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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 12, 2024

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

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

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practice, today's sitting begin with Senators' Statements, to last 3 minutes, followed by tributes to our colleague, the Honourable Senator Jaffer, who will retire from the Senate on August 20, 2024, to last 69 minutes, not including the time for her 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

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Her Excellency Maria Andrelita S. Austria, Philippine Ambassador to Canada, and interns from the National Philippine Parliamentary Internship Program. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Osler.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, *mabuhay!* Today marks 126 years since the Philippines gained independence from 333 years of Spanish colonial rule.

Earlier today, we celebrated this significant occasion by continuing the annual tradition of raising the flags of both the Philippines and Canada on Parliament Hill.

In the gallery, I extend a heartfelt welcome to Her Excellency Maria Andrelita S. Austria, the Philippine Ambassador to Canada, as well as to the interns of the National Philippine Parliamentary Internship Program.

The program welcomes young Filipino-Canadian professionals to spend time in an MP or senator's office and learn about Canada's federal legislative processes, encouraging them to — one day — see themselves in leadership.

Today, there are over 1 million Canadians of Filipino descent, meaning 1 out of every 40 people has ties to the Philippines.

A significant wave of Filipino migration to Canada occurred in my home province of Manitoba. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Filipino doctors and nurses were recruited to work in hospitals and established a vital role in the health care sector.

Another wave of Filipino migration occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s, with Filipinos finding employment in the garment industry, as Winnipeg was home to several factories. Their strong work ethic and dedication to craftsmanship contributed to the success of the industry in the province.

More recently, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program has been a significant pathway for Filipinos seeking employment opportunities in Canada. These workers fill labour shortages as live-in caregivers, or in sectors like agriculture, aquaculture or food processing.

During the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology's study on temporary and migrant labour, the committee heard that these workers are essential in sustaining industries, local economies and communities.

This month of June, we honour Filipino Heritage Month and celebrate the richness and diversity of Filipino culture, and we recognize the enduring impact that Filipinos have had, and will continue to have, in Canada.

Filipino Canadians are making significant contributions in various sectors, including business, law, technology and politics, highlighting their impact across the professional landscape.

• (1410)

We also commemorate 75 years of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Canada. Our partnership is rooted in shared values of peace, stability, democracy and rule of law and is upheld by people-to-people ties. In the ever-changing landscape of the Indo-Pacific region, both the Philippines and Canada have agreed to elevate our bilateral relationship by investing in our peoples and strengthening economic ties.

Today, dear colleagues, I wish you happy Philippine Independence Day, happy Filipino Heritage Month and happy 75 years of diplomatic relations. *Maraming salamat po. Meegwetch.*

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Janet Austin, O.B.C., Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Moodie.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Malam Gerba, Senator Gerba's spouse.

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 Pierre Riopel. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Moncion.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE MOBINA S. B. JAFFER

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Honourable senators, today we salute an exceptional woman and a distinguished senator on the eve of her retirement after 23 years of service in the Senate of Canada. The Honourable Mobina Jaffer is a role model for many of us. She is one of the greats to whom we will refer long after they have left the Senate.

Mobina's background is indeed exceptional. Early in life, she was confronted with racism and exclusion. Born in Uganda to a practising Shia Ismaili family, her parents and their six children were forced to flee the Ugandan dictatorship in the early 1970s. This made her a strong, resilient woman who, in her youth, understood the terrible harm caused by racism, intolerance and the denial of the rule of law. Without a doubt, this would set her on the right path. She would become a lawyer and serve democracy through her advocacy work and then as a parliamentarian.

[Senator Osler]

Excellent trained with a law degree from the University of London, she was the first South Asian woman lawyer in private practice in Canada. Her excellence was recognized in 1998 when she was appointed Queen's Counsel. Her experience and in-depth knowledge of international conflicts would serve our country well as she went on to be Canada's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan. She also chaired the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security, and in this capacity was called upon to plead before the UN Security Council.

[*Translation*]

For nearly eight years now, I've had the privilege of working alongside Mobina and seeing how principled she is. Family, loyalty, respect, ethics, faith and openness to others are what matter most to her. It's a privilege to work alongside such a great Canadian and patriot, someone for whom the future of the country, the growth of democracy and the experience of living together in our multicultural society are of the utmost importance.

For Mobina, respect for both official languages, a fundamental linguistic right, is the glue that holds the country together. In fact, she has often spoken proudly of her family, particularly her daughter, her son and her grandchildren, who all speak both official languages.

[*English*]

I will never forget her welcoming words on December 2, 2016, the day I was sworn in. She came up to me and, in excellent French, immediately offered her help like a big sister. Ever since then she's been there for me through thick and thin, never failing to show sympathy and encouragement. She did it for me; she did it for so many of us.

It's time to say to my big sister, thank you and *au revoir*. "*Au revoir*" means we'll be seeing each other again. On behalf of the Independent Senators Group, I salute her excellence, merit and achievements. I would also like to express our appreciation for the privilege of having served alongside her in thanking her husband, children and grandchildren for having shared her with us. I wish you many happy years with your family.

To my sister Mobina, please savour the satisfaction of having fulfilled your duty. Through me, dear Mobina, all your colleagues in the ISG say to you: Bravo, mission accomplished. We love you, and you will always be one of us. Thank you.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I too rise today to pay tribute and offer thanks to Senator Mobina Jaffer, one of the most hard-working, dedicated and kind members of our upper house.

Senator Jaffer was appointed on the recommendation of former Prime Minister Chrétien in 2001. Of note, Senator Jaffer was the first Muslim senator here in the Red Chamber.

Over the past 23 years, Mobina has been a member of many Senate committees, most recently serving as Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, but her heart and so much of her work has always been focused on human rights. As you know, she fled Uganda in 1972 during

Idi Amin's expulsion reign, and she personally witnessed horrors in a country where human rights were ignored; indeed, she nearly lost both her father and her husband to the purge.

[*Translation*]

How fortunate for all of us that Mobina's father chose to come to Canada after his family fled Uganda. Her career as a lawyer — the first South Asian lawyer in Canada, as our colleague Senator Saint-Germain already mentioned — her work as Canada's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, her chairing of the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security and the many invitations she received to speak on issues related to women's rights and women's safety are a testament to how highly she regards the causes she cares most about.

[*English*]

Senator Jaffer has been an inspiration to many young women, especially immigrant women, who have witnessed her successes and have seen in her possibilities for themselves. Mobina sincerely believes that her role is to give back. She is in service to Canada and to Canadians. Her interventions in this chamber, in committee, at speaking engagements or in her one-on-one discussions with colleagues are always respectful and impactful. Her love for her Canada, her chosen country; her tireless fight for human rights, especially women's rights; and her vigorous voice for her beloved British Columbia have all been at the forefront of her career. Mobina never lets up, even when fighting her own health challenges.

On a personal level, Mobina, I want to thank you for your support and, most importantly, for the friendship that you extended to me from the very first days when I arrived. I'm going to miss you a lot.

As you take leave of the Senate, and on behalf of myself and the Government Representative Office, I wish you joy in your retirement. However, I have no doubt that even while spending time with your husband, Nuralla, your sons and your grandchildren — that being at the top of your priority list — I suspect that there will be new challenges that you will embrace in the future.

Your presence will be missed by all of us here, Mobina. Thank you.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, on behalf of the Conservative caucus and opposition in the Senate and as a fellow B.C. senator, I rise to pay tribute to our retiring colleague the Honourable Mobina Jaffer. Senator Jaffer, it is with mixed emotions that we pay our tributes because on one hand we are happy that you will have more time to spend with your loved ones, but we are also sad that you will soon be leaving us.

• (1420)

It is a fact that our colleague Mobina Jaffer is not only the first Muslim senator to be appointed to the Senate of Canada, but she is also the first African-born senator, the first senator of South

Asian descent and the first South Asian woman to practise law in Canada. She is, indeed, a trailblazing pioneer in Canadian history in more ways than one.

Throughout her illustrious career, Senator Jaffer has consistently demonstrated her dedication and commitment to public service. Her tireless efforts in championing human rights and advocating for the marginalized have left indelible marks on our institution, as well as in the annals of Canadian history. She has taken on a leadership role in advocating for women's rights. Her efforts have shaped policy. She has inspired countless individuals to engage in public service, and has cultivated a desire in others to make a difference.

On a personal level, I remember my early days as a newly appointed senator. At the end of one of the sitting days, I remember Senator Jaffer pausing to speak to me as we exited the chamber. Your words of wisdom then, spoken with sincerity and care, still reverberate in my head:

Be patient. You will know what you are meant to do as a senator. An issue or cause will find you. Just be patient, and you will know when it is yours.

Your warm smile and gentle touch gave me a sense of assurance that I would soon find my footing, and, sure enough, the first cause that has become one of my defining roles — to be a champion for the Korean War veterans — found me a few months later. Other issues have found me since then, just as you said.

I have repeated your sage words to others from time to time. Your words guide me to this day in knowing what I am to do in giving voice to the voiceless, in my constituency work as a senator.

Senator Jaffer, thank you for your friendship and for your genuine care of me and others. Thank you for your exemplary service. Your dedication to our nation will not be forgotten, and, while we will miss your presence in the Senate of Canada, we wish you all the best in your well-deserved retirement. May this new chapter bring you good health, joy and quality time with your loved ones.

Hon. Scott Tannas: Honourable senators, if you were to conduct a poll amongst parliamentarians today and ask the question "Which senator is the most likely to have a school named after them?" I am certain that Senator Jaffer's name would be first on the list.

My leadership colleagues have provided you with Senator Jaffer's accomplishments and firsts during her career. I'd like to share a few personal insights into this remarkable woman and parliamentarian.

When I was young, I lived in Uganda during the turbulent time in 1971 when the military coup took place and Idi Amin took power. I saw first-hand some of the terror and turmoil leading up to the expulsion decree in 1972.

Senator Jaffer has often shared her experiences and hardships as a refugee, as well as the challenges she faced coming to Canada. The courage shown by this remarkable woman — and,

indeed, her entire family — leaving her homeland under duress and with nothing, to then rebuild a new life in a foreign country, speaks volumes about her character, her perseverance and her determination. I am honoured to sit with her as one of her peers.

I believe that one of the traits that permits her to turn adversity into success is her unwavering faith. As an Ismaili-Muslim woman, her commitment to her community and her heritage is remarkable and admirable. She has exemplified the tenet of her faith with a commitment to generosity by caring and by giving, without hesitation, her time and her sound counsel to assist her colleagues in the Senate.

She has been a true ambassador for her community through numerous statements in this place, leading by example with her compassion and caring for those who are oftentimes voiceless. As a champion for diversity, multilingualism and human rights, she has paved the road for those who will follow her by fulfilling her duty to serve. She once wrote that she owes her success, honours, awards and milestones to the values instilled in her as an Ismaili Muslim and as a follower of the Aga Khan.

I'd like to share an observation which I discovered when I arrived here in the Senate 11 years ago. Senator Jaffer is likely the most prolific speaker to inquiries in the history of the Senate. She used this opportunity in a very efficient manner to bring attention to policies and causes which required national attention. I distinctly remember "Senator Jaffer days" in the Senate, where she would speak to multiple inquiries in a single day, and she would speak extremely quickly to ensure that all that needed to be said appeared in the record of debates for all kinds of stakeholders and audiences. This was before broadcasting in the Senate and before social media. Again, she was a voice for those who — in Canada and around the world — needed to be heard, needed to be understood and needed to have hope.

Senator Jaffer, today is day 8,401 of your service in the Senate. For each of these days, the Senate and your Senate colleagues have been enriched by your presence, your friendship, your contribution to our debates, your grace, your generosity and your unwavering support to your home, Canada.

On behalf of the Canadian Senators Group, we wish you a happy and restful retirement with your family and your friends. God bless Mobina.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre J. Dalfond: Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise to pay tribute to the Honourable Mobina Jaffer, who tomorrow will celebrate the 23rd anniversary of her appointment to the Senate.

