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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, June 6, 2024

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, I move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practice, today's sitting begin with Senators' Statements, regarding the 80th anniversary of D-Day, to last 15 minutes, followed by tributes to our colleague, the Honourable Senator Oh, who will retire from the Senate on June 10, 2024, to last 36 minutes, not including the time for his response.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

D-DAY AND THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, today is the eightieth anniversary of D-Day and a day of remembrance for the 14,000 Canadian heroes who stormed Juno Beach. It is also 80 years since the turning of the tide in World War II. Among the Canadian regiments who landed on June 6, 1944, were the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the 1st Hussars, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, The Fort Garry Horse, the Royal Regina Rifles and the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment.

[*Translation*]

Before the landings, 450 members of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, including many French Canadians, were dropped behind enemy lines and were the first to make contact with the French Resistance.

[*English*]

In one day, 359 Canadian lives were cut short, and 715 of our soldiers were wounded or captured. The Battle of Normandy itself went on for 12 more weeks, and Canada lost more than 5,000 young men in total — some barely older than children,

only 18 or 19 years old. They didn't know it at the time, but they changed the course of World War II and, as a result, the course of history.

[*Translation*]

Eighty years on, there are hardly any veterans left to tell their stories. The youngest veteran taking part in this year's ceremonies is 98 years old. As they leave us, it is imperative that we continue to teach people about their experiences and tell their stories.

The Normandy landings marked the beginning of the British, Canadian, American and French allied offensive on the eastern front. That offensive led to the downfall of the Third Reich and to final victory in the war.

[*English*]

Colleagues, to quote George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it." This history must be kept alive so that the evil of the mid-20th century is never repeated.

We, our children and grandchildren owe our freedoms and our way of life, in large part, to these brave men who made the ultimate sacrifice. But neither must we forget those who came home and who then spent decades haunted by the memories of that day, of the weeks following and the faces of friends who were lost. For many years, June 6, 1944, was seared in the minds of tens of thousands of veterans.

Now, when there are so few left, it is our duty to thank them, remember them and honour them.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I also rise today to commemorate the pivotal moment in history: the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, commonly known as D-Day.

On that fateful day, brave soldiers from across the globe embarked on a mission to liberate Europe from the grip of tyranny. Among those valiant soldiers were the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, an infantry battalion hailing from the great nation of Canada and, indeed, my home province of Manitoba. These men, after years of rigorous training, faced the enemy head-on as they stormed the beaches of Normandy. Their unwavering courage and determination helped launch the restoration of freedom in Europe.

Front-line reporter Ross Munro, writing for The Canadian Press, captured the essence of their struggle:

Bloody fighting raged all along the beaches. On the right, the Winnipegs had to battle their way past five major concrete casements and 15 machine gun positions set in the

dunes commanding a long sweep of beach. From dune to dune, along the German trench systems, and through the tunnels, these Manitoba troops fought every yard of the way. They broke into the casements, ferreted out the gun crews with machine guns, grenades, bayonets and knives. The Canadians ran into crossfire. They were shelled and mortared even in the German positions, but they kept slugging away at the enemy. After a struggle that was . . . bitter and savage . . . the Winnipegs broke through into the open country behind the beach.

Colleagues, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles knew this was their moment. They faced the enemy with resolve, fully aware that victory would come at a high cost. There were, indeed, 650 members in the battalion that landed on June 6. Of them, 57 were killed and 71 were wounded. The actions of these soldiers exemplified the courageous spirit of Canadian men and women in uniform: steadfast, unyielding, committed to the cause of freedom.

As we reflect on the sacrifices made by the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and all those who stormed the beaches that day, let's honour their memory and heroism.

A few weeks ago, colleagues, I was reminded of not only the important contributions of Canadian soldiers but also the importance of standing up for families that have been directly impacted by the war. Many soldiers did not come back. Families lost loved ones, often not knowing exactly the details of how their loved ones passed away. Others saw their loved one forever change once they returned from war. May their resilience, commitment and contributions to our country always be remembered, honoured and serve as an inspiration for us to carry these values in our respective roles.

• (1410)

This year as we commemorate the eightieth anniversary of D-Day and the end of the Battle of Normandy, may we forever hold their legacy in our hearts.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of the Independent Senators Group on this, the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings.

On June 6, 1944, Canadian troops were the first to set foot on French soil and storm the beach at Normandy. It was one of the biggest military operations in history.

Let's take the time to commemorate this important day, because the future of the world was at stake that day. Senator Aucoin, Senator Busson and Senator Greenwood are attending the commemoration ceremony in Normandy today in a show of

[Senator Plett]

solidarity. Surviving veterans are also in attendance there and across Canada. They range in age from 98 to 106 years old. We pay tribute to them.

On June 6, 1944, 14,000 Canadian soldiers landed on Juno Beach in Normandy. Young men from across Canada, including Quebecers, Acadians and members of the First Nations, took part. Sadly, 359 of them lost their lives that day.

They were joined on French soil by 45,000 Canadians who were killed in action in that war. Today, many of them are laid to rest under thousands of white gravestones marked with a cross at the Bény-sur-Mer cemetery, which is not far from where I was born 20 years later, in the neighbouring department, where my Oudar relatives still live. My life, my family's life and the lives of millions of French citizens would have been very different today had it not been for the sacrifices of those Canadian soldiers.

Let's remember that more than one million Canadians served in this war. Let's remember those who survived and those who perished, those who were wounded and those who were taken prisoner during the war to enable the liberation of all of Europe.

Here in the Senate of Canada, I wish to join France, my birthplace and childhood home, all parliamentarians of the French Republic and all French citizens in thanking Canada from the bottom of my heart for the supreme sacrifice that was made to liberate France. France and Canada have shared a fraternal bond for over four centuries, and they have so many values in common, including a thirst for freedom and faith in humanity.

I will close by saying that these soldiers did not die in vain, and we must learn from the lessons they left for us.

History gives us perspective and teaches us, now more than ever, that nothing can be taken for granted. Still, once they reconcile, past adversaries can come together and unite to defend freedom, as the Allies did on the beaches of Normandy. Thank you, Your Honour and honourable senators.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: Honourable senators, Utah, Omaha, Gold, Sword and, of course, Juno are the names of the five beaches in Normandy where, 80 years ago today, approximately 150,000 Allied troops landed in, floated or parachuted into. Soldiers, like those of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, the same regiment that Private George Cooper was a member of. Private Cooper, if you remember, recently celebrated his one-hundredth birthday by visiting us here in the Senate last month. There is not many of them left.

Other units that were at D-Day include the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders of Senator Clement's beloved Cornwall, Ontario, which landed 733 troops on Juno Beach that day.

One of the lucky ones, Earl Kennedy, survived D-Day, and five years ago ahead of travelling to France for the seventy-fifth anniversary described that day, and I quote:

Young fellas with knobby knees and shiny cheeks tried to get off the landing craft onto the beach. . . . They so much wanted to get in there and get at the Germans. And they didn't even have the chance. As they got onto the beach, they were blown to hell.

Please excuse that word. When asked why he joined the army, Mr. Kennedy said, plain and simply: "I thought that what Hitler was doing was unforgivable."

Of course, it was.

Colleagues, many of us have a direct connection to D-Day. My own grandfather, a member of the Royal Air Force, landed on D-Day plus-one. I remember him telling me when I was young that the only thing he really feared on D-Day was the Royal Van Doos Regiment jumping out from the hedges because they were known as fierce warriors — so proud.

Senator Aucoin's father, Eddie, of Le Régiment de la Chaudière, was also there.

Some of us have other connections to that day. Senator Varone yesterday shared his family's story and the importance of the Italian campaign to not only liberate Italy but also to keep the Germans fighting and unable to reinforce their position in Normandy.

But all Canadians have a connection to D-Day, and that is the simple fact that we enjoy freedom today.

Honourable senators, the dark clouds of global war are once again hovering over Europe. And with the war in Ukraine, we are once again witness to a despot who is threatening our allies and is trying to push us toward a global war.

I wanted to remind you all of the links to those brave men and women involved with D-Day because I think we would do well to remember the lesson of Mr. Kennedy and why he served. Despots and tyranny have no place in humanity. We must all work to preserve the peace that was won with the blood and sacrifice of Canadians, of our veterans.

Sadly, many of those who served at or in support of D-Day have passed on. The living links that tie us to that time are almost all but gone. That is why I was heartened to see so many veterans make the pilgrimage to France this year, many of whom were boys when they went ashore are now old men.

As a young nursing officer early in my career, I remember treating some of Canada's Second World War veterans. As a veteran now myself, I wonder who will tell their stories after they have all gone.

As a parliamentarian, I will endeavour to tell their stories. As a Canadian, I will remember them.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, 80 years ago today, more than 14,000 courageous men and boys from across Canada — some as young as 14 years old who had lied about their age to enlist — engaged in one of the most incredible feats of human bravery in modern history.

The memory of their sacrifice on Juno Beach on June 6, 1944, remains etched in our hearts and minds to this day. The Allied assault on Normandy was the largest seaborne invasion ever attempted as soldiers stormed the fortified beaches with an uncompromising resolve to liberate our allies from the tyranny sweeping Europe.

There were 1096 Canadian casualties that day, 381 young Canadians were killed. They paid the ultimate sacrifice so that we may live a life of freedom, democracy, rule of law and dignity for all.

We will never truly understand the horror they witnessed that day. So many who came back didn't want to talk about it. And as time wears on, there are fewer and fewer of them alive.

Sadly, we just lost another World War II veteran with the passing of William Cameron on the morning of Monday, June 3, as he was preparing to travel to France to be part of today's commemoration. May he and every other veteran know eternal peace, and may their service to this country never be forgotten.

But colleagues, honouring their memory and their sacrifices doesn't just mean holding ceremonies and making statements. With a war resonating on Europe's borders once again and tyrannical forces growing emboldened around the world, this anniversary serves as a special reminder of the consequences of war, but also the importance of fighting for democracy and freedom wherever and whenever it is under threat.

As we reflect on the horrible human price that was paid on the beaches of Normandy, it should serve as a reminder that we must never take our way of life for granted. This fight starts at home, ensuring that our own country and society remains a beacon for these ideas.

However, our obligations to our morals and values also extend abroad. Canada and Canadians have the responsibility to be a guiding light in the worldwide fight against authoritarian tyranny.

The spirit and legacy of those who fought in Normandy live within us. It calls us to stand firm against the threats they fought. We defend freedom and democracy today in the name of those who came before us and for those who will come after us. Let us honour their memory by continuing their fight with the same courage and resolve they brought with them to the beaches 80 years ago.

• (1420)

Lest we forget. Thank you, colleagues.

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 members of the Deaf-Blind community. They are the guests of the Honourable Senators Martin, Audette, Cotter and Osler.

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 Rhona Ruben. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Ross.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE VICTOR OH

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to our esteemed colleague Senator Victor Oh as he prepares to retire from the upper chamber. Senator Oh has made significant contributions to the Senate and to the entire Canadian community.

Senator Oh was born in Singapore, and immigrated to Canada in 1978. He quickly became a successful entrepreneur in the Greater Toronto Area. Beyond his business endeavours, he became an active community leader, focusing on building bridges of understanding across cultures and helping newcomers establish themselves and start businesses.

Since his appointment to the Senate of Canada in January 2013, Senator Oh has shown unwavering commitment in several key areas. He has been a loyal Conservative, always willing to amicably work with his colleagues. He worked tirelessly on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, often taking time during his summer break to visit farms across Ontario. His dedication to promoting agriculture and rural development has been commendable.

Senator Oh has also been steadfast, engaging with local communities to better understand and support their needs. His passion for community engagement extends to his efforts in promoting multiculturalism. He has been involved in numerous initiatives that celebrate Canada's rich ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. Through his work, he has highlighted the importance of inclusivity and respect for all Canadians, regardless of their backgrounds.

Notably, Senator Oh has been a strong advocate for Asian Heritage Month, helping to promote and celebrate the contributions of Asian Canadians to our society. His work raising awareness of the Chinese head tax, as well as the redress given by the government in 2006, had a lasting impact in the Chinese-Canadian community.

As we bid farewell to a colleague and friend, I want to express my gratitude for his years of service and dedication. Senator Oh, your engagement in the Senate, in the community and in our great nation has not gone unnoticed. Victor, as a leader and as a friend, I wish to personally thank you for your loyalty and friendship. As our team has become smaller, you never hesitated to step up to provide additional support. Therefore, Victor, on behalf of myself and our Conservative caucus, we thank you and wish you all the very best in your future endeavours.

Thank you, Victor.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I would like to join with my colleagues in paying tribute to Senator Victor Oh as he takes leave of the Senate and heads into a well-deserved retirement.

Senator Oh was appointed to the Senate on the advice of former Prime Minister Harper in January 2013. Since that time, he has served as the vice-chair of the Canada-China Legislative Association and of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group. He has also been a member of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas and the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group, and he has held executive positions in a number of parliamentary friendship groups, including Canada-Bulgaria, Canada-Indonesia, Canada-Malaysia, Canada-Nordic-Baltic, Canada-Peru and Canada-Singapore.

As Senator Plett mentioned, Senator Oh has served on various committees, including the Agriculture and Forestry Committee and the National Security and Defence Committee, and he served as deputy chair of the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee. Senator Oh was also a member of the very consequential Special Senate Committee on the Arctic.

[*Translation*]

Over the years, Senator Oh has been involved in initiatives celebrating Canada's cultural diversity. As Senator Plett explained, Senator Oh and his family immigrated to Canada and, since then, he has always represented his community with pride and distinction. After arriving in Canada, he helped other newcomers settle here and start their own businesses. His career, both in and out of the Senate, is a testament to Senator Oh's attachment to his adopted country.

[*English*]

On behalf of the Government Representative Office, Victor, I want to wish you an enjoyable retirement with your lovely wife, Rosa, and time with your sons and their families and — most importantly — your grandchildren.

We'll miss you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Honourable senators, I also rise today to pay tribute to an esteemed and much-appreciated colleague the Honourable Senator Victor Oh.

Well before being appointed to the Senate of Canada, Senator Oh was already a champion of his community. In fact, throughout his life, Senator Oh has been dedicated to the Singaporean and Chinese diaspora in Canada. He played a crucial role in promoting and facilitating their inclusion in our country. I know this leadership was especially needed in recent years when Canadian people of Asian descent were unjustly targeted with racism in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are lucky to have in their corner an advocate as passionate and devoted as you, Senator Oh.

You've also never shied away from helping people in need, often providing guidance with immigration and integration issues, as well as helping new Canadians contribute, start businesses and grow the country positively. You have helped and been part of the invaluable contribution that Canadians of Asian descent have had on Canadian society. For this only, the country is deeply indebted to you.

We can read on your official Senate profile that you are a bridge builder of understanding and collaboration between cultures. I believe there is no better way to define you and your many accomplishments. Senator Oh, you came to this institution in 2013, and, ever since then, you have made a mark on our parliamentary diplomacy. You were an active member of many associations, notably the Canada-China Legislative Association, the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group, the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group and many others.

Your expertise, tact and sense of humour — this is my preferred one — will be missed. You can be proud of the impact you've had in promoting the values and interests of this country on the world stage, and I know that you will continue to do so.

You are now entering a new phase of your personal and professional life. I hope you will enjoy this well-deserved retirement. I know you to be someone active and devoted to others, but I hope you can now take the time needed for you and your beautiful family, especially your wife, Rosa, and your sons, Daryll and Derek, as well as your three grandchildren. Today, colleagues, we lose an esteemed senator, a great diplomat and a devoted advocate. Today, however, our loss is his loved ones' gain.

Senator Oh, in my name, and in the name of all senators from the Independent Senators Group, I wish you a happy retirement from the Senate of Canada.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

• (1430)

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Honourable senators, it is now my turn to take the few minutes allotted to me to mark, in my own way, the retirement of my friend the Honourable Victor Oh. Over the last 11 years, I have had the great pleasure to spend time with Victor: to work, have lunch and travel with him. Each time I couldn't help but see his kindness and the great respect he has for the people he knows.

I probably won't surprise anyone by saying that Victor Oh has many friends and acquaintances here in Ottawa, in Canada and around the world. His photo album speaks for itself. For that

matter, if you don't have a picture with Senator Oh it's because you haven't been within 10 feet of him. Victor takes a picture of everything, and he gets himself photographed with everyone that he meets. Fortunately for him, we now have digital photos instead of 36-exposure rolls of film.

More seriously, I want to say that it has been a pleasure to work with Senator Oh on the Senate Agriculture Committee and National Security Committee. As part of our work on the Agriculture Committee, I remember very well our visit to the Shanghai International Agricultural Products Exhibition. His many contacts in China enriched the knowledge of all committee members who took part in that trip.

I also have fond memories of our mission as international observers during the 2022 presidential election in Kazakhstan. During his time in the Senate, Victor Oh multiplied his involvement in parliamentary groups and associations: Canada-China, Canada-Japan, Canada-Europe, Canada-Bulgaria, Canada-Peru and many others, and I can't omit Canada-Singapore, an association with his home country.

For me, Victor Oh has been much more than a senator. He has been a true ambassador for Canada, looking to promote the beauty and the business opportunities of our country. Senator Oh was only 30 years old when he immigrated to Canada and became an entrepreneur in Toronto. His business and political roadmaps are remarkable. Indeed, just last Friday, friends, politicians of all stripes, business people and more than a dozen ambassadors from various countries gathered at a nearby hotel to celebrate his retirement from the Senate. That was impressive.

