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Thursday, November 7, 2024

The Honourable PIERRETTE RINGUETTE,
Speaker pro tempore

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THE SENATE

Thursday, November 7, 2024

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

Prayers.

approach November 11, let us carry their memory in our hearts and honour their service by living in a way that makes Canada — a land of peace, freedom and hope — worthy of their sacrifice. Thank you.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):

Honourable senators, I rise today ahead of Remembrance Day to reflect on the bravery and sacrifices of the men and women who served our country with unyielding courage. Each November we pause to honour those who have worn Canada's uniform and who answered the call to defend freedom and peace, often at the cost of their own lives. This is a time to remember the incredible price of the liberties we hold today and to pay tribute to the unbreakable spirit of our veterans, past and present.

From the battlefields of Vimy Ridge to the beaches of Normandy, from the hills of Korea to the deserts of Afghanistan, Canadian Forces have stood shoulder to shoulder with our allies to protect our way of life. They endured hardship, danger and loss beyond words. Yet they stood firm, embodying the very best of what it means to be Canadian. They answered the call to protect future generations and to secure a world where freedom and peace might flourish.

Today we live in a country that enjoys stability, safety and democracy. These freedoms were neither free nor guaranteed. They were fought for by generations of Canadians who believed in a better and a more just world. We must never take this peace for granted; it is our solemn duty to remember that the freedoms we enjoy today were paid for in sacrifice.

Colleagues, as we approach Remembrance Day, let us also consider the importance of remembrance itself. We wear the poppy not only as a symbol of respect but as a commitment to never forget. Each poppy signifies a life given, a promise kept and a legacy to uphold. It is our responsibility to pass this legacy to future generations so they also understand the depth of sacrifice made by those who came before us.

Our veterans deserve our deepest gratitude and unwavering support. For those who are still with us, we must ensure they receive the care and respect they have so rightfully earned. For those who have passed, it is our duty to preserve their memory and to carry forward the torch of peace they fought to give us. Their bravery is our inspiration, and their sacrifice is our everlasting reminder of the cost of war.

May we honour our veterans not only with words but through our actions, through our dedication to peace and our resolve to protect the freedoms they fought so hard to secure. As we

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, I rise today because I have something on my mind and because we are being asked to "talk about it."

Colleagues, November is Financial Literacy Month. This year's theme is "Money on your Mind. Talk about it!"

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, or FCAC, which leads this national campaign, is championing various initiatives to destigmatize conversations about money and give Canadians the confidence they need to make informed choices about their finances.

As the FCAC points out, talking about money remains taboo. Many find it difficult to discuss financial matters. It can be overwhelming; it can even be embarrassing for some individuals to ask questions that may feel simplistic or rudimentary. But as any teacher would say, no question is ever off limits.

In my past life as a banker, I always made sure my clients felt supported, informed and understood their banking options. I speak from experience: Clients would feel more confident and better equipped to face some of life's big financial decisions when they were properly accompanied.

[Translation]

The agency's five-year plan also reminds us about the importance of Canadians' financial resilience, especially in an increasingly digital world, and especially among our most vulnerable populations—our youth and our seniors.

That's why it is urgent that Canadians have the right tools to adapt to life's financial choices, difficulties and shocks, whether predictable or unpredictable. This is an objective we all, collectively, need to work towards.

[English]

Recent findings from an FCAC survey on the financial well-being of Canadians show that only 47% of Canadians describe themselves as financially knowledgeable. Although this number has increased since 2019, the truth is that more than half of Canadians may not feel adequately equipped to make some financial choices and decisions.

The survey also addresses Canadians' financial vulnerability, as 56% of households report having trouble or are sometimes struggling with their financial commitments. One third of Canadians report a high level of anxiety, stress or worry about their finances.

Honourable senators, Canadians are struggling financially these days, which makes financial literacy more important than ever. I urge all of us to encourage Canadians to take action this month to do something to boost their financial confidence and reduce their financial anxiety.

If you have money on your mind, I, for one, am always willing to talk about it.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

**THE HONOURABLE SUSAN HOLT, M.L.A.,
PREMIER OF NEW BRUNSWICK**

Hon. Krista Ross: Honourable senators, today I rise to mark a momentous occasion.

This past weekend I had the honour and privilege of attending the swearing-in of New Brunswick's first female Premier, Susan Holt.

The gallery at the provincial legislature in Fredericton was packed with many New Brunswickers for this historic day. In an impactful gesture, Premier Holt invited all recent female members of the legislative assembly, or MLAs, from every party, including our own Senator Kingston, to sit as honoured guests on the floor of the legislature, where she thanked them for leading the way and breaking the path for her to become the first female premier of New Brunswick. It was an incredibly uplifting day, with many hugs and many tears shed.

Some of the other female firsts in New Brunswick include Brenda Robertson, the first woman elected to the legislature and the first to serve in cabinet; Shirley Dysart, the first woman to serve as leader of a political party in New Brunswick and the first woman Speaker; and Aldéa Landry, the first Acadian woman named to the New Brunswick cabinet.

If we turn back the clock to 1972, it was a New Brunswick woman who achieved a first in this place. The first woman Speaker in the Senate was from New Brunswick, the indomitable advocate for women Muriel McQueen Fergusson.

• (1410)

After I was appointed, given the big shoes to fill of the many who came before me, I wanted to learn more about the history of the politics in the Senate and my province. To that end, I read a historical book on politics in New Brunswick. One of the chapters on representation was very enlightening:

Another characteristic that one would expect of senators, they do indeed possess; most of them are 'joiners' — of fraternal organizations, sporting and businessmen's clubs . . . The Senators, then, are men of means who are prominent in social and professional circles.

Throughout the chapter, they continue to refer to "him," "his" position in life or "his" appointment. However, to date, we have had 16 women from New Brunswick serve as senators, five of our current cohort of ten are women as well.

We have had 55 women serve as members of the Legislative Assembly. Now, we have Premier Susan Holt as another role model for young women to aspire to, that they too could become Premier of New Brunswick.

I hope the books on politics in New Brunswick in the future mention "her" position in life, "her" appointment and "her" electoral victory.

Congratulations, Premier Holt. You stand today as the first and only female Premier of the Province of New Brunswick, but I know not the last and that many young women in New Brunswick will walk in your footsteps in the future.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

BATTLE OF HONG KONG

Hon. Jane MacAdam: Honourable senators, I rise today during Veterans' Week to once again honour the brave Canadian soldiers who fought in one of our country's earliest and most devastating battles of the Second World War, the Battle of Hong Kong. This year, I wish to shine a light on the years of suffering that followed the battle, especially for those who endured the brutal conditions at prisoner of war camps.

In December 1941, nearly 2,000 Canadian soldiers, including my father, George Palmer, were sent to defend Hong Kong. After 17 gruelling days of combat against a fierce Japanese assault, Canadian Forces were overwhelmed. The battle cost the lives of 290 Canadians, with hundreds more wounded, but the greatest ordeal for those who survived was just beginning.

All 1,685 Canadian soldiers who were taken prisoner faced more than three-and-a-half years of unimaginable suffering. My father was sent to two camps in Hong Kong before being transferred to Japan to Omine camp, one of the most gruelling camps for Canadian prisoners of war and where he spent most of his time.

At Omine, 165 Canadians performed back-breaking labour in a nearby coal mine, descending each day into dark, confined tunnels to dig, drill and clear rubble. In these cramped, damp spaces they endured up to 22-hour shifts without rest, limited ventilation and the constant threats of cave-ins.

Above ground, the abuse was relentless. Food was scarce and disease was rampant. Starvation weakened the men while the ever-present threat of punishment — or worse — weighed heavily on their minds. The fear of mass executions was constant. Threats spread that prisoners would be buried alive in the mines or killed in shelters if an Allied invasion occurred.

For my father and the others, survival became an act of resilience, relying on sheer will, faith and hope.

Liberation finally came in September 1945. In addition to those lost in battle, over 260 Canadian soldiers died in captivity. My father rarely spoke of these years. It was only later in life, when other veterans began sharing their stories, that I learned more of his experiences in those camps.

He once said, “I’ve always been an optimistic fellow. I always had hope.” It was that hope that sustained his spirit and saved him, and others.

The Battle of Hong Kong and the trials endured by its veterans remain some of the darkest chapters in Canadian military history. These stories compel us to remember not only the battles fought but also the strength of those who survived.

To all who served, are serving and their families, your courage will never be forgotten.

Lest we forget. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, on November 11, we gather with solemn hearts and reverent minds to observe Remembrance Day, a moment set aside to honour the courage, sacrifice and unwavering dedication of those who have served our country in times of war and conflict.

We remember the over two million Canadians who have worn the uniform of our Armed Forces and the more than 118,000 who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

[*Translation*]

Their courage on the battlefield during the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War, the war in Afghanistan and various other conflicts around the world has become woven into the very fabric of our national identity.

[*English*]

As someone born in the Republic of Korea to parents who survived the Korean War, I wish to especially recognize the contributions of Canadians who went to Korea’s aid.

When North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, Canada was among the first nations to respond to the United Nations’ effort. Canadians served with valour, enduring harsh conditions and fierce battles, including the pivotal Battle of Kapyong. Their bravery helped to stem the tide of aggression and secure a fragile peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The Korean War was a testament to Canada’s commitment to international peace and security. Our veterans of the war have earned our deepest respect and gratitude.

This Remembrance Day, let us remember the sacrifices made by soldiers who stood firm in the face of adversity, gave their lives in distant lands and left behind families and loved ones.

Let us also remember the sacrifices of those who returned home, carrying the invisible scars of war, and the families who supported them through their trials.

In remembering our veterans, we also honour the values for which they fought: freedom, democracy and peace. We recognize their sacrifices were not made in vain but were a testament to the strength and resilience of the human spirit.

Their courage has ensured that we live in a country where we can cherish these freedoms and where the principles of justice and equality remain steadfast.

Let us also recognize the contributions of those who continue to serve in our Armed Forces, who work tirelessly to keep our nation safe and secure. Their dedication is a living tribute to the legacy of those we remember.

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, let’s honour their memory today and every day through our actions and our dedication to building a better world. We will remember them.

[*English*]

Lest we forget.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, as we approach Remembrance Day, I rise to speak about our solemn duty to honour those who have served and who continue to serve our nation.

Across the country, Canadians are already pinning their poppies over their hearts, a gesture that connects us to more than a century of service and sacrifice.

From the muddy trenches of Vimy Ridge to the beaches of Normandy, from the hills of Korea to the mountains of Afghanistan, Canadian Forces members have demonstrated extraordinary valour.

Today, our soldiers, sailors and flyers continue this proud tradition, serving in vital military and humanitarian missions with our allies around the world.

In Ukraine, the Canadian Armed Forces have led training missions and critical capacity-building operations.

In Latvia, our troops lead a North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, battle group, standing firm with our allies.

In the Indo-Pacific, our naval forces help maintain international maritime security.

Here at home, Canadian Forces have been invaluable in responding to natural disasters and supporting communities during times of crisis.

I acknowledge the legacy of Indigenous and First Nations veterans in Saskatchewan who served with distinction in The Royal Regina Rifles and throughout our Armed Forces, including on Juno Beach on D-Day. Their contributions are too often overlooked.

These brave warriors followed in the footsteps of their ancestors, fighting with honour yet facing discrimination at home. Recognizing the courage and sacrifice of all Indigenous Canadian Forces members and veterans is an important aspect of reconciliation.

• (1420)

To all our veterans: Your service has shaped the very character of our nation. The values you fought for — democracy, human rights and the rule of law — remain the bedrock of our society. Your example continues to inspire new generations of Canadians who choose to serve.

On Remembrance Day, we also bow our heads to the 118,000 Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us. We remember the families who bear the weight of each loss. We honour the veterans among us, marked by both visible and invisible scars from the line of duty. We cherish the freedom that Canadian heroes fought and died for.

In an increasingly complex world, Canada's commitment to our core values has never been more vital. It is our Armed Forces who are often tasked with realizing and representing these values around the world. Let's have their back.

Lest we forget. Thank you. *Hiy kitatamihin.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FIFTEENTH REPORT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Peter M. Boehm, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, presented the following report:

Thursday, November 7, 2024

The Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade has the honour to present its

FIFTEENTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill C-282, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management), has, in obedience to the order of reference of April 16, 2024, examined the said bill and now reports the same with the following amendment:

1. *Clause 1, page 1:* Add the following after line 17:

“(2.2) Subsection (2.1) does not apply to a commitment made on behalf of Canada by

(a) international trade treaty or agreement that existed upon the coming into force of that subsection;

(b) renegotiation of an international trade treaty or agreement that existed upon the coming into force of that subsection; or

(c) international trade treaty or agreement that was in the course of being negotiated upon the coming into force of that subsection.”.

Respectfully submitted,

PETER M. BOEHM

Chair

(*For text of observations, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 3265.*)

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

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

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE PREVENTION OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE BILL

TWENTY-NINTH REPORT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Chantal Petitclerc: Honourable senators, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the twenty-ninth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, which deals with Bill S-249, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the prevention of intimate partner violence.

(For text of report, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 3266.)

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

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

L'ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
FEBRUARY 21-23, 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 Parliamentary Mission to the United Nations, held in New York, New York, United States of America, on February 21 to 23, 2024.

PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
APRIL 3-4, 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 Parliamentary Mission to the United Nations, held in New York, New York, United States of America, from April 3 to 4, 2024.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on December 7, 2021, Question Period will begin at 3:30 this afternoon.

ANSWERS TO ORDER PAPER QUESTION TABLED

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD—ROGERS CELL AND
INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, including the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency, Canadian Grain Commission and Farm Products Council of Canada.

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY—ROGERS
CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

• (1430)

CANADIAN NORTHERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE
OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.

NATIONAL REVENUE—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Canada Revenue Agency.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF CANADA FOR
THE REGIONS OF QUEBEC—ROGERS CELL AND
INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions.

FISHERIES, OCEANS AND THE CANADIAN COAST GUARD—
ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Fisheries and Oceans Canada, including the Canadian Coast Guard.

INDIGENOUS SERVICES—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Indigenous Services Canada, including Indian Oil and Gas Canada.

NATIONAL DEFENCE—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — National Defence, Communications Security Establishment, Military Grievances External Review Committee, Military Police Complaints Commission and National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE—ROGERS CELL
AND INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Environment and Climate Change Canada, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada and Parks Canada.

CITIZENS' SERVICES—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable

Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Employment and Social Development Canada, Accessibility Standards Canada and Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY FOR
SOUTHERN ONTARIO—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY FOR
NORTHERN ONTARIO—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario.

FINANCE—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Department of Finance Canada and Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions.

EXPORT PROMOTION, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Global Affairs Canada and Invest in Canada.

HEALTH—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE
OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Health Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Patented Medicine Prices Review Board.

CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS—ROGERS CELL AND
INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES—ROGERS
CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Infrastructure Canada.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP—ROGERS CELL
AND INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY—ROGERS CELL AND
INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, including special operating agencies,

Copyright Board of Canada, Canadian Space Agency, National Research Council Canada, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Statistics Canada.

JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL—ROGERS CELL AND
INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Department of Justice Canada, Canadian Human Rights Commission and Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada.

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES—ROGERS CELL AND
INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Natural Resources Canada, Canada Energy Regulator, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Northern Pipeline Agency.

PACIFIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY—ROGERS CELL
AND INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Pacific Economic Development Canada.

CANADIAN HERITAGE—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Canadian Heritage, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, Library and Archives Canada, National Battlefields Commission, National Film Board of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute and Canadian Heritage Information Network.

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Privy Council Office.

JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL—PUBLIC PROSECUTION
SERVICE—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF
JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

PRAIRIES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CANADA—ROGERS CELL
AND INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Prairies Economic Development Canada.

PUBLIC SAFETY, DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS—ROGERS CELL AND
INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Public Safety Canada, Canada Border Services Agency, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Correctional Service of Canada, Parole Board of Canada and Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT—ROGERS CELL AND
INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Public Services and Procurement Canada and Shared Services Canada.

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY AND YOUTH—ROGERS CELL
AND INTERNET SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Women and Gender Equality Canada.

TREASURY BOARD—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE
OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and Canada School of Public Service.

TRANSPORT—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE
OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Transport Canada and Canadian Transportation Agency.

PUBLIC SAFETY, DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS—CANADIAN
INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT—
ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE
OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat.

PUBLIC SAFETY, DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS—PUBLIC SERVICE
COMMISSION AND TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD—
ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET SERVICE
OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Public Service Commission of Canada and Transportation Safety Board of Canada.

VETERANS AFFAIRS—ROGERS CELL AND INTERNET
SERVICE OUTAGE OF JULY 8, 2022

[English]

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the response to Question No. 183, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Rogers cell and internet service outage of July 8, 2022 — Veterans Affairs Canada and Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

ARAB HERITAGE MONTH BILL

THIRD READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Marty Klyne moved third reading of Bill C-232, An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month.

He said: Honourable senators, with Senator Cordy's retirement, I rise as the replacement sponsor of Bill C-232, the "Arab Heritage Month Act." She kind of tricked me into this. She asked if I would read this speech for her because she wouldn't be here. I turned and walked away, and she said, "Okay, now you're the sponsor." Thank you very much.

This is a House of Commons private member's bill to establish Arab heritage month every April, initiated by Ottawa South MP David McGuinty. Bill C-232 has the unanimous support of the other place, and the bill has been with us since March of last year. With our study now completed at the Social Affairs Committee, let's get this important bill over the finish line.

I am confident that our friendly critic, Senator Ataullahjan, will speak to this bill with greater eloquence than yours truly. Therefore, in the concise words of former Senator Baker, I will be brief.