In June 2001, the Senate was rather partisan. In choosing Senator Jaffer, prime minister Jean Chrétien appointed a committed woman who had held various positions in the Liberal Party, including chair of the National Women's Liberal Commission, or NWLC, and who ran in the 1993 and 1997 federal elections. She was also the first African-born senator, the first senator of South Asian descent and the first Muslim senator: three firsts in one day.

[Senator Tannas]

She was also an influential member of the Senate Liberal caucus before becoming a non-affiliated senator in 2018 and then joining the Independent Senators Group, or ISG, in 2019.

It was during that transition period, her transition period, that I first met Mobina and discovered how passionate she is about human rights, justice and the fight against all forms of discrimination.

[*English*]

Over the last few years, I have had the pleasure to work closely with her on the steering committee of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. I appreciate her leadership of our committee, her understanding of the law, her commitment to end discrimination, her steady insistence on GBA Plus analysis and her advocacy for greater data to better measure the impact of our laws on various groups and communities.

I also want to acknowledge Senator Jaffer's sponsorship of Bill C-48, the North Pacific tanker ban, in 2019. This chamber's close final vote was a milestone in the affirmations of the Salisbury Convention, and an important act of reconciliation with coastal First Nations.

To me, the most striking contributions of Senator Jaffer remain her strong voice for human rights, dialogue and solidarity. In the context of the current rise of hate speech and racism, I conclude by sharing parts of a statement by major religious groups from B.C., which was included in her maiden speech in 2001 after September 11:

We call upon all Canadians to join their prayers and their good will, to guard against prejudice and hatred, to befriend and support each other.

Colleagues, we shall always keep these words in mind.

On behalf of the independent senators of the Progressive Senate Group, I wish you, my friend, all the best in your retirement, and hope you enjoy some time with your family while you rest and plan for your next contribution to Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

• (1430)

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Mobina, at Monday's African Canadian Senate Group meeting, we started saying our goodbyes since it would be our last meeting with you. Not very many of us could get through a simple goodbye on Teams without crying.

At times, this place has felt lonely. But from the very first day I met you, you have made it less lonely here for me. Sometimes when I'm feeling this way in the chamber — because we're both little — I prop myself up to peek over the big stack of books just to see you; I immediately feel calmer, stronger and more welcome here.

This is not an easy place for some of us. I know it has not been easy for you either. Something I love most about you is how you make no secret of this. You say the things and exactly how it is; you don't try to sugar-coat anything. You tell it to me straight, but always with a reminder that you have my back and we are sisters. Then you tell me I need some lipstick and you send me on my way. This is perfect because it's exactly who you are.

What I'm particularly in awe of is your leadership style. You are smart but modest, confident but soft, funny but vulnerable, tough but caring. A time when we saw this in action was at the Laval detention centre. You were speaking with a detained African woman. You were direct and tough. The next thing we knew, you had switched to speaking Swahili. We saw the kindness and softness come shining through. You balance all of these important traits so beautifully, skilfully, with ease and grace.

The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs was a very intimidating place to walk into. At my very first meeting, I nearly turned around and walked right out of there. As an accomplished lawyer — and a Q.C. at that — having you at the helm as chair, and at my side as a committee member, made things okay. I have learned from you how to be in that space.

There was a young volunteer on my mayoral campaign named Jersey, who looks like me, skin and hair like mine. In the car on the way to door knocking, she reached up to the front seat, tugged on my hair and confidently said, "One day I'm going to run for mayor too." I understood in that moment how much representation matters. I have not had mentors who look like me in my life.

When I arrived here, I was like Jersey, the little girl in the back seat. And I saw you, Mobina, in the front seat, my mentor, who was leading the way and showing me that I belong here too.

Your grandson, Ayaan Jeraj, asked me to be a Black History Month guest in his classroom. I was thrilled to do so. He is so much like you. He has a huge heart. He's eloquent, sharp and funny. Your legacy is also your children and grandchildren. You have shown them the way. I'm sure they've also taught you a thing or two.

My heart breaks at the thought of not being able to peer over that stack of books to see you. I know you are only a phone call away. Retired or not, you remain my mentor. I know you will continue to guide me through tough times, inspire me to keep going and teach me so much more.

Mobina, my sister, please enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to Senator Mobina Jaffer and find myself struggling to express my admiration, respect and love in a few words.

Mobina, my sister, you have been such a strong presence in the Red Chamber. You have an impressive record of firsts, as we heard — the first Muslim senator, first African-born senator and first senator of South Asian descent.

I know a generation of South Asian women have looked up to you as a role model. Indeed, you have paved the way for many of us racialized women.

When I was appointed in 2010, you were the first to welcome me and offer support. I have since come to you many times for guidance, and I knew I could always count on you and your counsel.

Colleagues, as many of you are aware, our work has its challenges. When I needed a sympathetic ear, Mobina was there for me. Thank you for your friendship and support.

At times, there was no need for words between us, Mobina. We simply looked at each other. I knew exactly how we felt about something that was being discussed.

I want to quote Hafez, the Persian poet, who said, "Your heart and my heart are very, very old friends."

I have admired your dedication to defending human rights in Canada and overseas, as well as celebrating our country's diversity.

You have never been afraid to ask hard-hitting questions in committee or address difficult topics in the Red Chamber. Advocating for the vulnerable populations' human rights is not an easy task and yet, Mobina, you have continued to speak up about migrant workers' rights, women's bodily autonomy and safety, to name but a few.

As an immigrant to this country, you have been vocal about your love and understanding of the importance of mother languages, fluently speaking six languages yourself.

In addition to advocating for linguistic bilingualism throughout the country, you have also embraced our country's multiculturalism with your Bill S-214, An Act to establish International Mother Language Day. I was happy to be the critic of this bill, as I believe it has the potential to further unify our country by recognizing that all Canadians' mother tongue languages are worthy of honour and celebration.

Your presence gave me strength. We've shared many good times together, travelled together, laughed together. Nobody will know the challenges we faced together.

As you get ready to retire, I don't want to say goodbye, my dear sister. Instead, I will use Rumi's words:

Goodbyes are only for those who love with their eyes.
Because for those who love with heart and soul there is no such thing as separation.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, each one of us has a unique story regarding what has brought us here to this chamber. Our lives before coming to this place have shaped the kind of work we do here, and, in turn, our presence here shapes the institution and the people who will come after us.

I rise today to pay tribute to our departing colleague Senator Mobina Jaffer.

Senator Jaffer was appointed to the Senate in 2001 by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. Her background in law and her personal background, leaving her home country of Uganda, positioned her well as a member of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights. During her time on this committee, Senator Jaffer has chaired many important studies, including one on the sexual exploitation of children and the need for national action.

Senator Jaffer has also been a champion for bilingualism. Not only has she participated in many initiatives to encourage the use of French and English in communities across Canada, but she was also the sponsor for Bill S-214, recognizing February 21 as Mother Language Day.

Celebrating multilingualism strengthens Canada's diverse and multicultural society. Mobina herself speaks six different languages but, more importantly, she listens and understands in six languages.

As a Canadian born elsewhere, Senator Jaffer represents well all those who, for many different reasons, have chosen to make Canada their home.

As others have said, she was the first Muslim senator, the first African-born senator and the first senator of South Asian descent. In this way, she has blazed a trail for those new to Canada aspiring to careers in politics.

Mobina, it has been a pleasure serving with you in this chamber. Thank you for your friendship. I wish you more time relaxing and enjoying time with your family. I'm sure your husband Nuralla, your children and grandchildren, who we hear a lot about, will be happy to have you near.

I will miss our many conversations and laughs, my friend. It has been a privilege working with you.

• (1440)

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize our colleague the Honourable Mobina Jaffer for her many contributions in the Senate and on the international scene as she retires from our chamber.

Many already stated the incredible achievements of Senator Jaffer. Who is this Wonder Woman? Senator Jaffer is the immigrant girl, the lawyer, the wife, the mother and the grandmother. Mobina is the unrelenting human rights advocate, the peace diplomat, the international speaker, the peace activist, a businesswoman and — as we all recently learned — a chicken farmer. How can one compile such a list of achievements and not be called “Superwoman”? Maybe you will tell us that you can also fly, Mobina.

[Senator Cordy]

Many times in our chamber, Mobina, with her soft voice yet very powerful words, relayed to us testimonies of girls and women in situations of abuse. She could only do so by being a compassionate listener, able to relate and transmit in vivid terms. She unleashed our willingness to fight for these women and girls. She used her position in the Senate to advocate on their behalf. Mobina could listen with such compassion because she understood, being a target of discrimination herself.

I have known Mobina for 30 years and admire her unrelenting devotion to every issue she undertakes.

Before I cry, on a more humorous note, most women dream of having a walk-in closet for shoes. Well, my friends, I believe Mobina has a walk-in closet for jewellery, which makes me very jealous.

Dear friend, dear Mobina, I will miss you so much. I hope you have a great retirement alongside your loving husband, children and grandchildren. Gary and I will always have a place in our home and our hearts for you. Hugs, my friend. Happy retirement.

Hon. David M. Wells: Senator Jaffer, if everyone is saying how kind you are, it must be true. It's one of the lines in my notes, so I'll start with that. Not everyone's tribute includes the line “You've been so kind,” but yours does.

We have heard that she was appointed in 2001 by Canada's most conservative of Liberal prime ministers, Jean Chrétien. Senator Jaffer is proud — and we've joked about it over the years, with me being a proud Conservative and Senator Jaffer being a proud Liberal. She's happy to say it openly, even in these troubled times.

Senator Jaffer was the Deputy Chair of the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets when I chaired it back in 2014 or 2015. Together, we did two key things that were important for the Senate and which live on. The first was the zero-based budgeting process, through which we brought the Senate's budget back down to zero and then built it up to where it should be; it wasn't just increases.

The second was the initial work on the creation of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight. Senator Jaffer was there at the sharp end of the stick right after the Auditor General's report. Senator Jaffer, I remember well when we would sometimes talk on the phone in the evenings about what had happened that day or what would happen the next. And Senator Jaffer was always willing to see that the changes the Senate required were made. Those live on today.

Also, I didn't know anything about Ismaili Muslims; I had some knowledge but not a lot. Senator Jaffer would tell me about that. Since then, I've realized that she's been a leading voice for Ismaili Muslims in Canada. For that, thousands — millions — of people are thankful. I thank you for that.

To conclude, Senator Jaffer, your contributions have been valuable, appreciated and — of course, as I said — will live on. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Amina Gerba: As Senator Clement said earlier, we all cried when we said goodbye on Monday. I will try my best not to cry again.

I rise today to pay tribute to my African sister, Senator Mobina Jaffer. She is the first African of South Asian descent — as everyone has mentioned — and the first Muslim woman to be appointed to the Senate of Canada.

When I was appointed to this august chamber, I rushed to read up on the senators and their backgrounds. That is how I found out that I was not the first African-born woman to become a Canadian senator. However, when talking about Senator Jaffer to friends who are not familiar with the ethnic and racial diversity of the African continent, many told me that Senator Jaffer could not be considered African because she is not Black, she is of South Asian descent.

The fact that many people continue to believe that Africa's inhabitants are all Blacks attests to the lack of knowledge about the African continent. Just by talking to Senator Jaffer, I could see how proud she is of her Ugandan and African heritage. Honourable colleagues, we can leave Africa, no matter how and no matter under what conditions, but Africa never leaves us. After arriving in Canada as a refugee, the Honourable Senator Jaffer dedicated her career to representing and defending the interests of all Canadians, especially those who, like her, found a new home in this country of immigrants, which took all of us in. She came to this country as a refugee, but she has done it all, as you said, and I could have repeated everything you said.

A senator for 23 years, she used her unique history and powerful, yet always warm, voice to inspire and influence the policies that have shaped our country, to make the Canada we all love an inclusive and diverse place. Thank you.

