as optometrists, chiropractors and occupational therapists, for instance?

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

We all know that those Canadians who work in the health care sector are indispensable to the well-being of all Canadians and the well-being and resilience of our communities. It is critical that individuals have access to the care and support they need to thrive, whether that is dental care, mental health care or other health care. As Canada grows and our population ages, ensuring a healthy population means ensuring there are enough health care professionals in all parts of this country. That is why the government expanded eligibility for the Canada Student Loan forgiveness program to the professions you listed.

Having met with a group earlier today who were not included, I understand the government did engage in comprehensive consultations on this matter. I will certainly raise it with the minister.

The matter, of course, as senators should know, is currently being studied in the other place as part of the budget implementation act.

Senator M. Deacon: I heard the end of your comment about speaking with and carrying on this conversation, and this is my question: Would there be consideration given to expanded eligibility to other professions in the future?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question.

I'm not aware of any plans to expand eligibility to other medical professions at this time.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

MARINE RESEARCH

Hon. Colin Deacon: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, the Fisheries Committee report entitled *Sealing the Future: A Call to Action* reveals the government's long-standing unwillingness to leverage innovation to conduct more and better scientific research in Canada's marine environments, even when those technologies and approaches are proven to be far more effective and cost-efficient. Witnesses highlighted several examples, such as using bioacoustics to assess fish stocks, electronic telemetry to track the movements and survival of marine species and environmental DNA as a tool for biodiversity surveillance. Those technologies can immediately fill existing data and research gaps in Canada and Canada's marine ecosystems. However, DFO has yet to seize the opportunity.

Senator Gold, why has DFO not adopted those innovations, and what plans, if any, are in place to integrate such technologies into future research efforts?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, thank you for your question and for raising the importance of the science with regard to addressing this issue in all of its facets.

The government agrees that more science is necessary and more data is always better. In September, I am advised the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced new funding for seal and sea lion research projects across Canada, and the government will continue to look for ways to build upon existing science and incorporate expert recommendations and emerging science into the next steps for the industry.

Senator C. Deacon: Senator Gold, our committee found that DFO is not fulfilling its marine research mandate. There is evidence that this has been the case for a long time. Consequently, when existing research with technical and operational capacity exists in the private, not-for-profit and academic sectors, how are we going to get DFO to finally begin to work with these other groups to fill the vacuum?

Senator Gold: Again, thank you for your question. Also, again, thanks to the committee for its report.

Colleagues, by now, you may know that the Minister of Fisheries will likely appear before the Senate for ministerial Question Period in the coming weeks. I will certainly draw the minister's attention to this point so she can answer this question in full when she does appear before us.

SEAL HARVEST

Hon. Jane Cordy: As other senators have done this afternoon, my questions will also be regarding the seal harvest.

Currently, Canada does not have a seal harvest on the West Coast. In the report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans entitled *Ecosystem Impacts and Management of Pinniped Populations*, they list the risks of not reducing pinniped populations to the possible loss of salmon stocks, the collapse of the sports fishing industry and the collapse of the remaining commercial fishery on the West Coast.

There have been informal calls to establish a West Coast harvest for seals.

Has DFO, under their new emerging fishery policy, received any official proposals to establish a West Coast harvest? Would DFO ever consider establishing a West Coast harvest without a submitted proposal, perhaps as a pilot program?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. I am not aware of any such initiatives.

However, I will say more generally, colleagues, that the federal government is mindful of the complex interactions in this area, whether it is of the seal population and fish stocks or the impacts of the seal industry on communities and individual Canadians.

We are very aware of the illustrious history of the seal market when we go back to earlier in our history. I remember being fascinated and informed in my visit to Newfoundland in that regard.

• (1440)

Having said all of that, the government will continue to engage with stakeholders, Indigenous communities and provincial and territorial governments to make sure that any decision it takes is a prudent, balanced and fair one.

Senator Cordy: Thank you. I will focus my supplementary question on the East Coast of Canada. Indeed, you are absolutely correct; it is a complex interaction. We know the influence of the seal market on many communities in Canada.

Has Fisheries and Oceans Canada, or DFO, taken any steps to increase the harvest of seals on the East Coast? Fishers have been calling for DFO action for years to help increase the seal harvest, as they have warned that the sustainability of fish stocks is in jeopardy because of the amount of fish seals eat, which is having a negative impact on the fishers' livelihood.

In the same House report, it is noted that of the 4,482 licences that were issued in 2022 —

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. I would encourage senators to pose these questions to the minister when she appears at Question Period. She will be in a far better position than I am to have more up-to-date information on their thinking in this regard.

SEAL PRODUCTS

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: My question is for the Leader of the Government. The Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans recently released a report on Canada's seal population, and we learned, among other things, that the government fails to promote seal products at the international level. For example, seal products were not included in the original agenda of the 19th Canada-EU Leaders' Summit in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, in 2023.

Senator Gold, the committee heard that the federal government's action will shape the future of the sealing industry. How does the government plan to develop and implement a campaign to promote traditional and innovative Canadian seal products?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. As I mentioned in an earlier response, senator, the government is keen to work with stakeholders in exploring ways in which the market for seal products can be expanded and nurtured, especially the market abroad, and will continue to engage with stakeholders and interested parties in those efforts.

Senator Atallahjan: The committee also heard that there continues to be a lack of awareness of the Indigenous harvest exemption and the personal use exemption to the European Union's ban on seal products among retailers and within the tourism industry. Senator Gold, many tourists avoid buying seal products thinking that they may not be allowed to bring them back to their country. How does the government plan on ensuring that these regulations are publicly available and communicated to the public?

Senator Gold: Thank you for highlighting the importance of the rules which, though undoubtedly available on websites, are not clearly known to the public. I think that as the government engages with stakeholders to explore ways to expand that, clearly communicating the rules of the game should be an important part of that endeavour.

FINANCE

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Leader, last week I asked you about seniors struggling to afford housing in British Columbia. The Seniors' Advocate of Newfoundland and Labrador says seniors in that province also reported experiencing homelessness for the first time in their lives, as they can't afford the high cost of rent. The report also stated one third of seniors in that province cannot afford the necessities of life — not just rent but food as well. This is a sad reality of life for seniors all across our country after nine years of the Trudeau government.

Leader, does the Trudeau government have an estimate for the number of seniors being left behind in this affordability crisis? If so, what is it?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I don't know the number of seniors who are affected in one form or another, whether it is food insecurity or challenges with rent or other cost of living issues. It is not acceptable in our country that those who brought us into this world and who have contributed to the growth of this country should find themselves in such difficult circumstances.

I do not agree that the cause of what is plaguing too many Canadians is a function of nine years of this government. I would never have said that were the situation or governments different. That said, the government will continue to work to assist Canadians as they struggle through difficult times.

Senator Martin: A study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* last week says the percentage of seniors using homeless shelters is going up. The study's main author said that a sudden increase in rent is one of the factors contributing to this trend.

Leader, rent has doubled under the Trudeau government. You say that you do not know the numbers, but is this something that the government is tracking regarding the homelessness of seniors?

Senator Gold: The important point that you raise about tracking and data is a real challenge in our country, especially since so much of the data is within provincial hands — we have seen this in so many areas, colleagues — and where the data is not necessarily easily translatable from one jurisdiction to another. The government is seized of this problem within areas of its jurisdiction and will continue to work to the best of its ability.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, in December 2022, the Trudeau government appointed to the board of their wasteful and incompetent Canada Infrastructure Bank Andrée-Lise Méthot. She was previously a board member of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, their green slush fund.

Last fall, Ms. Méthot admitted before a House committee investigating the slush fund that she had approved millions of taxpayers' dollars to four companies in which she had a stake.

Last Tuesday, Minister Fraser revealed that Ms. Méthot had resigned from the Infrastructure Bank's board back on April 16. Leader, why did the government hide her resignation for over a month?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I don't think your characterization is at all correct. I am not going to parse the words, senator, simply to say that the issues that you have raised are serious issues. There is no denying that there are issues of governance that need to be addressed.

It is my understanding that the Auditor General has also looked into this and that an audit report will be forthcoming. The government has already taken many steps to address these issues based upon its own investigations on internal matters. We look forward to the Auditor General's report, which will shine even more light on this matter.

Senator Plett: Audit after audit, conflict of interest after conflict of interest — the list goes on with this government.

In November, Minister Champagne announced a law firm would look into allegations of misconduct at the Trudeau government's green slush fund. Leader, it has been over six months. Has Minister Champagne received this report, and if so, did he receive it before Ms. Méthot resigned from the Infrastructure Bank?

Senator Gold: It is my understanding, senator, that the report into the human resources issues surrounding this fund has not yet been tabled or made public. It is my understanding that we should expect it within a matter of weeks.

FINANCE

INTEREST COSTS ON FEDERAL DEBT

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Gold, in 2015, the Trudeau government came into power. You inherited a balanced budget, and you had a debt of \$619 billion. In just eight and a half years, you haven't balanced a single budget, the country's debt is now over \$1.4 trillion, and interest payments alone over the next year will be over \$54 billion. You will spend more on interest on the Trudeau debt than you will be spending in health transfer payments to the provinces.

Will you once and for all acknowledge, Senator Gold, that the Trudeau economic strategy has been a failure? Some might even call it a catastrophe.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The answer is no. You have asked this question before, and I have answered this question before. But because, clearly, it is of interest, I will answer it again.

The management of this economy through the pandemic, emerging from the pandemic has been prudent, responsible and productive. Notwithstanding the global slowdown that all countries experienced for the reasons to which I just alluded, Canada's economy is strong and resilient. Inflation is down to 2.7% — down from 8.1% in July of 2022. We have recovered 130% of the jobs lost since the peak of the pandemic compared to 118% in the United States. Labour force participation rate is at 65.6%, well above the U.S. rate at 62.6%. We have a record high 85.7% labour force participation rate for women in their prime working years.

• (1450)

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, inflation is at 2.9%. You guys are doing victory laps. It has calmed down marginally over the past few weeks, but you've set records in terms of inflation over the last seven years. As a result, Canadians are poorer than ever, the cost of living is reaching historic heights and you have a generation of Canadians living in the basements of their parents' homes. At some point, get your heads out of the sand and accept that your economies are failing. Will you cut the carbon tax, start reeling in the mismanagement and overspending of this government and become fiscally responsible once and for all?

Senator Gold: I don't agree with your analysis nor with the attempt to offer the slimmest of policy options or alternatives to deal with what is a complicated and important matter.

According to all reasonable, objective and — dare I say — small “c” conservative analysts, cutting the carbon tax has a modest, negligible impact to the cost of living compared with all the other forces — and you know that. You ought to know that.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: My question is a follow-up, in some ways, to the question earlier about the government's response to the International Criminal Court, or ICC, prosecutor's request for five warrants — three for Hamas leaders and two for Israeli leaders. As part of my question, I want to reference the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fact that they are indivisible — that all human beings in this world have equal rights. Therefore, they have equal rights to accountability under the Rome Statute, which the Government of Canada — in particular then foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy — led. In many ways, the anchoring of the ICC has been Canadian since the first leader.

Therefore, my question is this: How does the government justify not supporting the ICC prosecutor's right and responsibility to request those warrants?

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

The Government of Canada does not take the position that the prosecutor does not have the right to request this. Thank you for underlining the actual stage of the process we're at.

The Government of Canada was an early founding supporter of the ICC and respects its jurisdiction. However, that doesn't mean that the Government of Canada is prepared to take a position in advance of the decision of the judges faced with the request of the prosecutor. In that regard, as I tried to point out in the earlier question — and as a jurist, you would understand — there are actual legal requirements the ICC judges have to — and, one expects, will — take into account in evaluating this. We'll have to wait and see how they apply those criteria in their decision making.

Senator McPhedran: I have a quick supplementary, which is to point out that if we look at the statements by the representatives of the government thus far in responding to the prosecutor's request for the warrants, we see an equivocation and a differentiation appearing in their language between the Hamas leaders and the Israeli leaders. How can this be justified?

Senator Gold: I think it is very easily justified, if I may. Here I can cite Irwin Cotler indirectly in a piece that he published in *The Times of Israel*. Hamas is a terrorist organization; it is not a state. It has a genocidal ideology that is long-standing. Israel is a democracy with one of the most vibrant legal systems in the world. The ICC statute requires it to defer to those countries that have domestic —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, senator.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, in July 2022, the Lake Erie Connector Project was suspended due to high interest rates and inflation. This was kept quiet for months despite the fact that the incompetent Trudeau government committed \$665 million of taxpayers' money to the project through this wasteful Canada Infrastructure Bank. Earlier this year, we learned that the Infrastructure Bank spent about \$900,000 on this failed project in — you guessed it — consultants' and lawyers' fees — absolutely not worth the cost. Leader, how do you justify this total waste of about \$1 million of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, I do not have all the details of this project. I am not going to comment on it because I simply am not in a position to comment on whether the fees paid to lawyers or others were justified or not.

I can say that with projects of this kind, there are always risks. We saw that in the pipelines. We saw this in others where market forces, changing global demands, interest rates to be sure — not only Canadian interest rates, frankly — and questions of supply and demand all play a role, especially to those in the private sector who have to take a good part of the ongoing risks notwithstanding contributions at the front end. These are complex matters that, on a project-to-project basis, explain why some projects can go ahead and others are abandoned.

Senator Plett: In May 2022, the Transport Committee in the other place issued a report on the Infrastructure Bank. It had one recommendation: that the Government of Canada abolish the Canada Infrastructure Bank. This was the committee. Leader, how many projects have the failed Infrastructure Bank completed since the house report was released two years ago?

It is zero, isn't it, Senator Gold?

Senator Gold: Whether it is funded by the Infrastructure Bank or any major project, colleagues — and those of us who have experience in the private or public sector know this very well — it can take many years to get a project off the ground, from planning to execution to finalization. Therefore, as I have reported on other occasions, there are a number of projects that are under way and will continue to develop, depending on the nature of the project.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson:

That the following Address be presented to Her Excellency the Governor General of Canada:

To Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Military Merit, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the Senate of Canada in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I noticed the enthusiasm generated in the chamber when the page brought me my podium. I know you are all anxiously looking forward to Episode 3 of Trudeau's legacy, "An Unstitched Social Safety Net."

• (1500)

Honourable senators, I rise to continue my series of speeches on Justin Trudeau's legacy. Those of you who want to take your leave, do so quickly. This is like PVR: You can record it and watch it later on.

An Hon. Senator: In your dreams.

Senator Plett: In my dreams, yes. I dream about it a lot; so do a lot of other people. It might be your nightmare. It's my dream.

Today, I want to focus on the state of Canada's social safety net under the Trudeau government. I know that for some of the Trudeau-appointed senators, having a Conservative senator point out the failures of Justin Trudeau is a colossal waste of time, as we heard the other day right here in Question Period. They would prefer to debate the virtue of the Liberal 2015 agenda and how enlightened they all are.

I'm sorry to break the news, colleagues. Canadians are hurting. And, no, stating the facts about that and pointing out the responsibility of Justin Trudeau for this suffering are not a colossal waste of time. It is a fact that over the last nine years, Canadians have seen and felt the constant unstitching of our social safety net. Not a week goes by that we don't read a story or view a report on the state of homelessness in this country, on the near impossibility of Canadians' becoming homeowners or on the state of food banks that are being stretched by the overwhelming demands placed on them.

Under Justin Trudeau, housing costs have doubled, mortgage payments have doubled, and rents have doubled. After nine years of Justin Trudeau, one in four Canadians are skipping meals because they can't afford to eat three times a day.

I don't know how this isn't worth listening to. In the last three years alone, the use of food banks has increased by 50%. There is 38% more homelessness in our country compared to 2019. There are now 256 homeless encampments in Toronto alone. It is becoming clearer and clearer that the primary needs of vulnerable Canadians are unmet in the ongoing affordability crisis. Buying food is becoming more difficult. Owning or renting a home is nearly impossible. Universal health care is less accessible. Food, shelter and health care — more and more Canadians struggle to access those basic needs. That is the Canada that Justin Trudeau is leaving behind. This is Justin Trudeau's legacy.

