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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, June 25, 2020

The Senate met at 1:30 p.m., the Speaker in the chair.

Prayers.

THE SENATE

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING PAGES

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, as I indicated yesterday, this week we are paying tribute to Senate pages who will be leaving us this summer.

Today we have Kean Nembhard. Kean, having been in the Senate for the past three years, finishes his time with the pages as the Deputy Chief Page. He graduated this week from Carleton University with a degree in international relations. After hopefully spending more time working in our chamber, he plans on starting a master's degree in climate policy late next year.

Kean, thank you for all you've done for our institution.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker: Unfortunately, Audrey Matheson is not here today. She has just completed her bachelor's degree in criminology at the University of Ottawa, and this coincides with the end of her participation in the Senate Page Program. Audrey will be studying law at McGill University this fall. She is extremely grateful for having worked for the Senate this year and she takes with her some wonderful memories. On behalf of all senators, a big thank you, Audrey.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

STATEMENT OF REGRET REGARDING THE EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYEES OF FORMER SENATOR DON MEREDITH

Hon. Sabi Marwah: Honourable senators, today the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, or CIBA, unanimously adopted a report of the Subcommittee on Human Resources regarding harassment experienced by employees of former Senator Don Meredith.

The report contains a recommendation that CIBA express its regret for the experiences of employees who were negatively affected by Mr. Meredith's misconduct. As chair of CIBA, I do so now.

Workplace harassment of any kind is unacceptable, and has no place in the Senate of Canada. We have heard the experience of employees in the office of former Senator Don Meredith and, most importantly, we believe them.

Mr. Meredith's misconduct warrants an unequivocal condemnation from the Senate and from all senators. There is no question that his misconduct failed to uphold the highest standards of dignity of his position and has adversely affected our institution. Accordingly, it is incumbent on all senators to recognize that what happened to these employees was wrong; that these employees suffered as a direct result of Mr. Meredith's misconduct; and that the processes to address these matters took too long. To the employees who were impacted, we believe you.

[Translation]

I will say it again: To all employees who were impacted, we believe you.

[English]

We also acknowledge and profoundly regret the pain and trauma caused by what you endured in the workplace. We want you to know that the Senate is working to prevent what happened to you from happening again. All senators and Senate employees must now undergo mandatory anti-harassment training and we have developed a new anti-harassment policy for the Senate.

While the measures we take today won't change what happened to you, it is our sincerest hope that no one will have to endure the pain and suffering caused by any kind of harassment while working in the service of the Senate of Canada. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

COMMEMORATION OF KOREAN WAR

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, 70 years ago, in the early morning hours of June 25, 1950, the communist forces of North Korea launched an all-out offensive against the South Korean people. Within three weeks, all that remained of the country was a small, defensive perimeter around the Port of Pusan. The free and democratic nations of the world would not stand idly by as forces from 16 nations, including Canada, descended upon Korea to stem the tide of battle and to bring deliverance to a desperate people. But, honourable senators, when these heroes of the Korean War returned to Canada they found empty train and bus stations, no ticker tape parades, just people going about their usual business, oblivious to the Korean War that had taken millions of lives, including the lives of their fellow Canadians who remain buried in Pusan today.

Largely due to the efforts of the veterans themselves, the Korean War would be remembered. Through their fundraising efforts, they established the Korea Veterans Association of Canada Wall of Remembrance in 1997 in the Meadowvale Cemetery in Brampton, Ontario. I am grateful to all those who paid their respects earlier today at the wall and to Mayor Patrick Brown, who will lay a wreath this afternoon and has vowed to care for the national memorial in his city.

• (1340)

As a newly appointed senator in 2009, I had no idea how relentlessly and unapologetically I would have to work to remove the “forgotten war” label, to elevate Canada’s third-bloodiest war to its rightful place in the annals of Canadian history. The year 2013 was designated the year of the Korean War veteran by then-Minister of Veteran Affairs Steven Blaney, to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Korean War Armistice. The Korea Day ceremony was held and attended by then-Governor General David Johnston, hundreds of veterans, dignitaries and spectators at the National War Memorial, followed by a grand military parade.