Senator Jaffer is a true African mother who embodies the values of resilience, wisdom, compassion and generosity. I actually wore this sari, which you have all admired, to show her how much I appreciate her many gifts. My sister Mobina, after so many years of service to your community and to Canadians, it is high time that you enjoyed a well-deserved retirement with Nuralla and with your whole family, including your grandchildren and children, who are here today. Nuralla, love of her life, you will take good care of Mobina every day. I know that you've already planned a long trip to East Africa, and I hope you enjoy every minute. Thank you, Mobina.

• (1450)

[*English*]

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, I'm confident that our friend, colleague and co-agitator Senator Jaffer does not remember our first encounter.

In the early 1990s, the Honourable Bertha Wilson, the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada, chaired the Canadian Bar Association's Task Force on Gender Equality. Senator Jaffer was then an active lawyer. Despite having been called to the bar for some decades and even being a distinguished Queen's Counsel, she described how she was often confused for an accused or a clerk by judges and other counsel. These kinds of sexist and racist assumptions have been slow to dissipate — but dissipating they are because of your many contributions.

We can always count on you, Senator Jaffer, to identify and educate others about the discrimination you and too many others have experienced. We are grateful that you have always persisted, with courage, skill, wherewithal and fortitude, to pave the way for others — as we've heard from so many of our colleagues.

For decades before I was appointed, I often appeared before Senate committees, especially the Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. Then, as now — and now as our chair — Senator Jaffer, you have always been able to rule with an iron fist. But it doesn't look like an iron fist because it's always clad in the most soft, luxurious and chic of velvet gloves. You preside over diverse, often very challenging subjects, making everyone feel comfortable and heard. Your interventions are clear, insightful, challenging and always delivered with authority — but also kindness, grace and compassion.

When I entered the upper chamber in 2016, your generosity and kindness — which we've heard about from so many others — toward me were immediate and welcomed. In addition to introducing me to many, Mobina, you ensured that I was invited to as many meetings and events as I could possibly cram into every day and week — even non-sitting weeks. Then you would tell me, "Time to slow down, Kim. Take it easy. Don't take on so many things." That was true whether we were meeting international dignitaries or visiting with schoolchildren, as well as on that wonderful day we danced on the front lawn of the Hill for the Day of Pink.

Your genuine concern and collaborative nature make you a wonderful and much-valued colleague, mentor and friend. You have also been a keen and frequent participant in the Senators Go to Jail initiative, something well appreciated by correctional staff and prisoners alike — not to mention me.

Senator Jaffer, we all wish you the very best as you venture into this next phase of your amazing life journey. We wish you a well-deserved "slow down, time to take it easy" to do all that makes you happy with your beloved family and immense circle of friends and fans.

I want to thank your family for the privilege and responsibility of sharing this amazing woman with all of them. I want to thank you as you venture forward into this next phase of your life. I can't imagine what amazing adventures and endeavours you will undertake, but I hope to still occasionally be able to come along for the ride, my friend.

Thank you.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, Senator Jaffer, when prime ministers summon senators to this august chamber, sometimes they get it right and sometimes they get it wrong. In the case of Senator Jaffer, Jean Chrétien hit the mother lode. There's no doubt about that in my mind.

In these tributes, we've gone through all the firsts and distinguished accolades of Senator Jaffer. One that was not mentioned but must be is that, once upon a time, she was selected as a Canadian Immigrant of the Year by *Canadian Immigrant* magazine. Could there be a more deserving candidate? That also indicates she is the epitome of a great Canadian because, of course, Canada is a nation where we are all either immigrants or children of immigrants. She is a role model for how hard work, principle and perseverance can lead someone from the most humble beginnings to amazing achievements and great rewards.

When I came to this place, there were a number of people who influenced me — all the giants of the Senate who came before — and she was definitely one of them. She was quiet, kind, sincere and razor sharp. Regardless of her political affiliation — she has been a Liberal, an Independent Liberal, a Progressive and non-affiliated, you name it — one thing distinguished Senator Jaffer: She is a senator who stood for things she believed in, from when she first came here until the day she left. She not only stood for but fought for what she believed in, regardless of politics, leadership positions or caucus conflicts. I saw this firsthand.

I also saw somebody who was a vociferous voice for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the most unwavering fashion. If I've taken some of those things on over the years, Senator Jaffer, it's because I saw you as a mentor and role model when it came to fighting for them.

I also have to share this: Whenever I did good things, Senator Jaffer would take me aside and say, "Senator Housakos, this is very good," and whenever I did things she didn't agree with, she would take me aside and scold me vociferously. In all my battles of public policy discourse in this place, it was only Senator Jaffer who, after she scolded me and I walked away, I always felt had been right and that I had to be better. That's a special quality Senator Jaffer has.

Senator Clement, you're absolutely right. This is a tough place, and politics and public life are tough. I had some moments here when I was down and out, and Senator Jaffer, in her kind, sincere way, would take me aside — on at least a couple of occasions — and share her wisdom and kindness. Senator Jaffer, it left a mark and certainly gave me the strength to carry on. I will always appreciate that wisdom and kindness from you.

In a few days, you will be leaving this chamber as a senator for the last time. Many of your colleagues will be hurt and crying over it. I will be celebrating, as will many others — celebrating your legacy, which is so powerful and strong that it will carry on for a very long time after you're gone.

Thank you. God bless you and your family.

[Senator Housakos]

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, it is indeed my pleasure to join in the tributes to Senator Mobina Jaffer this afternoon. I've had the good fortune to know her over many years — decades, in fact — as we worked to advance issues of immigration and diversity, albeit from different parts of the country, long before either of us were in the Senate.

In this chamber, Senator Jaffer has often spoken about the important role of Ismailis in Canada — her community — who are followers of His Highness the Aga Khan. In that spirit, I want to take this opportunity to highlight a few attributes of this community, both worldwide and in Canada.

In global terms, it is a small community that punches well above its weight and does so because of its global outlook and generous and ethical leadership, which Senator Jaffer has often highlighted for us.

Ismailis are a branch of Shia Islam, led by Prince Karim Aga Khan, the forty-ninth leader of this branch of Muslims. The Aga Khan Development Network, a noted international development agency, works to eliminate global poverty, promote pluralism and advance the status of women. It is primarily focused on improving the quality of life of people of all faiths in key regions of Asia and Africa.

The Aga Khan is an honorary citizen of Canada and has a long history of visiting Canada and working with Canadians. I particularly appreciated one of his sentiments when he was commenting about the diversity of Canada. He famously said, "The world needs more Canada."

Senator Jaffer has faithfully talked about His Highness on his birthday each December and highlighted the important work he does worldwide. Indeed, the Aga Khan has worked with Canadian governments over many years. Most notably, he worked with prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau to bring in Asians being expelled from Uganda in the early 1970s, which included one Mobina Jaffer and her family. He opened the Ismaili Jamatkhana in Burnaby with prime minister Brian Mulroney in 1985. He worked on pluralism with prime minister Jean Chrétien in 2002. Notably, prime minister Stephen Harper awarded him honorary Canadian citizenship in 2010. He has continued to be a source of global advice and friendship to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. These, of course, are historical dates which are also featured in Senator Jaffer's calendar.

• (1500)

On a personal note, Mobina, thank you for your advice, guidance and encouragement to me over the last year and a half since I was appointed to the Senate. Senator Jaffer, thank you for your service to Canada and for highlighting the great contributions that Canadian Ismailis make to this country.

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, how do we describe our beloved Senator Jaffer, a sister to us all?

Regal, decisive, focused and empathic.

Articulate, precise and meticulous.

An advocate for the importance of the juxtaposition of kindness and humanity in a manner that emboldens the soul.

A bright smile and laser-sharp focus that affirm the elegance of language and substance.

An unbridled passion for advocacy, bringing to these hallowed halls a true reflection of jurisprudence Canadiana, empowering the forgotten and affording an enlightened sense of restitution.

An encyclopedic knowledge of all things that shape our narrative, both ancient and contemporary. An ethereal sense of touching that which seems elusive and hidden behind the walls of history.

Yes, dear Mobina, you have made a difference.

Your interventions have brought forth a kaleidoscopic balance to the sometimes glacially sonorous moments in this chamber to which we have all learned to adapt.

In your triumphant exulting, you leave behind a halo of technicolour that will resonate in this chamber for years to come.

I feel proud to have called you my sister, and I will miss you as the catalyst that opened my eyes to the profound impact of how our role of sober second thought should always encompass fairness and transparency.

I will always have admiration for your wisdom and principles, a bright beacon and a stable anchor for the Ismaili community, which you hold so near and deep in your heart, and the global resonance that you've brought to His Highness the Aga Khan.

In all your principal stances, Mobina, there was never an ounce of prevarication.

Thank you. May Allah bless you. *As-salam alaikum.*

Hon. Rosemary Moodie: Honourable senators, it is my honour to rise today to give tribute to an honourable senator, a leader, a mentor, a dear friend and sister — Mobina Jaffer.

Senator Jaffer, congratulations on your illustrious career, a career that includes many highlights, such as being named Queen's Counsel, chairing both the Human Rights Committee and the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee and being Canada's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan. As many have mentioned, your career is marked by many incredible firsts.

You moulded your career with persistence and with focus in the face of significant trials: expulsion from your homeland of Uganda, health issues that have challenged your ability to work as freely as you would want and facing racism and sexism within this very institution. Despite these trials and challenges, you have become the effective, strong and compassionate legislator that you are today.

These challenges have never silenced you. You never wavered. You turned your pain into purpose, and I, for one, am thankful that you never gave up. Despite these challenges, you have also stayed faithful to who you are, to your family, your faith and your values.

Despite your sharp intellect, political savvy, broad experience and deep connections, you remain humble and kind. Few can go through decades in politics and maintain their integrity as you have.

You have a large legacy, dear friend, not just for the legislative work that you have led but for the impact you've had on the people you have met. That is why you are loved and appreciated and why you will never be forgotten.

As Chair of the African Canadian Senate Group, it has been an honour for me to work with you. I congratulate and thank you on behalf of our group. We are proud to count you as a founding member. We hope to do your legacy real justice.

Thank you, friend. I'll miss you terribly. Enjoy your retirement.

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, each day, entering this chamber, I am reminded of the privilege it is to be in the Senate and to gather with all of you. Today, I'm especially honoured to join colleagues in recognizing our dear friend Senator Mobina Jaffer.

Senator Jaffer's accomplishments have been noted by many of you. I would like to highlight just one: the passage of An Act respecting Girl Guides of Canada.

Honourable senators, I chose to highlight this particular achievement of Mobina's, not solely because shepherding that bill through the chamber was one of the early challenges of this rookie ISG chamber coordinator and not only because the Girl Guides is an organization near and dear to my own heart, but also because it's near and dear to many in this chamber: Senator Deacon, Senator Moncion and Senator Sorensen — all Girl Guides.

During our time as Guides, part of the Girl Guide law included "A Guide is a friend to all and a sister to every other Guide." That is Mobina, as witnessed by the tributes throughout this chamber. Mobina has been a sister to me from the beginning. Often, when we were seized with imposter syndrome, she would stress to me and to others as she warmly welcomed us all that every voice in this august place matters. She would stress the importance of representing our regions and minorities, especially when sometimes a region is a minority.

A Girl Guide's honour is to be trusted, and their loyalty is never in question. During our Guiding time, we promised to be loyal to God, the Queen and our country. Our honourable colleague is loyal to her very core: to herself, to her beliefs and to Canada. She is loyal in her Senate summons to give her very best ". . . advice and assistance in all weighty and arduous affairs which may the State and Defence of Canada concern . . ."

One of the hallmarks of being a Girl Guide is the commitment to leave your campsite cleaner than you found it. Senator Jaffer, please know you've done exactly that. You have left your campsite cleaner, left your mark in this place, and you will always be to Canada and to all of us an honourable senator.