Let me read a few of the headlines in Canadian media in the last few weeks: "Canada at 'critical turning point' as poverty worsens, warns report"; "Insolvencies jump sharply as Canadians struggle with debt more than ever"; "Almost half of Canadians living paycheque to paycheque: poll"; "Credit debt grows as Canadians struggle with spike in cost of living and bills they just can't pay"; "1 in 4 Canadians fear income won't cover basic needs . . ."; "Cost of energy forcing many to go without necessities, StatsCan survey says"; "Financial stress taking toll on Canadians' mental health, personal relationships"; "Food insecurity in Canada at a crisis stage"; "Canadians getting sick trying to cut food costs: study"; "Canadian food banks on the brink: 'This is not a sustainable situation'"; "Housing crisis. Foodflation. Record gas prices. Canada is at a crossroads . . ."; "Most Canadians think economy, health care worse under Trudeau . . ."; "The Trudeau paradox of more spending and more hunger"; "Trudeau cranks up spending but Canadians are worse off."

Those are not Conservative talking points, colleagues. Those are headlines in the news media — the media that are deemed acceptable by the Liberals and the Trudeau-appointed senators.

This should not be a surprise. Canada is getting poorer and poorer. Canada's inflation-adjusted GDP per capita has fallen 3% in the last four years. This is one of the steepest and longest declines of this measure of wealth in Canadian history. American

GDP per capita has grown by more than 8% since 2019, while Canada's has fallen. Canada's economy is underperforming the American economy by the widest margin since 1965.

Justin Trudeau's policies have driven out investments, weakened workers' paycheques and increased the cost of living for every Canadian. They are why we are in a productivity crisis. Had they held the same trend line that the former Conservative government left them on, Canadians would be \$4,200 richer today. Instead, we are in an affordability crisis, a productivity crisis and at risk of a debt crisis.

Colleagues, it is simply shameful that in a country as rich as Canada there are so many people who live on an empty stomach, who cannot afford a nourishing meal.

After nine years of Justin Trudeau, poverty and food insecurity continue to climb. Nearly one in five households in Ontario are struggling to put food on the table, according to a study released just a few months ago. Last year, food banks had to handle a record 2 million visits in a single month, with a million more people expected in 2024, and one in ten people in Toronto have to rely on food banks to survive.

Food Banks Canada's 2024 Poverty Report Card showed that almost 50% of Canadians feel financially worse off compared to last year, while 25% of Canadians are experiencing food insecurity. That means close to 10 million people will go to bed tonight unsure if they will be able to have three good meals tomorrow.

Colleagues, we all got up and had a great breakfast today and we had lunch, yet 10 million people in our country will go to bed tonight not knowing if they can have three good meals tomorrow. That is Justin Trudeau's legacy.

On top of this, Food Banks Canada reported that the cost of living has become so high that food banks have seen a 50% increase in visits since 2021. As a direct consequence of the Trudeau government's inflationary spending and taxes, millions of Canadians are struggling to keep their heads above water.

The Salvation Army published its *Spring 2024 Research* report last week. This showed that nearly one third of Canadians continue to feel pessimistic about the future of their personal finances, while 25% of Canadians continue to be extremely concerned about having enough income to cover their basic needs.

This report also showed that nearly 75% of Canadians face challenges managing limited financial resources. This has contributed to a wave of Canadians who continue to deprioritize seeking medical help for financial reasons.

Lori Nikkel, CEO of Second Harvest, sums it up well:

People in Canada can't keep up with rising food costs. More people are being pushed towards food charity, which for most people comes as a last resort. Food charities already struggle to meet the current demand, with many of them

being forced to turn people away and add their names to growing waitlists for support. Our systems are buckling under the pressure.

And it is not just the use of food banks that is alarming. According to Statistics Canada, in 2022, 18% of Canadian families reported experiencing food insecurity in the past 12 months, up from 16% in 2021. That situation has worsened since.

• (1510)

Life is becoming too expensive for Canadians. According to Canada's Food Price Report 2024, food expenditures for a family of four will cost \$16,297 — an increase of \$700 from just a year ago. “Justinflation” has burned a hole in all of our pockets. To cope, some families have to eat less, skip a meal or eat food that is past its best-before date at the risk of becoming sick.

Senator Housakos: Imagine — in Canada.

Senator Plett: Colleagues, there are now groups on social media on how to find food in dumpsters. This is Canada, one of the world's richest countries —

Senator Housakos: It used to be.

Senator Plett: — after nine years of Liberal failed policies.

What I find troubling is the growth in the number of working poor in Canada. People who have a job — sometimes even two or three jobs — are forced to use the food bank or live in their car. These people are filling their end of the bargain. They work hard and stay out of trouble, but society only offers them a life of poverty, without any hope of living a normal life. This, colleagues, is heartbreaking. Less food for more money at the grocery store — that is Justin Trudeau's legacy.

Having to skip a meal, put water in your milk or go through the garbage to feed yourself — that is Justin Trudeau's legacy.

Having to rely on a food bank to feed your family, even if you are working 50 hours a week — that is Justin Trudeau's legacy.

If you think that in Trudeau's Canada the food insecurity crisis is bad, I'm sorry to tell you that the housing crisis is even worse.

Under Justin Trudeau, Canadian housing prices have doubled, making Canada one of the most expensive and unaffordable housing markets in the world. The reason is simple: There is simply not enough supply to answer the demand. Can you imagine? We are the second-largest country in the world, but we do not have enough housing space. This is simply mind-boggling. It is the result of Liberal policies that build bureaucracies and not homes.

Honourable senators, this has a more direct impact on two categories of people.

First, the market has become less and less accessible for first-time home buyers, even if the federal government has tried policies to help. For example, the Liberal government announced the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive program to help young Canadians buy their first home. The conditions to be approved were so restrictive that only a small number of Canadians could qualify. Furthermore, the limit imposed was so low that the incentive priced itself out of the hot markets of Toronto and Vancouver.

In 2019, the initial goal was to help 100,000 Canadians purchase their first home. By 2022, only 18,291 Canadians were approved to use the incentive. The program has been such a failure that the government decided to pull the plug a full year before its intended goal of March 2025. From the beginning, it was clear that the modalities of the policy would fall far short. Our Social Affairs Committee pointed out that the threshold needed to be higher, and the industry representatives went further: Such an incentive from the government could risk raising housing prices. Like this government does repeatedly, instead of admitting defeat and improving its legislation, it simply dug in its heels and gaslit Canadians for years before finally quietly retreating and killing its failed program.

The second class of people directly hit by the failed housing policies of the Trudeau government are the renters. Over the last few years, the renters' market has followed the trend of being less accessible. According to Rentals.ca, the asking rents for a two-bedroom property in Canada averaged \$2,350 in February — an increase of 11.7% year over year. In fact, since 2015 — the year that Trudeau and the Liberals came to power — rents have more than doubled in Canada. How can Canadians be expected to keep up?

For Canadians being squeezed out of the renting market, what are their options? Purchasing a home is out of the question. If you don't have rich parents willing to help you, there is no way. So we hear and read about it every week: encampments in every major city and spreading to smaller communities, homelessness rates going up and shelters being overrun. Canada's Federal Housing Advocate, Marie-Josée Houle, declared the following to CBC News:

It is a physical manifestation of exactly how broken our housing and homelessness system is from coast to coast to coast in Canada. It needs urgent measures . . .

She continued, “Government must act immediately to save lives.”

According to her report, an estimated 20% to 25% of homeless people across the country live in tent encampments, affecting not just major cities but also rural regions. There are more and more tent cities, and they are larger and larger.

In my city — the City of Winnipeg — Marion Willis, Executive Director of St. Boniface Street Links, says that there are more encampments than ever before east of the Red River.

We have to face the facts: People living in these tent cities are easy targets for drug dealers, pimps and other gangs. Homeless Canadians are dying in the encampments due to addictions or unsanitary conditions.

Senator Housakos: Unbelievable.

Senator Plett: The Liberals are claiming that they are throwing money at the problem. In this chamber, we hear — time after time — about how they're throwing money at the problem and hoping something sticks. But there is zero result.

The Auditor General already stated that the Trudeau government will miss all its targets on the reduction of homelessness in Canada. Last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that despite \$443 million in new annual spending aimed to reduce homelessness, the number of people without a roof over their head has grown by 20% in Canada.

This housing crisis is a direct result of Justin Trudeau's failed policies. He opened the door to millions of newcomers, without making sure there would be places for them to live in. He is maintaining bureaucracies that stop the construction of new housing. He has fuelled inflation, which led to a rise in mortgage interest rates. He is now punishing the owners of rental buildings with an increase in the capital gains tax.

Senator Housakos: Not worth the cost.

Senator Plett: Things will only get worse. We recently learned that the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions reported that many Canadians will face a payment shock when they renew their mortgages at much higher rates over the next two years. This could affect as many as 76% of Canadians with outstanding mortgages.

People paying more and more to house themselves — that is Justin Trudeau's legacy. Young Canadians unable to afford to buy a home — that is Justin Trudeau's legacy. People crammed in small apartments because rents are unaffordable — that is Justin Trudeau's legacy. People living and dying on the streets in Canada — that is Justin Trudeau's legacy.

While people are struggling to put food on their table and a roof over their heads, health care in Canada is breaking down. On about every metric possible, public health care in Canada is worse now than it has ever been. More than 6 million Canadians say they do not have access to primary care physicians. Median wait times for medical treatment are the highest they've ever been — at 27.7 weeks.

• (1520)

A report by SecondStreet.org found that at least 17,032 patients died in Canada while waiting for surgery or diagnostic tests between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023 — over 17,000 people in one year. In 2022, life expectancy in Canada rolled back to 81.3 years, a full year less compared to 2019.

Moreover, an August 2023 survey by the Canadian Medical Association found that 26% of Canadians considered health care to be in excellent or very good condition, down from 48% in 2015. Canadians' confidence in the health care system is decreasing at an alarming rate. Who can blame them? Last

November, according to statistics from Ontario Health, the average wait time in an emergency room was 22 hours. Only 23% of patients met a doctor within the eight-hour target.

Colleagues, those are facts. This is Canada under Justin Trudeau. All these symptoms confirm that health care in Canada is broken. The Canada Health Act provides that Canadian health care policy is “. . . to facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers.” Canadians do not have access to health services. Justin Trudeau does not respect the Canada Health Act.

Some of you who want to defend your leader, the Prime Minister who appointed you, will say that health care is a provincial jurisdiction. My answer is this: How can all 10 provinces be equally bad? There is clearly a Canadian health care problem since our system is a failure from St. John's to Victoria. Canada now has the worst health care systems among the richest countries, even though we are paying the most money for them.

According to the Canadian Institute for Health, Canada ranked last in access to primary health care in a survey of 10 high-income countries. Canada also ranked last with respect to the ability to get a same- or next-day appointment to see a doctor or nurse; only 26% of Canadian adults succeeded in doing so, down from 46% in 2016.

Out of 30 countries, Canada ranked twenty-third in terms of the number of beds dedicated to physical care, twenty-fifth in terms of MRIs, twenty-sixth in terms of CT scans and twenty-eighth in terms of the number of doctors. But that is not because of a lack of funds. Canada ranks highest for expenditures on health care as a percentage of GDP among 30 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, nations.

Sadly, colleagues, the level of care in Canada is deteriorating, and this has dire consequences. Canadians who can't see a doctor are more susceptible to complications. People who have been able to see a doctor and get a diagnosis see their conditions deteriorate or even die while they are on a waiting list. A new normal that's emerging in our public health care is hallway health care — patients waiting on a stretcher to receive care due to overcapacity. And then we have the too frequent cases of those who go to the ER and don't get help.

For example, in Nova Scotia last year, a 67-year-old, Charlene Snow, waited in the ER department for seven hours before giving up and going home. One hour later, Charlene Snow sadly passed away due to health complications.

I was shocked to hear the story of Normand Meunier, who sought a medically assisted death after developing a huge bedsore while lying on a stretcher in the ER for four days. This poor man was simply abandoned by the system. As I said, these issues are plaguing every province and territory from coast to coast.

Yes, COVID-19 happened, and that accelerated the downfall of our health care system. But it is not an excuse to let the situation worsen. It should be a motivation for our federal government to find a national solution to the delivery of health care in Canada. We need more family doctors, better health care infrastructure and — to overcome the obstacles between Canadians and the health care they need — federal leadership.

Instead of working with the provinces to innovate in delivery care, Justin Trudeau has decided to fight with them. His latest intrusions in dental care and pharmacare are an example of the Liberals' tendency to trample on provincial jurisdictions. Instead of fast-tracking foreign health care workers in our immigration system, Justin Trudeau has decided to prioritize other groups of newcomers.

For example, last week, the *Journal de Montréal* had a story on two nurses who cannot work in Gatineau because Immigration Canada is dragging its feet in granting them their work permits, even if there is a dire need for their services. Why do we have such a useless bureaucracy?

Instead of looking at why other countries do better on health care and how we could innovate, Justin Trudeau refuses to modernize the Canada Health Act. The Liberals are stuck in their 1970s vision that Canada's health care system is the best in the world, but the facts are the facts. We have become laggards in that area. The decline of the Canadian health care system over the last nine years lies squarely on Justin Trudeau's shoulders and will be part of his legacy.

As I said, the failed policies of the Trudeau Liberals and their incompetence in delivering services to Canadians spans all departments. And while all Canadians are affected by the policies stuck in ideology of this Liberal-NDP government and the constant failure to provide even the most basic of services, some groups are suffering more than others.

The first group I want to talk about is our veterans and the members of our Armed Forces.

The Liberal government's treatment of our veterans is an embarrassment, from Veterans Affairs suggesting assisted suicide to veterans looking for help to a complete breakdown on homelessness. This is not the way to thank and take care of those who put their lives on the line for our freedoms. According to most recent estimates, more than 2,600 veterans experience homelessness annually. Since 2018, Veterans Affairs has had in place an emergency fund paying \$2,500 in grants to homeless veterans. Every year, this program is oversubscribed.

While the National Housing Strategy objective is to prioritize housing needs of the most vulnerable, including our veterans, it has provided shelter for 277 veterans in four years. We need close to 10 times that number. The longer we wait, the more dire the situation becomes. While Justin Trudeau claims housing is not primarily a federal responsibility, supporting our veterans is clearly 100% his jurisdiction. However, according to a report authored by McGill researchers, there is a lack of leadership with respect to veteran housing, which is split between federal departments with no coordination. Our social safety net is failing

our veterans, colleagues, and this is Justin Trudeau's legacy — and his lack of consideration for our military personnel extends to our current troops.

A recent headline in the *Ottawa Citizen* read: "Soldiers had to rely on food donations because of lack of military support during Ottawa training." The Willis College staff had to create a food cupboard for military personnel so they wouldn't go hungry during specialized cybertraining. They were not getting paid on time or initially eligible for housing allowances while in Ottawa. What is going on in our military for soldiers to rely on food donations? Why are our soldiers in the Baltic states forced to go and buy warm clothes themselves because they are under-equipped? Why are our soldiers having to live in tents because of a lack of decent housing on certain bases?

• (1530)

In Justin Trudeau's Canada, our military — those we are asking to defend us — do not have their basic needs covered. Food, clothing, shelter — we cannot provide those for our brave men and women in uniform. Even for them, the safety net is unstitched after nine years of Justin Trudeau. The accumulation of a decade of neglect by the Trudeau government culminates in the situation our military finds itself in today: left to themselves while in the military, left to themselves once done their service. This lack of respect for those who put their lives on the line for us is part of Justin Trudeau's legacy.