This year, which marks the seventieth anniversary of the breakout of the Korean War, stood in marked contrast. Due to COVID-19, there was concern about whether we should even hold the ceremony, but veterans insisted. If they didn’t stand in silence, who would?

So, with only a few, we gathered. With masks donned, we stood silent. Six feet apart, we remembered.

I stood on my marked position in front of the Monument to Canadian Fallen, the Korea War memorial that stands in Confederation Park. As described on the Veteran Affairs Canada website:

The monument shows an unarmed Canadian soldier holding a young Korean girl and guiding a Korean boy. The children represent the generations of Koreans who live in freedom thanks to those who served and those who made the supreme sacrifice. . . . The monument bears the inscription: “We’ll never forget you brave sons of Canada” in English, French and Korean, along with the names of the 516 Canadian soldiers who died serving in the Korean War.

Looking into the eyes of those heroes on Sunday, I know they gathered even under the threat of COVID-19, because the nightmares they lived through in Korea are real. Communism and tyranny aren’t dead, even though their fallen comrades are gone forever. Their love of Korea and her people endure and has, in fact, deepened with the passage of time.

Honourable senators, today is the seventieth anniversary of the breakout of the Korean War and the beginning of the three-year commemorative campaign. Our veterans did their duty; now it falls on us to do ours before it is too late.

[Translation]

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

ROLE OF WOMEN

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, today I want to mark both International Women in Engineering Day, which was celebrated on June 23, and World Environment Day, which was celebrated on June 5 under the theme “Time for Nature.”

It has been time for nature for a long time now, and we’re committed to making nature a key priority in our society, our lives and our development. Yet, thanks to COVID-19, the disease at the centre of this unprecedented pandemic, we have been rudely awakened to the consequences of human activity and globalization. People are calling the pandemic a fire drill for what is likely to follow as a result of the climate crisis and the protests against racial injustice. Fire drills, however, aren’t supposed to be fatal, and yet the official death toll has surpassed 400,000. Sadly, figures from Quebec’s Public Health Institute show that the impact on the province has been devastating. Quebec’s death rate is the highest in the world, at 638 deaths per million residents.

[English]

Last January, the World Economic Forum identified the top five global risks as environmental, with climate change being the standout long-term risk the world faces. They also assessed that more than half of the world’s GDP, pre-crisis, is dependent upon nature, and is therefore vulnerable to its degradation. This is particularly important for the poor who rely on consistent services, leading some to consider nature as the GDP of the poor.

There are several ways we, as parliamentarians, can bring social progress. The Parliament of New Zealand passed a law recognizing all animals as sentient, and many countries in Latin America have enshrined rights of nature in their laws, recognizing the duty to tend to ecosystem and animal well-being. Not only do we share this planet with them, but our well-being as a species depends upon theirs.

A majority of Canadians understand the need for legislation for the protection of the environment. Polls have shown that Canadians want an economic stimulus that focuses on sustainability, a just transition and clean infrastructure. Not surprising, 59 of the submissions received by our National Finance Committee on the COVID economic response have called for a cleaner, greener and fairer economy, post-pandemic. Major organizations, such as the OECD, the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and the International Monetary Fund are encouraging countries to pursue a clean recovery.

So, colleagues, why are we waiting? We are the legislators of this country.

Women play a critical role in managing natural resources on family and community levels, and are the most affected by environmental degradation. In communities around the world, women manage water sources for fuel and food, as well as both forests and agricultural lands.

My favourite young women in engineering are Virginie, who works as a forest engineer and is presently fighting the fires in the Lac Saint-Jean region; and Lydia, who is assisting the managing construction of an award-winning LEED and — WELLcertificate high-rise building in Montreal.

Colleagues, the opportunity is now. It is the time for nature. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

THE SENATE

WORKING GROUPS

Hon. Marty Deacon: Honourable senators, I rise today as we prepare to leave the chamber for a while. The Senate sitting year was unique in many ways, beginning with the fall election, sitting briefly in December, followed by continuous global and national crises and tragedies that began early in January.

Today, I wish to focus on our work as senators over these last few months. Of course, every senator would like to be in the chamber, working every day in committee and with their staff to ensure sober second thought. That has not been possible, but I am proud of the way we have utilized our time in the chamber, and most importantly, with each other. I remember fondly working with four senators as we worked to get Canadians home from abroad in March. This worked because we worked together.