Victor Oh is leaving upon his retirement from the Senate, and I wish to thank him for all those years and for his friendship. Thank you so much, my friend.

Hon. Brian Francis: Honourable senators, I rise to pay tribute to Senator Victor Oh. Today we celebrate a remarkable man known for his kindness and friendship to all who know him. Victor has devoted a lot of his time and energy not only to helping newcomers settle, integrate and prosper, but also to raising greater awareness and understanding about the culture, history and contributions of people of Asian descent and other backgrounds.

In addition, Victor has been a voice for non-citizen children and youth. For example, in 2017 Victor introduced a successful amendment to the Citizenship Act to allow permanent residents under the age of 18 to apply for citizenship separately from their parents or guardians.

Having no option but to wait until they were 18 years old or obtaining a rare ministerial waiver, such minors were previously left without access to citizenship and, in some cases, risked removal in adulthood. His amendment guaranteed equitable access to citizenship for children and youth whose parents were unwilling or unable to apply at the same time.

In the end, Victor secured 47 votes in favour of his amendment from colleagues on all sides of the aisle. He has always been good at bringing people together.

Following Royal Assent in June 2017, Victor also successfully called on the federal government to update the related regulations since children or youth who applied with their parents or guardians were required to pay a processing fee of \$100, while those who did so separately were charged \$530.

All of this happened before my appointment. However, one of my current staff members, Jean, worked with Victor for a few years and closely supported his work on this amendment. She shared that a few months later the two of them attended a ceremony in Mississauga, where they met a group of siblings who had gained citizenship due to his successful amendment. It was an incredibly touching and unforgettable moment for both of them.

These contributions stand as a testament to Victor and his unwavering commitment and compassion. He championed the rights of vulnerable children and youth, and has had a lasting and positive impact on the lives of tens of thousands in Canada who are now full and permanent members of this country.

Victor, you should be immensely proud of this legacy. Congratulations on your retirement. I wish you and your family all the best and I hope that our paths cross again, maybe on a golf course in P.E.I. Thank you.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a beloved friend and colleague Senator Victor Oh, as he prepares to take his official retirement from the Senate on June 12, 2024.

Prior to the Senate, Victor was a successful entrepreneur and an active community leader in the Greater Toronto Area. He served his community with great pride, built bridges of understanding and educated others on the importance of culture, heritage and community ties.

In 2013, Victor Oh was appointed to the Senate of Canada to represent Ontario. During his time as a senator, he became a champion and a voice for the voiceless. He advocated for the rights of vulnerable groups, including seniors, youth and migrants, and took important initiatives that helped strengthen cultural diversity in Canada. He served on many friendship groups and associations, and served on the National Security and Defence Committee and the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, to name a few. He was also the critic and sponsor of several important pieces of legislation.

Your dedication and tireless work in the Senate will not be forgotten. Senator Oh, we have worked closely with one another for more than a decade. We have been part of the Conservative caucus, both in government and in opposition. We have often

stood together to vote on important bills and motions. We have attended many events together in support of communities, organizations and important celebrations or causes. We have enjoyed wonderful meals and conversations about family, community and life. I've witnessed first-hand your genuine commitment and selfless dedication to the people you serve.

You are a champion of the Chinese-Canadian community, not only in the GTA but across Canada. Beyond your community you have built bridges to many other ethno-cultural communities. I haven't met an ambassador or high commissioner who doesn't call you friend.

I'm happy to call you a friend as well. For more than a decade, you have served your regional and national constituents well. You have served Canada well in your role as senator. As your time as a senator is nearing its end, Senator Oh, I wish you all the best as you embark on this next chapter of your life with your beloved family surrounding you.

Rest assured this is not good-bye, dear Victor, but see you soon.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, the first thing to say about today's tributes to Senator Oh is that we are late to the game. There have been at least five events for our honourable colleague over the last few weeks in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa, and there will be more to come.

I'm not talking about Prosecco and cheese in an office with a few chums. The events I attended were full-on extravaganzas attended by dozens of people, some of whom had travelled long distances to attend. In fact, at a not-so-surprising surprise party for Senator Oh at the Westin Hotel last week, ducks and lambs were sacrificed in his honour. The 100 or so guests at the event included his colleagues from here and the other place, dignitaries from across town, and probably a dozen ambassadors and other members of the diplomatic corps.

• (1440)

There's no question about Senator Oh's ability to hobnob with movers and shakers. What is less known are his connections with the entire spectrum of Canadian society, especially within the Chinese community. For example, at a different Ottawa event to mark Senator Oh's retirement, held in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, a room full of Chinese Canadians from Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto feted him with song, dance and, yes, more sacrificial duck.

The reason why Senator Oh left a mark with such a broad swath of society is that he enjoys meeting people from all walks of life, and he believes in the importance of being friendly with everyone. He will talk to anyone, regardless of their politics, and he's not afraid to go against the winds of public opinion in building friendly relations with other countries. He has, on occasion, paid the price for his trust in others and for his lack of guile, but he has been loyal to those to whom he owed loyalty and a good friend to those who truly appreciated his friendship.

Senator Coyle shared an anecdote with me that is illustrative. Reflecting upon a shared trip across Canada's northern territories, she said:

His sense of wonder at the beauty of the lands and his deep respect for the people we met, from Iqaluit to Inuvik, from Yellowknife to Whitehorse, made Senator Oh a delight to travel with. An inveterate shopper, he even managed to satisfy that itch in remote Cambridge Bay.

I had the pleasure of working with Senator Oh on the remembrance of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which included a solemn ceremony in this chamber on June 23, 2023, and a rally that brought 4,000 Chinese Canadians from across the country to Parliament Hill. I know Senator Oh will continue to advocate for the rights of Chinese Canadians after he steps down from the Senate.

Colleagues, I want to let you in on a little-known factoid that Senator Oh and I might be long-lost relatives. You see, while he is an "Oh" and I am a "Woo," based on the Chinese character, our family names are the same. In Mandarin, we are both "Hu," and the word for "two Hu's" in Chinese is "Erhu", and an erhu is a traditional musical instrument that is like a fiddle with two strings.

Senator Oh came to the Senate before I did, so he is the first string on that instrument. It has been my privilege to be the second string and to perform a few "gigs" with him these eight years of our time together in the upper house.

Victor, I wish you a very happy, healthy and fulfilling retirement. I hope you and Rosa will now find the time to do the things you were too busy to do while you were a senator, and I hope it includes more than golf. I hope you will join me from time to time to play some tunes together for the causes that we share. The erhu will not sound the same with just one string.

[Editor's Note: Senator Woo spoke in Mandarin.]

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to my friend and colleague Senator Victor Oh.

I had the pleasure of getting to know Senator Oh on his important work, alongside the work of Senator Woo, in bringing recognition and awareness to the one-hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Through that collaboration and support, it became clear that we were linked on a deeply human level.

Just as First Nations had and have endured, the Chinese community — as with countless other Asian nations — has also faced unthinkable levels of persecution, discrimination and racism within Canada. As is also the same for First Nations, this harmful and damaging treatment was perpetuated by federal laws and policies, which normalized a substandard treatment at the societal level. Accordingly, through our respective lived experiences and the historical treatment of our ancestors, Senator Oh and I were able to connect on a profound and meaningful level.

I see in Senator Oh many qualities and characteristics I hold dear. Beyond his kind and jovial demeanour and his endearing sense of humour, Senator Oh is an unrelenting and unflinching advocate and supporter of his community and the people therein. The perspective he brings and the work he does are rooted in upholding his culture, heritage and the countless Canadians who look to Senator Oh to bring their voices to this august chamber.

One need look no further than the roster of parliamentary groups and associations he has been involved with over the years to understand the value Senator Oh places in the importance of community building. That work saw Senator Oh involved in relations building with myriad countries ranging from the United States to Bulgaria to Peru and beyond.

Senator Oh, I wish to thank you for your friendship and for the kindness you have always shown to me in and out of this chamber. I look forward to seeing the great things that lie ahead for you, and I greatly look forward to continuing our friendship outside of this crazy place.

Thank you.

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I also rise to pay tribute to our dear friend and colleague Senator Oh.

Senator Oh is known for many things but especially his compassion, kindness and selfless dedication. A testament to the immigrant experience, he arrived in Canada from Singapore, carrying with him not just his personal journey but also a profound commitment to uplifting Asian communities across our nation.

His tireless efforts have echoed throughout the hearts of those he serves, ensuring that the voices and needs of Asian Canadians are heard and addressed. From advocating for cultural preservation to championing educational initiatives, Senator Oh's leadership has fostered a sense of belonging and empowerment within the Asian community. His journey serves as a reminder to us of the transformative power of compassion and resilience.

Senator Oh's kindness is something I have had the privilege of experiencing first-hand. In 2017, we worked closely together on advocating for reforms to the immigration detention system for children. We worked closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and government officials to make sure the government was taking the necessary steps to look after the rights of refugee and immigrant children in care to ensure that our most vulnerable children are treated with dignity and respect.

But, senators, he did not stop there. Some of you might remember Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), to which Senator Oh introduced crucial amendments that enabled refugee children in government agencies or foster care to obtain citizenship. These amendments have helped to streamline and ensure equitable access to citizenship for individuals under age 18, transforming the lives of minors in care. Senator Oh's remarkable efforts have laid the groundwork

for current initiatives that aim to extend the protections offered in Senator Oh's amendment to children who have aged out of government or foster care.

Further, Senator Oh's impact within marginalized communities in Canada has been nothing short of transformative. His lifelong commitment to bridging cultural divides has not only encouraged mutual understanding and unity but has strengthened Canada as a whole.

We have all heard of his dedication to serving others and his unwavering commitment to fairness having left a mark on all who have had the privilege of working alongside him. Thank you, Senator Oh, for your work in seeking rights for children in care and government agencies, and for all the other work that others have mentioned in this place. Thank you. We wish you best of luck in your future endeavours, and we know that you will be using your Rolodex for your next challenges. Senator Oh, we will miss you very much in this place. I will miss you. Thank you for your dedication to our Senate.

• (1450)

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, Senator Oh and I were appointed the same day, January 25, 2013, along with Senator Batters, former Senator Beyak, whom some of you may remember, and former Senator Doug Black, whom some of you may also remember.

It's always special. You always have a special group when you're appointed with your colleagues. That little cohort always remembers that time, and it's always very special, and I have those feelings, obviously, for my colleagues who are both here, Senator Batters and Senator Oh, but, Senator Oh, this is your day. I probably won't get to give a tribute to Senator Batters because she's so much younger.

Senator Oh and I, of course, have been seatmates. We have been committee mates. We're caucus mates, both in the national and in the Senate caucus. Victor has always been there to cover me at committee. You're sometimes my first call because I know you'll be there. And I know I've helped you out on occasion. We've sat on many committees together, and we've travelled together.

One of Senator Oh's greatest contributions to this chamber and to Canada has been his contribution to parliamentary diplomacy. I think that the event that Senator Woo mentioned on Friday and here in the chamber today and other times when you've welcomed so many of the diplomatic corps to our chamber and to our Senate, to our Parliament, is a great testament to what you've done for parliamentary diplomacy.

One of the things that Senator Oh has continuously said to me, maybe just in the last three or four years, is he wants to buy some of my remaining years. Look, it's his last day in the chamber. The price is now the highest. I know a win-win when I see it. Therefore, with leave of the Senate, and notwithstanding the Constitution — Victor, I know I would be called out of order on that.

[Senator Jaffer]

Colleague, friend — Victor — it's a rare moment that I truly regret to say "happy birthday" to a friend, and that's today.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, how do I even begin to describe the richness and joy of the friendship that Senator Oh so generously brought to my life and the lives of all of us in this chamber? My dear Victor, from that warm handshake and hug on day one, you fostered a bond of trust, warmth, insight, balanced with that remarkable, mischievous sense of humour.

We've had many conversations about our common path in this great land: immigrants to this plural nation that afforded us a substrate and a canvas upon which we wrote our stories, adding to a tapestry that is Canada today, and yet never imagining in our wildest dreams that we would be given this privileged platform on which to continue our advocacy.

I have marvelled at the respect and appreciation that you have earned amongst not only your constituents but the broader community and your Senate family. Your advocacy for the Asian community and your stand against anti-Asian discrimination has been principled and deeply woven on your fundamental beliefs of fairness and equity.

The ease with which you interact in a respectful manner with all strata of society is a lesson for us all. And, yes, there have been moments of humour. Indeed, there have been moments of humour, as when you introduced me recently to one of our central Asian ambassadors as your brother. The ambassador did a double take with a rather quizzical look, to which Victor immediately responded, "Same mother, different fathers." Surprisingly, the ambassador's expression quickly returned to normal, and business continued.

And so, as we bid you farewell to embrace the next chapter in your life, *hamba gashle*, as we say in Southern Africa in true Zulu benevolence: Go in peace, my friend. The aura in this chamber will dim as you depart, and your presence will be missed, yet always felt. *Xie xie*, brother. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: Honourable senators, I stand in tribute to Senator Oh as a mark of admiration, respect and love for a dear friend and colleague. I am grateful to have had the pleasure of working alongside Victor for the last decade. Victor is a generous, supportive and patient man who always takes the time and makes an effort to include everyone. Part of our Asian culture is showing love for your family and friends through the sharing of food. I believe most of us have been blessed enough to be on the receiving end of his generosity.

I specifically remember a holiday lunch he hosted in his office. Senators, MPs and staff were all invited, and Victor assured us that we were about to sample the best Asian dishes our national capital has to offer, and none of us were disappointed.

Victor has worked with different communities, and I have personally seen him engage with groups across the Greater Toronto Area and Canada. His commitment to community was evident when he accompanied the Senate Committee on Human Rights on a fact-finding mission on Islamophobia. Although it is not an issue that directly affects him, it was a testament to his commitment to the Greater Toronto Area's Muslim community.

One quality that I respect and admire in Victor — and we've all seen that — is he walks up to everyone, introduces himself and engages them in conversation. Victor, I will miss your friendship and loyalty. You supported many of my events because I asked you to. Last night you had your own dinner, and yet you took the time to come to my event. Thank you, my friend.

Those of us who know him well will agree with me that once he made a commitment, he never let you down. Victor is that special friend that everyone should have.

Victor, I will miss the way you would walk up to me and say "Hey, Salma," and then we would proceed to make a plan together. But Victor, knowing you, I know that you won't rest on your laurels. I have already heard about your plans for the summer. I think we will miss you more than you will miss us, but I wish you and Rosa happiness and health as you begin this next phase in your life. I've said it, but I want to emphasize that when we are back in September and I see your empty chair, I will miss you and your gentle call of "Hey, Salma."

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 Senator Oh's wife, Rosa Bella Oh, as well as members of the Mengwei Yue Opera Studio of Ottawa. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Oh.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE HONOURABLE VICTOR OH

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Victor Oh: Honourable senators and esteemed guests.

[Editor's Note: Senator Oh spoke in Cantonese.]

Good afternoon. I would like to begin by sharing my heartfelt appreciation for all your kind words. As I stand before you to deliver my final speech in the Senate, this esteemed chamber, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and responsibility. Serving as a senator has been one of the greatest honours of my life, and I am deeply appreciative of the trust that has been placed in me. In a few hours, this seat will be up for grabs. I offer to anyone from the other side that the seat is ready for you.

• (1500)

As you all may be aware, I was appointed to the Senate 11.5 years ago in January 2013. I eagerly entered the Senate, determined to serve our marginalized and underserved communities and ready to help build bridges between cultures. I stood firmly by these goals.

I joined this chamber knowing I was to represent the great people of Ontario. I also knew deep in my heart that my new job also afforded me the honour of representing those of Asian descent. Throughout my years here, I have tried to be a voice for the Asian community I care for so deeply, and for all those within it who might have been overlooked, silenced and marginalized by stereotyping, systemic barriers and even racism.

It was my privilege to advocate for equality and inclusivity for all Canadians, regardless of background. This is a job I took very seriously.

As an Asian Canadian, I have faced my own share of challenges and prejudice. Over the years, I have also witnessed the struggles and triumphs of those who have faced such discrimination and persisted. I applaud the resilient and steadfast nature of this community in Canada.

In this chamber, I highlighted their unsung contributions to our Canadian history, such as the 140,000 young people who made up the Chinese Labour Corps during the First World War. In assisting the Allied forces, 20,000 souls perished, their sacrifice hardly acknowledged by our history.

In an effort to celebrate their contribution and mark such sacrifice, last June, 4,000 Chinese Canadians gathered on Parliament Hill to pay homage to the one hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Head Tax — a dark time for the Chinese community in our country. The rally showcased present-day respect for the past and the power of unity and community. It underscored the importance of standing together to acknowledge how far we have come. While there is still much work to be done, I am proud of the progress we have made together in celebrating multiculturalism and advancing equality.

Encompassed in equality is also representation. As I retire, it is my hope that more Asian Canadians are appointed to the Senate. This would not only honour the contributions of our community but also ensure their voices are heard and their perspectives are represented.