Colleagues, Canadians of Arab heritage have made immense contributions to our diverse and multicultural society. The first immigrants of Arab background arrived in Canada in 1882. The very first Arab immigrant who arrived in Canada 140 years ago was Ibrahim Bounader, who settled in Montreal.

The population of Arab Canadians now numbers over 1 million, and has increased by 75% since 2006. Over 90% of the Arab population in Canada lives in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta, with Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa-Gatineau having the highest concentrations. Indeed, I have heard a rumour from my staff that the shawarma in Ottawa is the best in Canada. It has even been suggested that I specifically mention the family-run local favourite Shawarma Palace.

In an important development in the last decade, Canada was proud to welcome over 25,000 Syrian refugees over 100 days beginning in November 2015. Within a year, Saskatchewan had welcomed over 1,200 of our new neighbours. At the time, Premier Brad Wall said:

The bedrock of Saskatchewan can be found in our provincial motto, "From Many Peoples Strength", which recognizes that diversity of background, experience and culture only makes us stronger . . . more than ever, we see the truth of this as we continue to extend the warmest of welcomes to these newcomers who are now our neighbours and friends.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HAIDA NATION RECOGNITION BILL

MESSAGE FROM COMMONS

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons returning Bill S-16, An Act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation, and acquainting the Senate that they had passed this bill without amendment.

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

STATUTES REPEAL ACT—COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY
2024 REVISED REPORT AND LIST OF ACTS OR PROVISIONS
OF ACTS PROPOSED TO NOT BE REPEALED IN 2024

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of November 5, 2024, moved:

That the revised report on the *Statutes Repeal Act* for the year 2024, whose tabling was recorded in the *Journals of the Senate* of May 22, 2024, together with the list of Acts or provisions of Acts proposed to not be repealed pursuant to the same Act, tabled in the Senate on November 5, 2024, be referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs for examination and report; and

That the committee submit its report to the Senate no later than December 5, 2024.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1440)

Colleagues, I echo those sentiments. Arab immigration to Saskatchewan and the Prairies has resulted in rich contributions through the generations. One interesting example, which you can read about in Canada's greatest newspapers, the *Regina Leader Post* and Saskatoon's *The Star Phoenix*, is Habeeb Salloum's 2017 cookbook, *Arab Cooking on a Prairie Homestead*, published by the University of Regina Press.

I know I'm focusing a little on food, so I must be hungry.

With over 200 recipes, from dumplings and lentil pies — lentils are a pulse crop, by the way — to zucchini mint soup, this cookbook is a tribute to Mr. Salloum's parents, who left French-occupied Syria in the 1920s to seek a new life as pioneers on the prairies of Saskatchewan. I quote from a description of that book:

By growing “exotic” crops brought from their country of origin — such as lentils, chickpeas, and bulgur — the Salloums survived the Dust Bowl conditions of the 1930s, and helped change the landscape of Canadian farming.

Colleagues, as you may know, Canada is now the world's leading producer and exporter of lentils, accounting for one third of the world's crop, with 95% of production in Saskatchewan. You could say, in our great province of Saskatchewan, we have our fingers on the pulse.

I would love to tell you more about Arab Canadians' contributions to my region. However, as I have taken this bill over from Senator Cordy, I would be remiss not to say a few words about Arab heritage in her province of Nova Scotia.

In Halifax, the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 — a great place to visit, by the way — tells an interesting story:

In the north of Lebanon, 1,400 metres above sea level, there is a village called Diman. It's small. There are 650-700 registered residents. You can walk from one corner to the other in around 20 minutes.

In the city of Halifax, by some estimates, there are as many people who originate or whose families originate from Diman as there are in the village itself. Perhaps even more surprising is **how successful members of the community have been**. Among them are business and community leaders, provincial and federal politicians, and some of the city's most prominent real-estate developers. Halifax has a significant population of Lebanese Canadians— nearly four times the national average. The community in general, including families from Diman and surrounding villages, has had an outsized effect on the city of Halifax— its culture, food, street names, economy and skyline.

In 2018, a statue commemorating early Lebanese immigrants was unveiled in Halifax. It portrays a Lebanese traveller wearing traditional clothes. The plaque accompanying the statue reads:

This monument is a universal symbol of a proud, strong and globally united Lebanese community. The statue honours the early Lebanese settlers who, 130 years ago, established a presence in this country, sewing the bonds of loyalty, faith,

and perseverance. We are thankful to our Nova Scotia community and for the enduring friendships built in our new home, Canada

Senators, this statue and plaque celebrate Canada's Lebanese community, but the message is a universal one. It applies to all peoples from around the world who have come to our country looking for a better life for themselves and their families. Arab heritage month will be an important opportunity to reflect on a specific chapter of our Canadian story, which we will keep writing together.

In closing, I would like to thank MP David McGuinty for bringing this bill forward. I would also like to thank the Canadian Arab Institute for their role in this initiative. As MP McGuinty has noted, Arab heritage month will provide the opportunity and space for Arab Canadians to showcase their culture, their talents and why they are proud to be both Arab and Canadian, contributing to our communities on every level.

Colleagues, with your support, I am hopeful that we can see this bill pass and receive Royal Assent. Thank you. *Hiy kitatamihin*.

(On motion of Senator Ataullahjan, debate adjourned.)

INCOME TAX ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Plett, for the third reading of Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons).

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise today as the sponsor in the Senate of Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons).

I want to thank the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance for all their work on this bill and for taking time to examine it carefully. I also wish to acknowledge the critic of this bill, Senator Dagenais, and the work that he has done to date.

As senators are aware, the primary intent of Bill C-241 is to amend the Income Tax Act to allow tradespeople and indentured apprentices to deduct from their income amounts expended for travelling where they were employed in a construction activity at a job site that is located at least 120 kilometres away from their ordinary place of residence. This, colleagues, is the nature of the work for many tradespeople. They may be called a “journeyman” or a “journeyperson” specifically because their vocation usually means travelling from one job site to another.

Many tradespeople do not have a fixed location where they show up for work, like you and I do. They work at one site until that job is completed, and then they move to the next one. Sometimes those job sites can be hundreds or even thousands of kilometres away from their home. The problem is that, for the longest time, our tax code did not recognize this need for tradespeople to travel to temporary job locations as a legitimate employment expense or, at least, not for those who were employees.

While these expenses can be readily claimed by tradespeople who run their own businesses or who operate as independent contractors, they could not be claimed by those who work as employees and are often not covered by their employers. In today's workplace, this is a serious inequity which forces tradespeople who work as employees to absorb costs that neither independent contractors nor business owners are required to absorb. And this is the inequity that Bill C-241 seeks to address. Bill C-241 will amend subsection 8(1) of the Income Tax Act by adding the following to include a tradesperson's travel expenses:

(q.1) where the taxpayer was employed as a duly qualified tradesperson or an indentured apprentice in a construction activity at a job site that was located at least 120 km away from their ordinary place of residence, amounts expended by the taxpayer in the year for travelling to and from the job site, if the taxpayer

(i) was required under the contract of employment to pay those expenses,

(ii) did not receive an allowance in respect of those expenses that is not included in computing the taxpayer's income for the year, and

(iii) does not claim those expenses as an income deduction or a tax credit for the year under any other provision of this Act

The government acknowledged the need to address this situation and introduced the Labour Mobility Deduction for Tradespeople in Bill C-19, which was part of Budget 2022. This legislation became law and currently allows an eligible tradesperson to deduct reasonable expenses for transportation costs for one round trip from the ordinary residence of the eligible temporary lodging for each eligible temporary relocation; meals consumed by the eligible tradesperson during those round trips; and temporary lodging costs, provided the eligible tradesperson maintains their ordinary residence as their principal place of residence throughout the eligible temporary relocation.

This was a step in the right direction, but it did not go far enough for a number of reasons.

• (1450)

[Senator Martin]

First of all, the Labour Mobility Deduction for tradespeople limits the deduction to a maximum of \$4,000 per year. This works out to less than \$350 a month. In many cases, that is a fraction of the costs that can be incurred for temporary relocation. Some job sites are hundreds or even thousands of kilometres away, and some can only be accessed by airplane. However, if you are a tradesperson working as an independent contractor, the expense limit poses no problem because it does not apply to you. If you are working as an employee, then your allowable expenses are capped at \$4,000 a year, even if your expenses legitimately exceed that amount.

Bill C-241 removes that cap because it is arbitrary and unnecessary. I would note that not only does the cap not exist for independent contractors, but Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, already has stringent guidelines in place for claiming such expenses. These include keeping detailed records and receipts, ensuring that the expenses are reasonable, legitimate and defensible, and do not include personal expenses. If enacted, these same parameters will apply to expenses claimed under the provisions introduced in Bill C-241.

The second shortfall with the existing Labour Mobility Deduction is that it requires that the tradesperson remain at the job site for a minimum of 36 hours in order to be eligible for the deduction. This is problematic because some job sites are remote and do not come equipped with accommodations. In some cases, the tradesperson could be forced to travel home each day and yet be ineligible to claim that travel expense. Alternatively, some jobs simply may not require 36 hours to complete, leaving the tradesperson unable to claim their expenses. Bill C-241 removes this unnecessary restriction.

Third, the Labour Mobility Deduction requires the tradesperson to travel 150 kilometres in order to be eligible to claim their expenses. Bill C-241 reduces this to 120 kilometres.

Colleagues, I want to underscore again that if a tradesperson works as an independent contractor or owns their own business, then none of these restrictions apply. They can jump in their company truck and claim every kilometre that their vehicle travels, including depreciation, leasing costs, insurance, maintenance and fuel. If they don't have a company truck, they can use their personal vehicle and log their mileage and expenses. Everything can be deducted proportionate to their business use of the vehicle. They can deduct their full accommodations and even their dry-cleaning, towing bill, parking fees, car rental, public transportation charges or airfare, if necessary.

Under the existing scenario today, you could have two tradespeople show up at the same temporary job site, coming from the same location, travelling the same distance and even making the same amount of money, but if one is an employee and the other is an independent contractor, then only one of them can claim their legitimate expenses for travel, meals and accommodations.

How is this fair? Tradespeople often face significant out-of-pocket expenses, with limited means to recoup these costs within the existing tax structure. By introducing a provision specifically tailored for tradespeople and apprentices, Bill C-241 aims to bridge this gap, ensuring that the tax system evolves in tandem with the realities of the modern workforce.

The disparity in how the tax system treats independent contractors and employees with respect to expense deductions is fundamentally unfair. It overlooks the economic realities faced by tradespeople and apprentices whose roles are crucial to Canada's infrastructure development and maintenance. This inequity not only imposes undue financial strain on these workers but also discourages mobility, which is essential for addressing regional labour shortages and ensuring that critical projects can proceed without undue delay.

During the committee hearings on Bill C-241, a number of concerns were raised about this legislation, which I would like to briefly address.

The first was the potential for confusion among taxpayers. It was noted that the introduction of Bill C-241 alongside the existing Labour Mobility Deduction would lead to confusion. Tradespeople might struggle to understand which deduction to apply for, as both deductions serve similar purposes but have different criteria and limitations.

I would propose that this concern is unfounded. First of all, the Income Tax Act is not known for its clarity and brevity. If simplicity and lack of confusion are now the measure by which we determine what is acceptable or unacceptable tax policy, then we can probably strike down 90% of the Income Tax Act. Secondly, the expense deductions provided by Bill C-241 are far simpler to understand than those provided by Bill C-19. Third, if passed, the deductions provided by Bill C-241 will not create uncertainty because they will be the clear choice of every tradesperson who qualifies for them. A simple comparison will quickly show them that Bill C-241 provides more complete coverage for their legitimate employment expenses, and this will be the deduction of choice.

The second concern we heard at committee was with respect to administrative complications for the CRA. It was suggested that the absence of a cap on eligible travel expenses in Bill C-241, unlike the Labour Mobility Deduction which caps at \$4,000, could introduce administrative challenges for the Canada Revenue Agency. This includes managing and verifying claims without a predetermined limit, potentially increasing the complexity of tax administration.

To tell you the truth, I find this objection a bit puzzling. It was made to sound like unless we put a dollar limit on this expense that tradespeople will be able to go wild and claim whatever they want. They'll now be able to drive across the country to their grandma's house, pound a few boards on her deck and deduct the entire cost of the trip. This is absurd, and anyone who has had any dealings with the CRA knows this.

With the introduction of Bill C-241, the general framework and principles for claiming employment expenses under the Income Tax Act would still apply with additional specific requirements as outlined in the amendment.

For example, first, documentation and record-keeping. Taxpayers would need to maintain thorough documentation of their travel expenses, including receipts, contracts and records that substantiate the expenses claimed under this new provision. This is consistent with the CRA's general requirement for substantiation of deductions and credits.

Second, employment contract requirements. As per the amendment, the expenses must be required under the contract of employment. This mirrors the existing requirement for other employment-related deductions where there must be a clear obligation for the employee to incur the expense as part of their employment duties.

Third, no double-dipping. The provision explicitly states that these expenses cannot be claimed as an income deduction or a tax credit under any other provision of the Income Tax Act for the same year. This principle is consistent with the broader tax law framework to prevent the same expense from being used to obtain multiple tax benefits.

Fourth, t2200 forms. Although not explicitly mentioned in Bill C-241, you can expect that the CRA will require a t2200 form, which is a Declaration of Conditions of Employment, or a similar form of certification from the employer. This form is generally needed for employees to substantiate claims for employment expense deductions, as it verifies that the employee was required to incur specific expenses as part of their employment duties. You may recall that during COVID, our staff were required to submit one of these with their income tax returns if they wanted to claim expenses related to working from home.

• (1500)

The fifth is the limitation on allowances. Bill C-241 specifies that a tradesperson is not eligible for these deductions if they have received an allowance for these expenses from their employer. This aligns with the general treatment of allowances in the Income Tax Act.

The sixth is that all expense claims are routinely required to be reasonable. It is a general principle within Canadian tax law that for expenses to be deductible, they must be incurred for the purpose of earning income and must be reasonable in the circumstances. This principle is applied to ensure that only legitimate business expenses are deducted and to prevent the deduction of excessive or inappropriate expenses. While Bill C-241 makes changes and deductions for tradespeople and apprentices, the existing overarching principles and constraints for claiming employment expenses under the Income Tax Act would continue to apply.

The third concern we heard at committee was what we would call lack of definition and scope. The objection was that the bill does not explicitly define terms such as "travel expenses" or "construction activity," leaving room for interpretation that could lead to inconsistent application or attempts to claim deductions for expenses that were not intended to be covered.

Colleagues, like the previous concern, this is completely addressed under the existing procedures, policies and guidance of the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA. We do not have to reinvent tax law or define what is an appropriate and inappropriate expense every time a new deduction is created. These rules are firmly in place, and professional tax guidance and advice are readily available for any tradesperson who is uncertain about what is or isn't deductible.

The fourth concern was with respect to fairness and equity. By introducing a travel deduction for tradespeople and apprentices, the question was raised whether this could be perceived as inequitable, since other employees who are not tradespeople would be unable to utilize the same deduction.

This, colleagues, is perhaps a legitimate question as part of a larger discussion about the Income Tax Act, but it is not relevant to Bill C-241. Here is why: If there is a problem with inequity by giving tradespeople the ability to deduct travel, meal and accommodation expenses under certain circumstances, then this problem already exists. That's because these deductions already exist in the form of the Labour Mobility Deduction, or LMD. The LMD already permits tradespeople to make these deductions, albeit it does it poorly. It's not enough. Bill C-241 provides a simplified and improved process for doing so, but it does not introduce new deductions into the income tax system. It merely changes the qualifying parameters.

The fifth objection raised at committee was the question of the impact that Bill C-241 would have on government revenue. By introducing broader parameters and a lower threshold to qualify for the deduction, what would be the impact on government revenue?

This, colleagues, is easy to answer because the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer answered it for us. In May 2022, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, released a costing note indicating that the Labour Mobility Deduction would cost \$459 million over a five-year period. In December 2022, the PBO released a costing note for Bill C-241, noting that it would add to that cost an additional \$19 million over five years. This is a minimal increase.

However, I would like to point out that this total of \$478 million over five years is not money paid out by the government, but rather money that is left in the pockets of our tradespeople. And these are precisely the kind of policies which are needed to encourage our young people to become tradespeople.

Finally, colleagues, the committee heard the objection that only one time in the last 20 years has the Income Tax Act been amended without the Minister of Finance's agreement, and, in this case, the Minister of Finance voted against Bill C-241.

Once again, colleagues, with respect, this is not the measure by which this legislation should be assessed. The questions are the following: Is this good legislation? Does it make an improvement and give our tradespeople a leg up? I believe it clearly does.

There is a significant disparity in the expense deductions available to independent contractors compared to the employees that Bill C-241 seeks to address. Independent contractors have

long enjoyed the ability to deduct a wide range of business expenses, including travel, meals and accommodation directly related to their business activities. This flexibility reflects the understanding that such expenses are integral to generating income and sustaining their business operations.

Bill C-241 is the correct vehicle to address this disparity, offering a targeted amendment to the Income Tax Act that recognizes the unique challenges faced by tradespeople and apprentices. By allowing these workers to deduct travel expenses for distances exceeding 120 kilometres from their residence, the bill acknowledges the integral role that mobility plays in their profession.

Colleagues, in November of last year, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported that labour shortages were costing Canadian small businesses over \$38 billion in lost revenue opportunities. This bill will not solve that problem in its entirety, but it's a critical and necessary step in the right direction.

Honourable senators, the tradespeople of this nation are asking us for our help, and this bill provides it. I urge you to support Bill C-241 and those workers who are so vital to our economy.

I forgot to mention member of Parliament Chris Lewis, who is the sponsor of this bill, and all the work and effort that he's put into bringing this bill to us.

I ask you for your support, honourable senators, at third reading.