Colleagues, Conservatives will change this. It is time we have a Conservative government that will address the real problems our Armed Forces face — the lack of modern equipment, the lack of manpower and low morale. We all know it is not by virtue signalling that the Canadian Armed Forces will attract new recruits. It is not by going fully woke that we will improve morale. Conservatives will make sure that we have a modern and fully prepared army, navy and air force. It is time to stop being happy to place with Luxembourg at the bottom of the NATO list. It is time for a common-sense approach with our veterans, soldiers, sailors, airwomen and airmen.

Senator Housakos: At least Luxembourg has money. We're broke.

Senator Plett: As I said, no one is protected by the reckless policy and lack of leadership from this Liberal government.

Another group that has seen their safety net diminished in the last nine years are Indigenous peoples. First Nations housing is a federal responsibility and another clear failure by Justin Trudeau. Let me share with you a passage from the Auditor General's report on housing in First Nations communities:

Indigenous Services Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation have been mandated to work with First Nations to meet their housing needs by 2030. We found that 80% of these needs were still not met with 7 years left before 2030.

It continues:

From 2018-19 to 2022-23, Indigenous Services Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provided funding to build 11,754 new housing units and repair 15,859 existing units in First Nations communities. This represents 21% of the new housing units and 20% of the repairs to existing units needed to close the gap.

There was no meaningful improvement in housing conditions in First Nations communities. From 2015-16 to 2021-22, the percentage of homes in need of major repairs decreased from 20.8% to 19.7%, while the percentage of homes in First Nations communities that needed to be replaced increased from 5.6% to 6.5%.

Colleagues, this is a complete and total failure from top to bottom on housing for First Nations communities. It is more proof that the Liberal government will prioritize talk to concrete actions.

Housing is only one part of the failures of the Trudeau Liberals to improve infrastructure on reserves. Most of the roads servicing reserves are in horrible condition, and delivering clean water remains a challenge. The situation is no better in the North, where Inuit are forced to live in houses too small and under-equipped and where food prices reach world-record levels.

Indigenous communities are a microcosm of what is happening across the country, where the housing crisis collides with the ongoing opioid and drug crisis. Just like the Auditor General justly observed the Liberal government's failure on housing for First Nations, the chiefs and their communities themselves are raising the alarm on the opioid crisis by declaring various states of emergency from coast to coast to coast.

In March 2023, Keewatin Tribal Council, representing 11 communities throughout northern Manitoba, declared a state of emergency due to system-wide failures in public safety, health and infrastructure. The Chief of God's Lake First Nation community pointed out illegal substance abuse as the main issue that continues to this day. Their local motel has been turned into a homeless shelter, and all 10 rooms are occupied.

What was the government's response? Indigenous Services Canada sent \$300,000 for short-, medium- and long-term strategies to address the crisis in 11 communities. For a population of 20,000 people, the government offered \$300,000.

Another example is the Blood Tribe nation in Alberta, which declared a state of emergency over an addiction crisis. While the provincial government in Alberta stepped up with \$30 million to build reserve-based recovery communities that fuse sweat lodges with abstinence-based treatment, the federal government has been missing in action.

Beyond the issue of addiction, the poor living conditions and hopelessness for the future have created a mental health crisis in Indigenous communities. The suicide rate is simply alarming. But worse, it is teenagers who are committing suicide. Imagine, colleagues, the suffering of a 12-year-old boy for him to take his

life. In January, First Nation leaders held an emergency meeting in Ottawa to discuss this mental health crisis that they warned could get even worse.

For all the talk by the federal government on renewing the relationship with the Indigenous peoples in this country, the substance abuse crisis is a sad reminder of how little the Liberals have achieved and how much more needs to be done. Barriers remain for Indigenous people to access appropriate health care support in a suicide crisis that has been going on for years in their communities at a much higher rate than non-Indigenous populations.

The safety net for Indigenous people to receive proper support is full of holes as well. Indigenous communities in Canada deserve more than a holiday in September where the Prime Minister can go surfing in Tofino. They need — now more than ever — a federal government that will be a partner to tackle various housing crises, substance-abuse crises and an ongoing suicide crisis by strengthening the social safety net.

Since 2015, the federal government's budget for Indigenous affairs has doubled, but some reserves still have to boil their drinking water. Indigenous communities still live in poverty and inadequate housing, unable to access the most basic of social services. More money, no progress — that is a hallmark of the Justin Trudeau government. Instead of unlocking the potential of Indigenous peoples by allowing them to profit from the exploitation of the resources on their territory, instead of providing them with good-paying jobs, the Trudeau Liberals have decided to keep them in a constant state of crisis, which will make them and keep them dependent on the federal government. The result of this ideology is that too many Indigenous live in Third World conditions in Canada. That will be Justin Trudeau's legacy regarding our relationship with First Nations, Inuit and Métis: a lot of talk, shiny objects — like a holiday — and a huge increase in spending, but no results. It clearly is time for a new leader and a new approach, an approach based on common sense and mutual respect under the leadership of a new Conservative prime minister.

• (1540)

Under Justin Trudeau, Canada is welcoming historical numbers of immigrants. These people are also victims of the Trudeau Liberals' incompetence. The Canadian safety net cannot protect them. Thousands of asylum seekers are forced to live in shelters or on the streets.

In Peel, a suburban region in Greater Toronto, the shelter system is running at 300% of capacity, with asylum seekers occupying more than 70% of the beds and many more camping on the streets, according to the mayor of Brampton, Ontario.

Several of those newcomers are forced to use the food banks. A Toronto-area food bank Feed Scarborough, sounded the alarm following a dramatic 112% increase in new clients across its five locations. Based on the clientele demographics, 95% of those relying on Feed Scarborough are not Canadian born, and less than three quarters — 72% — have been in Canada for less than a year. Who can forget the riots in Montreal as recent immigrants were trying to access a food bank?

Even those who have been here for a few years are finding it harder and harder to live in Justin Trudeau's Canada. The Canadian dream is turning into a nightmare for many immigrants due to the high cost of living and rental shortages.

What do these people do? They leave Canada. Rising emigration numbers hint to newcomers being forced to turn their backs on a country that they chose to make their adopted home.

Febby Lyan, a Singaporean immigrant to Canada, garnered nearly 400,000 views on a recent video about why people are leaving Canada. Over 20 minutes she detailed rising homelessness, rising crime, limited job opportunities, worsening affordability and even a few qualms with the political situation.

The YouTuber Angry Canadian Immigrant wrote an entire e-book accusing Canada of running an immigration system designed to scam newcomers:

"After three years in Canada I see it as one of the most overrated countries in the world; very high taxes, enormous cost of life, very few well-paying jobs with insane competition for them . . . no access to health care whatsoever," he says in one of his most popular videos, Top 5 reasons not to move to Canada.

We used to be the place to which people around the world wanted to come. Now these immigrants are writing about why people should not come to Canada. Again, these are not Conservative talking points; these are the conclusions of more and more immigrants.

The notion of Canada as an immigrant trap has even started to make the foreign press. The Indian news channel WION broadcast a segment titled "Canada: The Dream that Became a Nightmare."

Preliminary results of the Canadian Bureau for International Education's 2023 annual review have shown the weakening of the Canadian brand as a safe, stable and welcoming place for international students.

The mess in the immigration system is Justin Trudeau's legacy. The influx of immigrants was a purely ideological move by the Trudeau Liberals, but they failed to plan for the arrival of those newcomers. This has consequences on the price of housing, our health care system and our school system. More and more immigrants realize that life under Justin Trudeau is not what they were promised. Abandoning the same immigrants that he enticed to come here is Justin Trudeau's legacy.

Another group that has been let down by Justin Trudeau is young Canadians. For those who want to be part of the middle class someday, the dream is slipping out of their fingers. Nearly two thirds of young Canadians revealed that their financial situation, shaped by the housing crisis, affects their mental

health, and that living from paycheque to paycheque in the basement of your parents' home does not help with your social life.

Senator Housakos: Saddled with Liberal debt.

Senator Plett: Justin Trudeau's failed policies have affected nearly all facets of young Canadians' lives: their finances, their social life, their self-esteem and their mental health.

Young Canadians feel stuck and have to wait longer to achieve societal rites of passage. Leaving the family nest, buying a home and starting a family are all delayed.

With the sudden population growth due to the reckless immigration policies of the Liberals, young Canadians are now being squeezed out like never before.

According to Statistics Canada:

. . . This change may benefit Canadian society by increasing the size of the working-age population However, the high number of new working age Canadians may also put pressure on the delivery of services to the population, housing, transportation and infrastructure.

How can young Canadians be optimistic about their future when their federal government keeps failing them? At every turn, they hit a wall put in place by the Liberal-NDP coalition.

Young Canadians' dream of being part of the middle class is stuck in the affordability crisis perpetuated by the Trudeau government. They cannot leave the family nest due to an unaffordable housing market, but the rental market is not an enviable option, with rents being so high that it is impossible for them to save for a down payment.

For years, the Liberal-NDP coalition buried their heads in the sand while young Canadians were suffering. It took Pierre Poilievre and the Conservative Party to surge up in the polls for the Liberal government to rush and put together eye-catching headlines a few weeks ahead of this year's budget.

Suddenly it becomes urgent to address the issues that young Canadians face. Justin Trudeau wants to put on the image and illusion of the Liberal government that actually cares. However, other than dividing Canadians by starting a phony class war and blaming Baby Boomers for the condition of younger generations, we all know the Liberals will achieve nothing. It is the strategy the Liberal government has used time and time again: Try to look like busybodies by throwing money at a problem without any concrete plan. Our Prime Minister looks like a weather vane in the middle of a hurricane, throwing money everywhere and hoping it settles on something, but instead billions are being lost in the storm.

Senator Housakos: Canadians are running out.

Senator Plett: Canadians 18 to 34 are hurting. Their future is bleak. They believe less and less the promise that has been at the core of Canada's social contract: Get a good education, work hard and you will be able to have a good life which includes a good job, a home for your family and the assurance that there is a safety net if things go wrong. Justin Trudeau's decade in power will have been a lost decade for a generation of Canadians.

Finally, one other group that has suffered from the incompetence and failed policy of the Trudeau Liberals is seniors.

The large majority of seniors live on a fixed income. The devastating "JustinFlation" hurt these people disproportionately. They are unable to negotiate an increase of revenues to compensate for the increase in the cost of feeding and housing themselves.

Last week, the *National Post* told the story of 75-year-old Dorothy Bagan. She says:

I try to be really careful, really smart about my spending, especially with groceries. I can usually do a whole week of food for only \$35.

• (1550)

Imagine, colleagues, she manages to live on \$35 a week for food. As the newspaper points out, Bagan's other costs are rising, including a \$600 monthly mortgage payment combined with nearly \$250 in utilities, a bill that has nearly doubled since COVID. Ms. Bagan summarizes the dilemma for seniors when she says, "Like a lot of seniors, my bills keep growing. But my income isn't." There are hundreds of thousands of seniors like her.

Last fall, Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors' Advocate reported that 32% of seniors in that province cannot afford basic necessities, including food, rent and medical supplies. This is Justin Trudeau's legacy: One third of seniors cannot afford the basic necessities.

These people worked hard all their lives, trusting the system to help them when they would be old, but our safety net is failing them. After nine years of Justin Trudeau, food is costing more and more. The failed Liberal policies, like the carbon tax, mean that heating their homes costs more for seniors, and the increase in interest rates and rent is hurting the most vulnerable seniors.

Seniors are, of course, the principal users of our health care system. They are the main victims of the failures that I mentioned before. Millions of Canadians rely on Old Age Security, or OAS. While the federal government increased OAS in 2022, it was limited to those over 75 years of age.

What about the seniors living in poverty who are between the ages of 65 to 75? According to the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the cohort between 65 and 75 is the most needful part of the whole older Canadian group. These people are completely left behind by Justin Trudeau's Liberals.

OAS was scheduled to switch the delivery system in 2023, but as of last October, that deadline was pushed to 2025. The longer it takes, the more at risk the delivery systems are. Can you imagine the catastrophic result a simple delay of 10 days in the delivery of payments to seniors could have? The federal government presided over Phoenix, probably the biggest failure of a computer system in the history of Canada. We are not immune to this, colleagues.

Who in this chamber can say that they have 100% confidence in Justin Trudeau and his team to deliver on the modernization of this system?

Senator Housakos: Nobody.

Senator Plett: I don't think even our government leader would have that confidence.

Senator Housakos: No way.

Senator Plett: The Auditor General's report stated clearly in black and white that the delivery systems of Employment Insurance, or EI, and OAS are at risk of failure. The plans are behind schedule and — surprise, surprise — over budget.

Senator Housakos: Shocking.

Senator Plett: The report says that the project was estimated to cost \$1.75 billion in 2017. The Auditor General notes that although no benefits — zero — had yet moved to the new platform, the cost had increased 43% to \$2.7 billion. They have not done anything yet.

Times are tough for our seniors. Justin Trudeau is letting them down. Worse, he is blaming them for the problems of younger Canadians. The "Great Divider" would like us to believe that folks like Dorothy Bagan, who has \$35 a week to eat, are to blame for the fact that 30-year-olds live in the basement of their parents.

Colleagues, I want to take a few minutes to address our Employment Insurance system. As I just said, the delivery system for EI is close to being obsolete, and there are reasons to fear that the government will not be able to complete the modernization. But for EI, it is not just the delivery system that has to be reviewed. It is the system itself.

The Unemployment Insurance Act was introduced in 1940 and later became what we now call EI. It is commonly known as Canada's primary safety net, but it is getting old. Employees and employers have been asking for years, if not decades, for the EI program to be modernized to better reflect the labour market of today.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw shortcomings and difficulty in adapting to emergency situations. This should have been a lesson learned from the pandemic, and the Liberals did promise to act. In fact, the mandate letter of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion said:

Taking into account input received through consultations on the future of Employment Insurance (EI), by Summer 2022, bring forward and begin implementing a plan to modernize the EI system for the 21st century, building a stronger and more inclusive system that covers all workers, including workers in seasonal employment and persons employed by digital platforms, ensuring the system is simpler and more responsive for workers and employers. . . .

The minister was mandated to implement by the summer of 2022 a modernized EI system. But the Trudeau government decided to not go forward with the reform due to worry it would drive up premiums. Seeing their polling numbers plummet, the Liberals do what Liberals always do: They chose their political future ahead of Canada's future. They did not dare do the right thing and modernize the EI system as they, themselves, realized they had to. History tells us that when a government messes up with EI, voters are angry.

So instead of doing its job, the Trudeau government prefers to stick its head in the sand, yet again.

The necessary reforms to our Employment Insurance system will not be part of Justin Trudeau's legacy. Instead, it will fall on Pierre Poilievre to repair it, just like he will have to repair so many parts of the federal government.

While Justin Trudeau continues to say Canada is not broken, clearly the evidence I have shared with you today — and the day-to-day reality of Canadians — says the exact opposite. More Canadians today are struggling to put food on the table and a roof over their head. Canadians do not receive the health care they deserve and the government support that they need when times are difficult.

According to a recent poll, 70% of all Canadians agree with the statement that it feels like everything is broken in Canada right now. That, colleagues, includes 43% of Liberal voters and 66% of NDP voters.

More poverty, more homelessness. That is Justin Trudeau's legacy. People having trouble feeding themselves and their family, people having to pay too much to house themselves and their families. That is Justin Trudeau's legacy. The worst health system among the richest countries. That is Justin Trudeau's legacy. The most vulnerable of our society left behind, abandoned by a government who cannot deliver even the most basic of services. That is Justin Trudeau's legacy. An unstitched social safety net where more and more people fall through the cracks. That is Justin Trudeau's legacy.

The only people who are not disillusioned by the current state of the country are the Trudeau fanatics. The Liberal-NDP coalition continues to spend recklessly for future generations to

foot the bill. Even in their sunset months of being in power, they continue to spend recklessly for future generations to foot the bill.