One theme I was thrilled to see was the emergence of our working groups on an array of topics. My thanks go out to: Senators Pate and Lankin for their work on guaranteed liveable income; Senator Pate on the oversight of prisons; Senators Boehm and Jaffer on the international dimensions of COVID-19; Senator Deacon, my Nova Scotia brother, and Senators Moncion and Wetston for your small business working group; Senators Bovey and Cormier in the support of the arts and culture sector; Senator Coyle for an illuminating session on climate action and accountability in Canada; and Senator Massicotte for a series of informative meetings on the Canadian oil and gas sector. Rounding it off were Senators Miville-Dechéne and Cormier, who facilitated a session on internet and broadband network access, as well as personal data protection.

It would appear, colleagues, that we like to keep busy.

The speakers were outstanding, informative and thought-provoking. I thank you all for your leadership, and your connections in bringing about great learning and discussions on topics related to COVID-19, and the work we anticipate in the Senate in our continued COVID-19 world and in our country, post-pandemic.

None of this would have been possible without the work of their capable staff, either. I thank every one of them for their dedication to facilitating their senator's vision as they balanced their professional duties with personal obligations in trying and difficult times.

For my staff, thank you for your support, and the pictures and videos shared on National Health and Fitness Day. Virtually, it took on a new and exciting life, connecting more Canadians, including parliamentarians. We are thrilled that almost 500 communities have declared the first Saturday in June as National Health and Fitness Day. For some reason — I haven't figured it out yet — every time I clicked on my Twitter account, a fantastic video clip of Senator Dean pops up while he chats during his five-kilometre run. Thank you.

Book June 5, 2021, for our next National Health and Fitness Day.

Colleagues, I will continue to review what you've taught me in preparation for what will no doubt be a busy fall. I look forward to carrying on the camaraderie between the various caucuses and groups in the Senate, and applying what I've learned from all of you for the betterment of our country. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND RACISM

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, I am delivering this message on behalf of Senator Jaffer.

I rise today firstly to say thank all the Senators, the Clerk of the Senate, Richard Denis, Pascale Legault and all the staff who work so tirelessly. You do exceptional work, and you have continued to do so during the ongoing pandemic, COVID-19.

Colleagues, this pandemic is not the only illness that is plaguing our country. Racism is also a pandemic. One that has corroded the minds and bodies of far too many Canadians. However, this pandemic too is being fought.

Honourable Senators, I am thankful for each and every one of you who continues to walk with us through this very difficult time in our country.

Specifically, my fellow colleagues of African Descent; Senators Ravalia, Moodie, Bernard, and Mégie, for the work that we have done in the past few weeks. When we fight together, we are stronger.

In all our work, we must carefully consider how we can be promoters of national harmony.

We must also consider what equality and equity mean and what measures we can put in place to ensure the equal treatment of all people.

• (1350)

When I first became a Senator, the first thing my father, Sherali Bandali Jaffer, a former Member of Parliament in Uganda, told me, was that I must use my position of power and privilege to find ways to create harmony in Canada.

As we continue through this challenging summer, I ask that we all reflect on how we can create harmony in our society and what policies and resources we have to implement to achieve equality in Canada.

When I was young, my father taught me to think of how a piano creates beautiful harmonies.

He said, sure, you get some harmony by playing just the white keys, but the sound hurts your ears'. Sure, we also create some sort of harmony by playing just the black keys. But again, it does not sound great.

Senators, to achieve truly beautiful harmony, we must play on both the white and black keys.

In the same manner, we must work together, regardless of our racial backgrounds to promote equality among all Canadians.

Honourable senators, thank you and please stay safe.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

QUESTION PERIOD

VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMEMORATION OF KOREAN WAR

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I lead with a question to the Leader of the Government with regard to the seventieth anniversary of the Korean War, which I spoke about earlier.

As I said, today marks the start of the war. It's strange to think we would commemorate the start but, with the Korean War, the war isn't over. That is why this day is as equally important as the Korean War Armistice, three years from now on July 27, 2023.