Senator Plett: Hear, hear.

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, I want to thank the honourable senator for her speech. She has covered the issue very well. I want to take this opportunity to say a few words about the origins of this bill.

Apart from all the reasons she has given, one of the reasons I like this bill is it has an all-party history. It started with the New Democratic Party in the House of Commons. There have been about five attempts by the NDP to put forward a private member's bill over the past 20 years. Interestingly, at that point, the other parties were not in favour, but over time, they have moved.

Chris Charlton and Matthew Green are two members of the New Democratic Party who put forward private members' bills in this regard.

In 2021, the Liberal Party put it in their platform. Then in 2022, as Senator Martin noted, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland included it in her budget, with a limit of \$4,000. That's an interesting figure because in negotiations between the government and the union, it was Canada's Building Trades Unions that suggested the \$4,000 limit. In their view, that would be the median amount that workers would be asking for. That's why it was set, at that time, at a level of \$4,000.

Bill C-241, introduced by Conservative MP Chris Lewis, takes that further and has said that it shouldn't have a limit. In many ways, I think that the ideas that were put forward by the New Democratic Party 20 years ago — continuously for a system that wouldn't have a limit — would finally be coming into force.

I extend my compliments to all three parties: first, the NDP for having put it forward for a long time and supporting the union movement on it, and subsequently the Liberals and Conservatives for coming onside and putting this forward.

I will certainly be supporting this bill, and I urge colleagues to think about it positively.

Hon. Rodger Cuzner: Would Senator Cardozo take a question?

Senator Cardozo: Yes.

Senator Cuzner: Let me start with Senator Martin first. I very much appreciated her speech today.

• (1510)

Senator Cardozo, I come from Cape Breton, where we've long been a deep pool of mobile labour, and many Cape Bretoners have moved across the country and across borders to work and back to provide for their families.

We do our best as Canadians when we are able to connect job opportunities with those who are looking for work and those who are looking for work with job opportunities, and there should never be a disincentive. Certainly, the unfairness in the Income Tax Act — handling contractors and individuals quite differently —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Cuzner, do you have a question?

Senator Cuzner: The question is this: Now that more companies and contractors have cut back on living-out allowances and travel expenses, which were once covered, do you see this as almost urgent in order to make sure that workers are able to find and secure those opportunities?

Senator Cardozo: Thank you, Senator Cuzner, for that. First, in my list of people who have been pivotal in making this day possible, I should mention the name of Senator Rodger Cuzner. I don't know if I'm going by rumour or not, but I would suggest the reason the Liberal Party moved on this has a lot to do with Senator Cuzner having worked on this and been a real ally for the building trades for a long time. So congratulations to you, too, sir.

Absolutely, it is urgent, and I hope that we can pass it soon and that it would go into effect to the extent that it can for this calendar year. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Dagenais, debate adjourned.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, before proceeding to Question Period with the minister, I would like to remind you of the time limits the Senate established for questions and answers in the order of October 3, 2023.

When the Senate receives a minister for Question Period, as is the case today, the length of a main question is limited to one minute, and the answer to one minute and thirty seconds. The supplementary question and answer are each limited to 45 seconds. In all these cases, the reading clerk stands 10 seconds before the time expires.

I will now ask the minister to enter and take his seat.

QUESTION PERIOD

(Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on December 7, 2021, to receive a Minister of the Crown, the Honourable Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence, appeared before honourable senators during Question Period.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, today we have with us for Question Period the Honourable Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence, to respond to questions concerning his ministerial responsibilities. On behalf of all senators, I welcome the minister.

Minister, as I have noted to the Senate, a main question is limited to one minute, and your response to one minute and thirty seconds. The question and answer to a supplementary question are both limited to 45 seconds. The reading clerk stands 10 seconds before these times expire. I ask everyone to respect these times. Question Period will last 64 minutes.

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Hon. Elizabeth Marshall: Minister, welcome to the Senate of Canada. Minister, based on your new defence policy released in April, military spending will reach \$58 billion by 2029-30. This will be 1.58% of GDP, well below the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, target of 2%. Last July, just three months later, your government said it would reach NATO's military spending target of 2% by 2032. But to reach the 2% by 2032, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, says this would require defence expenditures to increase from \$58 billion to \$82 billion by 2032. That's a very significant increase of \$24 billion, or 40%, over three years. It's simply not credible. You have yet to release figures detailing how you will increase your spending to achieve the 2% target.

My question is this: When will you release the details as to how you are going to reach the military spending of \$82 billion in 2032 to reach the 2% target?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: Thank you very much, senator. I believe this is a very important question, and a question I have taken up in some detail with our colleagues among the NATO defence ministers. First of all, if I may provide a little clarity, I'm not ungrateful for the work of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and I think he does exceptional work on all of our behalf. At the same time, as I've pointed out to him, Canada committed to reaching 2% of the NATO target. To be very clear, this is a spending metric; it doesn't talk about the why or the how or the what that we have to do in order to achieve it. It only tells us how much.

But the NATO target that, frankly, in 2013, Prime Minister Harper committed to in Wales was to reach 2% of the NATO target as defined by NATO, and in that definition that they've applied to all 32 members of NATO is a calculation of GDP based on the calculations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, of what our spending will be. Those numbers are marginally different than that which is provided by the PBO, but I would offer that clarification.

I also would say that when we came forward with our defence policy update, *Our North, Strong and Free*, in April of this year, it coincided with the subsequent release of our budget, which did provide a spending target up to 2029. But we acknowledged, as the Prime Minister did when we went to the NATO summit, that Canada must reach the 2% target and will reach the 2% target by 2032. I have been able to provide —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

Senator Marshall: Thank you very much, minister, but you didn't give me the answer, and you still have to give us the details as to how you're going to get to the 2%. But I do want to say that your department has been challenged to deliver on the 2017 defence policy. Your department has a history of lapsed funding, delays in delivering capital projects on time and on budget. In fact, between 2017 and 2023, your department spent \$12 billion less on capital projects compared to what was planned under your 2017 defence policy.

Hence the reason why I'm asking you for your detailed plan to reach the 2%. I'd like to know what —

• (1520)

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you.

Mr. Blair: These are important questions, and I want to acknowledge their importance. One of the challenges that the Department of National Defence has faced, along with the Canadian Armed Forces, is our procurement processes. We acknowledge that those procurements have taken a long time. There are many reasons for that. We've done a very deep dive on how we can expedite those important capital acquisitions. I think there's been some very important work done.

I'll cite this as an example: Just in the last year and a half, we've now signed contracts for over 200 new aircraft, including the P-8, the F-35 and new training aircraft. We've signed new contracts, and we're in the process of negotiating a construction contract for building our new River-class destroyers with Irving Shipbuilding. We're delivering for next month. We're going to put it in the water. The first —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Minister, I also want to ask you about the Prime Minister's claim that your government expects to reach NATO's 2% target of GDP spending by 2032. As Senator Marshall pointed out — and she's much politer than I am, minister; you know that — your own defence policy update and the Parliamentary Budget Officer make it clear that there is no way that your government will fulfill your commitment to reach that 2% target.

Minister, did the Prime Minister just try to fool our allies with this fake commitment, or is he just incompetent and thinks that defence budgets also balance themselves?

Mr. Blair: Let me agree with one point, sir. You are much less polite, but, unfortunately, you're also wrong. And if I may, the report that was published in April articulated our plan over the next five years, but it also includes significant new spending: \$73 billion over 20 years. However, almost immediately we recognized that does not get us to the 2% commitment, so a decision was made and announced by the Prime Minister — it's not just our expectation; it's our commitment — to reach 2% of our GDP spending by 2032.

I have been working very hard since then. For example, in our budget, there was no mention of purchasing submarines in April. The Prime Minister committed to the purchase of 12 new conventional class submarines in July. In September, we put a request for information, or RFI, out into the market. We're moving very quickly to get that because that's a capability that our navy needs, and our allies expect us to do so.

There are a number of other very significant investments indicated in the defence policy that are now being worked on very actively — for example, integrated air and missile defence and new infrastructure to support our Armed Forces. Perhaps I'll get an opportunity to speak later about the reconstitution plans that the Chief of the Defence Staff and the deputy minister have brought forward, which will enable us to get the people we need to put on those ships and to maintain and fly those planes, as well as to do the important job that the Canadian Armed Forces does.

Senator Plett: Spend, spend, spend, and let Pierre Poilievre figure out how to pay for it. The Prime Minister made the 2% commitment at the NATO summit to get out of an embarrassing situation; we all know that. Our allies were upset and losing patience with your government. That's why he made the commitment without any credible plan to get there.

Minister, what will you tell the new Trump administration about your phony commitment when they come into office in January, if in fact you're still in government then? And do you have any concern that Canada will be kicked out of NATO?

Mr. Blair: I might remind the new administration that in 2013 when then-Prime Minister Harper committed to 2%, that same year he also cut the defence budget by \$2.5 billion, reducing it for the first and only time in Canadian history to below 1% of our GDP. I will also tell you that Canada is an important and respected member of NATO. Just recently — a week ago — I met with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and articulated our plan to ensure we deliver on the capabilities that NATO requires of us. We're going to get the job done. It's our commitment, and we're going to live up to it.

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Minister, welcome to the Senate. I would like to focus my intervention on the impact that President-elect Trump might have on Canada's defence strategy.

We know that Mr. Trump has been clear about his demand that NATO members reach the 2% spending target. And I'm sure you saw the op-ed by congressman Mike Turner in *Newsweek* last month that called us out on our failing grade in achieving our NATO commitments. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said the government has been preparing for the eventual return of Mr. Trump to the White House. Will the U.S. be satisfied with our long-term plan to reach the 2% target by 2032? Should we not reassess our NATO funding commitments in light of the election results, and how seriously is the federal government taking Mr. Trump's threat that the U.S. would not protect allies that fail to meet the 2% target?

Mr. Blair: Throughout Canada's long history in NATO and in all of the work that we have done to defend peace and security around the world, every expedition for Canada has been expeditionary. We have sent our soldiers to fight in conflicts around the world, and Canada's contribution is always highly valued and respected by all of our allies.

I would also say that the 2% commitment is a commitment that we've made to all of our NATO allies, but it's also a commitment that we've made to all Canadians and to our Canadian Armed Forces. We know that decades of underinvestment in the Canadian Armed Forces has resulted in a situation where we need to make significant new investments in their organization, in their people, in the infrastructure that is there to support them and in the important platforms that they use to do the jobs that we ask of them. I believe very strongly that we will be able to articulate to all of our allies, including the United States, our unwavering commitment to get the job done. I think that they will also understand that it takes time to deliver those 15 new battleships, for example, that we're building. It's going to take time to build and deliver those new submarines that we require. Even with the new fighter aircraft, we have a delivery schedule. It takes time to deliver on those important acquisitions for the Canadian Armed Forces.

We're making the commitment, we've dedicated the money, we're signing the contracts and we're moving ahead on all of those acquisitions. I think we can articulate a very clear plan to reach the 2% target by 2032, as we've indicated we would.

Senator Loffreda: Just yesterday, former U.S. ambassador Kelly Craft urged us to take geopolitical changes more seriously in the North. Are you confident that Canada is adequately prepared and that our funding requirements are sufficient to defend and protect the Canadian Arctic? Despite new investments announced in *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada's Defence*, many remain worried that defence spending is insufficient. Personally, I'm concerned about Arctic sovereignty which, as your vision states, is the most urgent and important task we face.

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much. I'm going to agree very vigorously. I think for everyone who has read our new defence policy, *Our North, Strong and Free*, you can see I have placed an enormous emphasis on our responsibility to defend the sovereignty and security of our country, our continent and our interests in the High Arctic. We've articulated a plan, and we recognize that we have to make significant new investments.

When I've gone north, I've learned about what sovereignty and security really mean to the people of the North: It's infrastructure, as they've told me very clearly. That includes building new airport runways, power plants, water treatment plants, fibre optic networks, highways, medical facilities and the facilities that are going to be needed to support our military operations in the North. There's also a huge opportunity to make use of —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

MILITARY SPENDING

Hon. Yvonne Boyer: Hello, minister. Thank you for coming today.

Canada has long been regarded as a leader in the international community when it comes to the training and development of our Armed Forces. However, in recent years, senior military leaders have expressed that there's not nearly enough funding to sustain and improve the level of training that our members receive. It's also my understanding that the Department of National Defence has been asked to find budget cuts this fiscal year.

The men and women who serve in Canada's Armed Forces are the pride of our country. They sign up willingly, and they put their lives on the line for all of us. It seems that the least we could do is ensure they have the resources they need to train and remain safe. What actions are you taking to immediately meet the needs and concerns of our Armed Forces members, especially in light of the impending budget cuts?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: I'm in complete agreement, and I share your pride in the excellence and in the training and capabilities of members of our Canadian Armed Forces. They are renowned and respected around the world, and, in fact, I hear often from our allies, friends and people around the world that they want the Canadian Armed Forces to come help train their people. For example, we trained over 45,000 Ukrainian soldiers, and the Ukrainians tell us that was absolutely critical for their survival in the early weeks of the illegal Russian invasion.

Our new Chief of the Defence Staff and deputy minister recently released a new reconstitution plan for the members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and they identified the infrastructure and foundations that are required in order to facilitate that training. It's going to result in a significant increase in the number of people we're able to bring into the organization and put through basic training and all the specialized training they require. It requires investment in that training capacity, and we're making that investment. It's foundational. There are a number of other things I hope I get an opportunity to explain.

• (1530)

Regarding the Treasury Board spending refocusing that took place last year, I issued a clear directive to members of the Canadian Armed Forces and to the CDS that none of that could impact the operations, training or supports we provide to members of the Canadian Armed Forces. They've been very careful. They've dealt with issues around professional services, executive travel, hospitality budgets, et cetera, but we've asked them not to allow those cuts to impact or impair the reconstitution of the Canadian Armed Forces because, and I'm in complete agreement with you, that's the most important mission ahead of us.

RECRUITMENT OF INDIGENOUS ARMED FORCES CANDIDATES

Hon. Yvonne Boyer: Thank you, minister. As I'm sure you'll agree, one way to increase the strength of our Armed Forces is by increasing the diversity within them. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have a long and honoured history of serving, which continues to this day.

Can you speak to your recruitment strategy for Indigenous communities, specifically if you are having Indigenous recruiters go into the community and share their experiences?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: I'm in complete agreement. I think it's a smart and effective organization, and it is one with a great diversity of perspectives. Traditional Indigenous knowledge is very important to us operating effectively in the High North and in the communities for which that knowledge is so helpful.

Currently, approximately 4% of our Canadian Armed Forces members report Indigenous heritage. Of course, we have the Rangers, comprised of nearly 5,000 people, both Junior Rangers and the Rangers force themselves, which is overwhelmingly Indigenous and essential to our security and sovereignty in the Far North.

I'm also in agreement with you regarding the reconstitution plan, in which we've talked about how to build upon the diversity of the Canadian Armed Forces.

SUPPORT FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

Hon. Krista Ross: Thank you for being here, minister.

In spring of this year, the Oromocto Food Bank said the increase in demand they were seeing was due in part to Canadian Armed Forces members, as it is located minutes from CFB Gagetown, and that the number of military members accessing the food bank had doubled. A spokesperson from your department mentioned in a media article that the forces are taking a number of measures to support members nationwide, including inflationary increases to salaries, borrowing and savings programs and on-base housing.

Can you tell me how many Canadian Armed Forces members at Base Gagetown, and also nationwide, are forced to rely on food banks as of today? Do you keep statistics, and can you please give me a number?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: No, ma'am. After I read those same media reports, I spoke to the people at Gagetown and asked why and how this is possible. There were a number of other media reports around the same time reporting that members of the Canadian Armed Forces were struggling financially, so we followed up on that. I don't have a precise number. There could be many circumstances that would compel any Canadian to rely on a food bank.

It is one of the things I looked into very seriously, because we have a responsibility to make sure that those members are adequately housed, adequately supported and able to serve. We must look at all the ways we can make it easier for them to serve.

I have been assured that they are all well employed. Just last year, we secured a new contract with them. We gave them a 12% pay raise in order to deal with some of the pressures that people are experiencing. All Canadians have been experiencing pressures with respect to affordability. I know everyone in this house is well aware of that. I am, of course, concerned with the impact it has on military members.

I've actually visited almost every base in the country now. I always have town halls with the members. I talk to them about their lived experiences and what more we can do with them. I have not heard directly from them; I've read the media reports around issues of food bank usage. They concern me. We must do what is necessary to support the men and women who have made the remarkable choice to serve their countries in the Armed Forces.

Senator Ross: Thank you, minister.

In March of this year, it was announced that the federal government would be investing \$55.6 million in various upgrades to CFB Gagetown, including \$19.7 million to create a solar farm which would then provide two thirds of the energy required at the base. The work was to begin in April and is estimated to be completed in 2026. Can you let us know how far along in the process we are?

Mr. Blair: Your Honour, I apologize. I don't know whether you were alerted, but I'm afraid I have to vote at the moment, and I apologize for not paying as much attention to your question.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Minister, you do your duty. We will pause Question Period until you have done your duty.

Mr. Blair: Thank you, Your Honour. I may be called upon in another 10 minutes to vote again.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Just to make sure that the last question we had to interrupt is addressed, Senator Ross, please repeat your second question.

Senator Ross: Thank you, minister. In March of this year, it was announced that the federal government would be investing \$55.6 million in various upgrades to CFB Gagetown, including \$19.7 million to create a solar farm that would then provide two thirds of the energy required at the base. The work was to begin in April and estimated to be completed in 2026. Can you let us know how far along in the process we are?

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much for the question. It's an important one. Unfortunately, I don't have an update on the current status of that construction, but I acknowledge that it's important. If there have been any delays, I'd be happy to address them.