I believe the future of our country is bright and that the next generation of leaders will build on the foundation of equality this chamber has instilled. With the complex challenges ahead, it will be more important than ever for the young leaders of tomorrow to uphold Canada's core values of peace, diplomacy, equality, social justice, diversity and inclusion.

With these core values and foundations held at the forefront, I believe Canada will continue to be a beacon of hope and opportunity for anyone who wishes to call it home. We truly live in the best country on earth: Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Oh: To my colleagues, my fellow advocates, I say thank you for shouldering this fight and lending your voices to the cause of equality. Today, we have made a difference and I am honoured to be a part of this country.

Today, I would also like to say thank you to Senator Black, the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, and all its members and staff. They ensured the report on soil health we did this year came out in time, a few hours before my retirement. Thank you, Senator Black.

Also, I would like to share the story of something that happened in April 2017. As a Chinese immigrant from Singapore, I'm part of the fourth generation of Chinese immigrants in Singapore. Nobody in my family ever travelled to our village in China; I had the honour, and invited Senator Plett and Senator Housakos to the village. We received a warm welcome from the villagers. They said, "Senator Oh, do you know that for the next 130 years we will not see three senators come to this village again?" That was Canada's diplomacy — parliamentary diplomacy — we were working.

Thank you to Senator Plett and Senator Housakos. They came back with my concerns. The first day back in the Senate, they told senators. Senator Plett made a beautiful statement and told the Senate how the visit with me in China went. Thank you, Senator Plett.

Clap — give him a hand.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Oh: When I retire from the Senate in a few days' time, I will do so with a heart full of gratitude. I am grateful for the support of Rosa and my family; Amanda, Lauren, Maggie and Lorenzo, my staff; and the Parliamentary Protective Service, who are the first people I meet every morning when I come into the building. To all of you, thank you. They ensure we are safe here in Ottawa.

To my colleagues, without whom none of this would have been possible, thank you for the privilege of serving with you. May we all continue to strive for a brighter, more inclusive future for all the people of this wonderful country.

I would like to end my speech with this meaningful quote. Senators, please pay attention and listen carefully.

[*Editor's Note: Senator Oh spoke in Cantonese.*]

We may belong to different races and have different colours. We may speak different languages and follow different religions. We may have different perceptions and live in

different realities. But we all live in one world and belong to a single humanity.

Senators, so long but not goodbye. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

[*Editor's Note: Senator Oh spoke in Cantonese.*]

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

• (1510)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIAN

CERTIFICATE OF NOMINATION AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES 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, the certificate of nomination and biographical notes for the proposed appointment of Christine Ivory to the position of Parliamentary Librarian.

STUDY ON THE STATUS OF SOIL HEALTH

THIRTEENTH REPORT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY COMMITTEE DEPOSITED WITH CLERK DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that pursuant to the orders adopted by the Senate on April 26, 2022, and September 28, 2023, the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 6, 2024, its thirteenth report entitled *Critical Ground: Why Soil is Essential to Canada's Economic, Environmental, Human, and Social Health* and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

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

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

THIRTEENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Scott Tannas, for Senator Moncion, Chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, presented the following report:

Thursday, June 6, 2024

The Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration has the honour to present its

THIRTEENTH REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the *Rules of the Senate* and by section 2:02 (10) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, to consider financial and administrative matters, recommends that the following funds be released for the fiscal year 2024-25, and that the committee be empowered to engage the services of such counsel, technical, clerical and other personnel as may be necessary.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LONG TERM VISION AND PLAN

General Expenses	\$	75,000
TOTAL	\$	75,000

Pursuant to Chapter 3:05, section 1(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted by the Subcommittee on the Long Term Vision and Plan to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

SCOTT TANNAS

Chair, Subcommittee on Long Term Vision and Plan of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix A, p. 2885.)

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

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

AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT

ELEVENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the eleventh report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, entitled *Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight: Activities and Observations for Fiscal Year 2023-2024*.

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION BILL, 2024, NO. 1

THIRTEENTH REPORT OF BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER TABLED

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the thirteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy, which deals with the subject matter of those elements contained in Divisions 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 33, 41 and 42 of Part 4, and in Subdivision A of Division 34 of Part 4 of Bill C-69, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024.

(Pursuant to the order adopted May 9, 2024, the report was deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[Translation]

FOURTEENTH REPORT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER TABLED

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fourteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which deals with the subject matter of those elements contained in Divisions 6, 7, 8 and 9 of Part 4 of Bill C-69, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024.

(Pursuant to the order adopted May 9, 2024, the report was deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[English]

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

BUDGET—STUDY ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S
CONSTITUTIONAL, TREATY, POLITICAL AND
LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND
MÉTIS PEOPLES—EIGHTEENTH REPORT
OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Brian Francis, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, presented the following report:

Thursday, June 6, 2024

The Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples has the honour to present its

EIGHTEENTH REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Thursday, March 3, 2022, to examine the federal government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and any other subject concerning Indigenous Peoples, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:05, section 1(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

BRIAN FRANCIS

Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix B, p. 2890.)

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

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

PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIAN

CERTIFICATE OF NOMINATION REFERRED TO JOINT COMMITTEE
ON THE LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(k), I move:

That the Certificate of Nomination for Christine Ivory as Parliamentary Librarian, tabled in the Senate on June 6, 2024, be referred to the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament for consideration and report; and

That a message be sent to the House of Commons to acquaint that house accordingly.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON FLOOD AND DROUGHT FORECASTING BILL

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-317, An Act to establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

• (1520)

[English]

PANDEMIC PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS BILL

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-293, An Act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

CANADA-EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION, OCTOBER 16-17, 2023—REPORT TABLED

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the Meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, held in Egilsstaðir, Iceland, from October 16 to 17, 2023.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY MEETING WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S DELEGATION RESPONSIBLE FOR RELATIONS WITH CANADA, JUNE 5-9, 2023—REPORT TABLED

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the Forty-second Interparliamentary Meeting with the European Parliament's Delegation Responsible for Relations with Canada, held in Normandy and Paris, France, Brussels, Belgium, from June 5 to 9, 2023.

FOURTH PART, 2023 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, OCTOBER 7-19, 2023—REPORT TABLED

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the Fourth Part of the 2023 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg, France, and Mission to Berlin, Germany, from October 7 to 19, 2023.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(k), I move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology be authorized to meet during the week of Monday, June 10, 2024, for the purpose of studying Government Business, even though the Senate may then be sitting and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

THE HONOURABLE MOBINA S. B. JAFFER

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the career of the Honourable Mobina S.B. Jaffer.

QUESTION PERIOD

FINANCE

BUDGET 2024

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, on Tuesday, during its pre-study of the NDP-Trudeau government's omnibus budget bill, our National Finance Committee heard from a representative of the Canadian Bar Association. This witness pointed out that this bill, Bill C-69, cuts the deductions that blind Canadians receive for the cost of such necessary equipment as Braille printers or large-print on-screen devices prescribed, Senator Gold, by a medical practitioner.

Not only is this budget irresponsible and not worth the cost, leader; it is heartless as well.

The witness asked the committee, "Why are we targeting that? What is that not a legitimate expense?"

Those are good questions, leader. What's the answer?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and for raising this important issue. I do not have an answer to your question, but I have every confidence that the Finance Committee, which continues to study the budget, will be in a position to demand and, I expect, to get satisfactory answers to the question.

Senator Plett: You accuse us of being partisan. Now we ask a non-partisan question, and you still don't have an answer. It is your government, Senator Gold, that introduced this. Nine long years ago, Prime Minister Trudeau promised to end these omnibus bills. Today, he has an omnibus budget bill cutting tax deductions for blind Canadians, Senator Gold. I'd like to think this is not being done by malice, leader. I suspect it is just another example of the pure incompetence that we've come to expect from this Trudeau government.

Leader, does your government intend to rectify this part of the omnibus bill — not the Finance Committee but your government — before it arrives in the Senate? Yes or no?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. I'm not aware of the government's plans in that regard, but I'll certainly bring it to the attention of the appropriate minister.

PUBLIC SAFETY

NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Gold, I have to say it was refreshing yesterday to see you show some anger in regard to the issue of foreign interference, but it was disappointing, though, to see that anger directed toward me and not toward the Trudeau government, which has not taken any action in regard to foreign interference. Now, this morning, we see in the House committee your government making jokes.

When discussing the report of NSICOP, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, Liberal MP Jennifer O'Connell, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and herself a former member of NSICOP, had this to say about the Conservatives who are frustrated with the government's refusal to release the names of parliamentarians implicated in foreign interference: "Boo hoo, get over it!"

Seriously, Senator Gold, is that something you condone? Do you believe that is a serious way to respond to a serious issue? And what is the Trudeau government hiding in not willing to release, once and for all, the names of parliamentarians implicated in foreign interference? What are you hiding, Senator Gold?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. As the RCMP has made very clear, "It is inappropriate at this time to speak to any specific incidents, much less divulge the names."

[Senator Plett]

I'm not going to comment on any classified elements that may involve individuals. No government, Senator Housakos, including the previous government, would discuss particularities of intelligence information publicly.

Senator Housakos: So, Senator Gold, are you saying this government has sent the names to the RCMP? Because, obviously, if the RCMP will open an investigation, it means the government is sharing that intelligence information. Please let us know if that's the case, Senator Gold.

Senator Gold: No, my understanding, Senator Housakos, is that the RCMP has confirmed that they were an active participant in the NSICOP review and provided detailed information about the RCMP's knowledge and understanding of the threat. As I said, and I'm quoting again from the RCMP, "It would be inappropriate at this time to speak to any specific incidents . . ."

COMBATTING MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

Hon. Mary Coyle: Senator Gold, during her appearance at the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Canada's Ambassador to the EU, Ailish Campbell, was asked about disinformation in relation to the upcoming EU elections. She indicated that online platforms are where most disinformation is spread and explained how the EU's Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act are in place to counter those threats.

In Canada, a recent Abacus Data poll indicated that 84% of respondents expressed concern about the spread of disinformation, and 80% questioned the truthfulness of the information they encounter. There is a significant level of anxiety which must be impacting Canada's democracy.

Senator Gold, could you elaborate on the specific measures the Government of Canada is planning or is already implementing to combat the spread of disinformation as we prepare for our own federal election next year?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. It is indeed a real problem. This government and all governments are seized with it and challenged to respond.

• (1530)

The government has taken a number of steps to address the question and the spread of disinformation. This includes creating tool kits and information to ensure that Canadians are better able to spot and identify misinformation. The government has created *Countering Disinformation: A Guidebook for Public Servants* to ensure that all departments, agencies and functional groups within the Government of Canada make efforts in their areas to counter disinformation.

With regard specifically to elections, the government has created the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol, which lays out a simple, clear and impartial process by which Canadians would be notified of a threat to the integrity of a general election.

Senator Coyle: Thank you, Senator Gold.

A recent report from the Brookings Institution highlighted the importance of engaging with digital platforms, such as Meta, Google and TikTok, to effectively combat the spread of disinformation.

Senator Gold, is the government working with these companies and/or others to ensure the dissemination of factual information, and ensure agreement to the removal of dangerous disinformation?

Senator Gold: Thank you. The short answer is yes. To be more specific, the government has created the Canada Declaration on Electoral Integrity Online. The declaration lays out multiple steps that platforms will take, as well as steps for the government to take. This includes the commitment by platforms to intensify efforts to combat disinformation that poses a threat to our democratic processes and institutions. I am advised that the declaration is endorsed by Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Microsoft, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Hon. Donna Dasko: My question is for the Government Representative.

Senator Gold, a story from The Canadian Press on May 13 reported the appointment of a new seven-person panel that will advise the Minister of Canadian Heritage about a path forward for the CBC and Radio-Canada, focusing on governance and funding. This same The Canadian Press report stated, “The department says that consultations on the CBC’s mandate have already been conducted with the general public.”

As well, Minister St-Onge is quoted as saying, “The expert committee won’t be consulting on the future of CBC/Radio-Canada. It’s already been done several times . . .”

My question is about these consultations with the public about the CBC. When were these consultations undertaken, who was consulted and where were they reported? Are past consultations adequate for the purpose today? Thank you.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, senator. Indeed, there have been extensive public consultations throughout the history of CBC/Radio-Canada, and the What We Heard Report results are regularly posted online in a variety of levels of detail.

While I cannot cover the exhaustive list in the time I have, recent consultations include the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, licence renewal in 2021; the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel in 2019 and 2020; and the 2017 report by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which is entitled *Disruption: Change and Churning in Canada’s Media Landscape*.

You may also note that in 2015, the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications published the report entitled *Time for Change: The CBC/Radio-Canada in the Twenty-first Century*, which will also help the current panel’s work.

These are just a few examples of how the Government of Canada and the houses of Parliament have engaged Canadians in issues that face our national broadcaster.

Senator Dasko: On May 18, CBC President Catherine Tait, in an interview on CBC Radio’s program *The House*, noted that the CBC conducts regular surveys of opinion — twice a year, she said — about aspects of the CBC’s mandate.

Are these consultations available to the public to be reviewed? Will these consultations be taken into consideration by the review panel?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question, senator. I’ve been informed that CBC/Radio-Canada publicly releases 17 metrics from the Mandate and Vision Perception Survey three times annually — in the fall and the spring, and then combined data. I understand that these surveys are sent directly to the CRTC, and CBC/Radio-Canada posts these publicly on their corporate site.

FINANCE

CAPITAL GAINS INCLUSION RATE

Hon. Robert Black: Senator Gold, yesterday I had a meeting with the Grain Growers of Canada — the national voice for over 65,000 grain growers and pulse producers — and grain farmers from Alberta and Saskatchewan in order to discuss the impacts of the proposed increase to the capital gains inclusion rate. Apparently, the government hinted that this increase would be in Budget 2024, but we know it’s not there. However, the government is now indicating that they will be introducing stand-alone legislation, possibly before the summer recess, to increase the capital gains tax.

The Grain Growers of Canada’s recent research shows that this policy will cause the average family farm to pay 30% more in taxes during ownership and transition — intergenerational or otherwise. For example, an 800-acre farm in Ontario will see an increase in taxation by almost \$1.2 million.

This policy has already caused many snap sales of farms across the country before such legislation is introduced because our farmers are concerned.

Senator Gold, is the government fully aware of the negative effects that the increase to the capital gains tax will cause farm families across this country?

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

Indeed, the government is very aware of the policy impacts of the capital gains increase. Colleagues, that is why the government is introducing new relief by increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption for capital gains on the sale of a small

business or farming property by 25% to \$1.25 million, as well as creating a new Canadian entrepreneurs' incentive, which will reduce the inclusion rate to 33.3% on a lifetime maximum of \$2 million in eligible capital gains.

Senator Black: Senator Gold, to protect Canadian farmers, ranchers and producers of this generation and the next, will the government consider exempting family farms by allowing intergenerational transfers to be exempt from the higher capital gains inclusion tax rate? Thank you.

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question.

At this time, senator, I'm not aware of any exemptions being considered by this government.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

D-DAY AND THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY

Hon. Marty Klyne: Senator Gold, having been born into a military family, I was deeply moved yesterday by Senator Varone's powerful tribute to the Canadian Armed Forces and their role in liberating Italy during the Second World War.

My father was enlisted in the active forces with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. In July 1940, he served in the U.K., Continental Europe and the Central Mediterranean area, returning to the U.K. approximately five years later in August 1945.

I note that my father received 10 medals during his military career, including the Italy Star, having served in the Italian Campaign from 1943 to 1945.

Today, I, too, observe the eightieth anniversary of D-Day when Allied soldiers, sailors and flyers launched the invasion into Normandy. This included over 14,000 Canadians who stormed Juno Beach to throw back tyranny and liberate Europe.

Will you join me, and all senators in this chamber, in uplifting those heroes' example to Canadians and to our future generations, and in honouring the valour and sacrifices of our great country's Armed Forces — then and today?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. Thank you to your family, your father and all those who served so nobly and with such great valour. The thanks of a nation go out to all who served.

Canadians' contributions in bringing an end to the Second World War and restoring democracy in Europe ushered in an era of rules-based international law which, though fragile, is nonetheless the best hope for humanity. I am happy to join my voice with yours — and all of ours — in paying tribute to all those who made that possible. Lest we forget.

[Senator Gold]

[Translation]

FINANCE

FEDERAL DEFICIT

Hon. Claude Carignan: Leader, in one week of Liberal scandals, we note the following: another \$10 billion has been added to the 2024 deficit, when the red ink from the April budget hasn't even had time to dry; Randy Boissonnault violated the ethics rules and lied when he said he wasn't involved in the fraud his company committed; the government muzzled the Parliamentary Budget Officer following a secret report on the real costs of the carbon tax; millions of dollars were paid to McKinsey, Mr. Trudeau's pals, although it remains uncertain whether the services were actually provided; the administrators of the green slush fund gave millions of dollars to companies they are associated with; and finally, the icing on the scandal cake, Mr. Trudeau ignored the advice of CSIS and willfully turned a blind eye to national security violations committed by parliamentarians — and today is only Thursday.

• (1540)

Leader —

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. With all due respect, I do not accept the premise of what you described. These are scandals. You mentioned a lot of things, and I don't have enough time to address them all. With regard to the deficit, it is no secret that the numbers are not final, as we read in the *National Post*, which is not necessarily a friend of this government.