Minister MacAulay has been very generous with his time. I met with him on Zoom last week. We talked about the three-year campaign. He is laying a wreath in Prince Edward Island today.

But my concern, leader, is that when I go to the minister's mandate letter from the Prime Minister, it doesn't mention ensuring commemoration of wars and battles other than:

... ensure funding to help the Juno Beach Centre continue to deliver its mandate to preserve the legacy of all Canadians who served during the Second World War.

In spite of Minister MacAulay's best intentions and his dedication, which he has shown to me, my concern is that he's limited in what he may be able to do unless there is clear direction and support from the Prime Minister's Office.

Leader, would you, one, communicate with the Prime Minister's Office about his acknowledgment of this important commemoration; and two, confirm that there will be support given to the minister and the Veterans Affairs Department so that these commemorations can take place in the way our veterans deserve?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you very much for raising that. The short answer is I certainly will communicate with the Prime Minister's Office and share your concerns, which I share. Too many people suffered and sacrificed, in Korea and certainly in Canada, to liberate Korea during the Korean War. I will use my best efforts to communicate these concerns for proper commemoration to the government.

Senator Martin: The timing, I think, is now. Today, as we saw the Prime Minister's press conference, he was fielding a lot of questions regarding China. It's a very difficult situation, but the war in Korea was against Communist tyranny. Canadians died in the defence of freedoms and democracy. Some remain buried in Korea to this day.

Would you ask the Prime Minister whether he will amend the mandate letter, or will new mandate letters be issued come fall? I'm not sure how that is done, whether it's at the start of Parliament, but that clarification would also be very important.

Senator Gold: It would be my pleasure to do so. Thank you.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Thanh Hai Ngo: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Despite there being no scientific evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted through food, Canadian seafood exports to China, such as Nova Scotia lobster, must now undergo a mandatory testing regime before clearing Chinese customs. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have stated that other products could also be subjected to testing.

The Chinese Communist Party, the CCP, has not notified us of what it is doing, nor given any clear details of what type of products will be targeted. To add insult to injury, the CCP is also demanding that Canadian shippers sign a declaration that lobster is free of COVID-19 and assume liability if it is later detected in China.

China will do anything until it gets its way. We have seen it on multiple occasions. Our two Michaels are being illegally detained on bogus espionage charges.

My question to you is, what action is the government taking to safeguard not only our industries but also to prevent Canadians signing these declarations from being liable for any bogus contamination? Will Canada start imposing mandatory testing on every product imported from China? If not, why not?

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

The actions by China with regard to various sectors of our economy — seafood as you mentioned, canola and pork in the past — are all unacceptable to this government. This government's position remains that the demands were unjustified on scientific or health grounds and represent examples of a country using its economic leverage for its political purposes.

The government in these complicated and challenging times continues to press China not only for the release of the two Michaels who are being held and have been charged arbitrarily — held hostage, to call it by its true name — but also to allow the free flow of goods from Canada to China. This government has every confidence in the health and safety standards of our industries, seafood and others, and will take the appropriate measures under all the circumstances.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Thanh Hai Ngo: You didn't answer my question yet, but I am going to go back on that one.

The Department of Foreign Affairs confirmed that the Government of Canada gave China \$41 million of taxpayers' money to a totalitarian government back in 2019, even though China's is the second largest economy in the world.

The *Post Millennial* article from April states that Canada has run a trade deficit with China since 1992 with the deficit breaking a record \$50 billion last year.

How can Canada justify throwing away hard-earned Canadian money and giving it to the second-largest economy in the world — also to the most despicable regime mankind has faced — and for what purpose?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. I'm not entirely clear what particular transaction you're referring to, senator. The relationship between Canada and China on economic matters has been and remains rather vast and widespread. We have many different arrangements with China, as we do with so many other countries. I'd be happy, however, if you would give me more specifics, to make inquiries and report back to the chamber.

HEALTH

COVID-19 PANDEMIC—MENTAL HEALTH

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, my question is to Senator Marc Gold, Government Representative in the Senate.

• (1400)

Recently, a British report used disaggregated data to examine how COVID-19 has had a worse impact on the mental health of BAME — black, Asian and minority ethnic heritage — children compared to their white peers. Internationally recognized epidemiologist Dr. Gabriel Leung was recently quoted as saying that a second wave of COVID-19 is a “statistical certainty.”