Senator Jaffer, you have served your country, Canadians, British Columbians, Muslims, immigrants — us all — with dignity and honour. Having set an example kindly, with wisdom and patience for us, you truly leave the Senate a better place for your presence.

As we are honouring you, may we also offer our heartfelt thanks to all of your family, who have supported you in this journey and loaned you to us. Senator Jaffer, this week we've heard senators quote lines from songs, and I'm going to apologize for the earworm. Today, as we say goodbye and wish you well, I'm reminded of the Girl Guide song with which we ended each campfire:

... I want to linger
 ... a little longer
 ... a little longer here with you
 ... it's such a perfect night
 ... it doesn't seem quite right
 ... that this should be —

— our last with you.

Rest assured, your legacy of loyalty, honour and trust is the clean campsite you have left behind. We will miss you.

Thank you for your legacy. Thank you, dear friend.

• (1510)

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, I rise today to join the chorus of praise in the Senate Chamber — on the lands of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation — as we express our admiration, respect and affection for our remarkably accomplished and beloved colleague the Honourable Mobina Jaffer.

In August 1972, Uganda's brutal dictator, Idi Amin, expelled tens of thousands of people of South Asian origin, including Mobina Jaffer, her family and many in her Ismaili-Muslim community. Responding to the crisis, the Aga Khan asked his friend and Harvard classmate Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau to help. Uganda's loss was Canada's gain, as Senator Jaffer and roughly 6,000 other Ismaili Muslims immigrated to Canada, and she never forgot Africa.

Appointed to the Senate of Canada in 2001, Mobina is a woman of many firsts: the first Muslim senator, the first African-born senator and the first senator of South Asian descent. She is a proud and loyal Canadian. A central expression of that pride is her commitment to bilingualism, including her own devotion to learning and speaking French, especially in this chamber. This devotion emanates from a place of respect for fellow Canadians.

[*Translation*]

— and for our francophone colleagues, in particular.

[Senator Duncan]

[*English*]

She champions mother languages, particularly Kutchi — her language.

Senator Jaffer is a proud Ismaili who's done an outstanding job of pursuing the Ismaili religious mandate to pursue knowledge and fulfill traditions of tolerance by actively working toward harmonious, pluralistic societies. She is a justice warrior, a lawyer and the Chair of the Senate Legal Committee. She was Canada's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, and the chair of the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security. Senator Jaffer has worked tirelessly for rights and justice for children, for women's place at the table and for all people everywhere who face discrimination.

Our mutual friend the Honourable Roméo Dallaire encouraged me to seek out Senator Jaffer as a role model and ally. General Dallaire, her former colleague on the special advisory team on Darfur, sent me these words to share today for you, Mobina:

Her commitment to human rights, equality for women, courage and eloquence in her interventions, and driving tireless work ethic, are but the surface of the total commitment that this magnificent grand lady gave to her country of adoption. Well done, Senator Jaffer, from a humbled colleague before you.

Honourable colleagues, as we bid farewell to this magnificent grand lady, with the sparkle usually right there on her shoulder, and with her brilliant brain and beautiful heart, let's join all Canadians in saying, "*Shukar*, Senator Jaffer."

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mobina.

[*English*]

You will be so missed. You are so loved.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, there are many threads in the "amazing technicolour dreamcoat" that Senator Mobina Jaffer has woven over the years. In the course of today's tributes, we have received a glimpse of the warp and woof of our honourable colleague's remarkable story, especially in her time at the Senate of Canada. But it has been only a glimpse, a peek, at the garment of Senator Jaffer's life and her persona. We already know about Senator Jaffer's elegance and her impeccable taste in her real life and in her fashion choices.

But we know even better now that the fabric and, if I can say, the jewellery of her life, her values and her accomplishments are even more impressive. Let me pull on just one of those threads in the fabric of her life.

It is in her commitment to fundamental rights when it comes to national security and anti-terrorist legislation. You may not be aware that Senator Jaffer was appointed to the Senate just days after the 9/11 attacks. This was a time that was fraught for all Canadians. It was a time of great anxiety, but it was a time particularly of great concern for Muslims, when Muslims were singled out for special scrutiny because of concerns around

anti-terrorism. To that issue and to the bill that was tabled — Bill C-51 at the time — Senator Mobina Jaffer had this to say: “This bill will not keep us safe, but is just a rhetoric that will divide us.”

She continued, “I want us to work together to keep each other safe.”

In light of contemporary discussions around national security and fears of interference and so on, we would do well to heed the reminder of Senator Jaffer.

Colleagues, it is rare that there is a lieutenant governor in our chamber recognizing and paying tribute to our departing colleague. I’m so honoured that I can, on her behalf, offer a few words to Senator Jaffer.

Here is a quote from Her Honour Janet Austin:

Expelled from Uganda in 1972 by dictator Idi Amin, she found a home in Canada and built a life of great public service, guided by the tenets of her Ismaili-Muslim faith.

Throughout her life, she has been a compelling voice for pluralism, human rights, international peace and the prevention of violence against women and children.

Thank you, Senator Jaffer, for everything you have done to build understanding among diverse cultures.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable senators, Senator Jaffer speaks six languages with her voice, but she speaks thousands with her heart.

An ardent defender of human rights, particularly women’s rights, Senator Jaffer has also demonstrated an unwavering commitment to defending linguistic rights throughout her remarkable career in the Senate.

Dear Mobina, you provided invaluable support to the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages during its study of the modernization of the Official Languages Act, particularly as a member of the steering committee. You were also a powerful advocate who highlighted the need to strengthen access to immersion in your home province of British Columbia. In a speech on October 5, 2017, you said, and I quote:

... there is a major French-language and French immersion education crisis in my province. Young people, immigrants, and all Franco-Columbians have the right to be able to express themselves in the language of their choice. This is not just a matter of education. It is a matter of Canadian identity.

Senator Jaffer, we understand why British Columbia’s francophone community has always recognized and appreciated your work, as shown by this message received yesterday from the

Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, which I have been asked to share with you in this chamber. I will quote an excerpt, as follows:

... Senator Jaffer has always been a staunch supporter of our community and we have fond memories of her enthusiasm for promoting the Francophonie far from Ottawa, on the shores of the Pacific. On behalf of the francophone community, the current president of the FFCB, Marie-Nicole Dubois, is very grateful to Senator Jaffer for the many years she has worked to ensure the future of the French fact.

The former president of the FFCB, Padminée Chundensing, who had the pleasure and privilege of working with Senator Jaffer for many years also wanted to thank Senator Jaffer for her support and her work on issues such as French immersion, the improvement of the Action Plan for Official Languages and employment centres.

Dear Mobina, throughout your career, you have also fought for the rights of immigrants and young people. Your ability to listen, your collaborative spirit and your sense of diplomacy make you an example to us all.

You have an extraordinary talent for asserting your opinions loud and clear, but with great kindness and elegance, while keeping a big smile on your face.

Dear Mobina, I will close by quoting something that you said in this chamber in March 2017 when the British Columbia francophone youth parliament was being held. You said the following, and I quote:

... I would like to remind senators of the importance we must place on the opinions and different ideas of our young people. It is our duty, as senators, to listen to them, to encourage them to get involved, and to remind them that no matter their gender, sexual orientation religion, or age, they have a role to play in our society, and not just today’s society, but also the society of the future.

We are taking your message to heart, senator. We wish you good health, much joy and many happy moments with your loved ones — as many as it takes to match the generosity of your heart. Thank you.

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: Honourable senators, so many things have been said. I too want to pay tribute to the Honourable Senator Mobina Jaffer, a passionate and caring feminist.

• (1520)

We met five and a half years ago under difficult circumstances. Senator Jaffer was the sponsor of Bill C-48, on banning oil tankers along the entire north shore of British Columbia, work that she abruptly had to put on hold for medical reasons. I had no Senate experience but was Deputy Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, where this controversial bill was being studied. I had been asked to keep the sponsor informed, so I would call Mobina on a regular basis. If I felt she had the energy, I would tell her about the atmosphere in committee, any conflicts, the motions and my mistakes. Despite

the strain she was under, Senator Jaffer would give me advice and, most of all, she would tell me not to worry, it was only politics, after all. Mobina was always dignified. I didn't know her well, but her experience and resilience soon won me over.

Later, we worked together again on the committee she was chairing, the famous Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, when I was defending my bill to protect children from exposure to online pornography. Senator Jaffer was a kind chair, but she put me in my place a few times, especially when I lost my temper with a witness. Mobina Jaffer has always believed that Senate public bills are legitimate initiatives and she took mine seriously. The committee, which was made up of a number of legal experts, perhaps too many, was divided. It must not have been easy for her to organize this study behind the scenes, in the midst of the pandemic, to ensure that the arguments for and against were fairly heard.

On the sidelines, Senator Jaffer often gave me words of encouragement. At one point, I remember thinking that I was going to give up the fight even before clause-by-clause consideration, given how much criticism my bill had received. She encouraged me to see it through, despite the very real possibility of failure, because, as she said, we needed to protect children from online harm and find the right way to do it. It was up to me to find the way to do that. Giving up was not an option for her.

In short, Mobina, I want to close by telling you how much I admire you and care about you, my dear colleague and almost-neighbour in the Senate. Your resilience taught me a valuable life lesson. Godspeed, my friend.

[*English*]

Hon. David M. Arnot: Honourable senators, I join you in celebrating the remarkable career and enduring contributions of our friend Mobina Jaffer. I met Mobina 33 years ago in 1991, when Judge Douglas Campbell, the director of the Western Judicial Education Centre, invited her to come to Saskatchewan to meet partners who were designing a three-day judicial education program studying race discrimination, gender discrimination and Indigenous issues.

Mobina's intervention in the conference was groundbreaking. We were helping judges understand the social context within which their decisions were occurring. Judges can make mistakes when they don't understand the social context. She clearly communicated the concept of intersectionality and how it can be a compounding negative effect on racialized and marginalized people, maintaining perpetual inequity.

Her story is etched in my memory. She spoke of working against gender discrimination for many years, and now she was standing at the front of the line with other women. Then she learned that she had to go to the back of another line because she was a woman of colour.

Her lessons were effective, and they contributed directly to a new model of judicial education in Canada. Our colleague Senator Jaffer is a force for action and change. She has

steadfastly amplified the voices of the marginalized and vulnerable, including religious minorities and refugees. Of her own experience, Senator Jaffer has said:

There are few places in the world where a refugee can become a Senator — Canada is the only place I know it can happen for sure, because it happened to me.

She is a testament to the contributions of refugees who have championed and strengthened the Canadian values of inclusion, diversity and opportunity.

Indeed, the Aga Khan has observed that Canada is the most successful pluralistic society in the world. Mobina Jaffer is a proof-positive embodiment of that observation.

As she retires from the Senate, I reflect on how she enriched the very fabric of Canadian society. Mobina had a profound influence on judicial education and a profound influence on me as a senator from day one.

Mobina, thank you for your extraordinary service, your passionate advocacy and your unyielding commitment to justice. Congratulations, Mobina, on a truly distinguished career.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, most Honourable Senator Jaffer, time travel with me back with me 20 years. You're a researcher at York University, and you got a small grant to work with Afghan women who fled the Taliban to build their lives in Canada. With them, you're organizing a leadership capacity-building workshop. These Afghan women — soon to be Canadians — ask you to bring women parliamentarians to talk with them about how to be leaders in Canada, so you reach out with an invitation to a long list of members of Parliament, or MPs, and senators. Two MPs and one senator said yes. That one from the Red Chamber was Senator Mobina Jaffer.

When I gave her the time options for one hour on the program, she asked, "How long is the program? How long is the workshop?" And upon learning that intergenerational Afghan women and girls were meeting for two full days at the university then travelling to Ottawa for a day of parliamentary meetings, she promptly said, "I'll be there." When I persisted in trying to confirm a full hour of her time, she said, "Let me be clear: I'm coming, and I'm staying for the whole time — this is too important."