I also have some pretty good news about Gagetown: We're also initiating an investment in housing in that area. I know of your interest in the people that serve there. I share that interest. We will make some investments in housing, child care and other supports for that community.

The investments we're making in doing a better job of managing our energy consumption at bases across the country are progressing very well. I'll get you an answer regarding the specific program you mentioned. If you don't mind, I'll have my people get back to you later today to provide that update.

NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND

Hon. Marty Klyne: Minister Blair, welcome. According to a recent article in the *Ottawa Citizen*, the Department of National Defence has announced a \$6-million Polar Over-the-Horizon Radar project as part of NORAD modernization, scheduled to be fully operational by 2033. This system, primarily designed to track incoming missiles in our Arctic region, represents one of our largest defence investments.

While announced in June 2022, construction is not set to begin until 2030, with current planning led by a small team of five military officers and three contractors. The project's significance to American defence, not to mention its substantial cost, warrant careful scrutiny.

Can you please explain why, for a project of this magnitude and urgency for North American defence, we are seeing a seven-year gap between the announcement and the start of construction? What activities will occur in that time?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: Thank you very much. It is an important question. The NORAD modernization project involves an investment of \$38.6 billion, which is very significant for both Canada and the United States with respect to our situational awareness, particularly in the High North with Over-the-Horizon Radar and Polar Over-the-Horizon Radar installations. We have put together a team and begun the work.

Respectfully, we cannot just go out and build a facility before the important work that is being done in concert and collaboration with the Americans on determining exactly what technology will be utilized in this important project; that is the work that is taking place right now. I won't call it a delay, but there has been rethinking on some of the types of technologies that we would employ, as well as looking at integrating more thoroughly some satellite technologies that are available. That work, which is taking place right now with both Canadian and American participation in that analysis, is taking place before any site selection might then occur with respect to the acquisition of the property where this will be located.

• (1540)

Ultimately, if we go with the existing technology, it would require about a thousand hectares of land being required somewhere in southern Ontario for the installation of our receiving site and a transmission site slightly further to the north. The determination of that site will depend entirely on what the technology eventually selected is.

I have some good news to your subsequent question.

Senator Klyne: Thank you for that. In light of concerns from domestic aerospace and defence companies about the government favouring foreign technology, what percentage of this \$6 billion project will be allocated to Canadian companies? What measures are being taken to ensure Canadian technological expertise is appropriately utilized?

Mr. Blair: We are making very significant investments. Two per cent of our GDP is, as has been indicated, an enormous new investment for Canada. It is incumbent upon me not only to make sure we make the investments that secure our defence and security along with our allies, but it's also an opportunity to invest in Canadian workers, Canadian industry and the Canadian economy. For example, the new ships we're building in Nova Scotia will sustain 10,800 jobs in Nova Scotia. It's going to add \$40 billion to our economy.

Your question is an important one. We work very closely with the Americans and we are doing all that is necessary to ensure that our industry is an innovator and our workers have every opportunity to participate in this project and the investments that we have to make. I'm confident that we will be able to secure a significant amount of that investment.

I also wanted to share with you —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Hon. Denise Batters: Minister Blair, you claim that as Public Safety Minister you didn't see a warrant application to monitor contact between a key Liberal organizer and Chinese regime agents, even though your office had it for nearly two months. You also claim you never received a secret issues management memo detailing potential threats by Chinese regime officials toward the family of Conservative member of Parliament Michael Chong.

First, you claimed you and your staff did not have access to the secure email network from your department. Then you claimed you didn't get binders of intelligence information during the pandemic, although your own deputy minister and assistant deputy minister both testified under oath that these binders were sent to you. You claimed to not know what an issues management memo was even though your own top official testified that your office received these memos two to three times a week. They said you preferred to work from home and rely on verbal briefings.

Your story doesn't add up, Minister Blair. Do all of these lapses stem from negligence, incompetence or wilful blindness?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: Senator, unfortunately you're badly misinformed. I might refer you to my sworn testimony. You characterize them as claims. I testified under oath four times, as did the Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, as did my deputy minister and my chief of staff. We testified under oath. Uncontradicted, I advised that I first saw a warrant application, the one in question, on May 11 and all of the other testimony confirmed that was true. That's exactly what happened.

I would invite you not to simply accept the political rhetoric, the exaggeration and the misinformation that has been put out about this event. Go look at the sworn testimony — and I would hope you would also get an opportunity to read the final report of the Hogue commission, which has heard all of that testimony — and I believe strongly that you will come to a very different conclusion than the one you articulated.

Senator Batters: I watched it, minister. Canadians have now learned about at least two major delays and failures in the flow of crucial security and intelligence information in your ministerial office. You tried to pass it off as your department's responsibility. You tried to blame it on your chief of staff yet you kept her employed in that key role for four years, including for several months after these stories became public. When will you finally admit the problem is actually you?

[Mr. Blair]

Mr. Blair: Your ability to ignore the facts is rather remarkable. The sworn testimony of all of the witnesses who appeared on this matter corroborates my testimony in full. I am looking forward to the report of the Hogue commission. Your conclusions are simply wrong.

[Translation]

MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Claude Carignan: Minister, the city of Kabul fell into Taliban hands the same day the Prime Minister called an election in 2021. While our allies focused on evacuating their citizens, the Trudeau government was focused on a pointless election campaign.

The Globe and Mail reported that while Canadian citizens, permanent residents and Afghan interpreters who helped our soldiers waited to be rescued, your predecessor, Minister Sajjan, ordered our soldiers to evacuate another group that had no connection to Canada.

The former chief of the defence staff confirmed those statements, stating that the forces were following the minister's "legal orders."

Minister, this is a very serious matter. Has your government investigated? Did Minister Sajjan intervene to change the armed forces' priorities during the evacuation of Kabul?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: Thank you for the question. In fact, this matter was canvassed by our parliamentary Defence Committee only two days ago with the appearance of Minister Sajjan before that committee. These questions were put to him in that public forum. In that public forum, he testified as to his actual actions, not as you have characterized them, but the fact that he received an inquiry from an organization in Canada and that he had passed that inquiry on to the military, that he did not provide, as you've characterized it, any direction or order but simply passed on the request.

It was a very difficult time for the Canadian Armed Forces. I would like to acknowledge that about 3,500 people got out of Afghanistan as a direct result of the heroic actions of members of the Canadian Armed Forces for which I think we should all be grateful. We were also making an effort, like many other like-minded countries were doing, to assist religious minors in those circumstances. The testimony, as I understand it, of Minister Sajjan before the parliamentary committee simply confirmed that was the sequence of events.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: *The Globe and Mail* also reported on Minister Sajjan's intervention, as follows:

The operation involved intense planning and it meant fewer soldiers were available to screen people awaiting the last flights out of Kabul."

Minister, is it true that Minister Sajjan's orders meant that fewer Canadian soldiers were able to help Canadian citizens escape Kabul?

[English]

Mr. Blair: Again, you're referring to suggestions that apparently appeared in a newspaper for which I have not seen any evidence that they were, in fact, true.

I can share with you that Minister Sajjan did appear before committee two days ago. He testified as to his actual experience there. Again, the committee is perfectly capable of doing its work and asking and making inquiries. I hope that that would provide not only our parliamentarians but also Canadians with a much clearer picture of what actually transpired rather than the reports from anonymous sources —

EXPORT REGIMES

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Minister, thank you for being here. Your government has suspended the issuance of new permits for exports of military equipment to Israel because of the possibility that Canada might be complicit in war crimes.

In light of new information that is, in fact, credible evidence of war crimes in Gaza, is your government willing to remove even further the export permits for arms to Israel?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Minister, are you voting right now?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: Actually, I was listening very carefully to the question, but if you don't mind, I would also just do a little bit of work, if I may.

Thank you for your question.

• (1550)

First, Canada has one of the most rigorous arms export regimes of any country in the world. It is the responsibility of Global Affairs Canada, or GAC, to administer that.

I can tell you, because I've sought information on this, that at the outset of the conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, steps were taken in January of this year to suspend the issuance of all new arms exports permits that were applied for. The numbers were not significant. There have been no new permits since that time.

Canada is also careful about ensuring that our technologies and arms exports are used in a way we believe is consistent with the law of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions, which we have signed.

I'm not aware of any other considerations currently being made by GAC, but that's a question better put to my colleague Minister Joly.

Senator Woo: Since we have a rigorous arms export regime, can you confirm that none of our exports to the United States, through the Defense Security Cooperation agreement, are being diverted to Israel as media reports are suggesting? If they are, we would then be complicit in potential war crimes in Gaza.

Mr. Blair: If I may, our military export regime does not include our interactions with the United States. That's governed under other legislation, but I take your point. I've also seen those media reports.

I have received some direct reassurance from the Secretary of Defense in the United States that is not, in fact, taking place. At the same time, I have no mechanism to verify that independently, so I wanted to be frank with you.

We do not have information that suggests our exports to the United States have subsequently been moved to or in any way shared with Israel during this period of time, but neither do I have the ability to assure you that they have not.

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Hon. Donna Dasko: Welcome back to the Senate, Minister Blair.

Minister, could you please provide your assessment of the situation in Ukraine? As the conflict evolves, what is the government's outlook for the near and long term, especially regarding the situation on the ground?

Additionally, could you please comment on any anticipated changes in Canada's support, be it military, humanitarian or strategic, and how Canada is working with allies to address ongoing challenges?

I'm eager to understand Canada's perspective on where the situation in Ukraine is headed and how we plan to adapt in response. Thank you.

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: Thank you very much. This is a question that deserves far more time than we will be allowed in this format.

However, we are gravely concerned with what we are now seeing unfold in Ukraine. The deployment of North Korean soldiers and arms in that conflict is not only strongly contradictory regarding the UN sanctions against North Korea, but also an unnecessary and serious escalation of that conflict.

I know it is deeply concerning to the Republic of Korea and all of us who support Ukraine.

We are seeing some deterioration in the battle environment in Ukraine; this requires a strong and immediate response. There's a great deal of concern being expressed about changes in the political environment, and not just in the United States. For example, we've recently seen some real challenges regarding Germany's support, as well as that of some of our other NATO allies.

Regarding your important question on what Canada is going to do in support, one of the things I mentioned earlier is that Canada played a significant role in training Ukrainian soldiers; that training has continued. We do it in partnership with a number of our allies, particularly the United Kingdom.

What we've heard clearly from the Ukrainians, because they're changing their conscription rules and bringing a large cohort of new Ukrainian soldiers into the fight, is that they want that training to take place either in or closer to Ukraine. Canada is playing an important, significant and leading role in working out how that can be accomplished.

Senator Dasko: Thank you. Following up on your comments about the concerns, minister, what is your understanding of President-elect Trump's intentions regarding support for Ukraine? How do you understand where he's headed?

Mr. Blair: I apologize, senator, but I would not claim any particular insight into what the new administration may or may not do.

I have followed the political rhetoric as well. I find sometimes there's a disconnect between political rhetoric during an election and what people actually think is the right thing to do.

One thing I will share is this: I have worked with the United States for decades in a number of different fora. I have great confidence in the institutions that make up America, including their Department of State, Department of Defense and Department of Justice. Because of that confidence, I believe America will do the right thing.

[Translation]

MILITARY SPENDING

Hon. Clément Gignac: Welcome to the Senate, minister. Thank you for your public service.

According to a recent CBC investigation, only between 55% and 60% of the Canadian Armed Forces would be able to respond if called upon to deploy. It was also reported that roughly 50% of Canada's military equipment is unavailable and unserviceable. You yourself recently alluded to the fact that supply problems were an issue for National Defence.

Can you reassure us about the state of the troops and tell us whether the information reported by the CBC is or is not accurate?

[Mr. Blair]

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: The CBC was reporting information that we and the Canadian Armed Forces provided to them.

There are very legitimate concerns about the capability, readiness and deployability of our current assets. There has been a long period — decades — of underinvestment in the maintenance of that equipment and infrastructure.

I will share with you my biggest concern. I spoke very publicly a couple years ago about the fact that, for four consecutive years, we lost more people than we hired. I referred to it as a death spiral. I wasn't trying to be provocative. I was trying to convey a sense of urgency of what we needed to do.

I'm gratified the current Chief of the Defence Staff and the deputy minister have come forward with a reconstitution plan. It's going to involve almost doubling the number of people we take in each year, increasing our training capacity and making investments in the infrastructure that are necessary not only to support that training but to support members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

We're making significant new investments not only in acquiring new equipment but in maintaining what we've got. Our capabilities must be significantly enhanced. We're making the necessary investments.

I will share with you that there is a strong sense of urgency to get this job done within the Canadian Armed Forces and within my office. We're all working full out on it.

[Translation]

Senator Gignac: Thank you. We're counting on you.

In June 2023, the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs released a report on the Arctic, to which I contributed. One of the 23 recommendations was that the government conduct an assessment of the Canadian Armed Forces' infrastructure north of the 60th parallel to identify infrastructure that requires repairs and upgrades. The government was asked to release a report by June 2025.

Have you made any progress on this file?

[English]

Mr. Blair: We've made some excellent progress with respect to the work since June.

One of the things we acknowledged in our new defence policy was that, while I had done consultation in the North, we needed to do more. We have partners up there and need to treat them respectfully.

In June of this year, I went to Iqaluit. I provided a secure briefing to all the northern premiers.

We have also been meeting extensively with Indigenous Inuit leadership in the region and going into those communities. Doing it without consultation with the people of the North would be a terrible mistake. We need partners up there. We also need their advice. We've been doing significant work.

I was recently in Inuvik. We are investing a substantial amount of money through the Government of the Northwest Territories and working with the Gwich'in and the IRC —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you.

INDIGENOUS CONSULTATION

Hon. Judy A. White: Thank you for joining us today.

My question relates to a publication you released back in September jointly with Ministers Joly and LeBlanc. It outlined the intelligence priorities.

• (1600)

The document recognized, among other things — but this one, in particular — that communities, including Indigenous communities, may have had prior negative experiences with intelligence organizations in Canada. The document then followed up with a commitment to earn the trust of such communities through concrete actions, improvement and accountability.

Could you speak a bit about this? For example, what kinds of concrete actions are being taken in this context, and what is the process for developing these plans and actions to combat that, in particular, with Indigenous communities?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: I spent much of my life in law enforcement, and one of the things I learned in that experience is how important trust is. You need to earn the trust of Indigenous communities, and I think it begins with an acknowledgment of mistakes that have been made in the past and things we need to do better. It also has to be demonstrated by a commitment to actually sit down and honestly and frankly talk about some of the challenges we are facing and the things that we need to do together. I can share with you that those conversations are, in fact, taking place. As I've already indicated, I've gone to the North and tried to engage, and I think we've made some real progress.

People have been kind and generous in allowing us to have those conversations about what needs to be done. Tomorrow, we're meeting with the Inuit organizations, and the whole day is going to be dedicated to the work we have to do together in the North. It's going to be absolutely essential that we rebuild trust not just that we're sincere but that we're prepared to make the changes that are necessary to have a truly respectful relationship. I think it's very important.

May I also suggest that we could always use help with it and advice.

Senator White: Thank you, Minister Blair, and I certainly have many thoughts I could provide if you desire to hear them.

I want to hear a little bit more about this engaging and consulting. We've heard time and time again in every sphere and every committee that I've been in since I've been here at the Senate that what you call consultation and what we call consultation doesn't always mean the same thing. Do you have any thoughts or ideas, or are you actually just going in? It's one thing to come in and say, "Hey, we want to talk to you about this," or "Hey, this is what we're doing," but it's a little bit different in terms of consulting to say, "We think this can work. What are your thoughts? What are the impacts?" There's a difference.

Mr. Blair: Let me say that I agree with you there is a difference. Consultation is not a conversation; it's a relationship. It requires that you approach it that way and remain committed to that relationship and ongoing dialogue. It's not simply a one-off.

I remember one of the first consultations I did when I first came to government. I sat down with a group of people for four hours, and, in the end, they told me, "We have not been consulted." I said, "Then help me understand what consultation is to you." They explained that to me.

In my previous job as a police chief, I set up consultation committees with religious and ethnic minorities and with different communities throughout my city because it's a very diverse city. I needed to understand their perspective, and I needed their help. It wasn't easy. For the first couple years, it was fraught with all sorts of difficulties, but we all just kept coming back to it.

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL IN AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Good afternoon, minister. During our decades-long engagement in Afghanistan, many Afghan Canadians were recruited by the Canadian Armed Forces, or CAF, to serve as language and cultural advisers. These individuals wore our uniforms and operated at great peril with our combat units outside the wire and remained in the theatre for extensive periods of time.

Unfortunately, some of these individuals were wounded while others continued to deal with the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. Yet, because they served as civilians on temporary contracts, your department has denied them help and benefits.

Minister, these brave individuals served our country and put their lives on the line. What is stopping your office from providing these people with the help and the benefits they have certainly earned and deserve?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: First of all, thank you very much, senator. It's an important question. I had a long meeting, and I've had a number of discussions with our military ombudsman on this particular issue. Let me also acknowledge that I think all Canadians should be grateful for the critical services and contributions of the language and cultural advisers. They served alongside our CAF members, and in my conversations with the CAF members, they valued that work and relationship. I've also acknowledged that that service can have a lasting impact on those individuals.

In these specific cases, just to be clear, the benefits that are available through our Veterans Benefit Act and program — unfortunately, these were contracted employees. In many respects, they were members of the public service and, therefore, are not necessarily eligible for the federal benefits, the same benefits that were available to our soldiers.

However, there are various important and different ways that we can support these military advisers. It is important work that I and the ombudsman's office are doing together. We've engaged with the Department of National Defence, or DND, to ensure that there are other mechanisms where we can provide the necessary and required supports to those individuals. I think it's an important question, and we're trying to find ways that we can do the right thing by these people.