• (1600)

Their solution to all problems is to spend, spend, spend and to build more bureaucracy instead of helping Canadians. Colleagues, it is time for a Conservative government to bring common sense back to Ottawa and to Canada.

Canadians are looking at their wallets being stretched out, looking at their families struggling to make ends meet and looking at their communities being overrun by homelessness and substance abuse. They realize that Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh are just not worth the cost. But the good thing is that Canada was not like that before Justin Trudeau, and it will not be like that after he is gone.

Senator Housakos: Can't be soon enough.

Senator Plett: There is a light at the end of the tunnel, and that light is becoming larger. Soon, Canadians will have a chance — a chance that all Canadians are waiting for — to vote this incompetent Liberal government out of power and give themselves a Pierre Poilievre government. This new team will axe the tax to stop this money grab disguised as an environmental policy. It will build more houses and revive the Canadian dream of owning a home. It will fix the budget to make sure that Canadians get what they pay for. It will put an end to the radical policies that favour criminals over victims so that we can all live in safe communities. And it will work with the provinces to rebuild a strong health care system that heals when you need it.

Colleagues, there is no end to what I have to say on this subject and many others. I will need to take a break for now. With that, I move the adjournment of the debate for the balance of my time. Thank you, colleagues.

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Would the honourable senator take a question?

Senator Plett: Yes, I'll take one.

Senator Downe: Thank you, Senator Plett, for that entertaining — as always — speech. I'm not sure that all my colleagues were listening that closely, however, because your lament about seniors seems to ring a little untrue, given you were part of a government and a party where Prime Minister Harper wanted to increase the Old Age Security level from age 65 to 67. If you're so concerned about seniors, why did you not oppose that at the time?

Senator Plett: Well, yes, that's indeed a good question. I was not standing up here defending any other government. I was up here saying exactly what your friend Justin Trudeau has been doing over the last nine years, and will continue to do. Again, with that, I move the adjournment for the rest of my time.

(On motion of Senator Plett, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMISSION BILL

BILL TO AMEND—MOTION TO AUTHORIZE NATIONAL SECURITY,
DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
TO STUDY SUBJECT MATTER—MOTION IN AMENDMENT—
DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson:

That, in accordance with rule 10-11(1), the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs be authorized to examine the subject matter of Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments, introduced in the House of Commons on May 19, 2022, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate;

That, for the purposes of this study, the committee be authorized to meet even though the Senate may then be sitting or adjourned, with the application of rules 12-18(1) and 12-18(2) being suspended in relation thereto;

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 13, 2024; and

That the committee be authorized to deposit its report with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, provided that it then be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting following the one on which the depositing is recorded in the *Journals of the Senate*.

And on the motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Plett, seconded by the Honourable Senator Poirier:

That the motion be not now adopted, but that it be amended by deleting the second paragraph.

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Plett's amendment to Senator Gold's motion to have the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs study the subject matter of Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments.

The second paragraph of the motion would authorize the committee:

. . . to meet even though the Senate may then be sitting or adjourned, with the application of rules 12-18(1) and 12-18(2) being suspended in relation thereto;

Senator Plett's amendment deletes this paragraph from the motion, effectively significantly reducing opportunities for the committee to meet for the purposes of this study, as it would be unable to do so during Senate sittings.

At the end of the session, when committees are overloaded and senators' schedules are difficult to coordinate, greater flexibility is crucial. More leeway will enable the committee to organize itself more efficiently in order to complete its work in spite of tight deadlines and time constraints.

[*English*]

That said, I'd also like to endorse Senator Harder's caution about expanding the practice of conducting pre-studies on certain bills. Pre-studies are sometimes necessary and justified, particularly in the case of budget bills, appropriation bills or bills subject to judicial deadlines. These bills have special status under our parliamentary practices and customs, and require a certain deference on the part of the Senate.

When assessing the need to conduct a pre-study of a bill that does not fall into these categories, we should also consider the criterion of time constraint. Is there any justification for the time constraint imposed on the Senate to study this bill?

Extending this practice is not necessarily consistent with the Senate's traditional role in exercising its objective second look at legislation. The Senate must be able to take the time it needs, when appropriate.

I, too, would like to caution the government and colleagues about changing practices and customs that would diminish the breadth and depth of our committees' studies of bills we receive from the other place.

[*Translation*]

I believe that Senator Plett's proposed amendment is unnecessary at this time, because I trust that our fellow senators will make the right decision when they vote on the original motion.

Thank you for your attention.

(On motion of Senator Housakos, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

THE ESTIMATES, 2024-25

NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A)

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of May 23, 2024, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine and report upon the expenditures set out in the Supplementary Estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025;

That, for the purpose of this study, the committee have the power to meet, even though the Senate may then be sitting or adjourned, and that rules 12-18(1) and 12-18(2) be suspended in relation thereto; and

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit its report with the Clerk of the Senate, if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the report be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate.

The Hon. the Speaker: Are honourable senators ready for the question?

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT CITIZENSHIP ACT

BILL TO AMEND—TWENTIETH REPORT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS,
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE—
DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the twentieth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (*Bill S-235, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, with amendments and observations*), presented in the Senate on May 8, 2024.

Hon. Ratna Omidvar moved the adoption of the report.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise to speak on the report from the Senate Social Affairs Committee on Bill S-235, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

• (1610)

Bill S-235 was introduced by our colleague the Honourable Senator Jaffer on February 9, 2022. Bill S-235 was referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology on June 1, 2023.

This study follows similar previous work on other bills that amended the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. For example, last year, we studied Bill C-242, the Reuniting Families Act, from Conservative MP Kyle Seebach. We also studied Senator Martin's Bill S-245 on lost Canadians. Both bills passed the committee and the Senate.

The Social Affairs Committee studied Bill S-235 over the course of five meetings, during which time we heard from the Honourable Senator Mobina Jaffer; the Honourable Senator Kim

Pate; officials representing the Canada Border Services Agency; officials from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; an individual with lived experience; and immigration and children's rights advocates. This bill amends the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Citizenship Act. Amending two acts, of course, adds complexity to our work.

I would like to add that not a single senator disagreed with the principle of the bill, which was to provide a route to citizenship for immigrant minors who have aged out of care.

During witness testimony, however, it became clear to the sponsor and to members of the committee that the pathway to citizenship in the bill would have created significant unintended consequences. As such, the sponsor tabled amendments to provide a different pathway through amending different sections of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Citizenship Act.

I must also note that during clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, a senator raised a concern about the receivability of the amendments due to the new pathway, because the rule says that only those sections of the parent act that are being amended by a bill may be subject to amendment in committee during clause-by-clause consideration. The senator asked for the committee to understand this before proceeding to clause by clause; however, the senator also noted that there is a precedent for committees to make an exception to the rule, if they choose.

In the *Senate Procedure in Practice* on page 142, this is noted in a ruling dated December 9, 2009, which said:

Although the issue only comes up very rarely, practice [in the Senate] has tended to be that a proposed amendment to a bill amending an existing Act may deal with sections of the original Act that are not amended by the bill, provided that there is a strong and direct link between an existing clause of the bill and the change to the original Act that the proposed amendment seeks to affect.

Further, in committee, I weighed in, with the advice of the committee clerk, saying that section 3 of Chapter 7 in *Senate Procedure in Practice* allows for a bill to undergo significant amendments, provided that the text reported back to the Senate continues to respect the decision of the Senate at second reading — that is, the amendments do not violate the principle or scope of the bill. It was my opinion that the amendments fell within the scope of the principle of the bill at second reading, and they address the key concern that the bill raised.

Based on this discussion by the members, with the knowledge of the *Rules of the Senate*, the committee decided to proceed to clause by clause. One committee member abstained from voting, and one committee member voted on division. Based on the testimony received by the committee, the Social Affairs Committee members passed several amendments to Bill S-235 and one observation.

The amendments and observation made by the Social Affairs Committee are captured in the committee's twentieth report, presented here on May 8, 2024, and are as follows:

Clause 1 of the bill is amended to replace the provision amending section 3(1) of the Citizenship Act regarding automatic citizenship in favour of a provision amending section 5 of the act regarding the grant of citizenship. Specifically, clause 1 now adds a new section 5.3(1) to the Citizenship Act to allow the minister to grant citizenship to any person who applies for it and who meets the following criteria:

The person was ordinarily resident in Canada when they transitioned out of care — either state out-of-home care or an informal care arrangement under the supervision of the state — having been in care for at least 365 days cumulatively; the person was not returned to the care and custody of their parents when they transitioned out of care, unless their return happened within 365 days of the person turning 18 years of age; and the person has been physically present in Canada for at least 1,095 days before the date of their application, and has not resided outside of Canada for more than 10 years since turning 18 years of age.

Clause 1 is also amended to add a new section 5.3(2) to the Citizenship Act, allowing the minister to waive some of these requirements on compassionate grounds.

Clause 2 of the bill is amended by adding a new section 12(1.1) to the Citizenship Act. It stipulates that the minister must accept a written statement by the applicant about the circumstances of their care as evidence when determining whether to grant an application for citizenship made under the new section 5.3 of the act.

Finally, clause 3 of the bill is amended to add a new section 50(c.1) to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. It provides that a removal order is stayed in the case of a foreign national who has applied for citizenship under the new section 5.3 of the Citizenship Act until a final decision has been made on the application.

In addition to the above amendments, the Social Affairs Committee made one observation. It acknowledges testimony about the \$630 application fee and documentation requirements associated with obtaining a grant of citizenship as representing insurmountable barriers to many individuals who were formerly in the child welfare system. The Social Affairs Committee expressed its expectation that the Government of Canada consult with immigration and citizenship law experts, and eliminate — through regulation — barriers to applying for citizenship under Bill S-235, including the removal of application fees.

In closing, I wish to commend Senator Jaffer for her persistence and commitment in bringing us to this stage. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[Senator Omidvar]

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

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McPhedran, seconded by the Honourable Senator White, for the second reading of Bill S-201, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Regulation Adapting the Canada Elections Act for the Purposes of a Referendum (voting age).

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, this item stands adjourned in the name of the Honourable Senator Martin. After my intervention today, I ask for leave that it remain adjourned in her name.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: So ordered.

Senator Clement: Honourable senators, the Mohawk people of Akwesasne, with whom we share the mighty St. Lawrence River in my home community of Cornwall, were part of what is often described as the oldest participatory democracy on earth: the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Spanning six nations, the Haudenosaunee system hinged on three fundamental principles, including the Seventh Generation Principle, the responsibility to participate and ensuring that everyone has a voice.

[*Translation*]

It is with that in mind that I rise today to speak in support of Senator McPhedran's Bill S-201, which seeks to lower the federal voting age to 16. I think that this initiative reflects these three principles and their lasting significance in Canadian society.

[*English*]

The first principle — the Seventh Generation Principle — is based on the Haudenosaunee philosophy that the decisions we make today should lead to a sustainable world seven generations into the future. It's no secret that the impacts of climate change and the many decisions made by our politicians today greatly affect our next generations. Things like education, minimum wage, law reform and environmental policy all have lasting impact.

• (1620)

How do we go about making more sustainable decisions for future generations if they are not part of the conversation? Contrary to what some would have you believe, issues like the housing crisis and climate change, which disproportionately affect young people, didn't happen overnight. Instead, they have been the result of decades of underfunding and inaction. We've become experts in crisis management, but often have failed to plan ahead, and yet young people have their entire future ahead of them.

In 2022, research by Children First Canada found that underage youth are not consistently less knowledgeable about politics than young adults. Rather, it was highlighted that youth are already engaged, as it is their future that will be impacted.

In March 2022, I met with young people from Operation Black Vote Canada for an event called "Are You Too Young to Vote?" During this meeting we talked about all sorts of things, from TikTok to Beyoncé — my favourite — the environment to the housing crisis and what it would mean to them to lower the voting age to 16. Everything they said is reflected in the research done by Children First Canada. If, at the age of 16, young Canadians can drive a car, consent to sex, get a job and even pay income tax, they should have agency over their futures.

The second principle is the responsibility to participate. Beyond the traditional "get out the vote" efforts that rely on campaign organizers, we can boost civic engagement by lowering the voting age and creating more consistent voting habits. In January 2022, I sat down with a group of young people at St. Lawrence College to ask them about their perspectives on voting and youth engagement. One participant explained that their parents didn't teach them about voting and that, with the whirlwind of information provided at the start of their university education, voting was the last thing on their mind.

Elections Canada states that if a person votes in their very first election, they will probably be a lifelong voter, while those who don't are more unlikely to pick up the habit later in life. It's like learning good manners or learning to swim, to ride a bike or learning a second language. These are all things we teach and reinforce in kids when they are young, because that's when it has the most lasting impact — and it makes sense. When we pick up things at a young age, we are more likely to hold on to them. Children in Ontario typically take civics in grade 10, so let's shorten the gap between learning about democracy and actually getting to participate in it.

The third and last principle is that everyone should have a voice, which is perhaps the most important one and explains why lowering the voting age deserves our attention. They say you shouldn't talk about politics, religion and sex, which has always been an issue for me because they're my favourite things to talk about. Invite me to dinner parties, folks. I love it.

Now, while I'll concede the last two, we need to ask ourselves why we have made politics such an untouchable topic — even polarizing — and yet politics is everything. Politics is sidewalks, schools, landlords, daycare, mental health, gambling, language, the internet. What isn't politics? Voting connects you to that process.

When I was young, my teacher parents brought me to a school board trustee by-election. They led by example and demonstrated to me how important the ballot is. I have never missed a vote in my whole life. The ballot is a visceral connection to a bigger process.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, the perspectives of our young people, the new ideas that they bring, are extremely valuable when it comes to normalizing respectful political discourse and civic engagement at an early age. Listening more closely to young people and showing empathy could go a long way in creating a better political climate. It is no secret that we have work to do in that regard.

[*English*]

One of my favourite parts of being a senator has been meeting young people in schools and also when they come to visit us here. I spent my last birthday with 48 students, and I would trust every single one of those kids to vote. Meeting with students and hearing their fresh new ideas gives me faith in our future — something we don't often get in politics, but maybe it's time we did.

Lowering the voting age is a big idea — I get it. But I do not see that as a reason to ignore the voices of young people. Bills like this one have been defeated or dropped from the Order Paper before, but should that stop our efforts? Should we just give up every time a bill doesn't pass? If anything, the fact that 10 such bills have been tabled since 2011 should serve as evidence that this is an important and ongoing concern for Canadians.

The speech by Senator Tannas on this bill addressed important issues, such as the same-question rule. I listened with great interest. I gave his points a lot of thought, and did some research on the barriers that this bill could face. I don't want us here to assume that the same-question rule might be called at the other place. That is a decision for them to make. It makes sense to study this bill here, in the appointed Senate. In the elected house, a discussion around lowering the voting age can lead to consideration of a loss of seats, and this can lead to limiting debate, whereas here, we can have a fuller study without the same constraint.

I have lived life as both an elected person and an appointed politician. I understand the sweat that runs down your back when a vote is being taken on a big issue that could affect you in the next election. Here, in this place, the conversation is more about advocating for minorities, asking the tough questions and thinking past an election cycle.

Regardless of how Bill S-201 turns out, I want to be on the record. I want to contribute my thoughts and lend my voice to this worthwhile project. But, if you're still not convinced — and even if you are — I want to encourage you to attend the great event mentioned earlier by Senator McPhedran. Tomorrow, from 2 p.m. onwards, the Vote16 Summit will be happening, and you can check out vote16.ca for all the details. I want to thank Senator McPhedran for her hard work and endless dedication to this cause and this event. Her tenacity is indispensable.

To close, this bill provides me with much-needed hope: hope that we can make better decisions for our next generations, hope that we can create a more civically engaged population and hope that we will embrace the challenges of political discourse as opportunities for positive change.