Not only did Senator Jaffer stay with us for every moment of those two days, she travelled with us on the train from Toronto to Ottawa, and, as we continued to capacity build en route, she took me aside and told me what needed to happen that night when we got to Ottawa.

And so at the Ottawa hotel that evening when all of us were encircled together preparing our parliamentary agenda, we followed Mobina's advice. The non-Afghan women stepped back. The Afghan women stepped forward to signify that the leaders' voices the next day on Parliament Hill would be those of Afghan women.

I am so grateful for the seven years I've had in this chamber with you, Mobina, for your wisdom, your generosity, your courage and your countless kindnesses to me and so many others. Dear Mobina, thank you, *meegwetch, asante*.

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 many guests of Senator Jaffer, including Mr. Nuralla Jeraj, husband of Senator Jaffer, and her immediate family; the Honourable Salma Lakhani, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta; His Excellency Sanjay Kumar Verma, High Commissioner of India to Canada; Her Excellency Ruth Acheng, High Commissioner of Uganda to Canada; Shala Chandani, President of the Ismaili Council of British Columbia; Amir Mirshahi, President of the Ismaili Council for Northeast Ontario; and other leaders from the Ismaili Muslim community, as well as former member of Parliament Yasmin Ratansi, member of Parliament Taleeb Noormohamed and member of Parliament Chandra Arya.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1530)

THE HONOURABLE MOBINA S. B. JAFFER

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I am overwhelmed. Imagine having two lieutenant-governors — from Alberta and from my province, British Columbia — here, and all the other guests. I am very blessed. I want to thank each and every one of them again, if I may.

Honourable senators, I would like to acknowledge that we are currently located on the unceded, unsundered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people.

You know that I rise today overcome with emotion. Twenty-three years ago, in 2001, I was honoured to be appointed to the Senate of Canada. This chamber has been more than just a place of work; it has been a home where I have grown, learned and had the honour and privilege of representing the people of British Columbia and Canada.

[*Translation*]

I would like to begin by extending my warmest thanks to the Speaker of the Senate. Madam Speaker, your unfailing support and invaluable advice have been crucial to my career in the Senate. I will always have fond memories of working alongside you, particularly on the Official Languages Committee, where I witnessed first-hand your dedication to preserving and promoting Canada's linguistic diversity.

[*English*]

I would like to thank the Independent Senators Group leadership — Senators St. Germain, Clement, Petitclerc and Arnot — and former leaders Senators Woo and Dean.

[*Translation*]

Senator Saint-Germain and Senator Clement, in addition to being exceptional leaders, you are also great friends. I simply don't have enough words to say about you both. Thanks to you, my last few years in the Senate have been exceptional. I can't thank you enough.

[*English*]

Over the years, the Usher of the Black Rod, Greg Peters, and the Mace Bearer, Chasse Helbin, have gone out of their way to assist me given the recent challenges I have faced. We all know that they do more for us than is necessary. Thank you both for your service to the Senate of Canada.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: Honourable senators, as has been mentioned, I have stood in this chamber many times to highlight the tremendous work His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan and his institutions are doing globally as well as the significant role he has played in my life. Everything I stand for and everything I have achieved is thanks to the guidance and sacrifices of His Highness the Aga Khan.

I received a world-class education in Kampala, Uganda, at the Aga Khan Nursery School, the Aga Khan Primary School and the Aga Khan High School. In addition to my formal education, the Aga Khan also instilled in me many life lessons that serve as guiding principles in my personal and professional life. His Highness the Aga Khan has taught us that true success lies not in personal gain but in the betterment of our communities and our world. It is this message of compassion, unity and service that I carry with me today and every day.

Honourable senators, I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to former prime minister Jean Chrétien for appointing me to the Senate and to Madam Aline Chrétien, his wife, for always being in my corner. When I came to the Senate I often went for lunch or tea with her, and I really miss her. Since joining the Liberal Party, Madam Aline and Mr. Chrétien have given me their unwavering support.

I was appointed to the Senate, as has been said, just one week after 9/11. I will be the first to admit that the weeks and months following 9/11 were incredibly difficult for Muslim Canadians. Mr. Chrétien always reminded me and all Muslim Canadians that we were not accountable for the acts of a few members of our faith. He and many of my honourable colleagues, including former Senator Ross Fitzpatrick and former leader of the government in the Senate Sharon Carstairs, went out of their way to welcome me to the role, knowing that I was assuming it at a very challenging time in Canada's history. For that I am extremely grateful.

Honourable senators, my dad always used to remind me that our family encompasses many identities. We were very proud Africans. We were of South Asian descent, and we were Ismaili Muslims. We are very proud Africans now. We are very proud people of South Asian descent now. We are proud Ismaili Muslims now, and we are proud Canadians.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: He taught me that every identity we had and have is a blessing, and we must shoulder them with honour and responsibility.

This is why I am deeply touched to have here today the High Commissioner of Uganda, Ruth Acheng, and the High Commissioner of India, Sanjay Kumar Verma, whose predecessors also graced the chamber when I was sworn into the Senate in 2001. Both of you are here not just representing your offices but also representing all the things that I believe in.

On the day I was sworn in, I was deeply touched by the presence of your predecessors. Now, 23 years later, I am once again deeply touched that you have readily accepted my invitation. Each of the countries you represent has such a special place in my heart, and your presence here today means so much to me.

Although Dr. Mahmoud Eboo, Representative of the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat, could not be here with us today, I am very pleased that his wife, Karima Eboo, is here.

I would also like to thank the President of the Ismaili Council of British Columbia, Shala Chandani, and her husband, Karim, for being here. When I phoned Shala and said, “You would have to come all the way from Vancouver to Ottawa, and I know how busy you are,” she told me, “I will be there.” Shala, I really appreciate it. Thank you.

• (1540)

President Amir Mirshahi, Salim Fakriani and Member for External Relations Fiaz Basaria, from the Ismaili Council of Northeast Ontario, thank you also for being here today.

I would also like to personally thank my mentor, to whom I will always be indebted, the Honourable Thomas Anthony Dohm. Mr. Dohm was someone who truly made a difference in many people’s lives. He took on so many vital roles and meant so much to me in my life. He was my boss, a mentor, a law partner and a father figure who helped me reach for the stars and realize my dreams in Canada.

I could only join Mr. Dohm’s firm, even though I was a London-trained lawyer, as a junior secretary because the law society would not process my papers. They would not even look at my papers. It was because of Mr. Dohm’s advocacy with the law society that I became a lawyer and the first woman of South Asian descent to practise law in Canada.

Honourable senators, being separated from my tight-knit family has been one of the most difficult aspects of my journey as a senator. However, I have been incredibly fortunate to find an extended family here, in Ottawa, among my colleagues and the dedicated staff who work tirelessly to support us.

To all the staff in the Senate, I want you to know that I consider you my family in Ottawa. You have been my source of comfort, laughter and unwavering support during the long periods away from my loved ones. Your friendship has made the distance between Ottawa and British Columbia feel just a bit shorter. For that, I will be eternally grateful.

While I can’t thank each of you individually, I do want to share some stories with you that I will always carry with me, long after I leave this place.

There is not enough I can say about the Parliamentary Protective Service. They were first the Senate Protective Service, and now they are the Parliamentary Protective Service. They have always looked out for all senators, and I am always touched by how they have supported me personally as a senator.

Sergeant Denis McNicoll specifically asked to lead the parade today. Denis also brought four members of his family here to join me on this occasion.

Many of the Senate Protective Service and Parliamentary Protective Service have been especially kind to me over the years.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: I do not have enough time today to mention each and every one of them individually, but I wish I could speak more about the kindness they have shown to me and about how they have enriched my time at the Senate.

I would like to thank Julie Lacroix, Director of Corporate Security, for ensuring the safety of everyone who works here. Julie, I have made numerous requests, and you and your team have never failed to accommodate me.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Information Services Directorate, our remarkable IT department, specifically, Director David Vatcher. Throughout the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, your team has worked tirelessly to keep us connected and to ensure that we could continue to serve Canadians effectively.

To the Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate, led by Director Mélisa Leclerc, you have beautifully shared the essence and the story of the Senate’s work with Canadians. Thank you.

I also want to thank our exceptional interpreters, who work tirelessly to bridge linguistic divides. Your dedication to ensuring we communicate effectively in both official languages, often late into the night and under challenging circumstances, is truly remarkable.

Honourable senators, I am sure that the Senate pages have privately nicknamed me “the hot water senator” because I drink a lot of hot water. Besides getting me hot water, there are so many other ways the pages have helped me. I want the pages to know that I have never taken them for granted, and I wish them well in their future education and endeavours.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: I also want to thank the Chamber Operations and Procedure Office for all the different requests I've always made of Till Heyde, Adam Thompson and Shaila Anwar.

Shaila, when your appointment came through, my granddaughter was singing, "Shaila has become the Clerk! Shaila has become the Clerk!" because that became my mantra. You have brought such honour to all of us. That is not because you are an ethnic person, because from the day you came here, you have worked extremely hard. You've worked very long hours for a long time. The fact that you have become the Clerk of the Senate is because of your dedication and your hard work. You are the pride of our communities.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: I want to share with you a touching story. After I came back from being sick for a while, Maria Hernandez of the Senate presented me with a beautiful card signed by committee room attendants, mail clerks and postal clerks.

Your Honour, I know I'm not supposed to show props, but I ask for a second of your indulgence. I want to show you this big card that they gave me. Can you imagine? I've never seen a card like that, and it was signed by all the members of all the departments. I wish you could see what they wrote when I was so sick. When I have a bad day, I read those words, and they really touch my heart.

Thank you, Your Honour, for the indulgence.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the maintenance staff of the Victoria Building, including Suzanne Gagnon-Gingras, Lynn Lavergne, Fleury Indoumou, Eric Morin-Duchesne, Wendy Dulorier, Maxène Jeanty and Lisa Darlaston. Thank you for your commitment to keeping my workplace in pristine condition.

Bernide Basquin and Judith Frederick, thank you for promptly bringing me my mail early in the morning, always with a smile on your face, brightening my day.

Senators, I know you will all agree with me that our bus drivers, who at times have had to carry me onto the Senate bus, have always gone out of their way to help us and me. They stay until late; they don't know what hours they are going to work, but they always receive us with a smile.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: During my time at the Senate, I have sat on various committees. I would like to thank all the clerks and staff with whom I have worked.

It is important to recognize the hard work and the ability to operate as a team player. The person who resembles this the most is the Clerk of the Senate, Shaila Anwar.

• (1550)

I want to thank the clerk assistant, Till Heyde. Till does any job necessary to ensure the Senate runs smoothly. He always responds to my queries, as I'm sure he does for everybody — Till, I don't think you give anyone special treatment. There is no job too big or too small for Till Heyde.

I also want to thank the staff from when I was Chair of the Human Rights Committee, Adam Thompson and Dan Charbonneau. As well, I wish to thank the staff who have supported me in my capacity as Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Mark Palmer and Vincent Labrosse.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank my French teachers, who over the years have shown a great deal of patience and diligence in helping me improve my skills in this language, skills that I hope to continue developing long after I leave the Senate. They are Géraldine Lavoie, Evelyn Mudahemuka, Suzanne Bouchard and Agathe Rhéaume. Thank you for being here today and thank you very much for everything you have done for me over the years.

My goal was to become bilingual. You all took it to heart to help me achieve that goal, and I will be eternally grateful. I thank you.

Honourable senators, I have always thought that language had the power to unite entire communities and that addressing someone in their mother tongue was the ultimate sign of respect and understanding. As a senator of African origin and Indian descent, I speak several languages but, to me, bilingualism is truly important now.