As for the other things, including McKinsey, when it comes to the report that you mentioned, I have already said several times that there was no political interference in that situation.

Senator Carignan: Leader, it's no secret that the Prime Minister would rather take walks on the beach, in the sand, than in the snow. Will the Prime Minister take a walk on the beach this summer and resign?

Senator Gold: I have no idea what the Prime Minister's exercise or vacation plans are.

• (1540)

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Leader, on Tuesday, the Auditor General reported that in 13 out of 17 contracts given to McKinsey where security clearances should have been necessary, the Trudeau government allowed McKinsey to operate without them. For example, five contracts were granted access to the immigration department's network without a valid security clearance.

Lax security oversight isn't isolated to McKinsey. In a report on "ArriveScam" in February, the Auditor General found some of the consultants tasked to do cybersecurity work on the app did not have security clearances. Leader, how do you defend the Trudeau government's repeated disregard for security?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): All of the issues around the awarding of contracts have been the subject of serious review, scrutiny and action taken by this government. New protocols have been put into place. In some cases, as was reported on several occasions, measures have been taken to terminate standing orders. In other cases, the ability of departments to issue such contracts on their own was taken away. Other measures are being contemplated as well to ensure that Canadians get the value that they deserve when contracts are accorded.

Senator Martin: With respect to the contracts given to Accenture for the Canada Emergency Business Account, or CEBA, program, the Trudeau government claims only workers at Export Development Canada, or EDC, and Accenture handled the data of Canadian small businesses and not workers at the Brazilian subsidiary of Accenture.

In February, I asked you if all workers handling the sensitive information had security clearances. It's been four months, leader. What's the answer to my question?

An Hon. Senator: Shame.

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. Let's recall, colleagues, that the Canada Emergency Business Account helped keep nearly 900,000 small businesses across the country afloat and to keep their workers on the payroll. EDC, the arm's length Crown corporation responsible for administering CEBA, independently awarded the contract. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has raised her concerns with the contract directly with the President of EDC.

PUBLIC SAFETY

CYBERCRIME

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Senator Gold, I would like to build on some of the findings from the Auditor General's report this week on combatting cybercrime.

We were informed that victims of fraud reported financial losses totalling \$531 million to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre in 2022 and that three quarters of these reports were cybercrime related. What is most concerning is that in the centre's estimation, only 5 to 10% of cybercrimes are reported.

My question is twofold. First, what is the government doing to ensure we have the adequate deterrence measures and protective safeguards in place to reduce cybercriminality? Second, is the government engaged in any education or awareness campaigns to help Canadians navigate the complex world of online fraud and cyber-threats?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your questions, senator. The government recognizes the importance of strengthening Canada's capacity to counter cybercrime. To that end, in 2020, the government provided the RCMP with approximately \$137.5 billion to establish the National Cybercrime Coordination Centre to work with domestic and international law enforcement, and other partners, to investigate and combat cybercrime. They also note that the RCMP has invested an additional \$78.9 million to increase its federal policing capacity, including establishing specialist cybercrime teams across the country. As well, Bill C-26, an act respecting cybersecurity, is currently making its way through Parliament. Its provisions will give the government additional tools to protect Canada's critical infrastructure systems from cyber-threats.

With regards to the second part of your question, I've also been informed that in the coming months the government will launch Canada's new national cybersecurity strategy. It will outline a strengthened whole-of-society approach to protect our economic interests from such cyber-threats.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for those answers. The auditor found that some authorities did not have the capacity to effectively enforce laws intended to protect Canadians from the growing volume and sophistication of cybercrime. Can you provide us with an update on the Department of Finance's work on the data governance review? How might it benefit Canadians and help cyber resiliency? As part of its cybersecurity strategy, the government announced the launch of the data governance review in Budget 2024.

Senator Gold: Thank you for your questions. I'm not in a position to provide an update on the proposed review, but I do understand that the review will be focused on best practices for cybersecurity as well as on identifying areas to improve and build on our resiliency in this area.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS CANADA

Hon. Colin Deacon: Senator Gold, Treasury Board committed to refocus \$14 billion in spending over five years and gave departments the opportunity to reallocate funding that, "made the most operational sense."

Astonishingly, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, or ISED, decided to cut funding to Innovative Solutions Canada, or ISC, a program the department claims returns \$1.40 in tax revenue for every dollar. The ISC program delivers a much-needed procurement advantage to Canadian innovators and is a crucial tool that enables the pockets of innovative public servants that exist to acquire and test effective solutions.

Senator Gold, please explain why the ISC program funding was cut, how many companies had their pre-approved projects cancelled, how much money will be saved and what alternatives the government proposes for these companies, many of whom now face a liquidity crisis as a result of ISED's decision?

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

The changes in the budgeting reductions were done as part of a broader exercise to refocus government spending. Agencies across the federal government, as we know, had to meet spending targets. That required difficult trade-offs and difficult decision making. I've been informed that the refocusing government spending initiative reduced the ISC budget by \$28.2 million in 2024-25, by \$70 million in the following year and is ongoing.

The main impact of the budget reduction is on the ISC's Challenge Stream activities. It's a competitive research and development program stream designed to solve internal departmental operational issues and/or to fill a gap in the marketplace in line with a given department's mission and mandate by leveraging the ingenuity of Canadian small business.

Innovation Solutions Canada continues to engage with the affected companies and has made efforts to direct them to other resources where they can learn more about alternative funding opportunities and other government supports.

Senator C. Deacon: Senator Gold, hundreds of innovative Canadian companies were already approved under the ISC program, and then it was cancelled without warning. This is mismanagement at best — gross mismanagement — and unethical, in my mind, at worst.

This program was promised to be a pathway to commercialization. These entrepreneurs spent years pursuing this opportunity and years developing a relationship with the corresponding customer and government.

How does ISED plan to reverse the harm they have caused from this decision?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. I understand the challenge and the disappointment that those companies must be experiencing.

• (1550)

As I said, the government is working with these companies to direct them and help orient them to other sources of support. The government had to make — and has to make, as governments do — difficult decisions, which sometimes have consequences for those whose expectations are disappointed.

[Senator Deacon (Nova Scotia)]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, I want to return to your answer yesterday to my question about the massive conflict of interest surrounding Liberal insiders running the green slush fund.

The Auditor General of Canada's report found:

These 90 cases were connected to approval decisions for nearly \$76 million in funding. Of these, we found that 2 projects, approved for \$12 million, were ineligible . . .

Leader, yesterday you said the Trudeau government has taken the allegations seriously and acted on them. Of course, you take everything seriously.

If that's the case, Senator Gold, has the Trudeau government referred the green slush fund to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, for investigation? Yes or no — and if not, why not?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The characterization is not one I would accept. The government has made changes to the program so that the funds available can be administered in a better way.

To ensure that Canada's clean tech companies can start receiving support expediently, the government has set up a transition plan, which includes the Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, board stepping down with a new transitional board in place, and the SDTC being transferred to National Research Council Canada — which is a Crown corporation — which will ensure stringent oversight and accountability.

The government is moving forward to ensure funding is resumed for Canada's clean tech sector and that organizations which receive federal funding adhere to the highest standards of governance.

Senator Plett: You don't accept the characterization? I was quoting the Auditor General.

The Auditor General found a total of \$59 million from the slush fund was awarded to projects that were ineligible. Whether you like that characterization or not, that's a fact.

The green slush fund combined corruption with incompetence, and no one from this government was looking out for the best interests of taxpayers, Senator Gold.

Leader, is the Trudeau government doing anything to get the money back, or is it gone for good?

Senator Gold: I objected to the characterization of the fund as a "slush fund," and I will add to that my disagreement with the allegations or insinuations of corruption and the like.

What the government is and has been doing is clear, and I've outlined it. As soon as the government found out about these allegations, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada acted quickly. I've outlined the steps that were taken, and the government committed to ensuring that organizations which received the funding —

Senator Plett: Finally, you said something that is correct: What the government is doing is clear. That is, in fact, the truth.

REHABILITATION OF 24 SUSSEX DRIVE

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, over the last two years, the responses provided to some of my written questions on the Senate's Order Paper have revealed that the Trudeau government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars just to come up with a plan about what to do with 24 Sussex Drive. This is only for such things as feasibility studies, cost estimates, third-party evaluations and, of course — their favourite — consultations.

A response tabled last month shows this amount has now exceeded \$1 million. About two thirds of the money recently disclosed went, again, to — what else — consultants. It's easy for this wasteful government to spend money like this when taxpayers are footing the bill, isn't it, leader?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The work this government is doing to evaluate the future of 24 Sussex Drive is necessary. Unfortunately — and this has been true, regrettably, of all previous governments — it is very easy to punt the issue of expending money on official residences to the next government. There doesn't seem to be much appetite, or at least history seems to testify to that effect.

This government is taking the responsibility for 24 Sussex Drive seriously and investing time and resources to ensure that it is done properly. This is the official residence and it had fallen into terrible disrepair. The government is looking at what the proper next steps are.

Senator Plett: And their friends are getting richer every day.

The Trudeau government has had nine years and has spent over \$1 million to come up with a plan, and they still don't have one. I know you don't like this statement: It is simply not worth the cost.

The answer I received last month with information on the updated spending withheld the names of the consultants who received the contracts. Why is that, leader? Who are they?

Senator Gold: There are rules in place, senator — as you know, having been in government — to protect the integrity of contracts and commercial information. I don't have the names and have no ability to provide them to you.

ANSWERS TO ORDER PAPER QUESTIONS TABLED

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD—INVASIVE WILD PIGS IN WESTERN CANADA

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 310, dated February 6, 2024, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding invasive wild pigs in Western Canada — Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (including the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency).

HEALTH—INVASIVE WILD PIGS IN WESTERN CANADA

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 310, dated February 6, 2024, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding invasive wild pigs in Western Canada — Health Canada.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT—CANADA EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 319, dated April 9, 2024, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Public Services and Procurement Canada.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CANADA—NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR ATLANTIC ACCORD IMPLEMENTATION ACT CANADA-NOVA SCOTIA OFFSHORE PETROLEUM RESOURCES ACCORD IMPLEMENTATION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Petten, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cormier, for the second reading of Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Let me be clear from the start: Bill C-49 deals with an important and essential topic for Canada's energy future. Colleagues, you will know that I'm in favour of responsible resource development and further exploration and development of the Newfoundland Offshore Area, which includes all areas in the jurisdiction of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, or C-NLOPB.

The same is true for Nova Scotia. I'm also strongly in favour of responsible development of other offshore energy resources such as wind, solar, tidal and geothermal, and of transition fuels such as biodiesel, ethanol and natural gas, as well as the development of hydrogen as a fuel along all Canadian coasts — and wherever else the potential exists. This is, of course, as long as it's done responsibly, within the rules and regulations and with fairness regarding the opportunities that come with that development.

While I support the principle of this bill, I do not support the haste with which we in the Senate are expected to deal with it. It was introduced at first reading in the other place on May 30, 2023, more than a year ago. Second reading was completed five months later, in October, at which point it was sent to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

The committee devoted 12 hearings to the bill. It arrived here a year after it received first reading in the House, and we are expected to apply all our self-celebrated and careful sober second thought to it with three weeks of committee and chamber time.

This bill proposes significant changes to both the regulatory frameworks and existing laws affecting both offshore petroleum and offshore wind energy development, along with, perhaps, other offshore energy opportunities. Bill C-49 is not specific on that, but it does open the door to it, which I support.

These changes restructure and broaden our current approach integrating renewable energy initiatives while redefining oil and gas resource management.

Bill C-49 includes several key measures that I'll summarize in a clear way to better explain the implications of these changes. First, the bill proposes to rename the current regulatory bodies; thus, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board will become the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Energy Regulator and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator, respectively. These new entities, called "regulators," will now be responsible for regulating renewable energy projects in addition to the petroleum projects they already regulate.

• (1600)

Second, the bill introduces a new decision-making framework for federal and provincial ministers regarding the granting of permits for submerged lands. This process begins with the assessment of projects by the regulators, which make recommendations to the federal and provincial ministers responsible for energy and the environment. These ministers then have 60 days to review these recommendations and render a decision. The period can be extended by an additional 30 days if the ministers request it in writing.

The bill grants the Governor-in-Council, with full authorization of the provincial minister, the power to determine ongoing oil and gas operations and prohibit new activities in areas designated as marine protected areas. These provisions also apply to future offshore renewable energy projects.

Finally, the bill allows the federal government to rely on the regulator for consultation with Indigenous peoples. This could lead to legal challenges if the Crown's duty to consult is not adequately respected, as this bill gives government ministers the final decision.

The government was very clear when it introduced Bill C-49 that a fundamental aspect of this bill was to align the Accord Acts with the Impact Assessment Act, or IAA, as they refer to it. Here is what is written in the government backgrounder that accompanied the bill:

In addition to amending the Accord Acts to modernize and expand the mandates of the Offshore Boards to include the regulation of renewable energy development, the other amendments introduced today will improve alignment with the Impact Assessment Act (IAA), establish new tools to support the Government of Canada's marine conservation agenda and modernize the existing land tenure regime for offshore petroleum. . . .

The amendments introduced today follow through on the Government of Canada's commitment to work with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador to implement the IAA in the Atlantic offshore collaboratively. Specifically, the proposed amendments remove outdated references to the former Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 —

— known as CEAA 2012 —

— clarify the roles and responsibilities for the Boards during the Impact Assessment process to better align the Accord Acts with the impact Assessment regime; and simply ensure that the Accord Acts reflect how the Regulators and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada work together while respecting the principles of joint management.

The backgrounder goes on to state:

It is important to note that none of these proposed amendments would change the Impact Assessment Act or the authorities of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada or the Minister of the Environment, and that the strong environmental protections under that Act will continue to be upheld. The Government of Canada will continue to work closely with the Governments of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador and the Regulators to implement the Impact Assessment Act in the Atlantic offshore going forward.

Colleagues, an interesting thing happened on the way to that alignment. That backgrounder is dated May 31, 2023, the day after this bill was introduced at first reading in the other place. Just as second reading was being completed there in October, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Bill C-69, the bill that Bill C-49 was to be aligned with, was “largely unconstitutional.” Those are the Supreme Court’s words.

The Supreme Court of Canada was preceded in its conclusion by the Court of Appeal of Alberta, which ruled the bill entirely unconstitutional. The Attorney General appealed that verdict to the Supreme Court, which ruled that while sections 81 and 91 of the bill were constitutional, the rest were not.

Bill C-49, as written, includes 32 references to sections of Bill C-69 that the Supreme Court identified as unconstitutional: sections 1 to 80, and 92 to 188. It also included both the discretionary decision-making power of a minister and the entirety of the designated project scheme, both of which are unconstitutional, so components of Bill C-49 may be unconstitutional as well. In fact, colleagues, it is clear they are.

In the short time that we will have to study the bill, we may not be able to look at that aspect. Upon reflection, these aspects of the bill should be referred to the Senate’s Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

We are aware that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, issued interim guidance to take account of the court’s ruling until the amendments can be made to the IAA. Of course, the House had time to consider the impact of these issues, but we’re the chamber of sober second thought and I think it would have been better if we had been afforded the time to study this aspect. A week at the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee could save years in court challenges.

In issuing his guidance, the minister assured the people of my province and of Nova Scotia that regional assessment for offshore wind development in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia will continue. Honourable senators, in making the case for Bill C-49 the government stated that the potential for offshore wind development is particularly promising in Atlantic Canada, with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador having some of the highest wind speeds in the world. Canada, the government said, can use what it calls our “. . . world-class-leading offshore wind resources . . .” to serve the local and international clean hydrogen markets. Moreover:

Industry interest in developing offshore wind and hydrogen projects has also grown substantially over the past year, with numerous projects now contemplated off the coasts of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

That’s all well and good, of course, but until the constitutional uncertainty of the IAA is resolved and some decision is made regarding those contemplated projects, they will remain in limbo. Colleagues, global investors migrate toward regulatory certainty, and this is the opposite.

Honourable senators, as many of you may be aware, the hydrogen that Canada and much of the world currently produce is grey hydrogen, and producing it is carbon-intensive. I applaud the provincial governments for championing the movement to green hydrogen through wind power.

As you know, the Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources completed a report on hydrogen last year, asking whether it was a viable option for net zero by 2050. Many witnesses, including the government’s own witnesses, were less than optimistic about how hydrogen can achieve or even contribute to our net-zero goals by 2050. That report says on page 33:

Government witnesses from NRCan, the lead department on the *Hydrogen Strategy for Canada*, told us that there is not yet a clear plan for achieving the vision of the strategy.

On page 34 of the report, the testimony of several non-governmental witness is cited:

Mark Kirby of Canadian Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association and Sabina Russell of Zen Clean Energy Solutions, each gave the federal government a “C-plus” grade on the hydrogen strategy due to a lack of smart goals with defined metrics. . . .

Jeff Griffin of Canadian Nuclear Laboratories called the hydrogen strategy a “strong framework toward [realizing net-zero emissions by 2050]” more than a detailed plan for getting there.

Finally:

Julia Levin of Environmental Defence Canada warned that the hydrogen strategy exaggerates the role of hydrogen and leaves “too much room for fossil hydrogen.”