Bear with me as I go into my last paragraph here, because I had this part translated into Gen Z for us:

Honourable Fam, waiting to vote until 18 is a big yikes and mad cheugy. But S-201 hits different! Today's youth slays and stays bussin' — that's why we gotta give them a chance to clap back. If not, how will we be able to say that they ate that up? No cap, this bill slaps and is electoral glow up. I am its #1 stan, for real.

Thank you. *Nia 'wen*.

(Debate adjourned.)

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Carignan, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Plett, for the second reading of Bill S-221, An Act to amend the Governor General's Act (retiring annuity and other benefits).

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): With leave of the Senate, I'd like to readjourn in the name of Senator Carignan.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

[Senator Clement]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator White, for the second reading of Bill S-271, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15, and I'm not ready to speak at this time. Therefore, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 4-14(3), I move the adjournment of the debate for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

• (1630)

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator White, for the second reading of Bill S-272, An Act to amend the Director of Public Prosecutions Act.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15 and I am also not ready to speak at this time. Therefore, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 4-14(3) I move the adjournment of the debate for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR EYE CARE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Ravalia, seconded by the Honourable Senator Woo, for the second reading of Bill C-284, An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care.

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak in support of Bill C-284, An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care. There are currently 1.2 million Canadians living with vision loss and more than 8 million living with an eye disease that could lead to blindness.

This is an issue that affects Canadians of all ages. Indeed, my own father is one of them. His lack of access to preventative information and therefore to early intervention left him with an advanced state of macular degeneration, which prematurely robbed him of the joys of reading, videotaping family events — the latter perhaps not so missed by some members of the family — and denied this man, who drove for a living, the freedom of driving himself, including to pursue his favourite pastime: purchasing second-hand garden furniture and equipment.

How his family misses that freedom too. We each dread the call to retrieve and deliver another table, mower, swing or heaven-knows-what, which rarely fits in our vehicles and involves scenes of Clampett-style transportation all over the Ottawa River Valley. You get the picture, but I digress.

Increasingly frequent screen time is impacting the eye health of young people. Canada's aging population also faces particular and increased risks of vision loss and blindness. For these reasons, it is more crucial than ever that we make vision care accessible and affordable in Canada. The implementation of a national strategy must be a priority.

Despite this country's medicare system, access to eye care services is an out-of-pocket expense for most Canadians. Most provincial coverage only includes medically necessary eye care services, and routine eye examinations are not universally available. Only 55% of Canadians have private insurance eye care coverage. Those with the least amount of coverage include newcomers, at 47.3%; those who are racialized, at 49.3%; and seniors. In fact, despite the increased needs and risks that older Canadians face, only one in three have private coverage.

Public health promotion of eye health is sparse and sporadic. This increases risks of harm that could otherwise often be prevented by early detection and exacts greater human and fiscal tolls due to resulting requirements for more expensive remedial treatment and rehabilitation costs.

Age-related macular degeneration, or AMD, can significantly impact day-to-day tasks, such as reading or driving, and is the leading cause of vision loss and blindness in Canadians over the age of 55. Although, as the name implies, AMD is certainly age-related, the risk of developing it can be reduced by precautionary measures and early detection via regular eye exams.

Access to eye care specialists is far from equal across the country, especially when it comes to rural and Indigenous communities. The Canadian Association of Optometrists rightly insists the lack of equitable access to vision care for Indigenous peoples is a pressing public health issue. According to Statistics Canada, Indigenous people are less likely to visit an eye care professional. In fact, one third of Indigenous people have not had

an eye examination within the last two years. Too many Indigenous people face multiple barriers to accessing these services, including lack of transportation, financial constraints and overall abysmal investment by Canada in support of adequate health care on reserves.

First Nations people who live on a reserve also have the highest rates of diabetes in Canada. Over the last 20 years, there has been a 20% increase in the number of Indigenous people living with diabetes. You may be wondering what that has to do with this bill.

Diabetes comes with an increased risk of diabetic retinopathy, which can lead to vision loss. It is the most common eye disease correlated with diabetes and costs the health care system about \$1.2 billion every year. It is also preventable. Early detection can reduce the risk of vision loss by 95%. How could we not want access to eye care, given the current system's human, health and financial costs?

The government is failing to meet many of its obligations to Indigenous peoples. When it comes to providing adequate access to vision care, a major component of overall health and well-being, Canada is behind both the United States and Australia in making these services available for Indigenous peoples.

Canada is failing to meet its obligations under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, especially Articles 21, 23, 24.2 and 29.3. These articles outline the government's obligations to provide ". . . the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. . . ." and ensure that programs to maintain and restore the health of Indigenous peoples are implemented.

This gap in care also fails to meet the terms of Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 19, which calls on the federal government to ". . . establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes . . ." Call to Justice 3.2 of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls similarly calls upon the government to ". . . ensure that health and wellness services are available and accessible within Indigenous communities . . ." so that they are not forced to relocate in order to access treatment.

This national strategy framework, particularly the requirements for consultations with Indigenous peoples, can and must result in Canada working nation-to-nation with Indigenous governments and in support of improved access to eye care for Indigenous peoples. This work must also address the impacts of this strategy on First Nations and Inuit communities under the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program.

The national strategy must also consider and address the limited number of optometrists in Canada, given that there are currently only two schools of optometry in the country: one in Waterloo and one in Montreal.

The benefits of eye care extend far beyond the health system. Vision impairment is correlated with increased social isolation, lower community involvement and strain on caregivers. Investing in a national strategy for eye care benefits everyone as improved

vision for Canadians means increased educational opportunities, improved employment rates and a boost in productivity and economic growth.

In 2019, vision loss resulted in \$32.9 billion in costs for Canada. Direct health system costs of \$9.5 billion included costs associated with hospitals, surgeries, services provided by ophthalmologists, optometrists or opticians, pharmaceuticals and eyewear. Costs relating to reduced productivity at work, loss of future earnings and loss of caregivers' income added up to an additional \$6.1 billion. Lost well-being resulted in costs of \$17.4 billion. If nothing changes, the cost of vision loss in Canada is expected to grow to \$56 billion in 2050.

In these challenging economic times, too many are struggling to access housing, food, health care and other essentials. Leaving people to struggle is not only morally wrong but also fiscally irresponsible. It creates preventable and costly crises within the health care system and countless other sectors.

Bill C-284 is yet another representation of the simple yet too often overlooked fact that all of us stand to benefit — socially, financially and in terms of health — when we ensure that no one is left behind and in need.

• (1640)

A national eye care strategy can help to strengthen Canada's social safety net as we work toward national, universal single-payer pharmacare, an adequately funded Canada disability benefit, a national guaranteed livable income and countless other policies that enhance equality and point the way to a future where no one's health is contingent on how much money they have in their bank account.

Action must be taken to determine and implement the policies necessary to ensure adequate eye care access across Canada. Creating a national strategy for eye care is an important step toward ensuring prevention and early detection and toward upholding health as a human right.

Thank you, Senator Ravalia and member of Parliament Judy Sgro, for your leadership in this regard. *Meegwetch*. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Victor Oh: Honourable senators, I stand today to speak to Bill C-284, An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care, sponsored in the Senate by our honourable colleague Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, and in the other place by the Honourable Judy Sgro of Humber River—Black Creek.

First, I would like to acknowledge this bill intends to ensure access to quality eye care for all Canadians. It also aims to designate a month to raise awareness of age-related macular degeneration. Through this awareness, Bill C-284 also

emphasizes the importance of promoting research and improving data collection on eye disease prevention and treatment, improving eye care advancements.

The major eye conditions affecting millions of Canadians and disproportionately impacting our aging population include macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.

Macular degeneration impacts around 2.5 million Canadians. Increasing awareness and promoting preventive measures can significantly reduce its prevalence. Cataracts, which are the leading cause of vision loss, can be effectively treated with modern surgical techniques. Glaucoma, often undiagnosed due to a lack of early symptoms, requires increased public awareness and regular screenings.

There are more than 8 million Canadians who have one of these four common eye diseases and are at high risk of losing their vision. According to the Canadian Association of Optometrists, “. . . 1 in 3 Canadian adults have not sought vision care or purchased corrective lenses due to cost,” and 75% of vision loss is preventable or treatable through proper preventative measures.

This is a shocking statistic. In 2019, vision loss cost the Canadian economy \$32.9 billion. Vision health is fundamental to nearly every aspect of our daily life. This includes everything from reading and driving to working and participating in activities. Vision loss can profoundly impact a person's quality of life, reduce independence and increase the risk of accidents. It can also contribute to social isolation and depression.

Colleagues, I don't need to stress how important vision health is for Canadians. Bill C-284 aims to alleviate the hurdles many Canadians face in their access to quality eye care. We must ensure that Bill C-284 doesn't fall short in key areas, such as ensuring fiscal responsibility and transparency and providing a clear, actionable strategy for raising public awareness and ensuring accessibility to eye care for all Canadians, particularly those in remote and underserved communities.

It is imperative that this bill address the regional disparities and inequitable access that many remote and underserved communities often face. It is imperative that a national framework bridge this gap and ensure that all Canadians, whether in urban centres or rural areas, will benefit equally.

It is also important that this bill respect the balance of federal and provincial roles and that the federal government do not encroach on provincial authority. Collaboration with the provinces and territories is vital to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure the smooth implementation of the framework.

Further collaboration between the federal government and vision experts in the private sector, such as ophthalmologists, optometrists and researchers, is also important so that evidence-based strategies are developed. This ensures that a comprehensive and effective approach is developed and addresses the needs of Canadians.

A framework is essential for monitoring and evaluating the impact of Bill C-284 so that its success can be measured accurately and areas of improvement can be identified.

In conclusion, Bill C-284 addresses an important public health issue and provides the opportunity for better accessibility to eye care services, protecting and enhancing the vision health of Canadians. Establishing a framework to monitor and evaluate the data and research and having a clear strategy for public awareness are vital steps toward improving this health sector in Canada and benefiting our citizens.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

PROHIBITION OF THE EXPORT OF HORSES BY AIR FOR SLAUGHTER BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Pierre J. Dalfond moved second reading of Bill C-355, An Act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain Acts.

He said: Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise to begin the debate at second reading of Bill C-355, An Act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain Acts.

This title is a very accurate description of the content of the bill, which sets out only eight provisions over three pages, one of which is dedicated to a long preamble.

• (1650)

In other words, this private member's bill, if adopted by the Senate, will do just one thing: prohibit people from putting horses on planes for the purpose of being slaughtered or fattened for slaughter in another country, primarily Japan.

Fresh horsemeat is actually a prized delicacy in Japan. Known as sashimi, the meat must be raw, so it must be eaten soon after slaughter.

One of the main suppliers of live horses to the Japanese market is Canada.

Currently, horses are exported from airports in Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton, to which they have been transported by trailer from a feedlot just hours before. At the airport, they're crammed into wooden cages and flown to Japan.

As we all know, a trip from Winnipeg to Tokyo takes many hours, even if it's non-stop. That's in addition to the road trip and waiting time at the airport and on the plane.

The premise of this bill is that this process subjects horses to dozens of hours of unnecessary stress and pain, and that it must end.

[English]

My speech will be divided as follows: one, the origin of this bill and its legislative history; two, the content of the bill; three, the wide support for it among Canadians; four, the impact on Canadian agriculture; five, the scientific and veterinary cases for the bill; six, Canadians' special relationship with horses; seven, the main arguments of those opposing; and finally, eight, the next steps for the bill.

Before I proceed further, I want to make a declaration. My spouse and I both love horses and are the proud owners of a beautiful, black Friesian horse named Victoria, who is beginning to win prizes in dressage competitions. So I love horses. Maybe that makes me "woke."

My interests in the issue of the live export of horses for slaughter overseas started with reading a piece in *The Globe and Mail*, written by columnist Gary Mason, published on March 1, 2023, entitled "The unconscionable horse slaughter we need to end now." I was shocked to read about up to four horses being confined in small wooden crates for long flights and going without food and water for over 24 hours. Further research by my team revealed that during the 2021 federal election, the Liberal Party announced that, if re-elected, their government would prevent shipping horses to Japan by air for slaughter. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food's mandate letter, issued on December 16, 2021, asked her to, "Ban the live export of horses for slaughter."

After realizing that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food was not moving in a timely way, I decided to work on a Senate bill to prompt action on this issue. On June 21, 2023, as some of you might remember, I introduced Bill S-270, entitled the "Horse Protection Act." At about the same time, and maybe not truly a coincidence, Liberal MP Tim Louis announced in a statement in the other place that he intended to table a private member's bill on live horse export by air for slaughter in September 2023. I contacted MP Louis and offered to work collaboratively to achieve our shared goal. On September 19, 2023, he introduced Bill C-355.

The same day, the Prime Minister backed this bill. A spokesperson for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food said that the department would work with MP Louis "every step of the way" during the passage of this bill. Subsequently, MP Louis was able to place his bill on the priority list of private members' bills up for scheduled debate and decisions in the House of Commons.

His bill completed second reading on January 31, while being studied and amended by the Agriculture Committee and adopted on division on May 9.

Meanwhile, on March 21, I let my bill drop from the Order Paper to avoid the potential point of order that we saw with the two wildlife captivity bills, Bill S-241 and Bill S-15.

I move now to my second point — the content of the bill before us. Essentially, Bill C-355 is animal protection legislation that targets a specifically cruel practice: the export of live horses by air for slaughter. This three-page bill targets the stress and cruelty of these long and grueling flights to Japan, according to scientific and veterinary information.

Let's be clear, the bill will not affect the domestic slaughter of horses or the export of horse meat. The bill prohibits a person from exporting a horse by air unless they have provided the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food with a written attestation that, to the best of their knowledge, the horse is not being exported for slaughter or fattened for slaughter. As well, it creates an offence to make a false or misleading statement on this subject.

Contravention of the new act would be subject to similar penalties as those found in the Health of Animals Act, a federal statute for regulating livestock in place since 1990. However, Bill C-355 is written as a stand-alone bill specific to the practice we're trying to ban. Furthermore, Bill C-355 will come into force 18 months after Royal Assent to allow horses currently being raised for food to work through the system. The intent is to strike a balance between practical considerations and ending this practice as soon as possible.

In the other place, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food amended the bill to remove any administrative burdens on pilots and Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, officials as well as to prevent adding red tape for other sectors of the equine industry, such as horses travelling for sport.

I now move to my third point — the strong support of Canadians for ending the live export of horses for slaughter overseas. A key factor in the bill's origins is determined grassroots support. Last year, singer-songwriter Jann Arden, patron of the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition, said:

Since 2006, tens of thousands of terrified horses have been crammed into shoddy wooden crates and flown 8,000 km to their demise, enduring turbulence, thirst and hunger, and abject fear. To say this practice is inhumane would be an understatement. Canadians want this to end.

Ms. Arden has a good read of Canadians' feelings about it. For example, on June 22, 2021, MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith presented a petition to the House of Commons on this subject with over 77,000 signatures. On February 13, 2023, MP Alistair MacGregor presented another such petition to the other place

with over 36,000 signatures. Those petitions indicate the importance to Canadians of banning live exports of horses overseas for slaughter.

Moreover, opinion polls also confirm this fact. An online survey conducted in 2021 by Research Co. revealed that 54% of Canadians then strongly opposed the export of Canadian horses for slaughter abroad and another 13% moderately opposed. Only 22% strongly or moderately supported this practice. The highest level of strong opposition was in Alberta, with 61% strongly opposed plus 13% moderately opposed. Like Albertans, I love horses.

• (1700)

Also worth mentioning is that the highest level of opposition was found among persons who voted Conservative in 2019 — at 69%.

A similar survey conducted by the same firm from April 3 to April 5 of this year showed that 68% of Canadians agree with banning the export of horses for slaughter. On a regional basis, support for a ban was highest in Alberta, at 78%; followed by B.C., at 71%; Atlantic provinces, at 70%; Ontario, at 68%; Quebec, at 65%; and Saskatchewan and Manitoba, at 64%. The level of support for a ban among those who voted Conservative in the previous election decreased to 65%, while 74% of those who voted NDP and 73% of those who voted Liberal were in support of the ban. Thus, we can see that support for this policy is strong across the country and among voters for the major parties running across Canada.