[*English*]

Honourable senators, lastly, I want to thank my staff and my family. I would like to begin with my wonderful staff. Gavin Jeffray, has been with me for over 12 years and has worked diligently and meticulously. He is exceptionally hard-working and very loyal. I will truly miss him, as I will no longer be able to use the mantra, "Oh, I will just phone Gavin and ask how to do something." Nobody has been more loyal to me than you, Gavin. You answer my calls at all times, and you've always been there for me. I truly appreciate what you've done for me. Thank you, Gavin.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: I have had many other hard-working people in my office over the years: Rahmat Kassam, Seema Rampersad, Nadia Charania, Linda Phillips, Darrell Mast, Hafeez Jannohamed and Vincent Frenette. Presently, I have the two most amazing young women, Bushra Khadra and Alyza Samji, working with me. These two have been a godsend in our office.

Honourable senators, you may not have expected me to make a speech like this, just thanking everybody, but after being here for 23 years, I believe it's really important to recognize the people who make you and are there for you. Forgive me as I continue mentioning names.

As Canada's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, I worked with many wonderful people from the Department of Foreign Affairs, including former minister Bill Graham. Two people throughout my appointment as envoy were almost stuck to my hip. They are Alan Bones and Barry Parkinson. Often, I would ask Alan to arrange transportation on a UN plane to meet with different groups to discuss peace in Sudan. He would tell me, "Nobody

else is going there. It's not safe. The department won't agree to it." I would say, "If we don't tell them, they won't know. Just book it."

He was always willing to try something else for me — sometimes with risks to our lives, but he would not leave my side. We went to all parts of Sudan so everyone's voice could be heard, because for unity, everybody must feel they are part of the process.

Honourable senators, I had the most amazing mom and dad. They had six children and gave us so much. Most importantly, they taught us that no one can treat us as second-class citizens. My dad really instilled in us that we were equal to all. My dad was a member of Parliament and businessman in Uganda. On so many occasions, I saw how he stood up for himself and his family to make sure we were never treated differently from others. He was the most hard-working philanthropist in Uganda.

My mother was the first woman in Kenya to receive higher education. Later, she furthered her education abroad, but at home, she was always there cooking us the most delicious food and being a shoulder to cry on.

My four sisters, Zenobia, Nimet, Bergees and Umeshaffi, and their husbands, Karim, Addil and Faruk, are my lifeline. They are always there to help take care of my children, bring me food and so much more than I ever expected.

My only brother was an exceptional brother. Imagine — he had five sisters, yet with every sister he had a distinct, precious relationship. Recently, my brother passed away. Burying my younger sibling was one of the hardest things I have done in my life. Not a day goes by that I do not miss him. When I am here or in Uganda, people approach me and say, "We miss your brother." Aneez truly was an exceptional soul. To my nephews and nieces, I want you to know that I am thinking of you all the time.

I want to take a moment to recognize the incredible support and love of my wonderful husband, Nuralla.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: Throughout my career, his unwavering encouragement has been my rock. His kindness and patience have been a source of strength for me, allowing me to pursue my passions and excel in my work.

In addition to his love and support, my husband has taken on countless additional duties while I'm away. From managing the household to being there for our family in every possible way, he has handled everything with grace and dedication. You all know; you've seen him here. You know this man has a busy accounting practice, but he let his clients go so that I could continue to be a senator.

This past weekend, I was overwhelmed, so my husband decided to come to Ottawa. He left at 1:30 p.m. from Vancouver and took two flights to arrive at 1:30 a.m. That is the kind of husband my Nuralla is. Nuralla, I am profoundly grateful for your sacrifices and contributions, which have made my journey so much more fulfilling. Thank you for being my partner and hero.

[Senator Jaffer]

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: My three children, Azool; his wife, Shaleena; and my daughter Farzana are here with us today. I am so blessed that my son and I share a law practice together, one that I will return to after I leave the Senate. I'm not sure if he's quite ready for me. It's still under discussion because we do things very differently. It's under discussion, but if I say so, what is he going to do? I also look forward to working with my daughter on the chicken farm. One day, ask me about the story of how I happened to own a chicken farm — though not today.

My children always do more for me than I could ever ask. They are there every step of the way.

• (1600)

Honourable senators, I am blessed with two grandchildren, Ayaan and Almeera, whom I speak to every day. My grandson always gives me feedback about what I have said in the Senate, and how I could have said it differently to make more of an impact. My granddaughter always lights up my day. She always remembers to say something very touching.

I want to thank my husband's family who are here: Nadir Jeraj; Karim Jeraj; and Karim's wife, Christine Tremblay. They, along with my husband's siblings, Badur, Nurjahan, Firoz, Rustom, Shenaz and their spouses, have always supported my husband and me.

Honourable senators, I want to leave one message with all of you: During my time as Canada's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, I had the opportunity to meet with President Yoweri Museveni, who is the President of Uganda — my birth country. I was very hesitant to deliver a strong message to him, because he was my former president, but Mr. Chrétien insisted I do so.

After delivering a strong message from Prime Minister Chrétien about the conflict in Sudan and the role of Uganda, the President stopped me and asked me how it is possible for me to have been expelled from Uganda only to be welcomed into Canada as a refugee, and later to be appointed as a senator. He kept repeating the following:

We threw you out, and you've come back as a senator to lecture me. We threw you out, and you are coming back and lecturing me as a senator from Canada.

Then he said, "What is in the blood of Canadians? How can a refugee become a senator?"

He was truly taken aback by the kindness and inclusivity of Canadians, affirming that there is something truly special in the blood of the Canadian people. He was right.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Jaffer: Canadians are indeed special.

Honourable senators, I want to leave you with a story. When I was a little girl, my mother dreamt that I would play the piano. My father said I should be a politician. You all know who won out.

When I was little, to annoy my mother, after I came back from school, I would sometimes play on the white keys. I ask you to try it; the harmony is horrible. Sometimes, I would play on the black keys, and the harmony was just as bad. My mother would keep saying to me, “You have to play both the white keys and the black keys. Only then will you get harmony.”

Honourable senators, I leave this message with you: Our society has come a long way, but there are still many gaps. I have so much faith in this chamber. You will make sure that the people who are outside are included. We are a nation that embraces diversity, opens doors to those in need and strives to build a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Honourable senators, it has truly been the honour of my lifetime to serve alongside you, and to represent the people of British Columbia. I will carry the memories and lessons learned in this chamber and in committees with me always.

Most of all, I will carry, from all of you, the love you have given. Forgive me for not responding to all the moving words you said, as I wanted to finish my speech, but I will not forget one word, because you are my Senate family. I leave in your hands this challenge: Do not cut up our society, but sew it up. If we sew it up, we will have the harmony and be the strongest country in this world. If no one can break us, we will always be together.

Honourable senators, I humbly ask you to please find ways to include everybody in our society, because every Canadian matters. Thank you very much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIAN

THIRD REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament, which deals with certificate of nomination for the proposed appointment for Christine Ivory as Parliamentary Librarian 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 Ravalia, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN SUSTAINABLE JOBS BILL

NINTH REPORT OF ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER TABLED

Hon. Paul J. Massicotte: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, which deals with the subject matter of Bill C-50, An Act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy.

[*English*]

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Monday, June 17, 2024, at 6 p.m.;

That rule 3-3(1) be suspended on that day; and

That, notwithstanding rule 9-10(2), if a vote has been or is deferred to that day, it take place at the end of Question Period.

[*Translation*]

L'ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

MEETING OF THE COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND SYMPOSIUM ON SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION IN PARLIAMENTS, MAY 24-26, 2023—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie concerning the Meeting of the Cooperation and Development Committee and Symposium on Scientific Information in Parliaments, held in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, from May 24 to 26, 2023.

BUREAU MEETING, JANUARY 25-28, 2024—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie concerning the Bureau Meeting, held in Brussels, Belgium, from January 25 to 28, 2024.

• (1610)

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING PAGES

The Hon. the Speaker: Colleagues, it's that time of year when we pay tribute to the pages who support us throughout these long sittings.

I will ask Alex Morson to join me.

[*English*]

Alex Morson will be graduating with a bachelor's degree in global and international studies with a specialization in law and social justice at Carleton University next year. She hopes to continue serving this chamber and to eventually work abroad and pursue graduate studies. She is immensely grateful for the opportunity to have served the Senate over the past two years and will take many great memories with her.

Thank you so much, Alex.

Rachel Moss is completing her third year as a page, having served as Chief Page over the last year. After obtaining her bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Ottawa, she hopes to attend law school and continue pursuing higher education. Rachel is grateful to have had the opportunity to represent her home province of Newfoundland and Labrador in the Senate Page Program. She would like to thank the Black Rod's office for their support and dedication to the page program.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of family members of our Chief Page, Rachel Moss.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

FINANCE

CAPITAL GAINS INCLUSION RATE

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, the Trudeau government has spent the last nine long years pursuing job-killing and investment-killing policies. These policies have hurt Canadian families and left our country with record hunger, record housing costs and a record number of Canadians without a family doctor — in fact, six million Canadians without a doctor.

Now the Prime Minister claims his new tax on farmers, doctors, retirees and small businesses will fix everything he broke. Does the Minister of Finance even understand how it works? Last night, she was tweeting that she's on the side of plumbers, Senator Gold. Most plumbers are in business for themselves. Their nest egg is their business, which they plan to sell to fund their retirement, of course. Now, poof, all of a sudden that's gone thanks to Chrystia Freeland and Justin Trudeau's attack on plumbers and other small businesses.

Senator Gold, no one believes the Trudeau government brought in this tax in the name of fairness — no one. Even you have to admit that this is nothing more than a way for Justin Trudeau to fund his wild, wacko, out-of-control spending, and this is just not worth the cost.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, but I respectfully disagree with your conclusion.

The change in the inclusion rate for the capital gains tax — returning it to the position where it was some years ago — is a balanced and focused measure to create greater fairness in terms of the burden all of us bear to fund our collective responsibilities to each other.

This is not an attack on plumbers, the rich or the middle class. It is a modulated and, frankly, modest attempt to ensure that those who are better off than many Canadians pay their fair share.

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, taxes disincentivize hard work. That's what taxes do, Senator Gold. Our gross domestic product per capita has declined for four consecutive quarters. It's not me saying that, it's Statistics Canada. Our economy has flattened and the standard of living in Canada is falling, yet this incompetent Trudeau government thinks another tax is the answer because that's what tax-and-spend Liberals always think.

Senator Gold, can you tell us how many jobs will be created in our communities and across the country by piling more taxes onto local businesses? How many jobs will this create?

Senator Gold: This government believes in a responsible, progressive policy of taxation so that Canadians can benefit collectively from the social services that not only the federal government can provide but that the federal government funds

through its assistance to provinces, equalization programs and the like. In that regard, the Canadian economy is continuing to do well. Indeed, I've quoted on several occasions how well we are, in fact, doing compared to other G7 countries.

FEDERAL DEFICIT

Hon. Elizabeth Marshall: Senator Gold, the government recently released two different deficit numbers. The *Fiscal Monitor* said it was \$50.9 billion and the budget said it was \$40 billion. Could you tell us what the deficit was for last year? There's a big difference in those two numbers. Could you give us the correct number?

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

As you would know, the initial numbers and the revised numbers in both cases were not necessarily the final numbers. It was made clear by the Department of Finance that the final results for 2023 and 2024 still require additional adjustments. Therefore, unfortunately, I'm not able to give you the number at this juncture.

Senator Marshall: I expect that the government will make us wait until about Christmas for the number.

Why would the government even release two different numbers for the deficit? The numbers were released at about the same time, and there's quite a difference in the numbers. Why would they release those two numbers and not provide an explanation?

Senator Gold: I'm not in a position to answer your specific question, but as I said, it was made clear by the Department of Finance — and even validated in reports in the press — that adjustments will be made, and I believe those numbers will ultimately be forthcoming.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

Hon. Mary Coyle: Senator Gold, since 2021, you have answered 54 questions from senators about the Canada disability benefit. This is a clear priority. In my second reading speech, I cited criticisms calling the bill weak because it didn't specify how much the benefit would be, who would be eligible and when the government would start paying it out.