I've also been working very closely with the Minister of Veterans Affairs on this issue, trying to ensure that we do what Canada is obliged to do.

Senator MacDonald: You've touched upon my second question, so I'll go back to it. This issue has been repeatedly flagged for over five years by the DND/CAF Ombudsman Office, and now you're saying you are in discussion with the ombudsman.

Mr. Blair: Yes.

Senator MacDonald: Can you and the ombudsman find a resolution to this matter, because right now they're falling through the cracks?

Mr. Blair: I'm in complete agreement with the ombudsman and with your point that we should not allow these people to fall through the cracks. They are not treated exactly the same way as CAF members who served in Afghanistan, because they were not members; they were contract employees. In that respect, there are other benefits potentially available to them.

I'm aware that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, or WSIB, has resolved 23 of the 26 cases that are before it, providing health benefits to those individuals. I'm also aware that in one case, so far, income replacement has been awarded to an individual who was qualified. These things have taken time — perhaps too much time. I would acknowledge that that made it difficult for these individuals, but we are utilizing the laws and the benefits that are available for public servants through the WSIB, and that work is progressing. I think there's more work to do.

SUPPORT FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Minister, when you appeared before us this time last year, I asked you about the terrible impact your government's affordability crisis was having on the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families. We've already heard about the alarming situation at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown of 40 to 50 military families using the food bank each month. As well, CAF personnel who were sent to Ottawa for specialized cybertraining had to rely on food donations from a college's staff so they wouldn't go hungry. They also went months without having their expenses reimbursed. Minister, we have heard

reports of homelessness among serving members. Why should our proud military and their families have to struggle just to survive?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: Thank you very much. It's an important question. We also looked into ensuring we provided the right supports to these individuals, making sure they have everything they need to do the job we ask of them.

Our cyberoperation students who went to Willis College, when they completed the basic military training and were awaiting the next course at Willis College, we posted them the basic training list in Canadian Forces Base Kingston in order to minimize any financial pressures they may have experienced while living in Ottawa. And in January 2023, we placed all full-time personnel at Willis College to provide administrative assistance and prioritize efforts with all of our local CAF resources.

We were very aware of the pressures that these individuals on this highly specialized course faced because of the training taking place in Ottawa, and steps were taken to provide them with the resources and supports that they required.

Senator Martin: Minister, when you were last here, you told us you believed that the real answer to the affordability crisis was more housing. Yet, on April 1, you raised the cost of rent for Canadian military personnel living on bases.

Minister, why did you raise their rent this year, and will you do so again in 2025?

Mr. Blair: The rent — to be clear — is tied to income, and we gave them a pay raise. So there was a subsequent impact on that. But can I be clear? There's also a huge issue of supply. We are making very significant investments. There is not enough time to answer the full question here, but we will be announcing this week 400 new military housing units on three of our bases, including Gagetown, Borden and Esquimalt, where we are going to begin construction immediately.

• (1610)

Also, through a number of programs that my department has now initiated, including project Pathfinder, we're making arrangements to lease property to municipalities and developers to build housing on Department of National Defence, or DND, property without selling it. We can get it done quickly. I've spoken to a number of extraordinary people across this country. The plan is to build housing more quickly for —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

SECURITY POLICY

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Minister, in two weeks, the sixteenth Halifax International Security Forum will bring together defence and security policy experts from around the world. I think there's an expectation that there will be a fairly large U.S. congressional delegation, as well as think tank experts who will probably, in some cases, find themselves serving in the new administration.

Do you see this as an opportunity for yourself and other Canadian participants to get in there early with the incoming Trump administration, particularly in terms of setting out Canadian capabilities and policies?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: I think it's a great opportunity to engage and build a stronger relationship with a lot of very important congressional leaders from the United States without anticipating what role they might subsequently play in the future.

Last year was the first time I attended the Halifax International Security Forum as the Minister of National Defence, and I took the opportunity to try to be very frank with everybody who was in attendance that Canada needed to do more and was going to do more. I was quite explicit about the current state of the world, what needed to be done and how Canada needed to step up its game. I also met with the congressional delegation at that time and told them what needed to be done and what we were going to do about it. I think that was helpful.

I'm looking forward to the meeting that will take place in two weeks' time so I can give them an update on the progress that we are, in fact, making and the investments we are making in defence. I will also be very clear with them that we still have to do more and that we're going to do more.

Senator Boehm: Minister, if you play it forward to January, Canada will assume the presidency of the G7. Do you see this as an opportunity for you and your department to engage in terms of leveraging policy issues and looking at some of the big geostrategic concerns that we have now? Have you started your planning?

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much, senator. There has been some important work. Two weeks ago I was in Naples, and I attended the first G7 Ministers' Meeting on Defence that has been held in a very long time. Meeting with my counterparts there, we initiated a very important dialogue on the role of the G7 countries and how many of our friends, frankly, who would like to be part of the G7 can contribute. There are really important policy discussions that could arise and will come out of those discussions that will take place in Canada during Canada's leadership of the G7 next year.

At the same time, let me also share with you that I've been meeting very extensively not just with members of the G7 but with a lot of our friends and allies from around the world. They value Canada's contribution and, in particular, I just want to say, we made a commitment in the Indo-Pacific —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Hon. Paula Simons: Thank you very much, minister. Perhaps it falls to me to address the elephant in the room. Since the end of the Second World War and beginning of the Cold War, the paradigm upon which our defence is predicated is that we belong to an alliance of Western allies facing Russia.

In January, we may enter a world in which the president-elect exercises his warm personal relationship with Vladimir Putin in a way that will start to corrode the foundations of the NATO and NORAD alliances. This is probably the worst question of all to end with, but I'm wondering what position within government you are looking at to deal with other Western allies to talk about a potential world post-NORAD and post-NATO and what that means for Canada.

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: My view is not as pessimistic, if I may. First of all, I've also heard the new president-elect's comments and his concerns that he expressed with the NATO that he experienced during his previous administration. Since the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022, I think it has been Putin's intention to break apart or to weaken the alliance which is NATO, and I think he has failed miserably. What I have witnessed in my role as the Minister of National Defence — and I've attended numerous NATO defence ministers' meetings and of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group — is a remarkable strength in NATO and new members coming in, particularly Sweden and Finland. There is an incredible resolve and commitment by NATO members and an acknowledgment — not rhetoric — given the reality of Putin's illegal invasion, that we need to do more globally in our national defence, and all of us are upping our game and making significant new investments. There is huge and important work taking place among our industries to ensure production, because production is also deterrence.

I'm hopeful that the new president-elect will learn about a new NATO when he assumes office in January. I'm also hopeful that he will see that it's a stronger organization, a more committed organization and that all of its members, including Canada, are committed to making the investments that will make it as strong as it needs to be.

Senator Simons: We live in hope, minister.

Mr. Blair: Yes, ma'am.

ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY

Hon. Paula Simons: NORAD, in particular, has been responsible for the defence of Canada's Arctic. With global warming opening new shipping lanes and with interest in the North from both a Donald Trump White House and a Vladimir Putin government, can you explain to us what positions the Canadian government is taking and what resources you are exercising to ensure that we maintain sovereignty over the Arctic in this new world?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: As I indicated in our defence policy update, the Arctic is becoming a more strategic theatre of potential conflict than was ever the case in the past. As a result of climate change, we are finding that the Arctic is becoming far more accessible. Whereas we used to rely on a frozen ocean to keep us safe, that is now less likely to do the job. We are also seeing the aggressive actions of certain adversaries, particularly China and Russia, really leaning in — in some ways very aggressively through cyber attacks and

other types of military-related operations in the North and in other ways simply by trying to make investments in our critical infrastructure in northern communities.

We understand that sovereignty is more than just having a plane fly by every once in a while or a ship sail by when the oceans are free. It means investment. Investments in infrastructure —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

[Translation]

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Minister, yesterday, I met with veterans of the 1990 Persian Gulf War. They were complaining about the fact that they are having a hard time getting this government to listen to them and to give them the same recognition as Korean War veterans. Because of their situation, these veterans who served our country are not receiving the same compensation. In other words, it is not worth as much to have lost a leg in the Persian Gulf as it is to have lost one in Korea.

Isn't it shameful that the Canadian Armed Forces do not guarantee equal treatment to all the men and women who serve our country in situations of conflict? That certainly does not help recruit soldiers or motivate our troops.

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: Thank you very much, senator. Let me acknowledge the service of all of our veterans, including those who fought in the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and in subsequent conflicts around the world. I've also met with those same veterans — I believe they're the same ones — and they're a terrific group of people. We spent a lot of time talking about their experiences.

I've also appeared quite recently before the Veterans' Affairs Committee and testified about the difference between the two pieces of legislation that govern benefits for members of the Canadian Armed Forces in different conflicts. The Pension Act applied to those veterans who fought in the First World War, the Second World War and the Korean War. They were under the Pension Act, and there was legislation passed in 2006 that is essentially a veterans' benefit act. I want to acknowledge that it does not have exactly the same benefits, but there's great parity between them.

In the example you cited — and I discussed this with the same veterans that you did — a person lost their foot. Under the previous act, everybody received exactly the same amount of money for a lost limb. Under the new act, there's an acknowledgment that the impact of losing that limb goes far beyond simply writing a cheque and receiving a certain amount of money for the leg. It talks about income replacement, other ongoing services and other types of injury supports that people require. It's not exactly the same, but there is great parity. If there is disparity in how we treat those people —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

[Mr. Blair]

[Translation]

Senator Dagenais: These 1990 veterans served Canada just the same. Don't you find it ironic that, unlike Korean War veterans, their names can't be added to the National War Memorial, when we have had a monument just behind our building here in Ottawa since 2012 to honour the horses, mules, dogs and pigeons that helped our soldiers in times of war?

• (1620)

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: I think commemoration, acknowledgment and respect for their service are absolutely essential, so I'm going to agree vigorously with you that we need to do a better job of acknowledging their service. One of the challenges I face is when someone says, "Well, can't you just retroactively declare a war?" Of course, as Minister of Defence, I do not have that authority. In fact, Canada has not declared a war since 1945 when the original Geneva Conventions were signed.

The only authority I possess as Minister of National Defence is either to declare, under the Veterans Benefit Act, a particular conflict as either a special duty operation or a special duty locale. I can identify it as special duty. I have done it, and my predecessors have done it frequently, for a wide variety of conflicts. One of the concerns expressed by those veterans is that —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

RACIAL AND GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Welcome, Minister Blair, to the Senate. Thank you for being here for the past hour or more. You talked about the death spiral when it comes to recruitment. Surely, part of the problem is the rampant or the significant presence of misogyny and racism in the forces. What is it about the forces that allows members to feel they can behave so reprehensibly? What concrete steps are you taking, and how are those measures going?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: Let me first of all agree with you that there's no place for racism or misogyny nor any form of discrimination in the Canadian Armed Forces. Everyone who makes that remarkable choice to serve their country in the Canadian Armed Forces deserves to be treated with respect and to be supported and respected when serving in that uniform. There can be no tolerance for racism or intolerance within the Canadian Armed Forces.

We have the benefit of some really important consultations and work that have been done with members of the Canadian Armed Forces. In particular, I'm implementing the recommendations of Justice Arbour. She made 48 recommendations, one of which requires legislative change. I have Bill C-66 currently before the House. I am working really hard to get it through second reading so we can get it to committee. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, we can get it before this house because it is important legislation, and it aligns completely with the recommendation of

Justice Arbour. But there are 47 other recommendations, as well as other reports from Justice Fish, for example, which we're busily implementing.

We have made commitments through a number of different initiatives. There's not one thing to do to confront racism because it's a human frailty, and we recruit from the human race. There are a thousand things to do. I've appointed a special committee to look at all of our military training institutions to ensure that we organize them in such a way that it does not foster that type of misbehaviour. There can be no tolerance for racism, misogyny and hatred in the Canadian Armed Forces. Frankly, overwhelmingly, we hire some of the best people anywhere in the world. They've made extraordinary choices to serve their country. Overwhelmingly, they're great people —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: I look forward to the bill coming to the Senate soon.

Just to clarify on the matter of the 2% of GDP, there's been some controversy as to whether your department lowballed the estimate too much on the dollar figure. Can you commit that it is 2% regardless of what the GDP is at that point? What pressures are on us to meet that 2% a lot sooner, like in the next year or two?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of National Defence: First of all, regarding the investments that we have to make, I've been able to go and explain this to my allies because they face the same challenges I do. We know we need to spend money on new platforms. As an example, we're building 15 new battleships, new destroyers, but that takes time. We're going to acquire 12 new submarines, but it will take time for them to come through the shipyard and for us to build the infrastructure needed to support them.

We also need to reconstitute our Armed Forces so we have the people to sail on those ships and in those submarines and to fly those planes and to maintain them. All of that work is happening in concert, but it takes times to get those things delivered. Some senators made reference to lapses, to money that did not get spent. We're able to repurpose that money and carry it forward. If we can't get the planes delivered in that year —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

The time for Question Period has expired. I am certain you will want to join me in thanking Minister Blair for joining us today.

Thank you, minister.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NATIONAL THANADELTHUR DAY BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator White, for the second reading of Bill S-274, An Act to Establish National Thanadelthur Day.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Your Honour, for starting Question Period a minute earlier than what was anticipated. I was thinking I might have to hold my breath for a minute before I would start delivering my remarks, and I didn't have to do that.

Honourable senators, I'm rising today to speak to second reading of Bill S-274, An Act to establish — and I hope I will not mess this up too often, Senator McCallum — National Thanadelthur Day. This bill was introduced by Senator McCallum.

Before I begin, colleagues, I want to set the record straight again, as we have in the past. This is in regard to some comments made by Senator McCallum in her intervention after the adjournment and as insinuated by others after we adjourned the debate about a week ago. It was insinuated that the Conservatives were delaying the adoption of this bill by taking the adjournment that day.

Quite frankly, that could not be further from the truth. The fact of the matter is that when Senator McCallum delivered her second reading speech on Bill S-274 on September 21, 2023, the adjournment was taken in Senator McPhedran's name. She then held the adjournment in her name for over a year, even resetting the clock this past April and finally speaking on day 15, last Tuesday, over a year later.

Colleagues, we never held the adjournment, so I'm not sure how we could have delayed Bill S-274.

The only people who delayed your bill, Senator McCallum, are in fact Senator McPhedran and the Senate Government Representative Office, or GRO. It is the GRO's responsibility, as we have said in the past — and it doesn't matter how bewildered they look, again — through Senator LaBoucane-Benson to offer proper representation to non-affiliated senators.

Clearly, they have let you and other non-affiliated senators down, Senator McCallum. It is not the Conservatives and, in fact, not the Independent Senators Group, or ISG; not the Canadian Senators Group, or CSG; nor the Progressive Senate Group, or PSG. It is the government that has let you down.

We all know that with a proper government in the Senate, your bill, Senator McCallum, would have had better representation. Instead, we have a government in the Senate that states they will not intervene in private member's bills, or PMBs. Then that same government chooses to vote in favour of adjourning debate on one PMB and voting against adjournment on another PMB.

We all know that critics typically, whether they're friendly critics or other critics, are the last people to speak on a bill. That's not a rule, but that's by convention. Critics are given the opportunity of being the last people to speak.

Senator McPhedran had your bill in adjournment. Here I am, a week later, speaking.

I want to refer to a little bit to Bill C-355 in this same regard. We, and I personally, have already been accused by Senator Dalphond, Animal Justice and all kinds of other people of stalling Bill C-355. Many of you don't even know what Bill C-355 is, probably, but I am responsible for stalling it. Animal Justice is sending letters around to their membership telling them: The Conservatives are stopping your bill, and horses are being slaughtered because the Conservatives are stalling your bill.

• (1630)

I am the critic on this bill, and I plan to be the last person to speak on this bill before it goes to committee. Today, there are four people slated to speak on scroll on Bill C-355. They're listed on scroll today, yet I'm responsible and the Conservatives have been responsible for holding up this bill. At least two other senators from two different caucuses in this chamber have told me they also want to speak on Bill C-355. They don't know when, but they want to speak on Bill C-355. Yet the fundraising is out there, and the fight against the Conservatives goes on.

Senator Gold: It's all true.

Senator Plett: It doesn't matter what you say, Senator Gold; that is the truth. You are one of the people who want to speak on it. The government leader wants to speak on Bill C-355 today, yet Senator Dalphond says I'm holding it up.

Yet again, it is the Conservatives, Senator McCallum and colleagues, who will do their job and help you move your good bill forward.

Like I have said many times, I strongly believe in every senator's right to speak. I have always had the highest respect, Senator McCallum, for your true and strong independence.

I'm raising these points because these insinuations raised against the Conservative caucus are unfair and without any basis. You can then surely appreciate and understand my colleagues' surprise and disappointment when these insinuations were made a week ago.

Now, while I might not intervene very often on these types of bills where we are enacting a month or a week of recognition — I'm not the biggest fan of recognizing days, weeks or months — Bill S-274, presented by Senator McCallum, in my opinion, is

different. It's an exception because, in my opinion, it's an opportunity for our country, especially our children, to learn a little bit about our history.

Born in the late 1690s, Thanadelthur was a peace negotiator, guide, teacher and interpreter in northern Manitoba. She negotiated peace between her tribe — the Denesuline — and the Cree, as well as played an instrumental role in creating ties between her tribe and the Hudson's Bay Company, or HBC, during the fur trade.

After escaping her captors in 1714, Thanadelthur made her way back to York Factory, a trading post for the Hudson's Bay Company. Governor James Knight wanted to expand trading north of the Churchill River but needed peace to be made between the Denesuline and the Cree. Thanadelthur left with a company of 150 Cree on a mission to broker a peace deal between the two groups.