Also worth mentioning is that among Indigenous and First Nations peoples in Canada, 71% agree that this practice should be banned.

My fourth point is about the impact on the industry that will likely be affected by the bill.

In Canada, the live export of horses for slaughter is a limited business and relatively new. Many of these horses are large draft breeds, such as Clydesdales, which are famous from Budweiser commercials, and Percherons, which are well known in Quebec.

In 1965, the then Minister of Trade and Commerce responded to a question on the Order Paper regarding horse exports to Europe by revealing that there had been only one shipment of live horses for slaughter to Europe in the previous 10 years, consisting of 330 horses shipped in 1964. So in the 1960s, this was not a real trade.

The first record of Japanese imports of live horses from Canada is found in the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database and dates to 1991, when Japan imported 34 live horses from Canada, valued at USD57,000.

Let me now refer to statistics on the evolution of this trade in Canada. Since 2012, Statistics Canada has provided data on Canadian exports of horses destined for slaughter by country of import. A review of the data reveals that in 2012 Canada

exported almost 1,200 horses to Japan for slaughter, worth almost \$6 million. In 2014, the number of horses reached a peak of 7,100 live horses exported to Japan for slaughter. In 2015-16, that number decreased by about 20%, with about 5,800 horses each year — down from the over 7,000 the year before. The decrease continued afterwards. By 2019, the number of horses exported to Japan fell to 2,800 — a number never reached again.

In 2022-23, the number seems to have stabilized at about 2,500 horses per year. According to Statistics Canada, these exports were worth about \$19 million in each of these two years. By comparison, Canada exported about \$25 million worth of horsemeat during each of these years.

As I said, Bill C-355 would come into force 18 months after Royal Assent to allow a transition for affected businesses by allowing horses currently being raised for food to work through the system. These businesses can adjust, if they wish, to participate in the domestic slaughter of horses and the export of horsemeat. However, the export of live horses for sashimi — a cruel practice — will not be possible.

Statistics Canada also provides data on the export of horsemeat, including that of mules and donkeys. Interestingly — as I said — the value in Canadian dollars of this meat export has always exceeded the value of the export of live horses, but it is also on a drastic downward path in value and quantity.

I repeat: This bill will not end the export of horsemeat.

Senators, I turn now to the scientific and veterinary reasons for this bill. Essentially, animal protection legislation requires an analysis at the intersection of biological science and ethics. This science can neither be ignored nor dismissed as woke. A key ethical point is that, with horses, we are dealing with sentient creatures, meaning they have perceptions and feelings. Horses are not property like tables or chairs.

In 1780, the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham wrote a book called *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. It's part of the curriculum at Oxford. Prior to this milestone, many European philosophers and religious thinkers viewed animals as unworthy of moral consideration because animals didn't, they supposed, have souls. However, Bentham wrote of animals, "The question is not *Can they reason?* or *Can they talk?* but *Can they suffer?*"

Thus, Bentham and scientists like Charles Darwin helped bring Western thinking closer to Indigenous wisdom. As we've heard in some of our debates, many First Nations view animals as "all

our relations," understanding that life forms are interconnected and interdependent. Taking a similar perspective, in 1871, Charles Darwin wrote:

. . . the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind.

Senators, what do science and veterinary medicine tell us about the ethics of shipping live horses to Japan for slaughter? During air transport, horses — which are easily panicked and have a strong flight response — become stressed and suffer due to the loading process and the loud, sudden and unfamiliar noises of aircraft of up to 140 decibels. They suffer from close confinement in crates with unfamiliar and terrified horses. Having a high centre of gravity, they also have difficulty balancing during takeoff, turbulence and landing, sometimes resulting in falls and injury.

In February, 34 veterinarians and animal welfare experts wrote to the House Agriculture Committee in support of Bill C-355. I will cite a long passage of the brief:

The journey by land and air from remote feedlots in western Canada to feedlots in Japan generally takes more than 24 hours, during which time the animals are denied food, water, and rest. . . . Horses travelling by air can experience moderate to severe suffering in many forms, including anxiety, fear, pain, exhaustion, physical discomfort, auditory discomfort, hunger, thirst, and panic. There is strong scientific evidence to support banning this practice for animal welfare reasons.

It is important to be clear that the conditions under which horses are exported for slaughter — and, by extension, the associated risks to their health and wellbeing — are markedly different from sport horses transported by air for other purposes. This is because horses transported for slaughter (a) are subjected to higher stocking densities and are confined in smaller spaces, (b) are provided less supervision and intervention during flights as well as medical care before, during and after transport, (c) are subjected to different handling styles prior to and during transport and are denied access to water, (d) are more likely to be confined with other unfamiliar and potentially incompatible horses, and (e) have less training and habituation to travel.

• (1710)

I'm tempted to say that horses which compete in Olympic competitions and other sporting events travel first class, but not those travelling to Japan to become sashimi. Colleagues, this is the main case for Bill C-355.

I turn now to Canadians' special relationships with horses, which, though they are much larger, are often treated as companion animals such as dogs and cats. We don't have a horse

in our house, but we do have two dogs. As MP Louis noted, Canadians rely on horses for transportation and labour. Horses have also given us friendship and service in times of war, with nearly 25,000 horses and mules serving our country overseas during World War I. We know the iconic black horses of the RCMP and celebrate Canada's Sports Hall of Fame members Big Ben and Northern Dancer.

In fact, not only do we have a special relationship with horses, but they have a special relationship with North America. It is a misconception that wild horses in Canada are an invasive species introduced by Europeans. In fact, horses evolved in North America before crossing an ancient land bridge to Asia and going extinct in the Americas over 10,000 years ago, at the end of the last ice age. They were brought back to North America by colonizers from Europe.

Senators, horses came home, and their strength and loyalty built our country. We are justified in according special treatment to these gentle creatures who are so dear to us. We are therefore looking to ban a particularly cruel and unnecessary practice with Bill C-355.

This is done in the same spirit as the Harper government's enactment in 2015 of an animal cruelty offence specific to service animals used in law enforcement, including horses. That bill was named Quanto's Law, in honour of an Edmonton German shepherd police dog killed in the line of duty.

Colleagues, before concluding, I will quickly address five arguments you may hear against this bill during this upcoming debate. The first is the suggestion that this bill initiates a slippery slope with respect to other animal use industries. However, we are dealing with a bounded and particularly cruel practice. This bill does not criticize the slaughter or consumption of horses or livestock generally and deals with one issue: the cruelty of air transport in a particular context related to the biological characteristics of horses.

Banning specific cruel and unnecessary practices is not a slippery slope, but rather a stairway to heaven.

A second potential objection is that the bill does not end the export of horses by air for all reasons, so what's the difference? As I outlined, veterinarians and other experts have identified major practical differences.

A third potential objection is that the bill is arbitrary or based only on emotions. For my part, empathy with horses should not be dismissed; also, emotions are not arbitrary. Our two species have a close and important relationship of affection and reciprocity. As I explained, we also have rational scientific evidence of cruelty with respect to the transport by air of horses to Japan for slaughter.

A fourth potential objection is that some of the breeders of horses for export are Métis, a matter raised by the Conservative Party and a witness in the other place. Our committee will no doubt hear more about that. However, I understand that the

practice of breeding and shipping live horses by air for slaughter in Japan is a relatively recent and non-traditional practice in Canada. Again, businesses can adjust to export horsemeat, just not the live horses intended to be served as sashimi.

It is also my understanding that the same ethical and legal considerations would apply equally to all Canadians in terms of any interest or prohibition regarding shipping horses by air to Japan for slaughter.

On a final and related point, I understand that one witness from the horse-producing sector preferred to appear anonymously at committee in the other place due to fear of harassment by activists. As with all bills, we should judge Bill C-355 on its merits, and the voices of stakeholders should be heard in a respectful way. Disagreement is part of democracy, but everyone should respect the norms of civil dialogue as well as free expression, and treat their fellow citizens with respect. I trust our Senate committee will safeguard and uphold these values in our study.

Colleagues, I conclude with a few remarks on the process. Bill C-355 is a House of Commons private member's bill. I'm glad that all groups in our chamber are increasingly acknowledging that, as an appointed chamber, the Senate has a duty to properly review and vote on these bills passed by MPs.

On the one hand, these bills have sometimes faced unreasonable and arduous processes in the Senate, with attempts and even successes by some senators to exercise veto-like powers over them by preventing votes through procedural tactics and repetitive adjournments to create delays. Professor Andrew Heard has called this the Senate's ". . . pocket veto." Two bills currently facing challenges in our process are the Green Party's Bill C-226, regarding environmental racism, sponsored in this chamber by Senator McCallum; and the Bloc Québécois's Bill C-282, regarding supply management, sponsored by Senator Gerba.

On the other hand, our process for these "C" bills sometimes lacks due diligence. This month, a private member's bill, Bill C-275, passed second reading without a sponsor or critic's speech or any debate. That was an interesting, fast-tracked second reading. This is all the more surprising in that, according to the emails we have received over the last few months, it seems to be a controversial bill. Such a Senate process cannot be justified to Canadians.

To bring integrity, fairness, transparency and due diligence to our process for House of Commons private members' bills, in 2020, former senator Murray Sinclair and I proposed rule changes. Our package was based on a 2014 proposal of a former Speaker, the late senator Pierre Claude Nolin of the Conservative caucus, former senator Serge Joyal of the Senate Liberals and former senator Vernon White, then a member of the Conservative caucus and later the Canadian Senators Group. It's time to consider these proposals again.

Their proposal in the Forty-first Parliament was contained in the fifth report of the Rules Committee, adopted by members not on consensus, but with a vote of nine to six. Perhaps we should revisit that initiative in the fall.

• (1720)

In any event, we should be vigilant and ensure fair and responsible treatment of House of Commons private members' bills in this place. It is a question of respect for MPs, for Canadians and for Canadian democracy. They're elected, and they speak on behalf of the Canadians who elected them. Therefore, I am speaking against horse trading in more than one way.

I'm confident, in the process of due diligence, that Bill C-355 presents a strong case for protecting horses from the cruel practice of exporting them live and by air to Japan for slaughter. Therefore, colleagues, I ask for your support.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Robert Black: Will my colleague take a question?

Senator Dalphond: With pleasure.

Senator Black: Thank you. Honourable colleague, according to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, there have been only five horse deaths related to air shipments to Japan since 2013. Approximately 47,000 horses have been transported during that period, with the mortality rate therefore being 0.011%.

To meet Japan's requirements, horses must be born and raised in Canada or have been kept in Canada for at least six months prior to the start of pre-export isolation, and all horses exported to Japan require several vaccinations and blood tests. The horses are also required to be isolated from animals that are not being exported. The animal disease history of the premises where the horses are kept must also be known and be kept with the animal. Horse health is monitored every step of the way and is of the utmost priority for industry and government alike.

Senator, are you aware that there have been no reported fatalities or injuries related to horse air transport, according to your government?

Senator Dalphond: Thank you for the question, Senator Black. As you said, you referred to statistics. Statistics show there is not a high number, but there's some death. There's also a certain number of injuries to horses. The point of this bill is to stop a practice which brings a lot of stress, distress and harmful consequences to live horses that can be avoided by shipping horsemeat. This bill is not meant to kill the horsemeat business. It's meant to make sure that we don't expose horses to travel that starts at the breeder's place and ends up in Japan 24 hours later, with no feed, no water and no looking after these horses during that whole period. That's the issue here.

Do we want to continue that practice? We receive about \$5,000 to \$6,000 for each of these horses. Is that the price we're ready to pay to preserve \$5,000 for the breeder? That's the issue.

Senator Black: Have you been to any airports, colleague, to see how well horses exported to Japan are treated? If so, what did you see? If not, how can you say they are ill-treated and mistreated if you haven't seen them?

An Hon. Senator: Hear, hear.

Senator Dalphond: I'm sure you will think it's a "woke" answer to tell you to look at some of the videos that you can find on websites. You will see them at the airport in Winnipeg; you will see how they are treated in other airports. You will hear from some of the people who testified before the Agriculture Committee in the other place. I'm sure our committee — most likely it will be the Agriculture Committee — and you, Senator Black, will be asking all the proper questions of witnesses.

The Hon. the Speaker: Will Senator Dalphond accept another question?

Senator Dalphond: Of course.

Senator Black: Are you aware that rather than 18 months to get the current horses through the system it is actually closer to 48 months, based on the gestation period of horses that are bred today for this purpose?

Senator Dalphond: Yes, I'm aware of that. However, 18 months is a long period of transition. There's a market for these horses. It depends. Some breeders just send one to Japan out of a larger lot. The rest are sent for horsemeat. Others are being used for other purposes. Yes, it will have to change.

We send between 2,000 and 2,500 per year, except three years ago, when it was 1,700. It's not a huge quantity of horses, sir. I'm sure there's space in the market to have them shipped to other parts. As I said in my speech, horsemeat as a trade represents twice as much in value to export. It's not the same type of horses that end up in horsemeat. They are normally very young horses. There are other ways for those who don't want to have them sent to a slaughterhouse in Japan but to a slaughterhouse in Canada where it's legal to slaughter horses.

Senator Black: Colleague, are you aware that horses have the amazing ability to sleep standing up? They don't have to sleep lying down. I'd like to correct some of the misinformation that you shared with us earlier.

Senator Dalphond: Obviously, the senator missed the beginning of my speech. Maybe it was when I spoke in French and that's why he didn't hear it. I said that I was the co-owner of one horse, Victoria. I've seen her a few times in my life — I ride her. I observed that, yes. Furthermore, we just bought a new horse that is about a year old. It has a good breeding pedigree. She was brought from Portugal to Canada. We have great hope for her — at least my spouse has great hope in Tulupa.

Yes, I know that, sir. As I told you in a previous speech, I was born on a farm where we used to have a horse and a few cows.

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Would Senator Dalphond take another question?

Senator Dalphond: With pleasure.

Senator Downe: Thank you. Listening to the debate, I've grown concerned because the same argument could be extended to lobsters. In Atlantic Canada, and in Prince Edward Island in particular, we ship live lobsters to Japan and throughout Asia. Do you have similar concerns about lobsters? Would this be extended to other areas as well?

Senator Dalphond: I guess you can make an analogy with many other things. Lobsters are shipped live in crates. Maybe they also fly. I don't know if they stand up during the flight. I don't know if they stand up for 14 hours, but I think there is a missing link in your question. This bill addresses one issue.

I will repeat what I said in the introduction of my speech. There is only one issue: banning the export of live horses on planes. Lobsters are not equine in any way.

Senator Downe: Thank you for that additional information. Coming from Prince Edward Island, I know the difference between lobsters and horses, but thank you for that explanation nevertheless.

Lobsters are caught, put in water and then put on an airplane. Sometimes they're stopped in Vancouver overnight and put back into holding tanks; sometimes they go directly to Japan and to other Asian countries. Having listened to the debate, I'm concerned that this will have a tremendous impact. If this bill passes, what else will be included? The lobster industry is extremely important in Prince Edward Island and to Atlantic Canada. There are always a lot of fishers and families in rural communities. My question is an extension of the logic of your bill, Senator Dalphond. I understand your concern, but my concern is that — and I hate to say it — this is a slippery slope. We're at the beginning of something of which we will not know the impact until we get to the end. Do you share my concern about lobsters?

Senator Dalphond: Thank you, Senator Downe, for this interesting question. MP Tim Louis's bill — and my bill that was introduced a year ago — rests on the proven assumption that horses are sentient animals and therefore they can feel pain. They can feel stress. They can be disturbed by harnesses that are on them. Standing up in a cage, wooden crate or box where you cannot run or do anything, you are just there for 20 to 24 hours is not experienced exactly the same for other types of animals.