How is the government preparing for this second wave? Is Canada currently collecting disaggregated race and gender data regarding the mental health impact of COVID-19 to inform a horizontal planning process across federal departments? If so, who is leading this multi-department horizontal strategy and how will our government incorporate lessons learned from the first wave of COVID-19?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you very much for your question, senator. It's an important one. This government takes the mental health of its citizens very seriously and is aware that the current crisis has imposed a significant burden on many sectors, including those parts of our community to which you referred, and it's a very challenging time. There are measures in place, as you know, to support Canadians during this time, including the Wellness Together Canada portal, and I encourage Canadians to look to this for the help that they may be able to obtain.

With regard to disaggregated data during the pandemic, we had advance notice of your question — and I'm grateful for that — and I've made inquiries with the government but, alas, have not yet received the answer. When I do, I will report back to the chamber in a timely fashion.

You also asked about second-wave possibilities and how we're coping and planning, and that there is a real possibility is clearly understood by the government. I'm advised the government has been working with its counterparts in the provinces and territories on their reopening plans, which has a major bearing upon what is likely to happen in the months to come.

The government will continue to take the best advice of public health officials to manage this forward and will continue to do its best to provide support for Canadians as things unfold. Thank you.

[Translation]

NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN GATINEAU PARK

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. You no doubt know that Gatineau Park is the only federal park that does not have national park status. As a result, its ecosystem is not fully protected. Since this park is in my senatorial division, I have taken an interest in it over the past few months. Given that one of the National Capital Commission's priorities is the conservation of the park's natural heritage, why have 133 private residences been built in the middle of Gatineau Park since 1992? Shouldn't the NCC have the power to put a stop to land speculation there?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator, for your question. Gatineau Park is obviously a treasure that must be protected, and the protection of that park and our environment is a priority for our government. The National Capital Commission, which is in charge of the park's day-to-day operations, is responsible for developing, preserving and improving the region, including Gatineau Park, for all Canadians. I looked into this situation myself, and I was told that the number of properties located within Gatineau Park has been dropping for a long time, more specifically since 1938. The NCC has regularly purchased private property adjacent to the park, including dozens of properties over the past decade. That being said, the NCC does not have authority over land it does not own. When it comes to the construction of residences on private property, those affected must contact their municipal representatives.

Senator Miville-Dechéne: That just goes to show that NCC officials don't have enough powers. This situation has been going on for years, and, as you know, there have been eight bills about this. Why isn't the federal government intervening to make Gatineau Park a national park like the others? The park is 20 minutes from Ottawa, and the Meech Lake Accord is part of the history of that place. It is truly a jewel, as you said. However, protecting a jewel requires appropriate powers, and one way to get those powers is through a robust bill and act.

Senator Gold: I thank the senator for her comment and her question. I will convey your concern to the government to make sure it's aware that we feel protecting the park is important.

[English]

HEALTH

PHARMACEUTICAL DRUGS

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, my question for the government leader in the Senate today concerns persistent drug shortages across Canada, which have been a problem long before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted global pharmaceutical supply chains.

The Canadian Pharmacists Association released a survey of community pharmacists almost a month ago. It found that 56% of pharmacists last month had received reduced quantities of drug orders due to drug shortages. The survey also reported that 46% of pharmacists did not receive any stock of certain medications because of known drug shortages. In recent weeks, we've heard media reports of shortages of a thyroid drug for pregnant women, and pharmacists have reported shortages of inhalers, blood pressure medication and glaucoma eye drops.

Senator Gold, as Health Canada is understandably working to ensure the supply of COVID-related medications, what is it doing to address other drug shortages as they arise?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, thank you for your question and for your ongoing commitment to keeping this issue front and centre in this place. It's a really important one. You properly point out that this is a problem that has plagued our health care system in various ways for some time. Though we have an industry in Canada that can provide certain drugs upon which we rely, we rely to a very great degree on international markets and other countries for the production of so many of our medications.

Health Canada is, of course, seized with the issue of the pandemic, as you properly point out, but remains very concerned about shortages more generally and the health impacts that they have on those quite apart from the pandemic, the so-called "collateral consequences" of our focus on the pandemic.