Although most of her company could not withstand the cold winter or the sickness, Thanadelthur, with about a dozen of her companions, was determined to carry on. While failure seemed to be almost a certainty, they stumbled upon nine Denesuline bodies. Fearing retaliation, the Cree members in her group did not want to continue.

Determined, Thanadelthur convinced them to stay where they were and promised to return in 10 days. After finding a group of Denesuline people, she convinced them of their pacific intentions and returned to her group, as promised, 10 days later.

Close to a year after the expedition left York Factory, Thanadelthur returned with peace having been achieved. The new peace accord allowed HBC to expand north of the Churchill River and establish present-day Churchill. Encouraged by the expansion, Governor Knight planned for a second expansion, to which Thanadelthur agreed. Unfortunately, she did not see the plan come to fruition, dying of illness on February 5, 1717.

After her death, Governor Knight wrote the following in his diary:

She was one of a very high Spirit and of the Firmest Resolution that ever I see in any Body in my Days and of great Courage.

According to the Churchill Northern Studies Centre, Thanadelthur is celebrated for several reasons:

First, she is celebrated for her diplomacy, which was displayed through her successful negotiation between the Cree and the Denesuline and is a prime example of effective diplomacy and conflict resolution.

Second, she is celebrated for her bravery; her journey, survival and willingness to be a peacemaker during violent times highlight her extraordinary courage.

The third reason is the important impact on trade. The peace agreements she brokered opened up trading in northern Manitoba for the Hudson's Bay Company into modern-day Churchill.

Lastly, Thanadelthur is celebrated for her cultural ambassadorship, through her peacemaking between different Indigenous cultures as well as between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. She convinced three groups to overlook their cultural differences to find common ground together, a wonderful feat.

Widely known as an ambassador for peace, Thanadelthur had significant importance for Manitoba and Indigenous history. Through the challenges she faced to survive harsh winters in Manitoba, Thanadelthur is a symbol of strength, leadership and courage. And believe me, colleagues — Senator McCallum is well aware; I have spent much of my time up in the same areas that she has — you haven't experienced winter until you've been through a Manitoba winter. Thanadelthur's legacy of bridging cultural differences is one that still resonates today and could offer teachings for all of our youth.

Yet, despite the pivotal role she played in Manitoba's history, her story has not found the wider recognition that it rightfully and importantly deserves. We know of the impact that other major figures have had in our country and various provinces, but we also need a light to shine on stories like Thanadelthur's. In a storied country like ours, too many important figures are pushed to the margins of history.

Manitoba, indeed, has a rich history to share with the rest of the country and the world. From Louis Riel and John Norquay, who have shaped our province and country, to Margaret Laurence and Gabrielle Roy, who made Manitoba's rich culture shine, Manitoba boasts an impressive array of important figures. While these names are better known across the country, some others, like Thanadelthur, are still in some obscurity. To have a day in recognition of her life would shine a brighter light on her remarkable life and on her legacy to inspire future generations.

Like I said earlier, and like many of you know already, I am not a huge fan of the various special days, weeks and months of recognition that are passed in this place. I simply believe there are too many. However, if there are any that deserve this type of recognition, this is one that deserves it.

Colleagues, I would encourage all senators here to support Bill S-274 at second reading, for it to be studied at committee and for the committee to determine if this is the best avenue with which to recognize Thanadelthur, because, without a doubt, there needs to be recognition.

• (1640)

In closing, Senator McCallum, I want to thank you for bringing forward the story and legacy of an important figure in our history. I thank you for your patience. It's always a good day when we can learn about our shared history, and thanks to your initiative, Senator McCallum, Thanadelthur's story reached a wider audience.

Thank you, colleagues.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I'd like to take a few moments to add my voice to this important debate and begin by thanking Senator McCallum for bringing this forward.

Senator Plett, thank you for your speech and your remarks.

I want to begin by making a few comments. I'm not going to say much more than this, except to say that we in the GRO do our very best to represent non-affiliated senators. I can handle the things that are said about me on a daily basis here, in the press and on social media, but Senator LaBoucane-Benson, on a regular basis, diligently and responsibly advocates for and represents non-affiliated senators' interests at scroll every day. Let the record show that the things said in that regard are simply not true.

I should also say that we in the GRO have been very clear that the role of non-affiliated senators under our current Rules needs to be re-examined. We pushed for that, as a matter of fact, and we're very glad that the Rules Committee has taken that question up to be studied. I hope that the study proceeds effectively and efficiently so that we can modernize our Rules to take this important matter into account.

With regard to debate on your bill, senator, we support Bill S-274 advancing to committee and, as we do with any bill, regardless of — I am also used to being interrupted, so I shall continue and try to ignore the interruptions.

We support Bill S-274 advancing to committee and, as we do with any bill, regardless of who introduces it, its ability to move forward to be properly studied in this place. That will require the collective will of this chamber. Therefore, colleagues, I'm calling the question.

Thank you, Senator McCallum, for bringing this forward. I urge us all to support sending this to committee right now.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator McCallum, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples.)

[Translation]

**PROHIBITION OF THE EXPORT OF HORSES
BY AIR FOR SLAUGHTER BILL**

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Dalphond, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy, for the second reading of Bill C-355, An Act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain Acts.

Hon. Chantal Petitclerc: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-355, An Act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain Acts.

[English]

It is important to emphasize — as Senator Dalphond, the sponsor in the Senate, already has — that this bill is not intended to put a brake on the consumption of horsemeat by those who wish to consume it. Rather, it seeks to protect these animals by avoiding a mode of transport that can be cruel and inappropriate.

[Translation]

Unlike Bill S-270, which was withdrawn from the Order Paper in March 2024, this bill focuses exclusively on exports by air, without prohibiting other modes of transport. At present, almost all horse exports by air are destined for Japan.

Before turning to the issues surrounding the transport of horses, let me briefly review the aims and potential impact of this bill.

The first part clearly prohibits the export by air of live horses for the purpose of being fattened and slaughtered.

[English]

The second part of the bill clarifies the prohibition on making a false or misleading written statement that the horse is not being exported for slaughter.

[Translation]

Finally, the third and last part of the bill provides for penalties in the event of non-compliance with the prohibition. These penalties should be sufficiently severe to encourage companies to comply with the legislation, while guaranteeing the safety of the horses concerned.

[English]

Bill C-355 presents itself as a solid legislative framework to protect horses. Its adoption could position Canada as a leader in the protection of animal rights and contribute to a significant change in our relationship with these animals.

[Translation]

Why is it so important to be concerned with the export of horses for slaughter? First, let's look at the current situation. There are several indications that this practice involves substandard treatment.

Two *Globe and Mail* and Radio-Canada articles made headlines last month.

The title of the *Globe and Mail* article says it all: “Live horses shipped to Japan for meat, dying and suffering on flights, report alleges.”

The authors of these articles have used documents from the Japanese Animal Quarantine Service to tell us the following facts.

[English]

Between June 2023 and May 2024, 21 horses shipped from Canada for slaughter died during transport or the following days.

Between July 2023 and January 2024, there were five deaths during three different flights from Edmonton to Japan that transported 184 horses.

Most of these deaths are due to dehydration, stress and pneumonia. More than 40 serious injuries and illnesses were also recorded.

[Translation]

The report consulted for this article indicates that on a flight from Edmonton on January 8, during the transport of 85 horses in crates to Kagoshima, four horses fell inside their crates during the flight. One mare was seriously injured and died as a result of the fall. On arrival in Japan, the three other horses found collapsed in their crates were suffering from shortness of breath. Two of them were so badly injured that they died shortly after arrival.

Studies have shown that horses subjected to prolonged stress can develop abnormal behaviour, such as the self-mutilation tic, a manifestation of stress and despair in the face of unbearable living conditions.

[English]

Also, according to *The Globe and Mail*, on January 16, a horse died from a fall on a plane during a flight. Several horses were said to have died during this flight. One of them collapsed in Japan and had to be towed and lifted by a forklift. The horse was unable to stand for days and died on the third day. Two pregnant female horses died a few days later after giving birth or having miscarried.

• (1650)

[Translation]

The biggest problem is that this information, although supposedly known to Canadian authorities, contradicts data from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. At the Agriculture Committee meeting on February 29, 2024, a CFIA official stated the following:

As we have reported forward-facing on our website, since 2013 there have been five fatalities out of the about 47,000 horses that have been exported. That's a mortality rate of about 0.011%. I'm not aware of other instances of significant injuries. The requirement for the regulated parties is to report mortalities and significant injuries.

That's the crux of the issue. Our standards are no longer adequate, oversight is lacking, and incident reporting is poor.

Colleagues, you will no doubt have noticed that horses for racing, training, show or other activities will not be affected by the ban in Bill C-355. The work of the Agriculture Committee in the other place, which studied this bill, helps to better understand why this restriction applies only to live horses intended for consumption.

[English]

Dr. Mary Jane Ireland, Chief Veterinary Officer for Canada, stated in her testimony:

The rules for horses with respect to their movement, their transport, are the same regardless of whether the horses are destined for another country for whatever purpose. Whether it's for show purposes, a competition or a feedlot, the same rules apply.

According to Dr. Ireland:

The feed, water and rest time, or the interval at which an animal must be provided rest, feed and water during transport, is 20 hours regardless of the outcome for that animal.

[Translation]

The regulations are the same for all horses and are not discriminatory. On the other hand, according to the witnesses, the transport conditions are not the same for horses intended for slaughter and for racehorses, those used for recreational riding and those sold to foreign clients.

Kenneth Serrien, Managing Director of Overseas Horse Services Ltd., came back to the major difference in handling when loading the animals on the plane. While the horses subject to the ban in Bill C-355 have not received basic behavioural training, other sport or companion horses are trained and are used to being transported by road or by air.

[English]

Honourable colleagues, a relevant aspect related to this question is the cost of the air transport of horses, which varies depending upon several factors. According to the company EMO Trans, prices for transporting a horse can range from \$2,000 to \$10,000 for a one-way ticket and up to \$20,000 for a return flight. Several levels of comfort are offered, ranging from economy class to first class.

[Translation]

For example, horses taking part in sporting events are often transported individually or in small groups in small wooden crates that are specially designed to provide optimum comfort. These transport conditions exceed the standards, because paying special attention to details can contribute to the horses' well-being during the journey. Upgraded transport conditions may include padding to prevent injury, increased headroom to allow for comfortable movement, fewer horses per journey to reduce stress, opportunities for attendants to check on the horses and handling techniques designed to reduce auditory distress.

Having more space inside the transport stall allows a horse to keep its balance during take-off and landing, and, according to bill sponsor Tim Louis, avoids exposing it to likely causes of injury. Private companies have already invested in high-tech transport systems that monitor the animals' well-being using heat and stress sensors. However, as one might expect, these costly requirements designed to ensure the comfort and well-being of racehorses, show horses and the like, which may be worth between \$250,000 and \$500,000, are not used for horses destined for slaughter.

[English]

For cost-effective reasons, the same secure transport arrangements will not be adopted for horses destined for slaughter, which are often transported in precarious conditions, often starving, dehydrated and deprived of rest for prolonged periods.

[Translation]

This disparity raises ethical and practical questions about the way we prioritize animal welfare. Why apply high standards to certain horses and not others simply because of the purpose they serve? Are we saying that responsibility for maintaining the well-being of a horse is based solely on the animal's economic utility or performance potential, whereas others fated to end up on high-priced menus are not worthy of the most basic compliance with standards?

[English]

This contrast between the conditions of transport of horses intended for slaughter and those for competition or show is not surprising, but, in the end, we must ensure compliance with minimum standards. Horses are sensitive beings, capable of feeling pain, anxiety and suffering. Exporting by air often poses significant risks, as demonstrated: precarious transport conditions, increased psychological and physical stress, lack of

access to food and water and travel time, which can be excessively long. As you will have understood, the question of animal welfare is at the heart of this debate.

[*Translation*]

Passing Bill C-355 would be an important step toward recognizing these values. By prohibiting the air transportation of horses intended for slaughter, we would be sending a powerful message: Animal welfare is a priority in Canada and the time has come to rethink our approach to exporting livestock.

We also have to reflect on the impact that these laws may have on our international image. By implementing regulations that reflect our concern for the ethical treatment of animals, we strengthen Canada's reputation. We would also follow in the footsteps of New Zealand, which prohibited the export of animals for slaughter in 2008 and, more recently, prohibited the export of livestock by sea. In May 2024, the British Parliament banned the export of animals for slaughter, and other countries are considering similar action.

[*English*]

Adherence to ethical standards has become essential in today's global context. Organizations like the Office International des Epizooties, or OIE, today the World Organisation for Animal Health and the Codex Alimentarius set international nutritional standards and have issued guidelines for animal transport. For example, the World Organisation for Animal Health has highlighted that "animal welfare must not be neglected, even in the context of food production."

• (1700)

By adopting Bill C-355, Canada is therefore harmonizing with several international conventions and recommendations.

[*Translation*]

Honourable colleagues, Bill C-355 must not be seen as just another piece of legislation. It can serve as a catalyst for broader reflection on how we treat all animals.

We have an opportunity to promote practices that favour animal welfare, use adequate transportation methods and ensure that horses are treated with dignity.

I hope, dear colleagues, that this bill will be referred to committee for in-depth study. Thank you. *Meegweich*

[*English*]

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise briefly to speak at second reading of Bill C-355, An Act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain Acts.

Let me begin by acknowledging the hard work and dedication of Mr. Tim Louis, Member of Parliament for Kitchener—Conestoga, who initiated this bill and has been spearheading this legislation through the legislative process.

[Senator Petitcherc]

[*Translation*]

These past few years, the issue of exporting horses for slaughter has garnered a lot of attention from the public and on social media; English Canadians have expressed their concern about this practice.

Thousands of letters sent to parliamentarians and the petition with more than 36,000 signatures presented at the other place by the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford clearly show that many Canadians believe that horses are not being treated the same way as other livestock.

[*English*]

It is important to remember that Bill C-355 is firmly grounded in science and in facts. Substantial evidence exists to support the advancement of this bill through our process.

Earlier this year, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food held four hearings on Bill C-355, with testimony from over 15 key stakeholders, including individuals from the horse industry, animal rights groups, veterinarians, pilots and Government of Canada officials. The committee heard and identified concerns and responded to them in a thoughtful, respectful and timely way. Based on input from witnesses, the committee passed an amendment to Bill C-355 by removing the requirement for pilots and Canada Border Services Agency officials with respect to dealing with the written declaration or other documentation.

[*Translation*]

They will not need to worry about processing additional paperwork, which will allow them to focus on their daily work, while ensuring the security of our borders.

The amendment also addresses the industry's concerns by giving the minister the flexibility of allowing the use of other documentation in place of the written declaration.

[*English*]

Let me also make clear that this bill is not about the domestic slaughter of horses, nor is it about the consumption of horsemeat. It will not impact food security. This bill has a very narrow focus that addresses a concern expressed by many Canadians, which is the live export by air of horses for slaughter.

Some have claimed that horses being sent for slaughter by air are treated similarly to — if not better than — horses being flown for sport or recreation. This is simply not the case, as our colleague Senator Petitcherc clearly explained in her very illuminating remarks. The welfare of horses is the primary concern of this bill, and it is not, colleagues, the beginning of a larger intrusion on animal agriculture, as some critics of this bill have suggested.

In closing, I want to reiterate that the Government of Canada is fully supportive of Bill C-355. It is my hope this bill can advance to committee as swiftly as possible. Thank you very much.

Hon. Robert Black: Would Senator Gold take a question?

Senator Gold: Of course.

Senator Black: Thank you. Senator Gold, I understand it's a \$20-million business annually. What do we tell producers who raise these animals when — if the bill passes — their livelihoods end? What do we tell them?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. It's clearly a very good question. I look forward to that being addressed at committee, where all the experts and officials relevant to this will be there to provide the answers.

Senator Black: I guess I didn't get the question answered there. I might put it another way. If we passed a bill that said all lawyers could not work anymore, how would we answer that question for the lawyers?

Senator Gold: I don't want to make light of the question. There are too many good lawyer jokes that would — senator, I'm not dismissing the question. I'm simply saying to you that this bill was studied thoroughly and properly in the other place. As soon as others who want to speak to this bill do so, we have a chance to send it to committee where those and other questions will properly be addressed in the study, and I look forward to the study of that bill.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Since Senator Gold was happy to answer Senator Black's question, I have two questions. Would he answer those as well?

Senator Gold: I will answer two questions from you, Senator Plett.

Senator Plett: Maybe it's three questions. The first one is this: In a form letter addressing calls to ban the export by air of horses designed for slaughter, former agriculture minister Marie-Claude Bibeau said the following:

This complex issue touches on a number of key considerations, including legal obligations, international trade commitments and relations [and animal transport regulations] more broadly, and mechanisms for implementation and enforcement.

Senator Gold, did the government complete this work? If so, would you be willing to table all the relevant documents so that we can examine them?

Senator Gold: Senator, I don't know the answer to your question, but, again, I do encourage this and many other questions to be raised at the committee study, as I suspect — although I can't say — they could have been and perhaps were raised in the House. The purpose of second reading debate is to address the principles of the bill.

Banning the live export of horses for slaughter was identified as part of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food's mandate letter. It's a policy issue that the government supports. That is why I, as the Government Representative, have taken the opportunity at second reading to lend my voice in support of this

bill as a matter of principle. The details of this bill and all of that are properly a matter to be studied at committee, as we do in this chamber.

Senator Plett: I won't bother asking this question: Why not make it a government bill and so on and so forth? I understand that you have this right, even if I may or may not disagree. I'll leave that for my speech. But I will ask you a question that I would have liked to ask Senator Petitcher, but she ran out of time.