Perhaps most damaging, the Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development audited the Government of Canada’s claims about how much GHG emissions could be reduced by adopting hydrogen at the levels envisaged in the *Hydrogen Strategy for Canada*. The Energy Committee’s report states:

We were disappointed to learn that the CESD’s audit found numerous methodological issues in both NRCan’s and Environment and Climate Change Canada’s (ECCC) modelling and raised larger issues with how the federal government models and projects the greenhouse gas emissions reductions of its programs and policies.

Colleagues, I will exercise a little caution with regard to the government’s claims for hydrogen in relation to Bill C-49: that it will decarbonize provincial electricity grids and move to a non-emitting electricity grid by 2035. However, I’m still in favour of trying, just as I was in favour of early exploration in the

offshore petroleum sector before any guarantees were on the table. This expansion of the responsibilities of the offshore boards is a good step and is necessary.

Honourable senators, we must also be cognizant of the impact on the fisheries. At the House committee, they heard from many in the fishing industry who unanimously shared their great concerns about the consequences Bill C-49 could have on their activities. I have also heard of significant concerns from First Nations, particularly in Nova Scotia, regarding a lack of consultation.

The concerns deserve our particular attention. The lack of adequate consultation with fishermen has been a major criticism. The fishing industry, essential to the economy of many coastal communities, has not been sufficiently involved in the construction of this bill. I can almost guarantee that the lack of consultation will come back to bite.

• (1610)

In her second-reading speech, Senator Petten, the sponsor of this bill, referenced the organization called One Ocean. It is a good organization. I sat as the C-NLOPB representative on One Ocean for three years. Colleagues, that organization is an early warning system that helps to maintain harmony between the vibrant and important fishing industry and the vibrant and important petroleum sector. It is not a place where the real effects of colliding interests are readily solved. Now we are introducing another industry that will operate nearshore, where inshore fishing happens and has happened for 500 years. The instillation and operation of wind turbines will absolutely have an effect on the fishing industry, especially if it takes place on traditional fishing grounds during limited fishing seasons.

The House committee study heard from witnesses who said that these developments could disrupt marine coastal ecosystems, reduce fisheries productivity and jeopardize the economic viability of coastal communities. In addition, the lack of solid scientific data and comprehensive assessments has been another point of contention.

Ruth Inniss, representing the fishing industry, highlighted the uncertainty surrounding the long-term effects of wind farms on fish populations and other marine species. She called for guarantees for a proper assessment of these impacts before projects are implemented. The offshore boards will have to develop the in-house expertise for assessments like this, as they have done for the petroleum sector.

Honourable senators, I would also like to further address the issue of the new regulatory framework for recommendations made by the regulators on the granting of permits for offshore renewable projects. It's important to point out that this step introduces an additional layer of regulation, which risks leading to significant delays and increased administrative burdens. According to clause 19 of the bill, the transfer of permit approval powers to federal and provincial ministers could triple the time it takes to make a decision. In the case of a call for tenders, the deadlines can be extended indefinitely until the call for tenders is concluded. This approach unnecessarily complicates the decision-making process and imposes additional obstacles to

future energy projects. Administrative burdens and prolonged delays risk discouraging investors and hindering our economic development.

The same criticism can be made of the regulator's authorization process as introduced by clauses 61 and 62 of Bill C-49 in connection with the Impact Assessment Act, or IAA. Indeed, Bill C-49 integrates the requirements of the IAA into the regulator's authorization process, requiring them, when it is a designated project, to wait for a decision from the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada before they can issue authorizations. If an assessment is required, this can significantly delay the process. In addition, it allows the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to impose "any condition that he or she considers appropriate," taking into account the public interest. These additional conditions can indefinitely extend the authorization period. In practice, this means the authorizations needed to start work on energy projects could be delayed for several months or even years. That, colleagues, is textbook regulatory uncertainty.

Honourable colleagues, I'm also concerned about clause 28 of Bill C-49, which seriously threatens Canada's Atlantic offshore petroleum industry. By allowing the federal minister, with the agreement of the provincial minister, to ban drilling in certain areas and suspend ongoing projects, this provision could lead to significant job losses and harm our regional economy. This provision has nothing to do with wind energy opportunities but instead provides the federal minister the ability to shut down approved and well-regulated existing activities, including production. Colleagues, this will undoubtedly result in multi-billion-dollar lawsuits.

The revenue generated by this industry is essential for local communities, provincial governments and, indeed, the federal government, allowing them to fund essential public services and contribute to the economy. Colleagues, just this week at the annual Energy NL conference, my home province, via the premier, sent a strong message that as the future "energy capital of North America," Newfoundland and Labrador isn't expecting its interest in offshore oil to go anywhere. The premier stated:

We will be all in on oil and gas for decades and decades to come. Because the world needs us to be.

As I have mentioned in the chamber before, there will be a demand for oil and gas from Newfoundland and Labrador for years to come. Given that reality, how can Bill C-49, which grants the federal government the power to halt or suspend drilling activities, support this vital industry? This is yet another attempt by the Trudeau government to phase out the oil and gas industry. It probably doesn't need to be said — but, of course, I will — that these are well-paying, middle-class jobs that support middle-class families and middle-class Canadian communities.

Honourable colleagues, I have raised the serious concerns I have with Bill C-49. There may be valid answers to all of these, but I have yet to hear them. My concerns and those of others

should be given a fair and thorough hearing in committee. My province is therefore in no rush. The provincial government will need to pass mirror legislation — Nova Scotia's government as well — before anything can move forward. When I last talked to the decision makers in Newfoundland and Labrador, they had not yet begun to prepare such legislation.

Colleagues, I began by stating that I'm in favour of the intent of Bill C-49. I'm in favour of establishing a regulatory regime for additional offshore energy resources for us to provide domestically and to world markets. I have, however, legitimate concerns that elements of this bill that have nothing to do with these additional opportunities will act as a Trojan Horse to damage the business case for the petroleum sector — not by lack of supply or lack of demand and not by high cost, as Newfoundland and Labrador is among the lowest-cost petroleum extraction jurisdictions in the world. It will be via regulatory uncertainty that will drive petroleum investment to other major petroleum jurisdictions: Russia, Venezuela, Iran and Saudi Arabia. These are jurisdictions that do not have the labour standards and environmental standards that we have and that will not employ our citizens, as we do.

Colleagues, I hope that some of these questions can be answered at committee and on further debate. Thank you.

Hon. Iris G. Petten: Senator Wells, thank you very much for your speech, for agreeing to be the critic of Bill C-49 and for your long history with the C-NLOPB and its contributions to our province.

Senator Wells, as you know, both premiers not only supported this legislation but both provinces were actually at the table as Bill C-49 was being drafted. The premiers have publicly called for us to pass this legislation as soon as possible so they can introduce and pass the required mirror legislation. Of course, they need the bill first in order to do that.

Senator Wells, would you not agree, especially since both premiers are on board, that this bill deserves to be studied in a timely manner, as requested by both premiers?

Senator Wells: Thank you, Senator Petten. That's a great question.

I do not agree that it should be passed without adequate study. I would also agree that adequate consultations need to happen. If that doesn't happen with First Nations — particularly in Nova Scotia — and with fisheries groups in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, this will be more trouble than it may be worth.

I recognize that the premiers of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia are anxious to get this going because they are anxious to see wind energy.

I know the industry quite well and have spent 30 years in the fishery — almost as long as you have, Senator Petten. I know both industries very well, and I know that without proper consultation, this will be a bill that could come back and haunt, especially the provisions that have nothing to do with wind energy and that have everything to do with stopping oil and gas development. It is like a sausage. I might say, "Do you like sausages?" Your answer should not be "yes." Your answer should be, "What's in it?" I think this bill is that.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Would Senator Wells take a question?

Senator Wells: I am happy to take a question, Senator McPhedran.

Senator McPhedran: Thank you very much, Senator Wells.

• (1620)

If I understand one of your key points correctly, you take some umbrage at how rapidly this is being asked to move through this chamber. May I ask if your concern is related only to this bill, or do you have any concerns about bills that actually have been passed in this chamber very recently with no debate whatsoever on those bills?

Senator Wells: Thank you, Senator McPhedran, for your question. Right now, I'm only concerned with Bill C-49 and my role as the critic of it. I think we have up to 70 Senate public bills somewhere in the process of Parliament. I don't know how many more there are, but we have more private members' bills that we would also like to see move through. I'm not sure if this adequately addressed your question. We would like to see all legislation, at some point, be given the adequate scrutiny it deserves. But Bill C-49 is the one I'm focused on today.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

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

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Petten, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources.)

[Translation]

**CANADA LABOUR CODE
CANADA INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BOARD
REGULATIONS, 2012**

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Lankin, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Pate, for the second reading of Bill C-58, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Canada Industrial Relations Board Regulations, 2012.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Honourable senators, I'm speaking today at second reading of Bill C-58, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Canada Industrial Relations Board Regulations, 2012.

The main purpose of this bill is to create a ban on the use of replacement workers in the event of a strike or lockout in federally regulated workplaces, such as those in the aviation, telecommunications and banking sectors.

It also aims to amend the maintenance of activities process. The government's intention with this bill is to improve labour relations across Canada.

Some time before the bill was referred to the Senate, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in the other place completed its review. I'm emphasizing that because I want to draw your attention to the fact that this bill has aroused a great deal of interest. The committee received 20 briefs and heard from 37 witnesses. I'll refer to some of their testimony later in my speech.

The bill continued its journey through the other place, and I would like to draw your attention to the fact that it passed unanimously on May 27.

Bill C-58 was finally sent to us for sober second thought on May 28, 2024. Let's not forget, colleagues, that this bill will have a major impact not only on relations between unions and management, but on all Canadians.

I will now summarize the main features of this bill, which will amend the Canada Labour Code in five key ways. First, with regard to obligations concerning strikes and lockouts, clause 6 of the bill amends the Canada Labour Code by changing the process for maintaining certain activities. Measures are being taken to ensure that the employer and the union agree on the terms governing the activities that need to be maintained.

In addition, if the parties fail to reach an agreement within the statutory time frame, the Canada Labour Board will, on application made by either party, determine any question with respect to maintenance of activities.

Second, still on the subject of strike and lockout obligations, clause 9 of bill repeals subsection 94(2.1) of the Canada Labour Code to:

(a) amend the scope of the prohibition relating to replacement workers by removing the requirement of demonstrating a purpose of undermining a trade union's representational capacity

Similarly, the amendments made in clause 9 of the bill include a list of persons that employers are prohibited from using during a strike or lockout. The clause would:

(b) prohibit employers from using, during a legal strike or lockout intended to involve the cessation of work by all employees in a bargaining unit, the services of an employee in that unit

This clause provides exceptions to these prohibitions in the event of threats, destruction or damage.

Third, under clause 12 of Bill C-58, when an employer contravenes the prohibitions I just mentioned, a new section of the Canada Labour Code establishes "a fine not exceeding \$100,000" for each day that the offence is committed.

Fourth, clause 14 of the bill, again through a new section added to the Canada Labour Code, empowers the Governor in Council to:

. . . make regulations establishing an administrative monetary penalties scheme for the purpose of promoting compliance with subsections 94(4) and (6)

Fifth and finally, clause 18 of the bill provides for its coming into force 12 months after it receives Royal Assent.

I said earlier that I would draw your attention to some of the testimony that was given before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in the other place.

It goes without saying that this kind of bill leads to differences of opinion and triggers debate. Having the opportunity to listen to those very different opinions helps us understand how important it is that we do our job of providing sober second thought on this bill. This bill will have many consequences, not only for the two main stakeholders, but also for suppliers, retailers and consumers. As a result, we must listen to and carefully consider all of the opinions that have been and will be shared with us.

For example, the committee heard from representatives of various unions, including the United Steelworkers Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Confédération des syndicats nationaux. The committee also heard from

representatives of various associations. For instance, the Canadian Canola Growers Association and the Canadian Telecommunications Association testified about Bill C-58.

The committee also heard from representatives of various federations, such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

The witnesses expressed concerns and talked about issues affecting various workplaces. For example, some fear the number of strikes will increase, and they worry that may have repercussions beyond the labour dispute itself. Others feel that the list of exceptions to the ban on the use of replacement workers should reflect the reality of certain workplaces.

I would invite the committee that will review Bill C-58 to pay special attention to certain issues that merit further study. For example, the committee could take a closer look at how the bill will affect the balance of power between labour and management once it is passed. Have we struck the right balance, or have we created a new imbalance?

Should the list of exceptions where the use of replacement workers is allowed be further restricted, or should it be expanded?

Does the current wording introduce ambiguity that could be tricky to interpret, as with “imminent or serious threat?”

What impact will the bill have on anyone other than the parties directly involved?

These are just a few examples of the many avenues to explore.

In closing, colleagues, even though the bill was passed unanimously in the House of Commons, the Senate must nonetheless take its role of providing sober second thought seriously. We must examine any potential flaws in the bill that could have a major impact on workers and employers directly involved in a labour dispute, as well as the collateral damage that could result from the changes proposed by Bill C-58.

• (1630)

Accordingly, I invite the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, to which the bill will likely be referred for study, to give special, careful consideration to the issues I mentioned, in addition to any particular elements the committee might identify.

Thank you. I invite you to vote in favour of this bill at second reading.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

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

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Lankin, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.)

[English]

PHARMACARE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Kim Pate moved second reading of Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare.

She said: I am pleased to sponsor Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare (Pharmacare Act), introduced by the Minister of Health on February 29, 2024.

This bill lays out the foundational principles for the first and vitally important steps towards national pharmacare for Canada. It outlines a plan to work with all provinces and territories willing to provide universal single-payer coverage of necessary medicines, starting with a number of contraceptive and diabetes medications. This legislation could improve access to prescription drugs, promote safe and appropriate prescribing and bring relief to Canadian households and employers who struggle with the high cost of necessary medications.

This bill brings Canada into line with most other wealthy countries that provide universal coverage of necessary medicines as part of their medicare systems. When medicare was introduced in Canada in the 1960s, prescription drugs played a relatively limited role in health care. Most drugs used outside a hospital were inexpensive medicines for common conditions. In the intervening decades, however, the development of drugs has surged as pharmaceutical companies have proliferated and marketed ever-increasing new treatments and cures.

Prescription medications are now a central part of health care. As a share of overall health care costs, spending on prescribed drugs has risen from 6% in 1975 to nearly 14% in 2022. This makes prescription drugs the second largest area of health care spending in Canada, second only, honourable colleagues, to hospital services. The cost of prescription medicines is a concern for far too many Canadians for whom access to affordable medication remains a significant and sometimes life-altering — sometimes life-ending — challenge.

In 2021, Statistics Canada found that 20% — or one in five — of adults in Canada did not have adequate coverage for their medication. In the face of rising costs, some Canadians are dealing with an untenable choice: they must decide between paying for their prescriptions or covering essentials like rent, food or heat. In a country as well resourced as ours, nobody should be abandoned in such ways.

Some people try to ration their drugs to save costs. Skipping doses or avoiding necessary treatments due to financial constraints can make already precarious health conditions far worse, which can lead to more serious health issues and more costly interventions overall.

A key Canadian value is that everyone should have timely access to the health care they need, when they need it, regardless of their ability to pay.

In 2019, the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare released its final report, known as the Hoskins report. It provided a blueprint for implementing a national pharmacare plan. Crucially, the Hoskins report recognized that pharmacare could improve access to necessary medicines for all Canadians while also saving costs if implemented as a universal single-payer system. Allowing Canada's public drug plans to join forces to provide single-payer coverage of carefully selected medications would increase bargaining power and effectively lower drug prices in a way that Canada's current patchwork mix of public and private plans simply cannot.

To realize this goal, the Hoskins report recommended an incremental or stepwise process, an approach to national pharmacare implementation that reflects both the significance of the work needed to make this transformational change and the clear end goal of a universal single-payer system to guide and inform each step.

The report recommended as a key first task the development of a national formulary, consisting of “. . . a carefully chosen list of essential medicines covering most major conditions and representing about half of all prescriptions” in Canada today.

Such an approach provides the time necessary to select medications to be covered nationally, negotiate the prices of covered drugs and allow meaningful coverage to begin while serving as a starting point that could be expanded into a more fulsome program.

Bill C-64 reflects this incremental approach to the implementation of national pharmacare. It lays the groundwork for universal single-payer coverage of essential contraceptive and diabetes medications. It also tasks the newly formed Canadian Drug Agency with the development of a broader national formulary of essential medicines that would be the next step for universal single-payer coverage.

Bill C-64 is the first step in addressing current inequities in Canada's patchwork system of drug coverage. In Budget 2024, the Government of Canada announced \$1.5 billion over five years to support the launch of national pharmacare. This investment in contraception and diabetes medications will benefit both the health of Canadians and our health care system.

Contraception — there are now more than 9 million women and gender-diverse people of reproductive age in Canada; that's nearly one quarter of our total population. Access to safe, reliable contraception, particularly birth control, is essential. It provides

the freedom to plan families and pursue long-term goals and dreams. This could include continuing with education, advancing a career or simply being able to wait to start a family.

Reliable and effective birth control is key to bodily autonomy. It is an essential component of reproductive health and is instrumental in advancing equality.

Too many of us know the consequences of unintended pregnancies, the disproportionate health and financial — not to mention social — consequences of which are disproportionately experienced and borne by women. The negative health and economic impacts can be legion.