I can assure this chamber that Health Canada is seized with this issue on an ongoing basis. I cannot report on the specifics they may be doing with regard to a particular drug or not, but the chamber should be confident that the government remains focused on this to the fullest extent that it can.

Senator Seidman: Canada's website for reporting drug shortages and discontinued drugs shows that between March 13 and June 25, 374 actual drug shortages have been reported, as well as another 27 anticipated drug shortages. Not surprisingly, this is worse than when I last raised this matter with you in February.

Leader, how does Health Canada reassure Canadians who continue to have fears about the availability of drugs they need in their daily lives?

• (1410)

Senator Gold: Health Canada takes its responsibility seriously, and although I reassured this chamber and do so again that it is taking its responsibility seriously in doing what it can, it's the position of this government that it will not attempt to issue false assurances when things are beyond its control. Supply chains have been disrupted dramatically, largely but not exclusively because of the crisis, so I will make inquiries and provide any information to the best of my ability.

The brute and sad fact is that these are matters largely outside the government's control in terms of worldwide shortages, in many cases, of important medications. We dearly wish we had full supplies of those for the benefit of Canadians.

FINANCE

DOWNGRADING OF CANADA'S CREDIT RATING

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question for the government leader today concerns the announcement yesterday that the Fitch credit rating agency has downgraded Canada's AAA status. For years now, leader, the Prime Minister has brushed off questions about his government's huge deficits by pointing to Canada's AAA credit rating. He has never recognized that hard work goes into maintaining the country's credit rating. Budgets don't balance themselves, and you cannot spend yourself into oblivion. No one disputes that the government has had to bring in emergency programs in response to COVID-19, but the Trudeau government headed into this disaster in a weak position.

Leader, how will losing our AAA credit rating impact your government's ability to service its massive debt, not just in the near term but in the years ahead?

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

Before the pandemic hit us, and heading into it, Canada was in a strong economic position, as I have mentioned in this chamber on a number of occasions, as has the Minister of Finance and others. This government agrees with you, and with all members of this chamber who voted in support of the economic measures that the government put in place to help Canadians, that had the government not acted during this time we, as Canadians and our country, would be far worse off, as would the economy.

I've been advised that notwithstanding this downgrading by one credit agency, Fitch, that global markets continue to invest in Canada, they continue to buy Canadian bonds and our cost of borrowing remains at historic lows. As we were advised by the Minister of Finance in this chamber earlier this week, the government will be providing us with information about our fiscal situation on July 8. At that point I think we will have more information about the state of affairs, but it is the government's position that it has and will continue to act responsibly to manage our economic affairs as we navigate through this crisis.

Senator Plett: Well, leader, your government has never concerned itself with Canada's debt level — not before the pandemic, not to date, not ever. Fitch warned over a year ago that Canada's debt level wasn't compatible with AAA status and nothing has been done to rein in the spending.

The mandate letter of the Minister of Finance instructs him to preserve our AAA credit rating, yet Minister Morneau came here on Tuesday, as you just said, and couldn't answer basic questions about the debt: How much is it? Who owns it? He either didn't know or he refused to answer. His lack of answers and poor grasp of detail doesn't instill much confidence in his ability to restore Canada's AAA rating.

Leader, why should Canadians believe that Minister Morneau's so-called snapshot in two weeks will provide us with a path forward?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. I think the Minister of Finance made it very clear that given the tremendous uncertainty, not only with regard to where the Canadian economy may be in 6 or 12 months, but the world economy, upon which our economy so depends and with which it is inextricably bound, we will receive a snapshot, meaning a portrait as opposed to a projection into the future.

It would be irresponsible to rely upon guesses when there is so much that remains uncertain, and point only to the uncertainty south of our border to report on how the economy might adjust as COVID-19 seems to rip through a number of states.

I understand the senator's position on deficit reduction. It is one, and only one, measure of the financial health of an economy, and it is only one measure, and not necessarily this government's primary measure, as to the appropriate way to steer our economy forward. This government has made investments in a number of areas, most recently in helping the economy stay alive so that it can return properly, and the government remains confident that it has the fiscal capacity to get us through that. We will return in a strong position and very well positioned to pay down the debt we are accumulating through this crisis.