There was much said, especially in Senator Petitcher's comments, regarding that there was no opposition to transporting racehorses, show horses and so on and so forth, because they are being transported in better conditions. I think Senator Dalphond actually alluded that they fly first class. First of all, I disagree with what was said, but, again, that's for my speech later. Hypothetically, then, if these horses were guaranteed to be transported in as good a condition as a racehorse — because we're not opposed to the slaughter of the horses, clearly. This is about transporting horses for slaughter, not the slaughter of the horses; Senator Petitcher was clear on that. Also, we're not opposed to transporting horses by air.

If there were a commitment made, and if everybody would agree that these horses would fly in as good a condition as the racehorses, would that satisfy us because that's about regulations and enforcing the rules. Not one person — certainly not me — would be opposed to ensuring that these horses are flown there. I don't like to use the word "humane" when talking about horses, even though Animal Justice might, but they would be flown in conditions where they would not suffer. Would that satisfy you?

• (1710)

Senator Gold: Again, thank you for your question. As I stated, and it's my understanding, the focus of this bill — and I think you're underlining that, Senator Plett — is clearly on the welfare of the animals in transport. My understanding is that the evidence clearly established not only that the conditions for travel for horses in sport are different and less harmful to those horses, but also the way in which horses are raised, trained and habituated to travel is very different. That also bears upon the impact of travel on those horses.

I'm not an expert in this area. I do believe and hope that these legitimate questions will be addressed at committee, and that so long as we keep our focus on the welfare of animals, based upon science and evidence and based upon current practices, I think we'll be doing the right thing in this study by not only the horses, but by the industry as well.

Senator Plett: Very briefly, you alluded to the fact that this was studied — I don't know if you used the word "extensively" — at committee and in the other place, and so on and so forth. We had some sort of an obligation to move this along because of that.

Let me ask you this question then, Senator Gold: If the House decides to pass bills by margins of 320 to 1, should they then be passed in this chamber?

Senator Gold: I'm slow but not that slow, Senator Plett. The position of the Government Representative Office, or GRO, has consistently been that bills that come to us should be properly studied. Not to point fingers at anybody else, but we in the GRO — the record will show — we don't use our Rules to delay bills going to committee. Every bill is different.

There are times when I will make an argument that you have made about other bills, and when those bills are properly before the chamber or in committee, I will not hesitate to make them, and I will sometimes make the opposite argument.

It's not to borrow a page from your playbook, but you have said in this chamber that you're indifferent to where bills originate as long as they're good laws. Of course, good laws are in the eyes of the beholder, and we may reasonably disagree.

But I think this bill, having come to us from the other place — and all bills that come to us, especially having been voted as they take priority on our Order Paper — should also deserve the respect of being properly studied in a timely fashion in this place. That, I believe, is a principle upon which I hope we can all agree, even though our Rules and practices don't always necessarily fall into place.

In that regard, again, I support sending this to committee so it can be properly studied, debated and improved if that's what the committee so feels, so chooses, and then debated further in this chamber.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Senator Batters, would you like to ask a question?

Hon. Denise Batters: I would, yes. Senator Gold, today you stand to make a second reading speech about a private member's bill. I guess it's important for you to telegraph that the Liberal government supports this bill, just in case independent senators don't know this was a Liberal MP's bill announced in the House of Commons.

Even though you're the Senate government leader, you deliver second and third reading speeches on government bills very infrequently thus depriving senators of a chance to ask you questions that have quite a bit of detail to them about government bills. I just did check this. Since the Senate returned in September, you have not delivered second or third reading speeches on any of these: Bill C-26, second reading; Bill C-40, second reading; Bill C-76, second and third reading; Bill C-49, third reading; Bill C-64, third reading; and Bill C-20, third reading.

Senator Gold, you haven't made a second or third reading speech on a government bill since last February 27, on Bill C-62.

Senator Gold, why don't you find it to be an important part of your job to deliver speeches on government bills so that senators can then ask you important questions about the government's reasoning and key details?

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

Before I answer your question, which I shall do, let me remind the chamber that I have made interventions on government bills and private members' bills on many occasions, including Senator Batters' private member's bill from the other place, Bill C-291, that you sponsored here in the Senate. I spoke in favour of that bill and was delighted it received Royal Assent. Let us be clear that I, like your leader, focus on the quality of the bills and not their provenance.

We in the GRO are three senators. We rely upon the experience, expertise and willingness of senators, beyond our small numbers, to accept, if they so wish, the sponsorship of government bills. Every government bill that comes forward to this place has the support of the government. Therefore, it will be no surprise to know — and no one needs to listen to me to talk to know — that I, as a Government Representative, support a government bill.

We have been blessed in this chamber with tremendous quality of sponsors of bills over the many years that this office has been operating.

Furthermore, when bills go to committee, ministers appear to defend the bills and answer on behalf of the government; officials appear before the committees to answer questions of technical and other non-political matters. So I make no apologies for sparing you my remarks when we have capable, able, well-briefed and experienced senators often, if not always, with greater understanding and background in the subject matter of the bills than I could possibly muster.

Senator Batters: Senator Gold, your Government Representative Office does have a sizeable office budget, \$1.5 million, in that realm. Plus you have the resources of the government to assist you, both to prepare your speeches and to brief you properly so you can answer our questions on behalf of the government. It's your government's choice to have a very small group that answers questions and handles things on behalf of the government.

Meanwhile, when we have independent senators who are sponsors of bills, they may do a very capable job as they're able to, but they don't have the resources of the government that are behind them and they don't have the proper briefings that are allowed to you to be able to answer on behalf of the government. That's the important thing about ensuring that government bills have the government leader frequently speaking on behalf of them, so that we can get questions properly answered. Too often, independent senators don't have those resources, so can you understand that that's why it's an important thing for you to give speeches on a regular basis on government bills?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. It gives me the opportunity, perhaps — how to put this gentlemanly — to correct what is clearly a misconception that you have.

We have a budget that supports an important and very capable, relatively small team that supports us. I do get briefings, but Senate sponsors get the same briefings as I would get on a bill. Anybody who sponsors the government bill has the same access to not only the briefings, but whatever support that I would otherwise provide.

Because this will come as no surprise to you, depending on the bill, either myself or one of my two colleagues and members of our staff will also follow carefully the progress of each and every government bill.

So it's simply not true that the sponsors who agree to sponsor government bills — and for which we are very grateful — do not have access to the same resources that we do, including briefings and follow-up briefings, as they would require. Again, I want this chamber to rest assured that when a government bill is before us, whether it's at second reading, certainly at committee or at third reading, those who speak on behalf of the bill, whether, at times, it is myself or one member of the Government Representative Office, or GRO — because we've all sponsored government bills at times, as you know — or the sponsors who have graciously agreed to help us, are able to answer the questions as best as they can and as we can.

• (1720)

Senator Batters: Senator Gold, wouldn't you agree, though, that those independent senators are not sworn in as Privy Councillors, so they don't have the same access to that level of briefing that you do and they also do not attend, as you do, meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Operations? They are just not able to get, because of the level of clearance that you have, the same level of briefing that you get from the government; isn't that correct?

Senator Gold: Again, respectfully, let me perhaps either correct a misconception you have or perhaps underline the possible difference between how this government operates and previous governments.

I'm a member of the King's Privy Council, which gives me certain access to cabinet confidences and information. None of that is relevant to how we present, defend or promote a bill in this chamber. The briefings that I get on bills do not require security clearance. I don't get any additional briefings on Bill C-40 or any other bill that are distinct, different or greater than a Senate sponsor will get. That's point one.

Point two, I'm certainly not going to share the nature of the information that I may get in my interactions with cabinet colleagues; that's why they're called confidences. But I can say this much: They don't bear upon the policy rationales or defences of any of the legislation that is brought forward. They deal with different matters that are not germane to the advancement of the legislative agenda, such as is carried by the sponsor of a bill or a speaker to the bill from any one of the three of us here in the GRO.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO STRIKE A SPECIAL SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN CAPITAL AND THE LABOUR MARKET—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Bellemare, seconded by the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C.:

That a Special Senate Committee on Human Capital and the Labour Market be appointed until the end of the current session, to which may be referred matters relating to human capital, labour markets, and employment generally;

That the committee be composed of nine members, to be nominated by the Committee of Selection, and that four members constitute a quorum; and

That the committee be empowered to inquire into and report on such matters as may be referred to it by the Senate; to send for persons, papers and records; to hear witnesses and to publish such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee.

Hon. Yonah Martin: I note this item is at day 15, so, with leave of the Senate, I move the adjournment of the debate for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

MOTION CONCERNING BILLS WITH A “NOTWITHSTANDING CLAUSE”—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Bellemare:

That the Senate express the view that it should not adopt any bill that contains a declaration pursuant to section 33 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, commonly known as the “notwithstanding clause.”

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, there's a great old-fashioned English expression I don't think we use enough anymore: to set a cat amongst the pigeons. That, of course, is exactly what our colleague Senator Harder has done with his timely and provocative motion.

In an era in which provincial governments are invoking the “notwithstanding” clause more and more casually, without seeming to see any political hazard or consequence, in an era in which one federal leader has mused about invoking the clause pre-emptively to Charter-proof future legislation, it’s a fair question for senators to ask themselves: Should we pre-emptively attest that we will not pass federal legislation that pre-emptively invokes the clause in such a way?

I shan’t keep you in suspense. Much though I applaud Senator Harder for asking this vexing question, and much though I deplore and denounce the cavalier way in which we’ve seen provinces weaponize the “notwithstanding” clause to strip fundamental civil rights away from everyone from trans teenagers to Muslim school teachers, I think we should be cautious about vowing not to pass any bills that invoke the clause, because there may come a day or time when the government has a legitimate public policy need to deke around a problematic court decision. We need only look across the border to see when the Supreme Court loses its moral bearings and starts to dishonour the constitutional rights it’s meant to protect. The “notwithstanding” clause is, after all, constitutional because it’s part and parcel of the Constitution itself.

But, with apologies, my speech isn’t quite over just yet because it’s imperative we have a hard and honest conversation about why we have a “notwithstanding” clause at all and why it’s being used so broadly and brutally these days. And to understand that question, we need to go back in time.

In 1971, the newly elected Peter Lougheed, the young reforming Premier of Alberta, decided that he wanted the very first bill he introduced in the Alberta legislature to be the Alberta Bill of Rights. Alberta was the first province in the nation to have a bill of rights, and for Alberta, waking from the thrall of almost four decades of Social Credit government into a modern age, Bill 1 was to be a beacon, a sign of the province Premier Lougheed wanted to create. And so he asked his new attorney general, Merv Leitch, to draw up such a bill.

In a speech he gave 20 years later to the Centre for Constitutional Studies in Edmonton, Lougheed explained that Merv Leitch came to him with a dilemma.

He said:

He came to my office and described his progress in preparing Bill 1, the Alberta Bill of Rights. Merv said to me, “Premier, we will have to provide in this Bill for a notwithstanding clause!” I responded, “What the hell is a notwithstanding clause?”

Merv patiently explained to me (something that he had to do on a number of occasions) that we needed to include a clause which allowed, if public policy dictated, for other Alberta laws to operate notwithstanding the Alberta Bill of Rights. . . .

As Lougheed told the story, Leitch patterned Alberta’s “notwithstanding” clause on a similar clause written into the Canadian Bill of Rights, which had been passed by the Diefenbaker government in 1960. And so the Alberta Bill of Rights was introduced in the spring of 1972 with a “notwithstanding” clause protecting the primacy of the elected legislature.

A decade later, in the heat of debate over the patriation of Canada’s Constitution and the drafting of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Alberta’s model of the “notwithstanding” clause helped to broker the compromise that made the Charter a reality. And yet, by 1991, Peter Lougheed himself was having some misgivings about the ease with which some provinces were invoking the clause.

In the same speech, Lougheed said that while he still supported the clause, he would have liked to have seen a higher bar to invoking it.

Lougheed told his audience:

A simple majority does not appear adequate for Parliament or a provincial legislature to introduce legislation including a notwithstanding clause. It is too substantive an action by the elected body and hence requires a higher level of authorization than a simple majority. . . .

Lougheed’s suggestion? Amend the Constitution to require any federal or provincial government that invoked the override clause to win a vote of at least 60% of MPs or MLAs. For better or worse, of course, that never happened. Peter Lougheed himself never did invoke the “notwithstanding” clause as premier.

But in March of 1998, the Government of Alberta’s then-premier Ralph Klein did just that. You may remember that I spoke recently in this chamber about the atrocities committed by the Alberta Eugenics Board under the terms of Alberta’s Sexual Sterilization Act. One of those people who had been sterilized without her knowledge or consent was a young girl named Leilani Muir. Years later, as an adult, Muir sued the province, and she won. She was awarded a judgment of more than \$740,000 plus costs.

In an effort to head off more lawsuits and save millions, the Klein government pre-emptively invoked the “notwithstanding” clause to stop other victims from suing and introduced a new law intended to cap damages at \$150,000 per person.

The public outcry was instantaneous and led, if I may say, by my own newspaper of the day, the *Edmonton Journal*, which rained down fire and brimstone on its editorial pages.

• (1730)

Less than 24 hours later, the province backed down and Ralph Klein personally apologized, saying to reporters at the time:

This was presented to caucus in pure, legal technical terms and... yes, my political sense probably didn’t click into gear.

He continued, saying:

It became abundantly clear that to individuals in this country, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is paramount and the use of any tool... to undermine the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is something that should be used only in very, very rare circumstances.

Three weeks later, in April of 1998, the Supreme Court of Canada brought down its landmark *Vriend* decision, which established LGBTQ rights in Canada by reading in protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation to both Alberta's Individual's Rights Protection Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In the wake of the *Vriend* decision, Ralph Klein came under immense pressure from some in his party — and in the province — to invoke the “notwithstanding” clause. In the end, he pushed back against the social conservative voices in his own caucus. He refused to invoke the clause, in no small part because of the backlash he'd experienced when he'd tried to use the clause to take away the rights of those who'd been sexually sterilized.

Ralph Klein was no constitutional scholar, but he was one canny politician. He judged that the political risks of invoking the clause were just too great. In Alberta, the “notwithstanding” clause worked just the way it was supposed to. It gave Ralph Klein, the democratically elected premier, the final political decision. He could have used the clause to veto the *Vriend* ruling, but he made a fundamental political decision not to invoke it. The legislation remained supreme, as Merv Leitch and Peter Lougheed had hoped, but only because decent, fair-minded Albertans made it clear they would not accept the use of the clause to strip vulnerable citizens of their rights.

In the end, we didn't just rely on Ralph Klein's political instincts or his sometimes wavering moral compass. We relied on the ethical judgment of Albertans who weren't afraid to speak out. Are the Albertans and Canadians of 2024 any less decent and fair-minded? Are they any less brave? I hope not. I don't think we're paying as much attention.

Back in 1998, pretty much every person in Alberta knew about the legal threats to use the “notwithstanding” clause against sexual sterilization victims and gays and lesbians. These were the biggest news stories of the year, covered by every newspaper and broadcast outlet. Everyone was talking about these issues. The whole province was engaged in the debate.

In the last few years, though, when premiers and provinces have invoked the clause, there has been, primarily, silence. It's disturbing, but I don't think it can simply be written off as apathy or tacit acceptance. Newspapers and newscasts simply don't have the same weight and power they did a quarter of a century ago. We have only a tiny fraction of the reporters and editorialists we once did, and — with digital disruptions at every turn — far fewer people are reading newspapers or watching the national news.

It doesn't help that, thanks to Bill C-18, vectors where people once saw and shared news, such as Facebook and Instagram, are no longer places to see the headlines or discuss the stories of the day.

Meanwhile, the social media ecosystem itself has fractured into so many tiny splinters. Once, when we talked about issues or memes going viral on Twitter or TikTok, we were talking about things that really spread. Now it's much more difficult to spread any kind of message to a broad general audience, especially if it's true.

Today's media consumers are divided, not connected, by their media channels. Once, everyone in a community was sharing the same information at the same time and reacting to it in concert. That doesn't happen anymore.

Canadians have never been more distracted by the latest news about Donald Trump or Taylor Swift; focused on what's happening in Ukraine, Gaza or Tigray Province; or simply preoccupied dealing with the daily challenges of feeding their families, making their mortgage payments or finding a doctor. If they follow national or provincial news at all, they probably see headlines about elections, not think pieces about constitutional conventions.

Small wonder that today's political leaders think they can get away with invoking the clause without backlash. It's because they've already seen that they can. If the citizens aren't doing their job of holding their elected officials accountable, and if our political culture is this badly broken — and I think after this week's events in the United States, that is a fair question — how dangerous has the clause now become?

Once, politicians feared to invoke it because of the sense of shame. However, in a political culture without honour, the clause has taken on a new and more sinister dimension because the democratic guardrails are gone.

Yet, in the midst of this muddle, our role in this chamber has never been clearer. We are here to protect the Constitution, the Charter, the civil and equality rights of all Canadians, the right to a fair and timely trial, the right to strike, freedom of religion, the right to abortion and complete reproductive health and to protect trans youth from state bullying.

If and when bills come before us that are *prima facie* unconstitutional, bills that clearly strip Canadians of their established Charter rights, we should feel empowered to delay, amend or — when necessary — defeat them, even if the party were to run and win on a platform of denying Charter rights.

I respect the legacy of the Salisbury Convention. If a government runs on a platform and is elected with a popular mandate, then we as an appointed chamber, traditionally and correctly, show deference to the bills that flow from that mandate.

This is not the United Kingdom. This is a federation with a written Constitution and a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While we must show appropriate deference to the other place, which is elected and accountable to voters, we must also, at the same time, be prepared to defend our Constitution and stand up for minority and regional rights and the rights of us all, not because we are radicals or revolutionaries, but because we are the guardians and conservators of the law, and because this chamber exists to be conservative in the very best sense of the word.