Cost is identified as the single-most significant barrier to accessing contraception. This can prohibit people from using birth control regularly and too often prevents them from choosing the most effective measures.

For example, oral contraceptives, which cost approximately \$25 per month, have a typical use failure rate of 9%. Compare this with intrauterine devices, or IUDs, which cost up to \$500 per unit. IUDs are more expensive up front, but they are generally more effective, can last for five years and have a use failure rate of just 0.2%.

For a young, part-time or gig worker without employment-based drug coverage, that \$500 IUD is not merely out of reach, it is unfathomable as an option. Limited employment income coupled with uncertain employment status, which is all too common for young adults, can also make even the cost of a monthly prescription a challenging expense. Just imagine what an unintended pregnancy means in those circumstances. Women from lower-income households, because of affordability, are often forced to use less effective contraceptive methods or no contraception at all.

• (1640)

There can also be stigma and risk associated with trying to access contraceptive medications, such that even girls and women who have drug coverage on paper through a family member might be prevented from using this coverage for fear of potential repercussions from parents or partners.

Studies have demonstrated that publicly funded, no-cost, universal access to contraception can lead to public cost savings. For instance, researchers at the University of British Columbia estimate that no-cost contraception has the potential to save the B.C. health care system alone approximately \$27 million per year.

The same cost-saving principles apply to medications for diabetes. Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in Canada. It currently affects about 3.7 million people, and that number is growing. We all know someone living with diabetes, and many of us have witnessed first-hand how this life-changing disease can have massive negative impacts on people's quality of life. Untreated or inadequately addressed diabetes can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and loss of circulatory health that can require the amputation of limbs and even end in death.

The full cost of diabetes to the health care system in 2018 was estimated to be around \$27 billion, and that amount could exceed \$39 billion by 2028. There is no cure for diabetes, but there are treatments to manage the disease.

In addition to and separate from Bill C-64, the Government of Canada also plans to create a fund for diabetes devices and supplies. This fund would be rolled out to support access to diabetes devices, such as continuous glucose monitors, insulin pumps, syringes and test strips. Combined with the framework outlined in Bill C-64 for universal single-payer coverage for select diabetes medications, this will help ensure that no diabetic in Canada is forced to ration their medication or compromise their treatment.

Providing coverage for these medications aligns with the four foundational principles embodied in Bill C-64. These principles are accessibility, affordability, appropriate use and universality.

Making prescription drugs more accessible means improving the consistency of access to drug coverage and needed medications across the country. Someone in rural P.E.I. or remote Northern communities should have access to the same diabetes medications as someone living in downtown Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal or here in the homeland of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation, also known as Ottawa.

Making prescription drugs more affordable means reducing administrative and financial barriers for Canadians, including premiums, deductibles and co-pays. Additionally, national pharmacare should address how to ensure that the prescription drugs people are taking are appropriate. This includes getting the right drug to the right patient at the right time to support their physical and mental well-being.

Finally, national pharmacare should be universal. As the Senate's Social Affairs Committee noted in its report entitled *The Health of Canadians —The Federal Role* during its landmark study, universality is one of the five national principles set out in the Canada Health Act and “. . . means that public health care insurance must be provided to all Canadians.” This means we must ensure that the principles of accessibility, affordability and the appropriate use of prescription drugs are applicable to all Canadians, regardless of where they live.

Each of these principles will help guide a step-by-step approach to building national universal pharmacare in collaboration with provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples.

Bill C-64 also outlines some of the work the newly established Canada's Drug Agency will undertake. As you might recall, this agency was created in December 2023 with an investment of \$89.5 million over five years, starting now — in 2024 — through to 2025.

Building upon the existing world-class health technology assessment capacity of the former Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, the new Canada's Drug Agency will help lead and coordinate efforts to make Canada's pharmaceutical system more sustainable and prepared for the

future. Bill C-64 calls upon the agency to prepare a list of prescriptions and related products to inform the development of Canada's national formulary of essential medicines. This formulary will outline the scope of prescription drugs and related products to which Canadians should have access under the next stage of national universal pharmacare. As recommended by the Hoskins Report, the agency's work on this must be rigorous, evidence-based and independent of commercial interests in the pharmaceutical sector in order to arrive at a national formulary that ensures equitable, evidence-based coverage for all Canadians.

Bill C-64 also tasks the Minister of Health with requesting that the agency develop a national bulk-purchasing strategy for prescription drugs and related products in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, including provinces and territories. As with the formulary itself, this procurement strategy must be developed absent the conflict of interest of drug companies and insurers, and with the well-being of all Canadians in mind, in order to best identify ways to increase the availability of and reduce prices for prescription drugs.

The agency must complete the preliminary list and strategy no later than the first anniversary of the day on which this act receives Royal Assent.

Finally, the agency will support the publication of a pan-Canadian strategy on the appropriate use of prescription drugs and related products. Such strategies have been shown to improve health outcomes and reduce health system costs in other countries. In addition to the first report, Canada's Drug Agency would also be required to report upon progress made in advancing this strategy every three years.

It is also important to point out that Bill C-64 recognizes and respects the important role of provinces and territories, as well as Indigenous peoples, in delivering health care. After all, Canada is large and diverse. Every province and territory has different needs and faces different challenges. This diversity necessitates a cooperative approach to help ensure that no Canadian is left behind.

If we are going to transform a complex landscape of drug coverage into national pharmacare while also improving access and affordability, we must do so in collaboration with provinces and territories, relying upon their considerable expertise and experience. Therefore, every step taken toward national universal pharmacare needs to be taken in concert with these partners.

The funding to support national pharmacare outlined in Bill C-64 will be provided to provincial and territorial governments through bilateral agreements. At the same time, the Government of Canada will look to learn from initiatives currently under way as they continue to work toward ensuring access and affordability for all Canadians.

Since August 2021, the Government of Canada has been working with the Province of Prince Edward Island to lower drug costs for patients via the Improving Affordable Access to Prescription Drugs program. In that time, P.E.I. has added more than 100 new medications to its list of drugs covered by provincial programs. These include medications for cancer, heart disease, migraines and multiple sclerosis. In addition, effective

June 1, 2023, P.E.I. reduced co-pays to \$5 for almost 60% of medications regularly used by beneficiaries of its public drug plans. Thanks to this initiative, P.E.I. residents have saved over \$2 million in out-of-pocket costs on more than 230,000 prescriptions.

Although not an example of a single-payer system, the work in P.E.I. is an illustration of the benefits of reducing costs for patients. As Canada puts into place the building blocks for universal single-payer public pharmacare, including a national formulary and bulk-purchasing capacity, both P.E.I. and Canada can harness countless additional benefits in the form of institutional capacity to help contain overall drug costs.

Visiting P.E.I. last week and hearing from many involved provided additional helpful context and increased my understanding regarding the need for the universal public drug plan envisioned by the Hoskins Report, and advocated for by Canadian and international experts, to ensure equality of access as well as equality of benefits. No doubt, there will be pressure on this and subsequent governments to follow the United States by implementing a fill-in-the-gap type of pharmacare model. Therefore, colleagues, we will all need to remain vigilant and ensure that our universal pharmacare program is just that.

How do we do that, and how do we ensure this?

We start by insisting that access does not vary from one person to the next. It should not be a fill-in-the-gap style for some people or some benefits. It should not be run as a patchwork of literally thousands of independent private and public drug plans that generates unnecessary administrative costs and program complexity for patients and prescribers. It should not be a multi-payer system that fragments Canada's purchasing power when negotiating prices and supply guarantees with multinational pharmaceutical companies. It should not leave individual households and employers bearing most of the program costs on their own. And, especially as it rolls out with the crucial coverage of contraception, it must not force teenagers or young adults to ask their parents' permission to use their existing private plan to reimburse contraceptives.

• (1650)

To prevent corporate lobbies from subverting the laudable intention of a national pharmacare program, it is imperative that Bill C-64 adhere to the recommendations of the 2019 Hoskins report. These include ensuring the following: First, the federal government should work with provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples to develop national pharmacare as a universal, single-payer, public system of prescription drug coverage that offers universal benefits unconditionally as a matter of citizenship or residency.

Second, national pharmacare should be a public program that applies the fundamental principles of Canadian medicare as embodied in the Canada Health Act.

Third, national pharmacare payments to provinces and territories for the coverage of selected diabetes and contraception medications should result in the provision of universal, single-payer, first-dollar, public coverage for these first stages of national pharmacare.

Fourth, provinces and territories should have the flexibility to offer coverage beyond the national pharmacare standards.

Establishing these principles clearly and unconditionally in the act, and thereby preserving the national negotiating power of the pharmacare program, will create the institutional capacity necessary to ensure the universal access that Prince Edward Islanders, with whom I met, await — ensuring it's in a way that will remain equitable and sustainable for generations to come.

Bill C-64 also builds on the work done to make drugs for rare diseases more accessible. In March 2023, the federal government launched Canada's first-ever National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases. With a federal investment of up to \$1.5 billion over three years, this strategy will improve access to drugs for rare diseases and make them more affordable to those who need them.

As part of the initial three-year phase of the strategy, the Government of Canada is providing up to \$1.4 billion to provinces and territories through bilateral agreements. This investment will enable consistency in access to these medications across the country, and, colleagues, these are medications that can transform and even save the lives of people with rare diseases in Canada. This is the first step toward looking at drugs for rare diseases from a national perspective.

Bill C-64 represents an important step forward to ensure that every Canadian has access to the affordable, quality medicines that they need. The Government of Canada's plan to provide universal coverage for contraception and diabetes medications will be transformational for individuals, families, society and our health care system. It is a start, and an important one, for Canadians. In a time when too many are shrinking from the hard-won struggles of previous generations of women, investing in reproductive health sends a clear and important message.

Also, as the country where insulin was first discovered by Banting, Best and Macleod in 1921 at the University of Toronto, it is fitting that diabetes medications will also be among the first provided. As we work to build a national pharmacare system that puts public interests above all else, we are reminded of the fact that these Canadian scientists, in addition to winning the Nobel Peace Prize, resisted impulses to personally profit over a matter of such importance to public health. Banting refused to even be part of any patent, as he considered it unethical to profit off of people's need for life-saving medicine. His two colleagues did patent insulin, but sold the patent to the University of Toronto for \$1 so that it would benefit all.

Dear colleagues, there is still much work to do. The federal government must clarify the mandate and governance of Canada's Drug Agency as it relates to national pharmacare. It must carefully select the first medications to be covered beyond these. It must negotiate prices and supply guarantees for covered medications. And it must work with provinces, territories and Indigenous people to ensure universal, single-payer, first-dollar, public coverage of these medications. This is serious work in the second-largest component of the Canadian health care system. All Canadians will be better off if we do this work in a principled manner together.

As the Romanow report, the 2018 House committee report and the Hoskins report have consistently made clear, these first steps lay the foundation for a national pharmacare program that will continue to expand to cover every medicine for every Canadian. We must, therefore, resist pushes to privatize and commodify the process.

From the outset, this program will need the buying power of a single-payer system purchasing medications for 40 million Canadians through processes that are evidence-based and publicly accountable. In addition to lowering costs for medications, this should streamline system complexity and administrative costs.

Honourable colleagues, by continuing our work together and passing this legislation, we can ensure that we enhance and fortify our health care system, and continue our work to ensure it is there for us when we need it, both now and in the years to come.

Meegwetch. Thank you.

Hon. Joan Kingston: Would the senator take a question, please?

Senator Pate: Yes.

Senator Kingston: Thank you. Many health care organizations, including those representing Canada's nurses, have advocated for a national pharmacare system for a long time. The studies that you mentioned have recommended establishing, of course, universal, single-payer, public pharmacare in Canada, which is what Canada's nurses have also advocated for.

Could you elaborate, in particular, on how a fully developed national, universal pharmacare system would decrease the costs in the provincial acute care systems of health?

Senator Pate: You are far more of an expert than I am, so I think you know the answer already. Part of it is certainly the bulk purchasing power. We know that in the United States, and even in Quebec, where they have gone with the fill-in-the-gaps model, the cost is actually higher. We are already seeing that you can reduce the cost by those measures, but you can reduce the costs far greater and, therefore, benefit all Canadians if you use the

bulk purchasing power of negotiating on behalf of 40 million Canadians versus however many there are in whichever province or territory you are living.

(On motion of Senator Housakos, debate adjourned.)

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. Rodger Cuzner: Honourable senators, this item stands adjourned in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, and I ask for leave of the Senate that, following my intervention, the balance of his time to speak to this item be reserved.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Cuzner: Honourable senators, I rise today in reply to the Speech from the Throne. This is my inaugural speech.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Cuzner: Thank you. As I said to Senator Harder and Senator Kutcher, manage your expectations.

The Speech from the Throne was quite some time ago, on November 23, 2021. That may seem like a significant amount of time, but judging by some of the responses that I've heard from senators across regarding response times to questions, it's probably not unreasonable.

• (1700)

First, let me start by offering my sincere thanks to the Senate Administration. From stem to stern, the team here approached the entire onboarding process with clarity, patience, a true desire to

help senators get off on the right foot and set them up to succeed. To all of those involved and who continue to serve, I will always be grateful. Thank you.

I should also thank my staff, Archie and Sheldon, for their early work and being able to secure this prime slot of speaking time, the last spot on a Thursday afternoon. Way to go, guys.

Honourable senators, let me take a moment to address an issue that is probably overt and obvious; in fact, it has been referred to several times in the chamber already. It is no secret that for the greater part of my life I have been committed to and have supported, through the good times and the not-so-good times — and sometimes these times aren't so good — but, regardless, I am proud to say that I am, as has been implied, a capital-L, Leafs fan. Thank you.

I assure you, colleagues, my strong commitment to the Leafs will not preclude me from working across benches with Habs, Jets and Sens fans — all senators — to ensure we do the good work for Canadians.

As for Bruins fans, no guarantees.

Some of you may know, I spent 19 years in the other place and, hopefully, have contributed, to some degree, to the public good. As a proud Cape Bretoner, I can say we hold in high regard our political leaders. I think of Father Andrew Hogan, a proud NDPer; Donald MacInnis, a Progressive Conservative and great friend of the family; and, of course, a political icon in Nova Scotia, Allan J. MacEachen. Allan J. served Canadians both in the Senate and in the other place. If I had been able to see the future, I would have asked him his thoughts on the difference between the two. I was under the impression there would be far more commonalities. Yet, I have been struck by the differences between our two houses.

I would liken this change to a busy construction site where a journeyman carpenter shows up on the job and is assigned the duties of a Red Seal electrician. The carpenter's obvious lack of understanding of his duties and the basic principles of electricity would probably come to him as a great shock. I will continue to listen and learn from my colleagues and to always try to find a way to contribute.

If I may, let me share with you this senator's early impressions of my new station.

Know first that I am absolutely impressed with the calibre of Canadians with whom I share the honour of serving in this place. The intellectual horsepower and passionate focus by so many on so many issues important to Canadians, from all groups and a caucus, are readily apparent and quite impressive.

We have distinguished scholars, celebrated journalists, committed social activists, successful business leaders, accomplished advocates, all of whom have made notable and positive contributions. The Indigenous leaders in this place will continue to help chart the path to meaningful reconciliation and a stronger, more inclusive Canada.

The more recent appointments process was reflected upon by the late senator Hugh Segal, who served here from 2005 to 2015. He was a firm believer in the Senate and Senate reform. In 2018, as a reflection, he said:

Good and able people were appointed under both structures, but today, gender, expertise and occupational balance is much stronger, as is the openness to a deliberative debate not driven purely by partisanship

As noted by Senator Deacon, my colleague from Nova Scotia:

In terms of diversity, of the 96 sitting senators, 83% are independent, 56% are female 34% are Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, or LGBTQ2.

This chamber, colleagues, represents Canada.

I have appreciated watching this talented body do its important work, like reviewing legislation, one of its primary responsibilities, and, when deemed appropriate, offering amendments.

All senators are aware there has been a striking increase in the number of amendments accepted by the other place in recent years. I recall the debate around Senator Cormier's amendment to Bill C-35, the Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act. I noted the important interventions shared by Senators Cormier, Moodie, Seidman and many others and, in particular, a very personal account by Senator Poirier, who made strong interventions on behalf of French minorities, a group she felt had been overlooked or could have been overlooked by this legislation. The amendment which passed offered the example of the Senate fulfilling its constitutional duties.

We know this chamber can initiate legislation as well. Before arriving in the Senate, I was not aware of the amount of legislation developed by individual senators, and that caught my attention. Many senators have invested considerable time and energy in the development of Senate public bills. These bills are important to the extent they provide the opportunity to advance discussions about a broad spectrum of important issues.

Senator Pate's bill, Bill S-233, has initiated a greater national discussion around a framework for the universal guaranteed basic income.

Recently, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, The Honourable Marc Miller, introduced government Bill C-71, mentioned yesterday by Senator Arnot, which addresses the issue of "Lost Canadians." I can only assume Bill S-245, tabled by Senator Martin, provided some of the impetus to prompt this government to act on this issue.

Currently, there are, by my count, 35 Senate public bills at various stages on the Order Paper plus those being studied at committee. Indeed, some senators have achieved success in having their bills receive Royal Assent.