COVID-19 ECONOMIC RESPONSE PLAN

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My goodness, if the Minister of Finance doesn't know then who does? I am so worried, leader. When the minister was in our chamber, his response to my question that it was only a few months these small businesses had to wait was described by someone as "cavalier," when every day makes a difference to their profit margins and their livelihoods.

I will not go back to that question but there is another one I didn't get to ask the minister. Leader, are you aware that the \$40,000 loans under the Canada Emergency Business Account are still not available for the very small businesses and self-employed workers who use a personal bank account? A commercial bank account remains a requirement under the expanded eligibility criteria the government announced a month ago. Would you find out from the minister when these businesses may have an opportunity? They've already waited three and a half months. Again, I don't even know how many of them have remained afloat. This is very serious, so an answer would be much appreciated.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you. I will certainly make inquiries, but I believe that the minister both here and on other occasions has made it clear that the government understands that the measures put into place so quickly were painted with a rather broad brush. The issues have been raised. The government is very aware of the smaller businesses, and you alluded to it in your question, if I recall, on the mom-and-pop businesses. There are gaps in programs that were put in place and the government is responsive to these issues, working with stakeholders. I will make inquiries.

I expect the government will make adjustments to the program to help those businesses that have fallen through the cracks, at least up until this point.

Senator Martin: I question his overall awareness of these very small businesses in the answers he gave to me. However, I hope he's also aware that under the small- and medium-sized enterprise category more than 50% of them are these very small businesses. Those are a lot of businesses.

I ask again whether there is a date, a plan or consideration to include these businesses within the eligibility criteria.

Senator Gold: Thank you. I will make those specific inquiries and report back to the chamber.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

SETTLEMENT OF CLAIMS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, the government recently settled a defamation lawsuit brought forward by Mr. Sean Bruyea, a veteran who was personally attacked in a newspaper column by Minister Seamus O'Regan when he was Minister of Veterans Affairs. That minister showed no understanding or respect, and that is no surprise. After all, Minister O'Regan once equated leaving his TV show to a veteran leaving the military.

Some Hon. Senators: Shame!

Senator Plett: In December 2019 an Order Paper answer tabled in the other place disclosed that the government spent more than \$183,000 in legal costs related to this lawsuit — over seven times what the veteran was seeking in damages.

Leader, could you tell us the total amount your government spent in this defamation case by defending the indefensible? Mr. Bruyea has stated he believes the amount is close to \$250,000, or 10 times what he claimed.

• (1420)

Does your government believe these are taxpayers' dollars well spent?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I'll certainly make inquiries about the amount spent on this case; and to the extent they are appropriate for release for legal purposes — because I gather from the question that there was a settlement, the details of which might very well remain confidential — I will make inquiries and report back as appropriate.

Senator Plett: Honourable senators, the failed prosecution of Vice-Admiral Mark Norman cost taxpayers over \$1.4 million and cost the vice-admiral and his family untold grief. Almost a year before Mark Norman was charged, the Prime Minister publicly stated that this matter “will likely end up before the courts.” Shamefully, the Trudeau government never apologized to the vice-admiral for all he has endured but rushed to apologize to a convicted terrorist and pay him \$10.5 million.

Leader, Vice-Admiral Norman was doing his job on the shipbuilding file. Mr. Bruyea was holding the government to account regarding veterans' benefits. Both men were targeted by your government.

Does your government commit to put an end to these irresponsible behaviours?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. However, again, the settlement and arrangements around Vice-Admiral Norman are things upon which I am in no position to comment at this stage.

HEALTH

MENTAL HEALTH

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate.

On May 3, the Prime Minister announced \$240 million to develop, expand and launch virtual care and mental health tools.

On June 3, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology heard from witnesses representing three leading mental health organizations: the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Strongest Families Institute and the Canadian Psychiatric Association. These witnesses said they had not been consulted by the government on its announcement and had not been provided details on the funding.