• (1730)

If you have studies that show that lobsters are sentient animals — and maybe they are, I do not know, I did not research that point. You are asking me a question. My answer is that, yes, I consider that sentient animals deserve to be treated in a way that takes into consideration the stress and the pain we inflict upon them.

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Senator Dalphond, will you take a question?

Senator Dalphond: Of course.

Senator Kutcher: First of all, I want to thank you for raising this issue, it is a really important one that challenges us in so many different areas.

One, it challenges us in the issue of sentience in animals, which is really an important issue for us to grapple with. Second, it challenges us to understand different cultural or religious approaches to what is or is not food. One could say the same thing about pigs.

These are really important issues. The issue that really struck me that I would like more information on is that you very appropriately are looking at what the veterinary medicine components on this are, the concerns that veterinarians have. You did say something about horses being sent long distances — and I imagine to Japan and other places — for the Olympics. If you could help us understand what the difference is between the horses that are sent for sport purposes and the horses that are sent for this so we can disentangle whether the concern we have is because the horse is going for slaughter as opposed to the horse is travelling. Thank you.

Senator Dalphond: Thank you, Senator Kutcher, for this important question.

I jokingly said that some travel in business or first class and some travel in economy. The horses I'm referring to — these 2,500 horses — are sold for about \$5,000 to \$7,000 each.

A horse that is part of sports competitions is worth way more than \$5,000, way more than \$100,000. Even Victoria is worth more than \$100,000. So they don't travel the same way because we care about the asset, which is the horse, and this is an important asset. There would be veterinarians, a trainer, a coach and other ways of travelling. It will not be in a wooden box alone — no, not alone. It would not be with other horses that are unknown to that horse, and they will not be exposed to those types of things. They will be looked after, provided some support, feed or water, things like that.

It is all part of what the economy is about. When I travel business class or first class, I'm treated better than those that travel economy because it comes with the price that you pay for it and the service you get for it. Expensive horses that participate in competitions and the Olympics travel in better conditions than these horses. That is what I referred to when I referred to the 34 veterinarians and experts that have written that brief and pointed out the difference. I will be quite happy to share the brief with the members of the committee when the bill goes to committee. I hope that answers part of your question.

Senator Kutcher: Thank you very much, Senator Dalphond. That did answer some of it, but not the whole part of the question.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Kutcher, I'm sorry, but the time for debate has expired.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

SEVENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Moncion, seconded by the Honourable Senator Yussuff, for the adoption of the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, entitled *Senate Budget 2023-24*, presented in the Senate on February 7, 2023.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, I would like to ask for leave to take adjournment for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO URGE GOVERNMENT TO RECOGNIZE THE ERASURE OF AFGHAN WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM PUBLIC LIFE AS GENDER APARTHEID—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Ataullahjan, seconded by the Honourable Senator Marshall:

That the Senate call on the Government of Canada to recognize the erasure of Afghan women and girls from public life as gender apartheid.

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, I rise today on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Anishinaabeg Algonquin Nation to speak in support of Senator Ataullahjan's Motion No. 139 that the Senate call on the Government of Canada to recognize the erasure of Afghan women and girls from public life as gender apartheid.

I rise today because the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan are being severely trampled by the Taliban regime. Afghan women are being systematically squeezed out of active and meaningful participation in Afghan society. Their rights as citizens are being drastically curtailed. Hard-won gains that were made after the previous Taliban regime was toppled in 2001 are being rapidly rolled back, and the potential for any future enjoyment of women's rights to participate and thrive politically, socially or economically is in danger. This is a catastrophe for Afghan women. This is a catastrophe for their nation which is suffering from the limits on women's contributions. This is a catastrophe for all of us who believe that the human rights of all people, everywhere, must be protected.

Colleagues, I was drawn to speak to this motion because I support it and it is the right thing to do, but also because of some of my own first-hand experience.

As I mentioned last June when I spoke in support of Bill C-41, I travelled regularly to Afghanistan as a board member of the Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan. The economic emancipation of women was a key goal of our work.

Colleagues, I started my career in 1980 in the southern African country of Botswana during the dark period of apartheid experienced by our next-door neighbour South Africa. The tentacles of that brutal apartheid regime were far-reaching throughout our region.

This motion brings together these two professional and formative experiences of mine. It also, frankly, reminds me of our own Canadian human rights transgressions against the original peoples of this land and the long-lived dire consequences of legislated discrimination and suppression of human rights.

Honourable colleagues, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly as Resolution 217 on December 10, 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris.

The commission was chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt and Canadian John Humphrey was the principal drafter of the declaration. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights commits nations to recognize all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language or any other status.

Ironically, the same year the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, apartheid was formally enacted in South Africa. One hundred and forty-eight apartheid laws were implemented over the 40 years that lasted, affecting every single aspect of people's lives in that country. Whites put in place a system of White supremacy based on the exclusion of the majority Black population. The apartheid economy was built on racially based privilege, exclusion and segregation.

• (1740)

Apartheid, meaning "apartness" or "separate development," regulated virtually every aspect of Black participation in the economy, residence and ownership, occupations, education and training, and health and welfare — and enforcement was brutal. While apartheid in South Africa was really more about money, power and fear than it was about religion, there was a stated Biblical case for it. I quote:

... the Bible taught that humankind, by the will of God, was separated into different races that should each have their own lands. . . .

The world is predicated on a number of unchanging creation "orders" . . . namely, the family, male leadership, the state, work, and race.

In South Africa, the divisions were White, Black, Coloured and Asian.

In Botswana, we had an influx of South African refugees. All were there seeking safety. Some, like Lindelwa Ntingana, the woman we named our Botswana-born daughter Lindi after, were there pursuing professional careers they would have been shut out of in their own country. Others were there for professional reasons and for reasons of love, like Mrs. Chetty, who taught our daughter Emilie. Mrs. Chetty was married to a man of another race.

Colleagues, when Nelson Mandela was freed from prison and became the first democratically elected president of the new South Africa, the broad and deep damages of the apartheid regime were not automatically reversed. In fact, many persist as challenges today. With the recent passing of former prime minister Brian Mulroney, we were reminded of Canada's leadership role in helping to bring other nations on board to end apartheid in South Africa.

Now, let's turn to the situation at hand in Afghanistan. The Atlantic Council has stated that the peace agreement between the Taliban and the U.S.A., which led to U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, did not account for the concerns of Afghan women.

Despite initial agreements for modernization, the Taliban has been destroying the progress made in the last 20 years by Afghan women and girls toward a more gender-equal Afghanistan. Since coming to power, the Taliban has issued 80 decrees targeting women and girls, creating a systematically enforced gender apartheid in Afghanistan.

Where Black people in South Africa were relegated to remote Bantustans, suburban townships, the domestic servant quarters of their White bosses or prisons — if they didn't comply with the laws of apartheid — women and girls in Afghanistan are prisoners in their own homes and inside their burkas, with very little right to free movement or to participation in the economy, in education, in politics or in public spaces. They too would end up in prison and/or brutally abused if they contravened the gender apartheid system imposed by the Taliban.

Honourable colleagues, the recognition that what is happening to women and girls in Afghanistan is, in fact, a form of apartheid is gaining support internationally. Article II of the 1976 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, which responded to the situation in South Africa at the time, describes:

. . . inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them. . . .

These include:

(a) Denial to a member or members of a racial group or groups of the right to life and liberty of person . . .

And:

(c) Any legislative measures and other measures calculated to prevent a racial group or groups from participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country and the deliberate creation of conditions preventing the full development of such a group or groups . . . basic human rights and freedoms, including the right to work, the right to form recognized trade unions, the right to education, the right to leave and to return to their country . . . the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. . . .

Colleagues, as you can see, there are stark parallels between the race-based apartheid of South Africa that this 1976 convention was responding to and the situation of gender apartheid today in Afghanistan.

Adapted from the international law on racial apartheid, gender apartheid emphasizes that discrimination has been made the system of governance itself such that the aim of government and public policy is to discriminate. As with apartheid in South Africa, there is also a stated, yet disputed, religious rationale for the system of gender apartheid in Afghanistan.

At last week's panel on gender apartheid here in Ottawa, Akila Radhakrishnan of the Atlantic Council mentioned work being done on a brief to codify gender apartheid, and she indicated that momentum is growing internationally.

At that same panel, MP Garnett Genuis spoke of the importance of fully implementing Bill C-41. We now have humanitarian aid flowing to Afghanistan from Canadian NGOs, but the system is not yet in place for development assistance, which, as we know, is sorely needed.

MP Ali Ehsassi spoke about our feminist foreign policy and our ambassador for Women, Peace and Security as Canadian strengths in the face of gender apartheid in Afghanistan.

Colleagues, when I look back on my own experiences in Afghanistan with the Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan, to which Canada was the largest contributor, I think about the women who were taking out the microloans for their businesses at that time. In 2007, I remember visiting hard-working businesswomen in their beauty salons. And, yes, the burkas hung on the hooks by the entrance. Those were still prevalent in those days too, but women had the freedom to go to salons and also earn a living serving their neighbours by running those salons. Now we know salons are closed by decree of the Taliban, immediately wiping out places for women to connect with each other and essential income and employment for many women.

I remember visiting a Hazara woman with her thriving bakery business. I remember visiting the widow Bibi Gul, who had literally carved by hand a modest home out of rock of the Kabul

mountainside for her and her son to live in when they came back from living as refugees in Iran. Her \$200 loan was used to import gold and silver threads from India to use in her embroidered badges for police and military. I wonder if Bibi and the women she trained are now shut down.

Honourable colleagues, excluding women from the Afghan economy hurts the women. It is devastating for their families. In a country with 70% of the population unable to even meet their most basic needs, it is a humanitarian disaster. It's a travesty.

Colleagues, we know that Canada played an important role in standing with the majority Black population of South Africa against their cruel compatriot perpetrators of racial apartheid injustices in that country. Today, we have an opportunity once more to stand against injustices — to stand with the women and girls of Afghanistan against the cruel Taliban perpetrators of gender apartheid in that country.

Honourable colleagues, let's support the women and girls of Afghanistan by recognizing the severity of their plight, and let's urgently find innovative ways with our partners to support them to resist and put an end to these inhumane laws. Colleagues, on this theme, as we hear Speaker Gagné utter at the beginning of every Senate sitting — and I listened attentively today — “May we serve ever better the cause of peace and justice in our land and throughout the world.” *Wela'liqq*. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Osler, for Senator Patterson, debate adjourned.)

• (1750)

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION BILL, 2023

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023.

(Bill read first time.)

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

(On motion of Senator Gold, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES TO CANADA'S ECONOMY

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Klyne, calling the attention of the Senate to the ongoing business and economic contributions made by Indigenous businesses to Canada's economy.

Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard: Honourable senators, I rise today — grateful to be on the Algonquin Anishinaabe territory — to discuss a topic of immense importance for the economic landscape and social fabric of our country: It is the vibrant, robust and growing Indigenous business sector in Canada. I invite you to join me in looking specifically at Atlantic Canada. Senator Klyne's inquiry has unearthed a compelling narrative of entrepreneurship and self-determination — one that deserves not just our attention, but also our admiration and our support.

Nova Scotia is home to a rich tapestry of cultures, but none as deeply rooted as the Mi'kmaw people. Today, the Mi'kmaq continue to enrich Nova Scotia with their vibrant culture, significant contributions and unyielding spirit, reminding us of the profound importance of acknowledging and respecting the First Peoples of my home province.

Reconciliation often revolves around historical injustices, land rights and cultural preservation. However, economic reconciliation is a key component to any conversation about reconciliation. In this speech, I will highlight the achievements of three Mi'kmaw businesses in Nova Scotia, starting off with Clearwater Seafoods, a major Indigenous-owned company; then I will discuss Muin Clothing Co., a thriving medium-sized Indigenous business; and I will conclude with Mi'kma'ki Craft Supplies, a smaller yet resilient Indigenous business led by a Mi'kmaw woman.

Let's start with Clearwater Seafoods. The Mi'kmaw people have long been leaders in various sectors of this economy. From sustainable fishing to artisan craftsmanship, their contributions go far beyond what is typically portrayed in mainstream narratives. It is crucial to acknowledge that Indigenous businesses are not mere subsidiaries of a broader Canadian economy; they are embedded into the fabric of our nation's financial framework. According to new research by Gareth Hampshire, in Atlantic Canada, Indigenous businesses “. . . generate billions of dollars in goods and services . . .” — equating to 5% of the region's gross domestic product. An admirable example of this, of course, is Clearwater Seafoods, whose success during the past few years has been outstanding.

In 2021, Clearwater Seafoods, a Nova Scotia-based company, marked a groundbreaking moment in Canadian fisheries by becoming 50% owned by the Mi'kmaq Coalition, a collective

formed by seven Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. This acquisition wasn't just a business transaction; it was a historic milestone, representing the largest investment in the seafood industry by any Indigenous group in Canada. According to Withers, Clearwater boasted a staggering \$71-million increase in sales compared to the previous year. More importantly, this investment stands as a transformative change, placing First Nations at the forefront of the global seafood industry. The impact goes beyond financial metrics. The acquisition aims to foster greater opportunity and prosperity for Indigenous communities in Atlantic Canada, exemplifying a new era of economic partnership and shared wealth. In addition to this, it is also an example of economic reconciliation and collective empowerment.

We can learn much from this business example, and I think about them every time I walk through the Halifax Stanfield airport with much pride, and I'm sure my Nova Scotia colleagues do as well.

Now let's turn our attention to a medium-sized company, the Muin Clothing Co. Indigenous economic engagement centres on community and culture, distinguishing itself from conventional definitions and practices of entrepreneurship that primarily emphasize individual economic gain and wealth accumulation. In the Indigenous context, entrepreneurship is geared toward fostering broader positive outcomes, such as the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage and the overall development of community.

Derek Lewis, a member of Millbrook First Nation near Truro, Nova Scotia, transitioned from being the first Indigenous cellphone game developer in Canada — Red Arrow Digital College — to immersing himself in cultural consulting and eventually returning to his passion for art, following starting a master's degree.

In 2018, he founded Muin Clothing Co., blending his artistic talent with his entrepreneurial drive and passion. This Indigenous company stands out for manufacturing the first made-in-Canada orange T-shirt — in partnership with Stanfield's — a significant marker for Indigenous recognition.

Derek Lewis's Muin Clothing Co. made a monumental step with the initiative — not merely being a business move, but stemming from Lewis's desire for authenticity. In the lead-up to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in 2021, the scarcity of the orange T-shirts, often sourced from abroad, was noticeable. Lewis saw the disconnection between the purpose of the orange shirt to raise awareness about the legacy of residential schools and the fact that they were being imported — imagine.

He's a man of action: Partnering with Stanfield's, Derek Lewis of Muin Clothing Co. ensured that the T-shirts were both produced domestically and produced by an Indigenous company, thereby emphasizing the deeper significance and authenticity of the message to be carried.

Derek's collaboration with Stanfield's also reflects a commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action No. 92.

• (1800)

This Call to Action urges the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework. It emphasizes meaningful consultation with Indigenous peoples, ensuring equitable access to jobs and training, educating staff on Indigenous history and rights and supporting Indigenous-led initiatives. At the heart of Muin Clothing Co. is the drive to narrate the nation's story through apparel, ensuring Indigenous involvement at every production level. Derek Lewis's philosophy resonates with a simple truth: Genuine art carries a piece of the creator's soul.

My final example is a thriving small business: Mi'kma'ki Craft Supplies. While we often direct our attention toward larger business investments, it's crucial not to overlook the profound impact of smaller enterprises, particularly those owned by Indigenous women. Despite women making up 51% of the Indigenous population in Canada, they make up only 41% of the self-employed Indigenous population, according to a National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, or NACCA, report on Indigenous women entrepreneurs.