However, in the many conversations I have had with many colleagues, there is a common thread; it suggests there is an issue with the number of Senate public bills. I offer no solution, but I do believe it is a discussion worth having. Perhaps we might find a better balance between the number of Senate public bills while not stifling the opportunity to shine light on important issues.

Honourable senators, I have always been of the belief that one of the true strengths of the Senate is the work done by committees. I recall a seminal report on health care in Canada tabled in 2002 by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, chaired by then-senator Michael Kirby.

I remember sitting in caucus in the other place when the report came out, along with Senator Ringuette and Senator Cordy. I can tell you, colleagues, while the report was not universally embraced, it did trigger, in my view, the government of the day to act.

That Senate study was followed by the Romanow report which strongly advocated for a major injection of federal funding by the government, which was subsequently materialized through two health accords in 2003 and 2004. There have been many studies since.

Honourable senators, central to the strength of Senate committees is a very simple power. The power is in the question. I have been impressed that when senators arrive at committee, they have their homework done. They are driven to ask delving questions to senior government officials, academics, representatives from various stakeholder groups. They play no favourites.

In the other place, quite often questions are posed in order to place their party's position in a better light. Senators are motivated to find the truth so that the recommendations can be presented to best help Canadians.

• (1710)

Likewise, I have been impressed with the two committees of which I am a member: the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications. The Fisheries and Oceans Committee is chaired by Senator Manning, an old friend, who is always fair, organized, collegial and respectful. The Chair of Transport and Communications Committee, Senator Housakos, has been great so far.

Senator Housakos: Give me time.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

Senator Cuzner: Colleagues, it is the power of the question that yields the success of Senate committees. With regard to the power of daily Question Period, I'm not so sold on that.

Your Honour and colleagues, make no mistake; I would in no way want to diminish the opportunity for the opposition to hold the government of the day to account — never. However, colleagues, if you will allow me to pose this question: Is the current format for Senate Question Period the best vehicle to do this?

An Hon. Senator: No.

Senator Cuzner: I watch Senator Gold — and, I assume, Senator Harder before him — try to reply to important questions that may arise as a result of anything — something that may have happened in 1 of the 130 different federal departments or 1 of the 46 Crown corporations, or an action taken by any of the 450,000 federal employees.

In the other place, besides the Prime Minister, there are 37 ministers who can answer those questions, along with 39 parliamentary secretaries — each having the benefit of ministerial staff and a team of departmental officials and communications professionals who brief them daily.

Now, I have a world of respect for Senator Gold and his staff, but his challenge is daunting. It is like being handed a soup spoon while standing beside the swimming pool at the Château Laurier and being asked to empty it.

In contrast, having witnessed and taken part in several ministerial Question Periods in this chamber, I believe that format is much more productive and beneficial. Once again, it is the power of the question. That power yields far more accurate and informed responses. All senators who participate ask good, relevant questions and, in most cases, get good, pertinent answers immediately.

Likewise, I am fully aware that the official opposition in the Senate has a limited number of procedural levers to pull in order to perform their duties — that is to say, hold the government to account. The current Leader of the Opposition has an intimate relationship with each of these levers and is masterful at engaging them. He is tough and focused, and he is doing what he needs to do to succeed.

With regard to what might appear to us newbies in this place as a tremendous squandering of time and talent, with various procedural interruptions and delays, I will only say this: We shouldn't be too quick to judge. Should there be a change in government — sometimes that happens — and an incoming government demonstrates an aggressive agenda that might cause concern to senators and Canadians, one might find themselves looking for those same levers.

I see this newly evolving Senate as a worthwhile experiment with huge potential. However, should there be a change in government, don't be surprised if the experiment has a whole new team of lab instructors. That being said, I still believe that so much could be done —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I'm sorry to interrupt you, senator, but I believe honourable senators could grant an additional five minutes so that you could complete your speech.

Senator Cuzner: Three minutes?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Three minutes, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Cuzner: Let's make it five. Do I hear seven?

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Five minutes.

Senator Cuzner: That being said, I still believe very much in this institution.

Again, colleagues, I want to quote Hugh Segal, who said about Senate reform that past appointments were “. . . largely driven by partisan directives from the parliamentary wings of the two old-line parties.”

He went on to say:

Creating a mirror Upper Chamber with the same divisions and tensions as the lower and elected House was not what the negotiators of Confederation had in mind. . . .

I am sure former Senator Segal would also believe that the recently adopted Rules changes were a positive step for this place. I tip my hat to those senators who have worked on this type of reform over the years.

I'm also mindful that reform of the Senate does not mean that we ignore our traditions or histories. Many men and women have come before us here. They were important actors in building the story of Canada. I say this because the history of this place, the other place and generations of governments is sometimes best viewed through the lens of time.

I acknowledge that the many Conservative governments of Macdonald, Diefenbaker, Mulroney and others in between, and the Liberal governments of Laurier, Pearson, Trudeau and Chrétien, have helped shape this government. To echo Senator Oh's comments today, I believe that we live in the greatest country in the world.

Now that you have an appreciation for my limited understanding of this chamber, I have one concern that I wish to share. This concern has been growing, and it is shared by many people in the world of politics.

In 2019, the Clerk of the Privy Council, Michael Wernick, commented at the Justice Committee in the other place, “I'm deeply concerned about my country right now, its politics and where it's headed.”

Many Canadians thought this quote was a bit odd at the time. I did not. Throughout my time in politics, I have witnessed a marked shift in political culture in this country. The increased toxicity in our political discourse is often cited as a major reason why good people are leaving and heading for the exits. This should worry us all. We need to understand that you can disagree with policies, but we need to respect those who have come forward to serve the public good.

Ian Shugart said in this place just short of a year ago:

Honourable senators, whether it is what we say to or about each other, or how we learn again to listen and dialogue with others who don't share our outlook, or how we guard the health of our institutions — we need to relearn the virtue of restraint.

Colleagues, I believe we have a healthy discourse in this chamber. We need to continue to provide leadership on this issue. We are charged with not only maintaining our institutions but also leaving them a better place upon our departure.

In closing, honourable senators, I'm honoured to serve in this chamber with this collective of capable, caring and committed senators. My time in politics has shown me that much can be achieved when people of goodwill work together to find solutions and propose initiatives that support and help Canadians. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(Debate adjourned.)

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of June 5, 2024, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, June 11, 2024, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1720)

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

BILL TO AMEND—MESSAGE FROM COMMONS—MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE IN COMMONS AMENDMENTS ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Cardozo, seconded by the Honourable Senator Klyne:

That, in relation to Bill S-202, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate), the Senate agree to the amendments made by the House of Commons; and

That a message be sent to the House of Commons to acquaint that house accordingly.

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: Honourable senators, I rise today as official critic of Bill S-202, An Act to Amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate). I stand here in support and to encourage you to vote in favour of the motion proposing that the Senate accept both amendments made to Bill S-202 in the other place.

I would like to begin by thanking former Senator Bovey, who sponsored the bill in the Senate prior to her retirement and showed outstanding commitment and determination with respect to the arts in Canada. I would also like to thank Senator Cardozo for taking up the torch.

For colleagues who may be less familiar with the Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate bill, it simply establishes a position for an officer of the Library of Parliament whose job is to promote the arts in Canada — through Parliament. The Visual Artist Laureate will foster knowledge, enjoyment, awareness and development of the arts. This new position will bring contemporary artwork into this institution and provide us with new perspectives while preserving Parliament's history through visual arts.

The other place has made two amendments to this bill that only serve to ensure that the Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate better represents the bilingual nature of Canada, as well as new forms of art. These are simple amendments that only serve to strengthen the bill.

The first amendment focuses on the Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate's primary spoken language. Just as is the practice in place for the Parliamentary Poet Laureate, the amendment calls for the primary official language spoken by the artist to alternate.

The second amendment aims to reflect the realities of our shifting artistic landscape by including digital creations. This second amendment seems particularly pertinent as we spend more and more time in digital spaces.

Finally, by passing this amended bill, we will publicly acknowledge the importance of artists and be better able to promote their talents.

Therefore, honourable senators, I humbly ask that you support this motion. Thank you.

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: I have a very brief intervention. I would like to thank Senator Ataullahjan and Senator Cardozo, two senators from Ontario. I would also like to thank former Senator Bovey from Manitoba and mention former Senator Moore from Nova Scotia, the initiator of the whole thing.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Downe, seconded by the Honourable Senator Quinn, for the third reading of Bill S-258, An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (reporting on unpaid income tax).

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Seidman, for the third reading of Bill C-288, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act (transparent and accurate broadband services information).

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today as the sponsor of Bill C-288, which is now before us at third reading and one step closer to becoming law. I would like to once again acknowledge and commend MP Dan Mazier, my colleague in the other house, for his hard work and advocacy on issues surrounding internet services in Canada and the crucial need for implementing Bill C-288, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act (transparent and accurate broadband services information).

I would also like to thank the members of the Transport and Communications Committee for the work that they did in studying this bill.

As we navigate the digital age, it has become increasingly evident that the disparity between advertised internet speeds and the actual speeds experienced by consumers is a prevalent problem across the country. Countless Canadians, especially those residing in rural, remote and Indigenous communities, are left feeling shortchanged by their internet service providers.

Acknowledging that over 1 million households and more than 50% of First Nations communities in Canada still lack access to high-speed internet is disheartening. Despite the government's efforts and announcements of substantial investments, the

Auditor General's report revealed a stark reality — a significant portion of the population remains disconnected. This digital divide is a stark reminder of the work that lies ahead of us in bridging the gap and ensuring equitable access to communication technologies for all Canadians.

The need for transparency and accountability in telecommunications cannot be overstated. While other countries have taken proactive measures to address similar issues, Canada needs to catch up in implementing necessary regulations. The European Union's Open Internet Regulation, adopted in 2015, serves as a benchmark for transparency and retail contract regulations regarding minimum and typical internet speeds. Similarly, the United States Federal Communications Commission's broadband service disclosure label initiative reflects the essence of Bill C-288, emphasizing the importance of accurate information for consumers.

Bill C-288 represents a crucial step toward rectifying the discrepancies in internet service quality experienced by Canadians. By mandating clear standards for advertising internet speeds during peak periods and enhancing transparency in the telecom sector, this bill aims to empower consumers with accurate information to make informed choices. Furthermore, it makes the internet service providers and regulatory bodies accountable, ensuring that the expectations set by Parliament are met.

Bill C-288 was sent to the Standing Senate Committee on Transportation and Communications, where we heard from witnesses who supported this important bill and recognized the need for reliable and efficient internet services for all Canadians.

OpenMedia said, "When you sign up for an internet plan, you deserve to know what you're paying for . . ."

They also said:

It's a simple matter of truth and transparency. If an Internet provider is advertising certain speeds, consumers have the right to know before they buy if those speeds accurately reflect average network performance. . . .

In addition, they said:

. . . Bill C-288 is not a controversial piece of legislation. We can all agree that it serves to empower everyday people, support their right to high-quality connectivity and protect them from shady business practices by big telecom. Improvements to the status quo will benefit every person in this room and people in Canada writ large.

MP Dan Mazier stated at the committee that:

Access to quality internet is essential, and rural Canadians, in particular, understand the devastating impacts associated with poor Internet service across our nation. If members of

the House were to speak with Canadians across our country, they would realize that many feel cheated, misled and ripped-off by Internet companies. . . .

He continued, saying, "Canadians deserve to know what they are paying for. . ."

We have heard compelling testimony highlighting the need for transparency and accountability within the telecommunications sector. OpenMedia's call for truth and transparency, MP Dan Mazier's advocacy for rural Canadians and expert insights into the shortcomings of the current Internet Code all reinforce the critical need for Bill C-288.

This bill empowers consumers to make informed choices and holds service providers accountable by mandating clear standards for advertising internet speeds and enhancing transparency. It addresses the persistent digital divide impacting rural, remote and Indigenous communities in particular and aims to ensure that every Canadian is included in the digital age.

The unanimous support from the committee and the overwhelming approval from the House of Commons underscore the urgency and importance of this issue. The passage of Bill C-288 represents more than just legislative progress — it signifies our commitment to ensuring that every Canadian can trust and rely on their internet service.

Honourable senators, we are here now at third reading of Bill C-288, and I ask once again for your support of the passage of Bill. This bill is not just a legislative milestone but a beacon of hope for Canadians seeking reliable and transparent internet services. This bill paves the way for a more equitable and connected future for all Canadians by addressing the long-standing issues of misleading advertisements and inconsistent service quality. Let us seize this opportunity to prioritize consumer interests, foster competition in the telecom sector and propel Canada towards a digital landscape that serves the needs of every citizen. Thank you.

• (1730)

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.)

**CITIZENSHIP ACT
IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT**

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

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Omidvar, seconded by the Honourable Senator Clement, for the adoption 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.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

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

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

CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS DYKELAND SYSTEM BILL

NINTH REPORT OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the ninth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications (*Bill S-273, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada, with amendments*), presented in the Senate on June 4, 2024.

Hon. Leo Housakos moved the adoption of the report.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today in my capacity as Chair of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications to outline several amendments made in committee to Bill S-273, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada. Most amendments were made by the bill's sponsor, Senator Quinn, in consultation with Indigenous stakeholders to improve the bill.

The first amendment includes the terms “Indigenous governing body” and “Indigenous organizations” in the definition of the types of persons with whom the Government of Canada can enter into agreements for designing, building or operating the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System. This amendment was requested by Indigenous stakeholders.

Second, based on testimony of the Indigenous stakeholders, the committee also amended the bill to provide a temporary non-derogation clause relating to section 35 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, “Aboriginal and treaty rights.” This clause will automatically be repealed if Bill S-13, which provides for a general non-derogation clause in the Interpretation Act, receives Royal Assent.

Third, in response to committee members and Indigenous stakeholders, the committee also inserted limiting language to narrow the scope of situations when cabinet can grant exemptions regarding construction permits, limiting these to emergency situations to prevent damage to the environment or if it is in the interest of public health or safety.

Fourth, a technical amendment was made to ensure the title of the minister responsible for the act reflects the department of infrastructure and communities, which will be formally established when Bill C-59 receives Royal Assent.

Fifth and last, the committee deleted clause 8 of the bill, which gave the minister the ability to designate contraventions of the act as an offence.

Honourable senators, I want to thank committee members for their participation and diligence in this study.

Thank you, colleagues.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

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

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

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

**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. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, this item stands adjourned in the name of the Honourable Senator Martin, and after my intervention today I ask for leave that it remain adjourned in her name.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Duncan: Honourable senators, I am mindful of the time and will be direct.

I rise today to address 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).

I was reviewing my notes on this subject and my previous speech on an earlier version of the bill as I watched the CBC national news coverage last night.

The preparations for and the gathering of the stories to share with Canadians on the eve of the eightieth anniversary of D-Day and the liberation of Normandy were especially poignant and — of course — well presented on the CBC, upon whose high standards of journalism we have come to depend. I will reserve further comments on the CBC for Senator Cardozo's inquiry.

Honourable senators have often heard me refer to the leadership of Yukon First Nations. Among my papers, I have a 2021 media release from the Council of Yukon First Nations, or CYFN, entitled "YFN Rock the Vote Initiatives to Empower, Inform and Increase Yukon First Nations Vote."

The media release included this quote from Grand Chief Peter Johnson. He said:

Our Elders fought hard to be granted the right to vote. Yukon First Nations can ensure our voices are reflected in the next government and that the changes they want to see through the simple act of voting.

In the "Quick Facts" section of that media release, it was noted:

The path to voting rights for First Nations peoples was long and difficult; it wasn't until 1962 that First Nations were granted the right to vote without conditions in Canada.

It's especially appropriate that I begin my remarks with a deferential reference to Yukon First Nations. Of the 14 Yukon First Nations, the constitutions of three have a voting age of 16.

The Kaska Dena Council are unsettled, and they include the Liard First Nation and the Ross River Dena Council. The First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' citizens are eligible to vote for chief and council of their self-governing First Nation at the age of 16.

I spoke with then-chief Steve Smith about Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' voting age prior to giving my speech the last time I addressed this subject.

I wish to repeat the words I shared with you on June 1, 2021:

I had the opportunity recently to ask Chief Steve Smith of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations how voting at age 16 came about for their First Nations, which is also one of the first four Yukon First Nations to reach a land claim agreement. He credited the more open perspective to his predecessors, recognizing that voting evolved from a young councillor's desire to involve all youth and have a lower voting age. He also told me that by voting earlier, youth have continued their active involvement in the government and leadership of their First Nations.

On a side note, colleagues, I'm compelled to elaborate on the importance of land claim agreements. When a First Nation, Canada and the Yukon reach a final land claim agreement, it carries with it all the responsibilities of government-to-government relations. In a First Nation where 16-year-olds are voting for their government, they have a say. Their government decides who represents them on the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board that reviews all projects, similar to what we were discussing today in Bill C-49. They also have the direction for their First Nation development corporations which invest and spend their funds allocated to them in the land claim agreement, and they have a say in their government that has care and custody of their land.

• (1740)

I follow my comments about then-Chief Smith's advice with this remark: Our esteemed former colleague Senator Sinclair advised that education would be part of our journey to reconciliation. Let's take the education and learn the lessons from the First Nations and their respect for youth participation. Let us value their opinions and continue the discourse on lowering the voting age. Let us continue our discussions and send the bill to the committee for further discussion and study.