At third reading, I said that in the absence of details, it came down to trust. We, the legislators, and the disabilities community were being asked to trust in the people charged with the job, trust in the process, trust there would be true co-development and trust in the government to live up to its stated commitments.

Senator Gold, why has that trust been so seriously betrayed?

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

Again, the government understands very well — as I do — the disappointment with regard to the actual amounts in this first phase of this program.

I will repeat, however — in response to your question — that this is a historic program. It's the first time there ever was the creation or the establishment of a disability benefit in Canada. Indeed, colleagues, you will know this was the largest single line item in the budget.

• (1620)

The amounts that were ultimately included were a function of having to take into account the competing fiscal priorities and constraints. Again, as I've said many times, the government has been clear in its intent that the program would be expanded, and that has, indeed, been indicated publicly and in the budget.

Senator Coyle: Senator Gold, in January 2022, 43 senators wrote to the government asking for the disabilities benefit legislation. In June 2023, we passed that legislation. In November 2023, I wrote to Minister Khera, encouraging swift implementation. Minister Khera responded, writing:

I can assure you that our Government is taking strong action to address the financial hardships that persons with disabilities are facing today.

Senator Gold, when can we expect to see that “strong action” to improve the shockingly weak Canada disability benefit?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. I'm not in a position to speculate — I cannot speculate on any future funding. I'll certainly raise it with the minister, as I know you and others have as well.

[Translation]

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

HOUSING ACCELERATOR FUND

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. In the Prime Minister's itinerary for Monday, June 10, in Quebec City, a meeting was scheduled between the Prime Minister and stakeholders in the affordable housing sector. The official record published at the end of his trip unfortunately makes no mention of the details of that meeting. Senator Gold, could you tell us about the stakeholders he met with, the content of the discussions and the progress made on affordable housing?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, colleague, for the question. I don't have a full list of the participants, or information on the specific topics of discussion. However, the Prime Minister and the government regularly meet with stakeholders in the affordable housing sector, municipalities, provinces and partners to discuss how the government can contribute to the development of affordable housing. For example, the government invested in the creation of more than 7,000 new, very affordable housing units, including

housing for seniors, through funds for affordable housing. The government will continue working to ensure that every Canadian has access to the housing they need.

Senator Mégie: To continue in the same vein, in 2023, the first ministers announced the Housing Accelerator Fund, which provided Quebec with \$900 million precisely to build the 8,000 housing units you mentioned, including 500 units specifically set aside for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. So far, how much of the money in this fund has been spent? How many housing units have been built? If you don't have that information on hand, could you give it to us later?

Senator Gold: Thank you. Honourable senator, since this is a relatively new agreement, I don't have the exact numbers to give you.

I can add that, since 2015, the government has invested nearly \$9 billion in Quebec to build, repair and subsidize hundreds of thousands of housing units. That represents nearly 20% of the federal housing funding in Canada. The government looks forward to building on the success of the recent \$1.8-billion agreement with Quebec.

[English]

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Senator Gold, the leader of the Green Party, Elizabeth May, has received an unredacted copy of the report of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP. She's a leader of a party with only two elected members and therefore not a recognized party in the House of Commons. When will the leaders of the recognized groups in the Senate be afforded the same courtesy as that extended to the leader of the Green Party in the House of Commons and be given access to the unredacted report of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, Senator Downe, and for your persistence in this matter. As I've mentioned — I believe it was yesterday — my office has made inquiries with the government regarding this, and we do not have an answer yet from the government, but I will follow up with interested senators as soon as I know more.

Senator Downe: Thank you. We appreciate the work of your office staff, but given the disparity of treatment between the party leaders in the House of Commons and the leaders of the various groups in the Senate, have you actually spoken directly to Minister LeBlanc to make the necessary arrangements for the group leaders in the Senate to read the same unredacted report that Elizabeth May read?

[Senator Gold]

Senator Gold: I personally and my office are in regular contact — I would say daily — with Minister LeBlanc's office. We have made the inquiries and are awaiting a response from the government.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. As we come to the end of this session, I want to come back to an issue that I've raised with him a few times, and that's an issue regarding the national capital.

First, it's with regard to the future of Wellington Street. There have been discussions between the Government of Canada and the City of Ottawa that have gone on for the past couple of years. On the one hand, I think that we can enhance and augment the national capital, and on the other, I think it's a matter of advancing security on Parliament Hill, both for parliamentarians and visitors.

I wonder if you could update the chamber on the federal-municipal discussions in this regard.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and your ongoing interest in our neighbourhood and the Parliamentary Precinct.

Colleagues, Public Services and Procurement Canada is committed to the acquisition of Wellington Street from the City of Ottawa as an essential first step in addressing the long-standing security challenges for the Parliamentary Precinct.

The Government of Canada is committed to creating a plan for Wellington Street that preserves the Parliamentary Precinct as a safe, open and accessible place in a way that works for local residents, supports dynamic business activity and creates an enhanced visitor experience for all those who come to visit our capital.

I have been informed that the Prime Minister and the mayor recently met to discuss their shared interest in maintaining a vibrant capital city and the revitalization of the downtown core while addressing the city's unique needs as Canada's national capital.

Again, all future plans for Wellington Street would ensure that it's an accessible and attractive space, and planning will be done in consultation with the city residents and businesses as well as Indigenous partners.

Senator Cardozo: Thank you for that. I think that's an advancement on the issue, and I'm pleased to hear that, as I'm sure many others will be.

I want to float a couple of other ideas with regard to other locations. One is that consideration should be given to the building which currently houses the Ottawa Public Library. When it moves to its new quarters in LeBreton Flats, I think it would be a great location for the Portrait Gallery of Canada. And

perhaps this building, in 10 years, when the Senate of Canada leaves this building, perhaps it can be used as a downtown location for the Canada Science and Technology Museum.

Senator Gold: Thank you for those suggestions. I would encourage you to pass them on to the relevant stakeholders. I'll certainly pass them on from my end.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY CANADA

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, you and your bosses over at the Prime Minister's Office like to say that things are under RCMP investigation as an excuse to avoid our questions. We're even seeing it now with the latest foreign interference on the part of parliamentarians. But when we want you to actually call in the RCMP to investigate Liberal corruption at the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund, you won't do it.

On Monday, the government voted against our motion referring the matter for criminal investigation. Yesterday, you refused to answer Senator Plett's questions about handing relevant documents over to the RCMP. This isn't a fund that was set up to fight climate change. It was set up as a slush fund to siphon hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars into Liberal insiders' pockets.

Just like your carbon tax, it's not about fighting climate change, Senator Gold. It's about funding Justin Trudeau's wild and wacky out-of-control spending. That's why you won't axe the tax.

Senator Gold, why won't the Trudeau government for once do the right thing: call in the RCMP?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question at the end of your statement. Senator Housakos, I don't know where to begin. I know that those who follow you on social media will take pleasure from your assertions. I can only say that in each and every one of those assertions you're incorrect, with all due respect.

To take one example, the price on pollution that is a centrepiece, though not the only component, of this government's climate change policy is a market-driven, economist-approved, efficient and effective measure to address what is an existential crisis.

A serious government has to have a serious climate action plan. I do not see the government in waiting with anything other than slogans and talking points, and I think that's regrettable and Canadians deserve better.

• (1630)

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, I'll tell you this: You should learn from the previous government. When there were serious allegations put forward, they would waive cabinet confidentiality, send files to the RCMP and, more importantly, call in the Auditor General. Senator Gold, \$123 million worth of

contracts was found to have been given inappropriately. There was \$76 million that went to Liberal insiders appointed to roles within Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, including Trudeau's hand-picked SDTC chair siphoning off \$217,000 in her own company. When will hard-working Canadians catch a break, and when will you call in the RCMP, or just call an election and get it over with?

Senator Gold: Again, it is easy — and you have the privilege — to make these assertions about slush funds, insiders and corruptions, and you can label assertions and innuendos as facts, if you wish. Again, you are protected by privilege; I respect that.

But, again, with respect, I believe you are misstating the case. Moreover, the government has taken appropriate, necessary, prudent and responsible steps to improve the procurement processes, and will continue to do so.

FINANCE

CAPITAL GAINS INCLUSION RATE

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Leader, in May, the average cost of rent across Canada hit another all-time high. It now stands at \$2,202 per month — an increase of 9.3% in just one year.

Senator Housakos: Wow.

Senator Martin: The Trudeau government has failed to build homes that Canadians can afford, and this has led to rent increases right across the country.

In May, the average listed rent in Atlantic Canada rose by 15% year over year. Leader, in your province of Quebec, it rose by 7%. In my province of B.C., where rent is already incredibly expensive, it went up another 2%. Leader, how will the Trudeau government's new capital gains tax impact the record cost of rent? How much investment in purpose-built rentals will be driven away as a result?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I don't know the answer to your question. What I do know is this: For a party that used to pride itself in understanding the division of powers in the Constitution, and that also professed respect for restrained — or criticism of government overreach, to assume that the rents in my province, or in any other province, are the function of a recently announced change in the inclusion rate of the capital gains tax is absolutely mind-boggling.

Anybody in this chamber — and there are some, at least, who have experience in the housing market, whether it's financing housing, building housing or managing housing projects — will know very well, as I said on so many occasions, and forgive me for being pedantic, that it is a combination of many factors and partners, including provincial, territorial and municipal, to say nothing of the private sector, who are responsible for both the housing stock and the cost of housing.

Senator Martin: Well, the fact is that on April 12, the Prime Minister promised Canadians that 3.87 million new homes would be built by 2031.

Senator Housakos: They lied.

Senator Martin: How many homes have been built in the two months since this promise was made?

Senator Gold: We live in the real world, not in a video game or The Sims game where you can simply press a button and houses pop up to appear, nor do we live in a Monopoly world where we can just play construction, whether it's homes or hotels.

The government's promise was a good faith promise that it would do its part with all of the other partners. Not every partner, frankly, has delivered on its promise, but the government is committed and will continue to work hard on behalf of Canadians.

HEALTH

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

Hon. Patrick Brazeau: Senator Gold, on May 31, the government issued its National Suicide Prevention Action Plan. As you are also aware, the Senate released its report entitled *Doing What Works: Rethinking the Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention*. Two of the three major recommendations that the Senate had made, essentially, was for the government to acknowledge that there's a suicide crisis in Indigenous communities in Canada, and, given the fact that 75% of suicides in Canada are committed by men and young boys, can you tell me why there's no mention of the words "men and young boys" in this action plan?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, senator, and thank you for your advocacy on this, and also for your courage in bringing this forward and humanizing this tragic situation within this chamber and for the benefit of Canadians.

The scourge that has afflicted too many Canadians — young boys and men in Indigenous communities and elsewhere — is a tragedy. The government remains committed to doing its part to provide the support and framework within which those supports can be given.

I will make some inquiries with the minister vis-à-vis the language to which you refer. But the government remains committed to doing its part in addressing this tragic situation in this country.

Senator Brazeau: Thank you for that. As you're aware, Senator Gold, I was part of the committee as a member, looking into suicide prevention — rethinking the suicide prevention strategy — and I also appeared as a witness because of my personal experience.

[Senator Martin]

If we want to deal with reducing the number of suicides in Canada, we have to target the core issue, and the core issue is the 75% of suicides that are committed by men and boys. If we are serious about reducing the number of suicides, there must be mention of it.

Senator Gold: I take your point, senator. But I'm sure you will agree with me as well that it is also fundamentally important to address the root causes — social, economic, societal and historical causes — that give rise to this, whether it's despair or other factors that drive people to consider taking, much less take, their own life.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

IMMIGRATION LEVELS

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: My question is for the Leader of the Government.

Since taking office, the Trudeau government's greatest strength has been inertia.

If you don't like the premise of my question, then let me tell you that this is something that was said by *Toronto Star* journalist Chantal Hébert a year ago.