According to NACCA, Indigenous women face unique challenges when starting and owning their own businesses. Some of these challenges include lack of access to financing due to ineligibility for certain programs and resources; Indigenous women being faced with the responsibility of taking care of their family, parents and often grandparents; a lack of support from their communities, chiefs and councils; and lastly, a lack of knowledge and education about financial literacy, business planning, regulations and management.

Despite these setbacks, Indigenous women are motivated, strive for personal autonomy and continue to pursue their passions and dreams of starting their own businesses. These businesses do more than just contribute to the economy; they serve as vibrant hubs of culture.

Here's an example: In March of 2020, Theresa Meuse, a dedicated Indigenous student support worker, noticed a major gap in resources reflective of Mi'kmaq culture for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Recognizing that need and fuelled by the positive reception to homemade educational tools she had developed during her tenure with the school board, she embarked on a journey to launch her own online business, Mi'kma'ki Craft Supplies. Partnering with a Mi'kmaq publishing company, she turned her grassroots tools into professionally developed resources that not only fostered cultural education for non-Indigenous individuals but also strengthened cultural ties in the Indigenous community.

However, the journey wasn't without its hurdles. Being off-reserve, Theresa grappled with a distinct lack of resources and guidance, from the absence of Indigenous economic development officers to the intricacies in tax reporting for Indigenous off-reserve businesses. Encounters with programs like Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network hinted at opportunities, but they often didn't align with the unique needs of her business. Despite these challenges, Theresa Meuse remains committed to her mission, offering a platform that educates and immerses individuals in Mi'kmaq culture.

Traditional crafts handmade with techniques passed down through generations not only find a marketplace but also offer a unique educational experience. Consumers of these products get a tangible insight into Indigenous culture, a form of storytelling that goes beyond the written or spoken word. For Indigenous entrepreneurs, these businesses serve a dual role as both a source of financial independence and a method of preserving cultural traditions.

To conclude, honourable senators, from the pioneering steps of Clearwater joining with the Mi'kmaq Coalition to lead transformational change in the seafood industry, to the heartfelt endeavours of Theresa Meuse with Mi'kma'ki Craft Supplies, and on to Derek Lewis — whose T-shirts have become more than just apparel — these are markers for Indigenous recognition. Each tells a unique tale of Indigenous resilience, innovation and tradition. There are many examples across Nova Scotia — and indeed Atlantic Canada and this country.

I want to thank you, Senator Klyne, for introducing this inquiry and allowing me the creative space to talk about some of the Indigenous businesses that thrive in my home province of Nova Scotia. We wish them continued success. Thank you. *Asante.*

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

COURAGE, BRAVERY AND SACRIFICE OF ALEXEI NAVALNY

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Omidvar, calling the attention of the Senate to the courage, bravery and sacrifice of Alexei Navalny and other political prisoners persecuted by Putin's Russia.

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Honourable senators, I rise today to add my voice to the tributes to the courageous life of Alexei Navalny. I thank Senator Omidvar for bringing forward this inquiry. She has already pointed to the bravery and determination displayed by Navalny as he fought for democracy in Russia and uncovered the depth of corruption present throughout Putin's reign. I too would like to commemorate his heroism.

Navalny's relentless opposition to Putin's autocratic terrorism was met with harassment and violence, but he remained undeterred. Sadly, his work toward achieving a better and democratic Russia resulted in his death. I hope that his unwavering commitment to justice will serve as an example for us all as we support Ukraine in its ongoing struggle to shake off Russian tyranny and oppression.

Navalny's sordid death as a political prisoner clearly demonstrates the cold-blooded terrors that underline Putin's approach to those who oppose him, be these people or states. Navalny's death also clearly illustrates how Putin uses a robust, sophisticated and unrelenting propaganda machine to influence the global political narrative. Even after Navalny's death, Putin's propaganda machine has been working to discredit Navalny's

character and deflect attention away from his legacy of fighting corruption. Unfortunately, this propaganda tsunami is not limited to Alexei Navalny. Weaponized propaganda is also directed internally toward Russians from all walks of life. Externally, it attempts to destabilize democratic states, such as our own country, by forcing open social fractures, polarizing our politics and demonizing our democratic institutions. Putin uses this well-orchestrated propaganda offensive to distract from and distort his crimes against both his own people and Ukraine.

If you have not yet seen the Oscar-winning film *20 Days in Mariupol*, I urge you to do so. It is a difficult movie to watch, but beautifully shows the propaganda machine of Putin at work regarding the attack of the hospital in Mariupol and the deaths of pregnant women, babies and infant children, then the Russian television and speeches at the UN that followed.

While this purveyance of falsehood is morally repugnant, it is not a new tool in Russia's tool kit. Putin's history of state-sanctioned violence and suppression of dissent follows smoothly in the footsteps of his predecessors. Since the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Russian leaders have been using the same playbook of silencing opposition with propaganda, threats, intimidation, false imprisonment and murder. During Lenin's rule, the KGB, then known as the Cheka, engaged in a program of state violence known as the Red Terror in order to solidify its political control. Mass shootings and hangings of dissidents took place, with over 100,000 estimated to have been killed during this short period of time. Stalin also sought to silence those he considered a threat, as was seen both in his ordered assassination of Trotsky and his attempt to suppress Ukrainians' desire for independence through the Holodomor, a famine he imposed that was responsible for approximately 4 million Ukrainian deaths.

• (1810)

Throughout the following decades after Stalin's death, various Russian state leaders continued to use the KGB to muzzle their critics. The message behind the long line of intimidation, false imprisonment, torture and murder was clear: Toe the line or else.

Today, Putin continues in the footsteps of his predecessors, showing with his actions that he feels the best way to deal with any opposition is to eliminate it.

Let's consider a few cases:

Anna Politkovskaya, the Russian journalist and human rights activist who authored several books about Putin's Russia, was shot dead in the elevator of her apartment in Moscow.

Alexander Litvinenko, a former officer in Russia's spy agency turned journalist, was poisoned for criticizing the Kremlin.

Boris Nemtsov, an opposition leader and Boris Yeltsin's deputy prime minister, was shot four times in the back within view of the Kremlin.

Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were both targeted in an attempted poisoning in England. In this attempted assassination, Putin's brazen disregard for other countries' sovereignty was on full display.

This same disregard for countries' sovereignty has long been understood in Ukraine. In the case of Viktor Yushchenko, the scars from his poisoning became a symbol for Ukrainian resistance against a corrupt regime, which only made his popular support grow stronger.

The Ukrainian people stood up to Putin. We in the West need to take this lesson to heart. The idea of a free, democratic and sovereign Ukraine is one that can't be stamped out, no matter how much Putin works to silence it.

Despite possessing one of the world's largest military powers, Putin's Russia has repeatedly failed to make the military victories he predicted it would. Instead, thanks to the incredibly successful efforts of Ukrainian soldiers and ordinary citizens, Russia has been defeated again and again and again.

Putin sees these military losses, the rallying of Western support around Ukraine and he's been forced to change the propaganda narrative to reframe these losses as victories and intensify his threats and propaganda attack on the West. He, as we know, has also reached out to rogue states and countries antagonistic towards Western values for more support.

History tells us that in Putin's Russia, aggression and violence — be it against individuals such as Navalny or states such as Ukraine — are baked into the Russian imperialistic, autocratic ideology. This is directed against its own people who dissent as well as towards Western-leaning countries who provide an alternative political and economic vision.

As historian Timothy Snyder also tells us, autocracies such as Russia must lose defining wars to devolve from autocratic into democratic regimes. Making sure that Ukraine wins this war may just be the best thing that can bring democracy to Russia.

Now more than ever, it is important that we vigorously support Ukraine in winning this war. We can honour the legacy of Navalny by standing up to this autocratic regime and ending this pattern of Russian aggression.

As I said before in this chamber, when Ukraine wins, there will be no more war, but if Russia wins, there will be no more Ukraine. Because of these incredibly high stakes, we must up our game when it comes to military support. We must better help Ukraine protect itself and be able to launch offensive defensive measures.

For the sake of democracy the world over and for Ukrainian people's rights to their national sovereignty and safe and peaceful lives, I implore us to both continue the good work we have been doing in Canada and to significantly enhance the advocacy, financial, humanitarian and especially military aid. We must seize Russian assets and repurpose them for Ukraine for in this way we can help to keep the spirit that was Navalny alive.

D'akuju.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[Senator Kutcher]

FUTURE OF CBC/RADIO-CANADA

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Cardozo, calling the attention of the Senate to the future of the CBC/Radio-Canada.

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable colleagues, I'm pleased to take part in this debate raised by Senator Cardozo to draw the attention of the Senate and Canadians to the future of CBC/Radio-Canada.

[*Translation*]

As we know, the current government has announced its intention to review the public broadcaster's mandate. On May 13, the Minister of Heritage appointed seven multimedia experts to provide strategic advice on the public broadcaster's governance, funding and mandate.

This re-examination comes at a time when the Conservative opposition is pledging to cut CBC funding and turn its Toronto headquarters into housing. To be honest, I don't think the time is right for a major overhaul of our public broadcaster. A pre-election climate is certainly not conducive to addressing the future of our public broadcaster, an institution that is so important to Canadian culture and democracy.

CBC/Radio-Canada plays such an important role in the media ecosystem that I'd rather see a review of its mandate take place when cooler heads prevail. That said, I don't deny that the Crown corporation has its own particular challenges. As we all know, times are tough for broadcasters, both private and public, because of platform proliferation, audience fragmentation and the erosion of the advertising base.

I'll start by saying a few words about CBC/Radio-Canada's funding. First of all, let's acknowledge that debates over the relevance of public broadcasters and how much funding they should get are happening everywhere, even in Europe. With a touch of humour, Pierre-Jean Benghozi, a researcher with the French national centre for scientific research and professor at the École Polytechnique in Paris, put it this way:

When things are going well for public broadcasters, we wonder why we fund them. And when things aren't going well, we also wonder why we fund them.

This is exactly what our public broadcaster is going through, with some people asking, "Why should we fund Radio-Canada programs if they're so popular?" Still others are asking, "Why should we fund CBC programs when they're not being watched?" When we compare the funding of Canada's public broadcaster with that of other countries, \$33 per capita per year is not excessive, compared with \$79 in France, \$149 in Germany and \$68 in Japan.

The Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel tabled the Yale Report in 2020. It outlined a number of possible solutions for strengthening our national public

broadcaster. With regard to funding, the Yale Report emphasized the need for long-term funding for at least five years. The report also proposed a process of ongoing discussion to establish a new funding formula commensurate with the new responsibilities to be entrusted to CBC/Radio-Canada.

The most interesting idea in the Yale Report, for me, was its proposition to:

... gradually eliminate advertising on all platforms over the next five years, starting with news content.

The advantage of this recommendation is that it would free up advertising revenues for the public sector and enable the Crown corporation to free itself from commercial imperatives and refocus on the fundamental character of the public broadcaster, which involves innovating, taking risks and providing content and services that aren't offered by the private sector.

We understand that CBC/Radio-Canada management has never been fond of that idea, worried as it is that, one day, a government might cut its parliamentary appropriations, which would leave the public broadcaster with no alternative source of revenue. However, I think that this option should be seriously considered since it would also require clarifying the nature of CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate so that innovation and the broadcasting of relevant content would take precedence over choosing content designed to please the masses. Over the past 10 years, with the media crisis, I think that we've evolved and that we've gained a better understanding of the value of news and content. We understand that not everything can be free and that we have to pay for quality.

Most Canadian households pay to subscribe to an online newspaper or to access one or more digital broadcasting platforms. When we compare the \$33 per capita per year that our public broadcaster costs us to the monthly cost of various digital platforms, we quickly realize that there may be room for more public funding for CBC/Radio-Canada.

CBC/Radio-Canada is particularly important at a time when the news media is going through an unprecedented crisis and many journalism jobs have been cut. That is extremely worrisome from a democratic point of view because news media play a democratic role in scrutinizing the work of elected officials and public office holders.

• (1820)

According to an American study, in places where citizens had greater access to local information, voter turnout was higher. Other research has shown that media-produced information promotes political and public engagement.

It's interesting to note that a study carried out in 1,266 counties in the United States found that the disappearance of local media in certain areas is associated with increased public spending, the rising cost of public tenders and higher compensation for public office holders.

As a former municipal councillor, I can also attest that regional news media encourage citizen participation and help mobilize the public to engage in community projects and address societal issues.

Just as they keep a watchful eye on local politicians, journalists serve decision-makers by informing them of the issues and topics that concern and interest their fellow citizens.

I am such a strong believer in the role of the media in general, and CBC/Radio-Canada in particular, that, in the early 2000s, I worked with unions, local elected officials and civil society to get the *Téléjournal* back on the air in eastern Quebec in 2010. We prevailed 20 years after Radio-Canada closed its stations in Rimouski, Matane and Sept-Îles in December 1990.

We know how important it is to be careful not to lose this resource. From time to time, we hear of jobs being cut. I think the public is just as alert as it was back then, especially after the blow inflicted on regional news last year when TVA announced that 24 of the Rimouski station's 30 jobs would be axed, and that regional newscasts would be read from Quebec City only from now on.

In my opinion, the public broadcaster's other major contribution is the important role it plays in fighting disinformation.

In a world where social networks serve as a major source of information and disinformation, being able to tell the difference between facts and lies is critical for democracies.

This issue is all the more important considering the many recent attempts by foreign entities to spread disinformation in order to destabilize our political systems.

Considering the disinformation flooding our social networks, and the widespread relativism that puts fact and opinion on an equal footing, a credible public broadcaster — staffed by journalists governed by a strict professional code and modern control mechanisms — is essential.

For many Canadians, the CBC/Radio-Canada is a bulwark of quality information.

The organization has its own guide entitled *Journalistic Standards and Practices* to uphold its commitment to the principles of accuracy, integrity, fairness, impartiality and balance in its journalistic endeavours.

The ombudsman, who is completely independent from management, acts as an appeal authority for complainants who are dissatisfied with responses from information management.

I am sure that Senator Miville-Dechéne, who was the first woman to hold this position in 2007, could speak more eloquently about the parameters put in place by the public broadcaster to ensure the quality of the information.

[English]

In conclusion, I would like to thank Senator Cardozo for this opportunity to discuss the future of CBC/Radio-Canada.

[Translation]

Our public broadcaster offers equitable access to quality information and culture to all Canadians, no matter where they live and regardless of their socio-economic situation. This is especially important in a vast and diverse country like Canada, where private media can encounter problems reaching every community equitably and from the same starting point.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Bernard, debate adjourned.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO CONDEMN ISLAMOPHOBIA AND ANTI-ARAB RACISM—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Pierre J. Dalfond, pursuant to notice of May 23, 2024, moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Al Zaibak:

That the Senate take note:

- (a) that Islamophobia includes racism, stereotypes, prejudice, systemic racism, fear or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general;
- (b) that hatred and discrimination have no place in Canada;
- (c) that on November 30, 2023, the Senate unanimously adopted the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, including 13 recommendations, entitled *Combating Hate: Islamophobia and its impact on Muslims in Canada*;

- (d) that despite their rich and varied contributions to Canadian society, Muslims are often unfairly vilified and marginalized;
- (e) that Islamophobia has motivated violent attacks on Muslim communities in recent years in Edmonton, Saskatoon, Mississauga, London, Quebec City and Toronto;
- (f) that the National Council of Canadian Muslims reports a disturbing increase in the number of hate incidents since October 2023; and
- (g) that in addition to Islamophobia, incidents of anti-Arab racism have been reported to the police and other public institutions;

That the Senate condemn Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism, reaffirm the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* value of equality, and the recommendations of the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, and denounce discrimination based on religion and other Charter-protected grounds; and

That the Senate call on the Government of Canada to fulfill its commitments made in its response, tabled in the Senate on April 26, 2024, to the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights and to consider convening, when appropriate, a second national summit to combat Islamophobia, in consultation with Canada's Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

(At 6:26 p.m., the Senate was continued until Wednesday, May 29, 2024, at 2 p.m.)

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