Honourable senators, it seems to me to be inconsistent, perhaps even hypocritical, as I watch young people learn about and honour the fallen at Normandy and see the respect paid by those

young people for those who died in battle for freedoms, including the right to vote. Should we not offer young people the same respect that they have paid to those who fought for our freedom?

As we repeatedly pledge to walk the path of reconciliation and learn from Indigenous peoples who have cared for the land for millennia, why not follow the teachings of the Yukon First Nations who have extended the franchise to 16-year-olds? Should we not, at a minimum, be exhibiting a respectful relationship and include these teachings and discuss whether these same young people should be extended the right to vote?

Ah, yes, the right to vote. If you visit my office or look back at my speech from three years ago, you will note that I have in my office a piece of a tattered purple cloth. It came from a T-shirt that was given to me, and it shows the section that reads: “No woman, idiot, lunatic or criminal shall have the right to vote. Canada Elections Act, 1918.” Women were granted the right to vote in 1918; as noted above, First Nations people in 1962; and incarcerated individuals in 2002.

I haven’t reviewed the details — the history — of extending the franchise to any of these groups of individuals. I do recall voting as a member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to extend the franchise to those who were incarcerated at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. I reviewed some of the information presented in discussions with young people in the Yukon and, notably, at the recent discussions during the national Vote16 summit in Ottawa.

May I highlight for you, honourable senators, just one of the Vote16 benefits confirmed in research and discussed recently in Ottawa?

Colleagues may know that Scotland was my father’s birthplace. He was also a member of the Royal Air Force in 1944. Scotland, having achieved a devolution agreement, is very near and dear to my heart.

The voting age in Scotland was experimentally lowered for their independence referendum in 2014. For this referendum, the voter turnout for the 16- and 17-year-olds was 75%; for the 18 to 24-year-olds, 54%; and for the 25 to 34-year-olds, 72%. The research by Hübner and Eichhorn presented at the Vote16 summit demonstrated the success of the pilot project, and an increase in public support for youth voting rights from 30% to 60%. Scotland has now established a voting age of 16 permanently for all Scottish elections.

Researchers have also noted increased democratic engagement with the lower voting age, something we could all wish for. The passion and eloquence of the young people during the recent summit — and most especially the participating Yukoners, Juliette Belisle Greetham and Keegan Newnham-Boyd — were truly inspiring.

Thank you, Senator McPhedran, for your dedication to this bill and the commitment to the young people of Canada.

Honourable senators, there is so much more information that is entirely worthy of study at committee. Recently, I was reminded by someone who went to junior high school with me about her memory of my active involvement and that I was rather

outspoken in school. I was sporting a button, she said, and I honestly can’t remember what the cause was, but that big button said, “Why not?” Truly remember that in this particular debate, honourable senators: Why not? Why not send this bill at second reading to committee so that we can look at the evidence, some of which I’ve noted? But most importantly let’s hear from young people. Let’s hear from these voices and from Canadians.

Colleagues may be aware that I served for a time on the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. A 1992 report on young women that I had some involvement with was entitled, *We’re here, listen to us! A survey of young women in Canada*. Let’s listen to all the young Canadian people.

Colleagues, I ask for your support for Bill S-209 at second reading. I encourage you to send it to committee for further study when the question is asked. Thank you. *Mahsi’cho*.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Would Senator Duncan take a question?

Senator Duncan: Certainly.

Senator McPhedran: Thank you. I very much appreciated your reference to the situation in Scotland as one of the most recent countries. As you know, Austria lowered the voting age at all levels to 16 in 2007. That’s where a lot of the very positive research comes from on a longitudinal basis.

My question is about the leader of the Conservatives in Scotland and whether you were aware of the fact that the leader changed her position on this very publicly and also made a statement, again very publicly, that her experience of the voting at 16 in Scotland was, to quote her, “. . . entirely positive.”

Senator Duncan: Thank you for that, Senator McPhedran. No, I was not aware. As you are aware, however, Scotland has also provided us with other leading examples of fine pieces of legislation and initiatives in terms of the free period products, which I note the Government of Canada has now adopted in all federal buildings. Thank you for your question.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: I’m not planning on making a long speech. I’ll focus on three points to contribute to the debate and state my position on the record.

[*English*]

Senator McPhedran, I thank you for introducing that bill. This is not the first time; you have introduced it a few times before. The current bill before us is Bill S-201. It was introduced on November 24, 2021.

I agree that bills must come, at one point, to a vote. Today, I will speak to say why, when the time comes to vote, we should vote no to this bill.

I agree that bills coming from the House of Commons should also be voted on, especially because they went through three readings at the other place and they deserve to be considered by us, the non-elected, because they are coming from elected officials. That being said, as you may know, similar bills have been introduced in the other place nine times so far. None made it.

As a matter of fact, the latest version was Bill C-210. That was defeated in the House of Commons on September 28, 2022. The members of Parliament who voted in favour of the bill were 77; those that voted against the bill were 246. That's not very close.

Senator Tannas, in a previous speech, referred to the question of whether it is a good use of parliamentary time to engage in this debate, to send it to committee, further to a third reading and then send it back to the House of Commons to consider something that they have refused to do. They have refused very clearly — 246 to 77.

This is a very good question that Senator Tannas has asked, but I want to go further because I share the answer he provided at the time that, no, it would not be a good use of our parliamentary time.

I will go to the most fundamental issues here: What is the age of wisdom? What is the age which is proper for voting?

[*Translation*]

It's an important question. What age is the age of wisdom, of reason, of understanding and of rational thought? If we look at the Bible's teachings, there are many variations.

• (1750)

Take the example of our health care systems. In Quebec, a 14-year-old can see a doctor and undergo surgery, because their consent is considered perfectly valid, since it was given by someone who understands their situation and who is capable of making decisions about treatments, including treatments that, if refused, could lead to death.

I don't know what age is the age of reason, the appropriate age, but it's a choice that societies must make. For health care purposes, we have decided that 14 is the age of capacity. To vote, it's age 18. In the United States, a person has to be 21 to drink alcohol, but they can vote at age 14 and carry firearms at age 16.

Sometimes, the age of reason depends on the activity involved. I'm not sure that a 16-year-old would be allowed to operate heavy machinery on a construction site. In the end, a lot of questions could be asked and a lot of explanations could be given when it comes to setting an age limit.

That said, the question is at once philosophical, practical and, above all, political, which brings me to my third point. Is the Senate, an unelected chamber, the appropriate forum for such a political question? In my opinion, this is a fundamental question.

[Senator Dalphond]

In Canada, people participate in the electoral system through political parties. It is political parties that get elected. There may be a few independent MPs, but basically our democratic system is based on the participation of voters who vote for political parties, which put forward policy options that voters can choose from.

[*English*]

It's up to the electors to vote for those parties whom they believe carry the platform that they are comfortable with. All the parties in the other place — well, it's at least 240, so that's probably three parties — are of the view that lowering the voting age to 16 is not such a great idea, and they are not ready to offer it to Canadians. That's an important consideration for us.

It's not up to us to decide what the political parties should be doing. It should be up to the political parties to decide for themselves. Since they represent Canadians, it's up to them to test with Canadians what they want. We are an unelected chamber, and I think it's very delicate for unelected people to decide what is good for elected people and who should be the elected people.

In a democracy, it should be the reverse: It's up to the elected people to decide who should be the unelected people and how to select these unelected people. For me, the issue belongs squarely and solely with the House of Commons. It's up to them to initiate this type of important reform. I'm not saying this is bad reform. I'm just saying that we're the wrong place. If you want to run for that issue, you are elected and you push it forward, or you work in a political party and you convince that party to move forward with that issue. But for us — the non-elected people, the wise people, the council of the elders — to decide what is good for democracy, I would prefer to leave it to those who are running and being elected.

For these reasons, colleagues, when it comes to voting on this bill, I invite you to vote it down. We should also not hesitate — not because we have no respect for the sponsor of the bill — where we say, "Let's send it to committee; we will study it." Then, if we let the committee look at it, they will say, "Maybe it's not so good, but it's a good person, so we're going to do a report, and push it to third reading." We should not do this. We come here to do an important duty. It's to review bills and put forward things that are worth being pushed forward. For other things that don't work, we should not push those forward. For me, and for a vote on this bill, I will say no. It doesn't belong to us, and we should put an end to that story and move on with another bill. Thank you.

Hon. Frances Lankin: Senator Dalphond, will you accept a question?

Senator Dalphond: Of course.

Senator Lankin: Thank you. Part of your speech focused on the elected chamber and its right to be dominant in consideration of issues around democracy and democratic process.

I happen to agree with you that there should be deference to the House of Commons. That's something I've said many times. I do want to point out, however, that there are issues that relate to

fundamental rights, and whether they are Charter rights or not, which we consider in this chamber, even if it's initiated in this chamber.

For example, while it's not a piece of legislation, there is a motion before us by one of your colleagues with respect to this chamber's consideration of the use of the notwithstanding clause, and what that might mean to our deliberations in the future. Do you object to that as well because that, in fact, deals even more fundamentally, in some ways, with protecting the democratic and Charter rights of Canadians?

Senator Dalphond: Thank you for the question, Senator Lankin. You are referring to the motion which is on the Order Paper as a pre-notice of Senator Harder. We will have plenty of time to debate it once it's moved from the pre-notice period to the debate period or the notice period, so I would be pleased to comment at that time.

One thing which is clear is that fundamental rights are protected by our Charter, but the right to vote at 16 is not protected by our Charter. No one had the court declare that it's unconstitutional to have the voting age be 18, because it would have been tried. It was not tried. Why? It's because 18 is considered a reasonable limit, which is necessary for exercising the right to vote.

This is not a controversial issue. It's a matter of policy choice, and, within the range of protected Charter rights, there are many options that are as valid as other options. It's not because there are two options, meaning that it's unconstitutional. Often, there are many options that are constitutional.

This issue concerning the voting age, to my understanding of the law, is not clear. It's clear that the voting age at 18 is not unconstitutional.

Would it be unconstitutional to vote at 16? No, but where is the choice to be made? It's in the House of Commons. Political parties engage young members to vote in their activities. For example, political parties have members at 14, and some at 16. They have youth commissions. They have conventions where the youth can vote, and even the youth can select the leader, but they won't be able to vote at the next election for that leader whom they voted to select in their party. That's the rules of the party.

Rights are important, but we should not confuse here what is at stake as a policy choice, and where we draw the line, and I will leave it to the political parties to be the first one to draw the line. Thank you.

Senator McPhedran: Will you take a question, please, Senator Dalphond?

Senator Dalphond: Yes, with pleasure, Senator McPhedran. I know I have 45 minutes. I should have thought about it.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Dalphond, you have 34 minutes now.

Senator McPhedran: Senator Dalphond, is it your position that there is some procedural rule that stops the Senate from initiating discussion of rights, including electoral rights? Is it

your position that the Senate must not take initiative on the question of rights, particularly when the potential expansion of rights relates to populations within our country that are typically not represented in Parliament?

Senator Dalphond: Thank you for this excellent question, but this is not the issue here. For example, is this place barred from having a bill that deals with foreign interference? Senator Housakos introduced a bill about that, and it's a way where the bill was designed to protect voting rights and democratic rights. Certainly, we have a role to play in that.

• (1800)

What is being proposed is a bill about a topic that was fully debated in the other place — not once, but many times — and has been defeated. The political parties are telling us that we are not ready to go in that direction, so why should the Senate say to the elected officials they are wrong, that they should be looking at that issue and that we are going to study it and issue a report to try to convince them that they are wrong? I guess that's what you are saying. You are saying to vote for it even if just to send it to the Legal Committee or another committee to study the issue.

I am not convinced that it is a good use of parliamentary resources or the Senate's role to say, "The MPs debated that issue, and the answer they provided is that it's clearly not a constitutional issue, but we think that it should be better because we know better, and this should entitle people to vote at 16." I don't think it is our role as the unelected upper chamber.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Can I ask you a question, Senator Dalphond?

Senator Dalphond: Of course, Senator Saint-Germain.

Senator Saint-Germain: Thank you. Senator Dalphond, I listened closely to what you said, and I'd like to know if I've grasped the gist of your argument, which is that you in no way deny that this chamber has, legally speaking, all the powers and prerogatives necessary to examine and potentially pass such a bill.

Rather, what you're questioning is whether it's legitimate to be studying it now, given that, as Senator Tannas pointed out, the House of Commons has studied this issue 10 times or so over the past 20 years, including in the current Parliament, without our raising the matter beforehand, because we are an independent chamber. Moreover, the House of Commons rejected just such a bill at second reading.

Do I understand correctly that you are questioning the legitimacy of taking such action under the circumstances?

Senator Dalphond: Thank you, Senator Saint-Germain. I rose to speak with a few notes scribbled on a piece of paper. I may not have made myself clear, but you summarized my position very clearly. I'm not saying it would be illegitimate to do this in the Senate at some point. I'm saying that, at this point, we don't have the legitimacy required to challenge the choice that an overwhelming majority of the elected members of the House of Commons made.

[English]

Hon. Donna Dasko: Will Senator Dalphond take another question? Thank you.

I can understand the argument you are making with respect to the other place having pronounced on this particular issue. Of course, we could debate that, but I understand that part of it. My question is a larger one, about the role of institutions in a democracy and the role of institutions in working to strengthen our democracy.

One can argue, as we have heard, that lowering the voting age to 16 might be a measure to strengthen democracy. I would accept that. Surely, this institution, along with the courts, the media, parliaments and the education system all have a role to play in strengthening democracy. I wonder if you would agree with that.

Would you also agree that we can take on an independent role in changing our democratic institutions, in trying to strengthen them? Thank you.

Senator Dalphond: Thank you, Senator Dasko. I would like to start by saying that both of us were appointed to this chamber six years ago today, so happy birthday to you and to me.

Senator Dasko: Happy birthday!

Senator Dalphond: That's a nice way to conclude the day.

I have no debate with the legitimacy of having inquiries about that issue here. We could debate it; that would be what is being proposed here, in a sense. They say, "Let's move to second reading, adopt it and send it to committee, just to debate it." Fine, let's do an inquiry. Let's debate it if you want to do that. But to go further, to push for legislation when we know that the other place just last year said no to that by a clear majority, I think that does not contribute to the democratic debate; it challenges the decision of the other place.

If you want to do an inquiry about it, if you want to move a motion that would have the other place reconsider its views, maybe. But what we're saying here is, "You made your decision; you decided this, but we don't accept that decision, and we are going to adopt a bill that is trying to achieve what you have refused to do." To me, this is not the way to go, especially on this issue, which belongs to political parties by definition, more or less. Sorry, I hope that answers a part of your question.

Senator McPhedran: Would Senator Dalphond take another question?

Senator Dalphond: Yes, with pleasure.

Senator McPhedran: Thank you very much.

It was hard to hear Senator Tannas say that it was a waste of our time to look at this bill and this issue, but after he spoke, we made an inquiry of the Library of Parliament as to whether there had been any bills that originated in the Senate that dealt with elections. It turns out that there have been between 10 and 12 bills in the history of the Senate that dealt with elections that originated in the Senate. Were you aware of this, Senator Dalphond? If you were not, does this information in any way seem to be of interest to you?

Senator Dalphond: Thank you very much. Have you checked if some of those were government bills versus private member's bills? That's my first question.

The second question is about the context here. As Senator Saint-Germain summarized it — better than I could have done — I'm not disputing that we have the right to initiate bills on almost all kinds of matters except bills that are financial bills, because the Constitution says that we cannot initiate this type of bills. There are other types of bills we can initiate. What I am disputing is the legitimacy to dispute the very issue of the voting age when the other place voted last year by 240-77 to say, "No, we don't want to open that debate; we don't want to do it."

If the other place had passed a bill saying it is 16, would you consider that this chamber has the right to say, "No, we refuse; we will amend your bill, and it is going to be 18"? Ask yourself the question: Could we do that? I think the answer is no, because that issue belongs to the other place. If they had voted to make it 16, at the Senate we would not be in a position to say, "You got it wrong. We think the wisdom required for it is at 18; therefore, we will amend the bill to put it at 18." I guess it goes both ways.

Senator McPhedran: Would you take one more question please, Senator Dalphond?

Senator Dalphond: Yes.

Senator McPhedran: Thank you. Senator, both you and Senator Saint-Germain used terms like "decided" and "considered." My question is whether you realize that — you referenced some nine bills in the House of Commons related to lowering the age of voting to 16 — when you used the term "decided," when you used the term "considered," did you take into consideration that only one of those bills actually reached any kind of a vote in the other place? In fact, do you include the introduction of a bill to be "consideration"?

Senator Dalphond: There are about 85 bills that were introduced in this place, so, yes, there is a difference between the introduction of a bill and the consideration of a bill. Many of them have not been fully considered, and, most likely, will never be.

• (1810)

That being said, on September 20, 2022, that very bill was debated, and in the nays, it was negated. This is the reality, not of 10 years ago.

I know I cannot ask you any questions because I am the one that is being questioned, but I would certainly like to hear from you. If the bill that didn't pass in the House of Commons were for a voting age of 16, would that chamber have the legitimacy to say, "No, it should be 18"?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: This item remains adjourned in the name of Senator Martin, as ordered.

(Debate adjourned.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-13(2), I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(At 6:11 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, June 11, 2024, at 2 p.m.)

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