There has been inertia in the issuing of passports, in foreign interference, in the immigration and asylum seeker files, and the list goes on.

At some point, will the Prime Minister stop saying that those who rightly claim that his bad judgment on immigration is responsible for the housing crisis and the excessive number of people in the education, health and social services systems are xenophobic?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. It gives me the opportunity to repeat our favourite phrase, "I do not accept the premise of your question."

No, but seriously, the Government of Canada's position is the opposite of that recently taken by a certain provincial premier and others, if my memory serves, who have described immigration as the cause of all of our society's misfortunes, including the problems with affordable housing and social services, when that is not the case.

The Canadian government has made changes to its various immigration programs to ensure the responsible integration of everyone who wants to come to Canada.

Senator Dagenais: Immigration Minister Marc Miller recently called the Premier of Quebec, François Legault, a grouch, because he keeps asking for the money owed to Quebecers as a result of the Trudeau government's mismanagement of immigration.

Does Minister Miller's opinion reflect that of your Prime Minister and the Liberal government regarding the Quebec premier?

Senator Gold: Prime Minister Trudeau has full confidence in Minister Miller, who does not mince words. Let's not forget that the federal government has given the Quebec government nearly \$750 million in recognition of the fact that Quebec takes in a large number of asylum seekers in this country. This is the correct and responsible thing to do.

• (1640)

[English]

FINANCE

CAPITAL GAINS INCLUSION RATE

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, the Trudeau government says its latest job-killing tax is aimed at the wealthiest Canadians. In fact, over the last nine years, it's well-connected Liberals who have done well for themselves while everyday Canadians have suffered.

Most recently, we have the Auditor General's report — it's not from me but the Auditor General — showing Liberal insiders at McKinsey and the green slush fund enrich themselves with shady contracts paid for by taxpayers.

Of course, all of this is overseen by the Prime Minister, whose last Christmas vacation cost more than three times the average annual income for Canadians. Speaking of that, it's reported that the Trudeau government will spend millions in taxpayers' money to buy property co-owned by the PM's childhood friend Tom Pitfield, who, along with his wife — Anna Gainey, former Liberal Party president and now, lo and behold, an MP — vacationed on "Billionaire Island" with Prime Minister Trudeau.

Senator Gold, what are the chances of the sale of this property closing before June 25 to avoid the higher tax rate? Who is supporting the multimillionaires here, Senator Gold?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Try as you may, Senator Housakos, I'm not going to bite.

You started by asking a legitimate question about the change in the inclusion rate for the capital gains tax. You toggled immediately to allegations of insiders and so on. First, I simply have no knowledge about the property or when it will be sold. However, I can say and will repeat that the change in the inclusion rate for the capital gains tax is a responsible, focused measure to ensure a greater degree of fairness for those in our tax system. It is not a job killer, a rent killer or anything else of the sort. It is a very modest change that only returns the inclusion level to what it was before, and we seemed to do fairly well when it was at that level.

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, we've faced historic inflation over the last decade under the watch of the Trudeau government. That means people who have things are becoming wealthier because things are becoming overly appreciated. That means the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

It's very disingenuous that the Auditor General — an officer of Parliament appointed by your government — has discovered impropriety and your government refuses to send that information to the RCMP so that Liberal insiders can be investigated. Why?

Senator Gold: It is irresponsible to assume that improprieties — as you've described them — are necessarily criminal acts. I am simply asserting — contrary to your assertions — that it is irresponsible to indulge in these kinds of claims and innuendos.

DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table the answers to the following oral questions:

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on June 16, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Martin, regarding gender-based violence.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on February 15, 2023, by the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

INDIGENOUS SERVICES

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on June 16, 2022)

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC):

The Government of Canada values its relationship with Indigenous Peoples and acknowledges the ongoing work needed for Reconciliation, including housing needs.

Canada's Housing Plan introduces a Rapid Housing Stream within the Affordable Housing Fund (AHF) to build deeply affordable housing, supportive housing, and shelters for our most vulnerable. Budget 2024 proposes \$976 million over five years, starting in 2024-25, and \$24 million in future years. The AHF, a more than \$14 billion program, offers low-interest or forgivable loans and contributions to build new, and repair existing, affordable and community housing. It prioritizes funding for women and children's shelters and transitional housing, Indigenous communities, and Black-led organizations to increase housing that benefit Black households.

Budget 2024 also includes an additional \$1 billion over four years for Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, which has provided prevention services to over 126,700 people at risk of homelessness and helped over 71,500 people find more stable housing.

INFRASTRUCTURE

CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Donald Neil Plett on February 15, 2023)

Infrastructure Canada

The Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) has adopted a market-competitive compensation program which reflects the best practices of Crown corporations and other comparable organizations in the financial services industry. The CIB's compensation program includes three components: base salary, performance-based incentive award, and benefits. At the end of each fiscal year, employees are eligible to receive an incentive award based on the achievement of corporate objectives, individual objectives and the employee's actions in contributing to the CIB's values and culture. Senior level employees are also required to defer a portion of the incentive award. The deferred incentive award vests and is paid out after three years to hold senior-level employees accountable for the long-term effectiveness of the capital deployed and the expected outcomes. At the end of the fiscal period ending March 31, 2022, the number of employees who received bonus payouts totaled 85 and their payouts (including deferred awards paid out from previous years) totaled \$7,064,814. Information on the CIB's compensation program is provided in the CIB's 2021-2022 Annual Report.

Please note that since the date of this question the Government of Canada has released both its Housing Plan (<https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2024/04/12/announcement-canadas-housing-plan>) and Budget 2024 (<https://budget.canada.ca/2024/home-accueil-en.html>).

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PHARMACARE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Pate, seconded by the Honourable Senator McBean, for the second reading of Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare.

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare. Today, I intend to focus on the examples of the first classes of medications which the proposed pharmacare plan would cover.

The first two classes of medications and other devices to be piloted under this program would be drugs and equipment related to the treatment of diabetes and drugs and devices for contraception.

Providing coverage for diabetes medications and equipment will be a huge economic and psychological relief for many Canadians whose health and lives depend on medications such as insulin, metformin and glimepiride.

The goal is also to include the basic equipment needed to treat diabetes, from syringes to glucose monitors.

Given that Type 2 diabetes runs in my family, I may one day have occasion to benefit from that coverage myself. And given how important Canadian diabetes research has been — from the days of Banting and Best, right through to the Edmonton Protocol — it seems very fitting that diabetes was targeted as the first medical condition to receive this proposed pharmacare coverage.

Yet, as important as that diabetes coverage will be for millions, I think it is far more revolutionary that this plan will cover birth control, including the pill, the patch, the implant and the IUD, as well as emergency “morning-after pills” such as Plan B.

In the Senate just last week, Senator Don Plett himself spoke with considerable passion on the need for access to contraception. He quoted a *Washington Post* piece which explained that one of the ways the Taliban was oppressing women in Afghanistan was by banning birth control.

I had not realized that the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate was such an outspoken and stalwart advocate for reproductive choice for women. However, I am grateful that he raised his voice — and loudly — to support a woman's right to control her own body and fertility.

Senator Plett was absolutely correct. No woman — and indeed no person with a womb — is truly free or able to access comprehensive health care without access to contraception. As long as Canadian women, girls and others who need it are denied access to reliable birth control because of financial barriers, we are denying them the opportunity to choose their future lives.

We don't need to look as far as Afghanistan for an example. In America, only 14 states currently offer legal protection for the right to purchase and use birth control. In the wake of the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, many states are moving toward banning certain kinds of birth control altogether, including the IUD and Plan B. It is a disturbing trend.

At a time when millions of women in the United States are facing the genuine threat of lack of access to contraceptives, I congratulate the Canadian government for its courageous commitment to make safe, reliable, legal birth control more accessible than ever before in Canadian history.

This will be life changing for so many Canadian women.

Action Canada reports that 46% of all pregnancies in Canada are unintended and that 70% of people seeking abortion in Canada report that they have no insurance coverage for contraception.

But if we can provide young teenagers with easy access to birth control — especially access to the more expensive long-term options, which don't require a pill to be taken every day or a patch to be changed every week — we stand a very good chance of reducing teen pregnancies and allowing more girls and young women the chance to continue with junior high, high school or post-secondary education.

For girls growing up in poverty, who are socially marginalized and might never be able to afford such contraceptive options, true reproductive choice — meaningful control over their own bodies and timelines — could make an extraordinary difference to their abilities to pursue an education that prepares them for the responsibilities of adult life and perhaps eventual parenthood.

Free birth control will also be a boon for young working women just starting their careers in this gig-driven economy, who may not have the kind of benefits packages which women workers of another generation took for granted. Even if you have a pretty good job these days, it can be hard — as you juggle student loans or high rents — to find the money to pay for something like a \$500 new-generation IUD or a \$400 contraceptive implant.

If you're a 40-year-old stay-at-home mom with three kids or a self-employed entrepreneur without work-related drug benefits, free, reliable birth control may be every bit as important to you as to a first-year university student.

Access to emergency contraception is every bit as vital, especially in cases where women or girls have been sexually assaulted or coerced into having unplanned sex, or if they've had a barrier method of birth control fail. Those emergency contraceptives are especially important in a country where access to abortion care is far from universal.

The point is that anyone who can have a baby should also have a choice about when and whether to have that baby.

This bold policy will mean substantive liberation for so many people wanting meaningful control over how they plan their families and manage their own physical health.

Providing girls and young women with more and better contraceptive options will pay dividends for them and the community in other ways too.

Fewer unplanned pregnancies means fewer babies born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, which is most often caused when women drink in the early weeks of pregnancy, before they know they are with child. With improved birth control availability, fewer women will become pregnant while drinking heavily. That kind of family planning could also reduce the risks of other medical issues caused by poor nutrition during pregnancy or lack of good prenatal care.

• (1650)

Fewer unplanned pregnancies could reduce the number of babies born to families who lack the economic or emotional capacity to care for them, which may, in time, mean fewer children abused and neglected, fewer children coming into foster care and not to mention fewer abortions.

Of course, preventing pregnancy isn't the only reason that people use contraception. Birth control medications can also be important for managing menstrual care, reducing anemia, treating conditions such as endometriosis or polycystic ovary disease or even providing gender-affirming care to trans men.

There are just so many costs — physical, psychological, cultural and economic — to walking around with a womb. Costs born by half the population, costs the other half rarely consider.

A pharmacare plan for contraceptives is a huge step in righting that balance, in acknowledging the true health and social consequences implicit in being female.

But while I celebrate the liberty and freedom that such a plan could offer to women across Canada, my heart breaks a bit to think that the women of Alberta — the women of my province — could well be denied such independence and equality.

As of now, the Government of Alberta has indicated it will refuse to take part in any national pharmacare plan. It's not clear to me how much of this has to do with Alberta's dislike of nationally funded and directed programs in general and how much it may be influenced by right-wing ideologues who wish to deny Alberta women their physical autonomy and full humanity.

Whatever the Smith government's reasons for denying Albertans access to free contraception — not to mention free diabetes care — this national pharmacare plan will not really be national until and unless the citizens of Alberta are included and receive equality with other Canadians.

What will this lead to? Will we have an absurd situation where Albertans will have to travel to British Columbia or Saskatchewan to get free insulin and free intrauterine devices or will that be against the rules? Will women's groups or families whose members have diabetes end up smuggling medication and medical supplies across Alberta's borders?

Will young women entering the workforce choose to move to another part of Canada for fear their access to contraception in Alberta might continue to erode? What a stark contrast to British Columbia, right next door, where contraception costs are already covered by the provincial government.

I would dearly hope that if and when these first few steps towards comprehensive pharmacare become law, Alberta and Ottawa are able to come to some sort of understanding or

compromise. Otherwise, millions of Albertans will be left as second-class citizens in their own country.

Thank you, *hiy hiy*.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

(At 4:55 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 5, 2024, the Senate adjourned until 2 p.m., tomorrow.)

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