Carved above the office of the Speaker of the Senate in the old Centre Block is this quotation from the Roman poet Horace, “Sapere aude,” which means “Dare to be prudent,” or, as it’s been translated by others, “Dare to be wise; dare to use your own reason.”

In any translation, it is an excellent motto for this fraught era and this independent Senate. Let us not tie our hands and take pledges that may someday backfire against us. Let us respect the legacy and proper purpose of the “notwithstanding” clause, which is a part of our Constitution and history. Let us always be courageous in prudently protecting the rights of all Canadians.

Thank you, *hiy hiy*.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore informed the Senate that the following communication had been received:

RIDEAU HALL

November 7, 2024

Madam Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 7th day of November, 2024, at 5:06 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ken MacKillop

Secretary to the Governor General

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

Bills Assented to Thursday, November 7, 2024:

An Act to amend the Copyright Act (diagnosis, maintenance and repair) (*Bill C-244, Chapter 26, 2024*)

An Act to amend the Copyright Act (interoperability) (*Bill C-294, Chapter 27, 2024*)

An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care (*Bill C-284, Chapter 28, 2024*)

An Act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation (*Bill S-16, Chapter 29, 2024*)

• (1740)

[English]

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Leave having been given to revert to Government Business, Motions, Order No. 199:

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of November 6, 2024, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, November 19, 2024, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY AMENDMENTS TO THE *ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST CODE FOR SENATORS* WITH RESPECT TO SPONSORED TRAVEL—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Saint-Germain, seconded by the Honourable Senator Clement:

That the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest be authorized to examine and report on amendments to the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators* with respect to sponsored travel, and to consider whether senators accepting sponsored travel continues to be appropriate in the current environment relating to foreign interference, whether that sponsorship is by foreign states or other third parties, including, but not limited to, corporations, lobbyists or non-governmental organizations;

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or the code, when the committee is dealing with this matter, it be authorized to meet in public if it so decides and a senator who is not a member of the committee not attend unless doing so as a witness and at the invitation of the committee; and

That the committee present its final report to the Senate no later than March 31, 2025.

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: Honourable senators, I am rising to give my full support to Senator Raymonde Saint-Germain's Motion No. 216, which proposes that the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators be authorized to re-examine the issue of sponsored travel in the context of foreign interference in Canada.

Since my appointment to the Senate, I have felt that the lack of oversight and transparency regarding sponsored travel raises significant ethical issues and tarnishes Parliament's reputation. Senators are free to go on missions abroad paid for by a country or lobby group, as long as they fill out a short form that really does not provide very many details at all about the reasons for the trip. I want to make it clear that this sponsored travel is permitted under the Code that senators created for themselves in 2005.

This issue is of concern to me because I was a journalist for 25 years and, as such, I was subject to strict ethical standards that I then applied in my decisions as the Radio-Canada ombudsman.

When I arrived in the Senate, my unease led me to testify in camera before the Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators Committee in 2019 about the risks posed by this type of travel.

At that time, we did not have the necessary consensus among senators to strengthen the rules.

In the interest of being fully transparent, last summer, I accepted an internship paid for by the United Nations. Also, last month, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK reimbursed me for my plane ticket to London, where I presented Bill S-211 to combat modern slavery, a bill I sponsored.

I felt that the risk of conflict of interest in both those cases was non-existent. Even so, I don't think it should be up to me to make that judgment; rather, it should be up to a neutral third party.

Senator Saint-Germain calculated that, over the past seven years, senators have taken 113 sponsored trips abroad, and 16 of those trips were to places with an authoritarian regime, as defined by the Economist Intelligence Unit. This is particularly worrying in light of the latest revelations about foreign interference in Canada and the work of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which notes that all-expenses-paid trips to foreign countries are among the incentives deployed by foreign actors.

Nonetheless, sponsored travel is still permitted in several other Commonwealth parliaments and jurisdictions.

Let's start with the House of Commons, which had a record number of expenses in 2023: 93 sponsored trips worth \$847,000. That's almost four times more money than five years ago. According to a *National Post* investigation, the two biggest sponsors of all-expenses-paid missions are the Government of Taiwan and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

[English]

Nevertheless, on a hopeful note, according to the House of Commons Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, during the first six months of 2024, significantly fewer MPs — 12 in total — accepted overseas sponsored travel as revelations about foreign interference in Canada were increasing. Some MPs have also become more aware of the issue, as the Ethics Committee in the House is due to consider it. The sponsor of the motion, NDP MP Matthew Green, considers that flying around the globe at other people's expense is a bad look for members of Parliament.

There has also been a welcome change, in my opinion, in The Lobbyists' Code of Conduct that came into force on July 1, 2023, and has, no doubt, had an influence on the decreasing number of sponsored travel this year. Ottawa-registered lobbyists seeking to influence us are no longer allowed to offer us fully paid trips. The limit on gifts is set at \$40 or \$200 dollars annually. However, entirely sponsored trips by foreign entities remain authorized.

How do we compare with other Commonwealth parliaments? In the United Kingdom and Australia, it is more or less the same way of doing things. It is left to the parliamentarians themselves to decide whether to accept sponsored travel. In practice, however, the United Kingdom is innovative in adopting an objective approach when the question of sponsored travel arises. The question to be answered is this: Would a reasonable member of the public — someone impartial and well informed — be led to believe that sponsored travel would influence a member of the House of Lords in the fulfillment of her or his duties?

Rose Whiffen, spokeswoman for Transparency International says:

... There is a clear risk that overseas trips funded by foreign governments could give rise to the perception — or reality — that the judgement of parliamentarians is influenced by the generosity of their hosts.

As for the United States, the same discretion applies to sponsored travel by a foreign government, but here is an interesting fact: In the event of privately sponsored travel, senators must obtain prior written approval from the Select Committee on Ethics. I think it would be useful to see how it works concretely.

[Translation]

Let's get back to our Senate. Under section 18 of our code, we are free to accept trips paid for by any government, lobby group or corporation. Under our code, senators aren't even required to disclose the total cost of these all-expenses-paid trips, including any gifts received.

Section 18 is an anachronism in a society where requirements regarding real and apparent conflicts of interest are increasingly stringent. Many of these free trips are offered to us precisely because we are in a position to exert influence favourable to foreign interests. This practice undermines Canadians' confidence in the institution of the Senate. I've seen it anecdotally on several occasions.

We also too often forget that an apparent conflict of interest is just as important as a real conflict of interest in the eyes of the public. Our code requires senators, and I quote:

(c) to arrange their private affairs so that foreseeable real or apparent conflicts of interest may be prevented from arising, but if such a conflict does arise, to resolve it in a way that protects the public interest.

This refers only to private affairs. Perhaps this section should be reviewed and expanded.

I would also point out that I believe the Ethics Committee should review section 19 of the code. It states, and I quote: “. . . sponsored travel . . . [is] deemed to have received the consent of the Senate thereto for all purposes.”

That is a pretty important test to apply. With the consent of the Senate, we would all have consented to all sponsored travel. Personally, I'm uncomfortable with that. Democracy is weakened when the wealthiest members of society have privileged access to government and to parliamentarians and can disproportionately influence public policy and positions. That's why we have rules about political donations and election financing, and that is also why they have been tightened up over the years.

• (1750)

In January 2019, former Canadian diplomat Scott Gilmore wrote in *Maclean's* magazine that, in his view, sponsored travel for Canadian parliamentarians amounts to bribery. Those are strong words, but here's his argument: If an official at Global Affairs Canada were, despite rules to the contrary, to accept such a trip paid for by a foreign country or a lobby group linked to that foreign government, the trip would rightly be considered a bribe intended to influence that diplomat's opinions. Why should it be any different for a senator?

Obviously, we have no way to scientifically measure the impact of these sponsored trips on legislative activity or on positions that are favourable to foreign interests. I'm aware of that. Nor can we lump all of this travel in the same basket after taking a closer look. For example, our ethics officer's reports make no distinction between an invitation from a university in Canada or elsewhere and a mission paid for by a foreign government or lobby group.

I have no easy answers to offer. As I see it, a country with Canada's means obviously can't allow these parliamentarians to travel on foreign powers' dime. The Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators is well placed to undertake an extensive exploration and draw the necessary distinctions between what is acceptable and what is not. Without the public's trust, institutions like ours have a hard time holding onto their credibility. Many of us are deeply committed to the

reform that made the Senate a more independent chamber. In my opinion, strengthening our code of ethics is another way of showing greater independence of thought in relation to anyone seeking to unduly influence us. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Burey, for Senator Tannas, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

RCMP'S ROLE AND MANDATE

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C., calling the attention of the Senate to the role and mandate of the RCMP, the skills and capabilities required for it to fulfill its role and mandate, and how it should be organized and resourced in the 21st century.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15, and Senator Busson wishes to speak to it. Therefore, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 4-14(3), I move the adjournment of the debate in the name of Senator Busson.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTIONS PARITY

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Burey, calling the attention of the Senate to ongoing concerns with respect to mental health, substance abuse and addiction parity in Canada.

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to my colleague Senator Sharon Burey's important inquiry on mental health, substance abuse and addictions parity. As a doctor and pediatrician, her wealth of knowledge has brought immeasurable insight to our discussions in this chamber and in the Agriculture and Forestry Committee. I would like to thank her for her hard work, interventions and insights.

Colleagues, mental health is a critical issue and is a conversation that touches every one of us, whether directly or indirectly, and it is long overdue. Like most of my interventions

in this chamber, I would like to approach this inquiry from the perspective of the stewards of our land: our farmers and farm families. Mental health in the agricultural community is an issue that deserves special attention, and I believe it's a reflection of the broader societal challenges we face regarding mental health and addiction.

We know that mental health challenges and substance abuse are deeply intertwined, affecting Canadians from all walks of life. When we look at the mental health struggles within our agricultural communities, we see a unique and often under-represented set of challenges. Farming is not just an occupation; it's a way of life that involves long hours, financial uncertainty, instability and isolation. These factors create a mental health landscape that is distinct from other professions.

Colleagues, let me explain this further. In Ontario, farmers, agricultural workers and their families often work in socially isolated and remote environments. This distance from urban centres, combined with our inherent cultural and societal pressures to be resilient and self-sufficient, means that many in the agricultural sector may feel they have to tough it out rather than seek help. The stigma around mental health can be even stronger in these communities, and we must address it head-on.

This problem is compounded by the fact that mental health resources are often inaccessible due to these remote and rural locations. Accessing mental health services often requires travelling long distances, which is not always feasible, especially during busy farming seasons.

There are many industry-led initiatives offering mental health wellness tools specifically geared toward farmers and those in the agricultural sectors and their unique needs. For example, Agriculture Wellness Ontario is doing tremendous work through their suite of free programs designed specifically to support the mental health and well-being of Ontario's agricultural community. Managed by the Canadian Mental Health Association's Ontario Division in partnership with agricultural stakeholders, this program offers crucial services such as 24-7 counselling, peer support and mental health education tailored to the unique needs of farmers. Another example of industry initiatives would be the many programs and supports offered through or supported by Farm Credit Canada. They're doing great work for the industry and provide wonderful support for those seeking help.

Colleagues, the availability of these types of services is a significant step forward, but it is only one part of the solution. We must do more to expand these kinds of services and initiatives, not only here in Ontario but also across the country. We need federal, national programs that recognize the specific challenges faced by farmers and that offer targeted support to meet their needs where they are, whether they are on the farm, at home or within their communities. Keep in mind the lack of access to reliable broadband internet in many of these rural and remote communities is also a huge barrier to accessing adequate health care, including mental health services.

Colleagues, the reality is that many farmers experience what has been termed "farmer's syndrome," which is a manifestation of physical fatigue, mental tension and burnout. This syndrome is often a direct consequence of the demanding and relentless nature of farming life. There are no nine-to-five workdays in agriculture. The effect of farmer's syndrome can be severe, leading to a host of physical and mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, heart problems and even substance abuse used as a coping mechanism.

Research from the University of Guelph and other academic institutions has demonstrated that farmers are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues. In fact, a national survey on farmer mental health conducted between 2015 and 2016 found that Canadian farmers face significantly higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression and burnout than the general population. The survey also revealed that many farmers were less likely to seek help for these issues, often because they felt they had to prioritize their work over their well-being, or they feared being judged by peers, which is a common stigma placed on those who request help.

Support programs geared toward farmers' mental health are lifelines for them, providing training, education and support in ways that resonate with their unique experiences. However, as beneficial as these programs are, they are not enough, as I've said. We still face significant barriers to mental health care in rural and remote areas. Cost, stigma and geography continue to prevent many farmers from accessing the help they need.

• (1800)

Colleagues, we must all work together to eliminate barriers and ensure every Canadian — no matter where they live, work or play — has access to the mental health support services they need.

As someone who is deeply invested in the well-being of farmers and farm families, I have seen first-hand how essential our farmers are to the economic and social fabric of this country. They feed our nation, they care for our land, and they contribute to the sustainability of our communities and of Canada.

However, we must remember that their mental health is as important to the sustainability of Canadian agriculture as is soil health, crop yields or livestock management. When farmers are struggling with their mental health, it affects not only their well-being but also their ability to care for their farms, their families and their communities.

As we look to the future of Canadian agriculture, we must ensure that access to viable and stable mental health supports must be a cornerstone of all agricultural policies. This means integrating mental health services into the broader framework of agricultural support programs, recognizing that the health of our farmers is inextricably linked to the health of our agricultural sector as a whole.

Of course, the challenges we face are not limited to the agricultural community. Across Canada, we are seeing rising rates of anxiety, depression and substance abuse in all sectors. The mental health crisis that has grown in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has only deepened the existing cracks in our health care system, exposing the urgent need for reform.

In a recent report, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food emphasized the need for urgent action not just within agriculture but across all industries and sectors. There is no excuse for mental health resources to be inaccessible or underfunded when the need is so clear.

Everyone, including government, industry, the private sector and everyday Canadians, must take bold steps to address this crisis, starting by ensuring that mental health and addiction treatment are treated with the same urgency and importance as physical health care.

As we move forward, colleagues, we must take meaningful steps to achieve true parity for mental health and addiction treatment in Canada. This means ensuring that mental health services are fully integrated into our health care systems and accessible to all Canadians, regardless of where they work or live or what profession they work in.

As Senator Burey alluded, it means reducing the stigma associated with seeking help and increasing funding for mental health and addiction programs across all sectors of society. We cannot allow mental health to be treated as a secondary issue. The well-being of our citizens, whether they are farmers, health care workers, students or the cashier at your local grocery store, depends on our willingness to recognize mental health as an integral part of our overall health.

In conclusion, colleagues, I want to encourage all of us in the chamber to consider speaking to Senator Burey's inquiry and to continue advocating for policies that recognize the importance of mental health parity. As we seek to address the complex issues of mental health, substance abuse and addiction in this country, we must ensure that no Canadian is left behind. We owe it to our farmers, our families and our communities to take action now.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Sharon Burey: Senator Black, I want to thank you so much for your leadership on the Agriculture Committee and for highlighting the needs of farmers and rural Canadians, especially related to mental health. As you know, everyone, there is no health without mental health.

I wanted to ask you a question. You alluded in your very comprehensive speech to the productivity and food insecurity when farmers suffer mental health challenges. Can you speak a little bit more about that?

Senator Black: Thank you, colleague. I will expand just a touch. Certainly, if a producer's or a farmer's mental health is impacted, everything within that farming operation is impacted, whether it be family interactions and relationships or how they tend to deal with what they're working with. Dealing with

livestock, dealing with growing in the land — it just impacts everything. As I mentioned, it's not a nine-to-five job. We cannot get away from it. Farmers are there 24-7, 365 days of the year.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

THE HONOURABLE JANE CORDY

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Marty Klyne rose pursuant to notice of Senator White on October 30, 2024:

That she will call the attention of the Senate to the career of the Honourable Jane Cordy.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise to pay tribute to Senator Jane Cordy on the occasion of her retirement. Jane's time in the Senate has been marked by service, compassion and dedication to creating lasting positive change for Canadians.

She has been, to her core, a teacher and a leader, and we will miss her greatly. The people of Nova Scotia will lose a strong voice for their province.

Throughout her career, Senator Cordy has championed a compassionate society. Whether advocating for mental health, awareness of sickle cell disease and other inherited blood disorders, Canada's veterans, accessible dental care or pharmacare, she has encouraged us to rise up and raise each other up.

She has also highlighted the importance of an evidence-based approach to policy, including as sponsor of a government bill to ensure the independence of Statistics Canada and as Deputy Chair of our influential Social Affairs, Science and Technology Committee.

In addition, Jane inspires a culture of kindness, empathy and optimism in this place. She has always seen the potential in others, sometimes before we saw it in ourselves. Her belief in people and her nurturing spirit have helped many of us to take risks, embrace challenges and achieve goals we might not have thought possible.

Jane's mentorship has empowered all who work with her to strive for excellence, knowing they had her support and encouragement. I greatly appreciated this mentorship during her time as the Leader of the Progressive Senate Group, and I know many senators and staff share my gratitude.

In addition, I note Senator Cordy's commitment to our military and defence as a past chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, including as an international Vice-President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly representing North America on the assembly's executive.

I also admire and share Senator Cordy's patriotism and her belief in Canada — and in Canadians — as we work to make our federation all we can be, including through reconciliation.

I imagine that Senator Cordy is watching on Senate ParlVU, so I'll let her know — Lady Jane, you have made profound contributions to this chamber, to our country, to Nova Scotia and the Atlantic region and to each of us personally. We will miss your presence, your warmth and your wisdom.

Thank you, Senator Cordy, for your extraordinary service. We wish you all the very best in the next chapter of your life. Thank you, *hiy kitatamihin*.

(On motion of Senator White, debate adjourned.)

(At 6:09 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, November 19, 2024, at 2 p.m.)

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