Leader, could you tell us which organizations, if any, were consulted prior to the government's announcement on May 3? Has the money under this program begun to flow to mental health care providers? If so, how much has been allocated so far, and to which groups?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. I'm not in a position to answer the specifics of your question. I will certainly make inquiries and I would be happy to report back to the chamber.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the time for Question Period has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Pursuant to the order of Monday, June 22, I leave the chair for the Senate to be put into a Committee of the Whole to consider the Government of Canada's role in addressing anti-black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and ending systemic racism. The Honourable Senator Ringuette will chair the committee.

[Translation]

THE SENATE

CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN COMBATTING RACISM IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On the Order:

The Senate in Committee of the Whole in order to consider the Government of Canada's role in addressing anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and ending systemic racism.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended and put into Committee of the Whole, the Honourable Pierrette Ringuette in the chair.)

The Chair: Honourable senators, the Senate is resolved into a Committee of the Whole to consider the Government of Canada's role in addressing anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and ending systemic racism.

Honourable senators, in a Committee of the Whole senators shall address the chair but need not stand. Under the Rules the speaking time is 10 minutes, including questions and answers, but, as ordered earlier this week, if a senator does not use all of his or her time, the balance can be yielded to another senator. As ordered by the Senate, the committee will receive the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth; the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development; and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and I would now invite them to enter, accompanied by their officials.

(Pursuant to the Order of the Senate, the Honourable Bardish Chagger, the Honourable Ahmed Hussen and the Honourable Bill Blair and their officials were escorted to seats in the Senate chamber.)

The Chair: Ministers, welcome to the Senate. I would ask you to introduce your officials and to make your opening remarks of at most five minutes.

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger, P.C., M.P., Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth: Honourable senators, we are gathered on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples, meeting today to work together to help Canada embrace diversity and promote inclusion so we can eradicate systemic racism, including anti-black, anti-Indigenous and anti-Asian racism. This is both important and essential.

[Translation]

I'm here with my colleagues, the Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

[English]

Also with me is Gina Wilson, Senior Associate Deputy Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth; Graham Flack, Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development Canada; and Rob Stewart, Deputy Minister of Public Safety Canada.

[Translation]

Recently, we have seen how concerned Canadians are about anti-black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and racism against people of Asian origin. Across Canada, thousands of us have taken a knee to demand change and an end to systemic racism.

[English]

We have video footage and thousands of testimonials from Indigenous peoples, black Canadians, racialized people and religious minorities experiencing racism again and again. There is no avoiding the stark fact: Systemic racism and discrimination are issues in Canada. It is present in these hallways, in our institutions and agencies.

As the Prime Minister said, systemic racism is something that touches every corner of our country. We need everyone to pause and reflect upon the Canada that we want, and commit to actions and outcomes; I would like to assure you that I am. To build a truly inclusive Canada, every single one of us must step up and do what we can to make workplaces, communities and public spaces safer and more inclusive.

Madam Chair, to quote and amplify Senator Brian Francis's important advice to every Canadian, "Allyship is a continuous journey of learning, understanding and action." We all need to do the work. While the work ahead can be uncomfortable and daunting, failing to act is no longer an option.

My mandate letter is public. My responsibilities include working with every federal department, agency and minister, including the Public Service of Canada, to ensure that every decision is made with diversity and inclusion in mind. We are improving policies, initiatives and practices in our federal institutions, but these efforts need to be accelerated and, at a minimum, informed by lived experiences.

We unveiled Canada's anti-racism strategy in June 2019. In October, the Anti-Racism Secretariat was established and Peter Flegel appointed the director.

The secretariat is engaging with all levels of government, civil society, Indigenous peoples and diverse communities, addressing, among other things, anti-black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Asian racism, as well as anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Its goal is to identify systemic barriers and gaps in federal policies, programs and services; kick-start new initiatives; and develop further areas for action.

COVID-19 has impacted all segments of society. We also know that the pandemic has made racialized groups more vulnerable. To address this, the secretariat set up the government-

wide equity-seeking communities and COVID-19 task force to ensure the federal response to COVID-19 is adapted to the needs of equity-seeking communities.

[Translation]

Our government recognizes that to effectively combat systemic racism, we must do so systematically. We must tackle the problem in its entirety by minimizing the blind spots. That is why I am working with all my colleagues, including Ministers Blair and Hussen, who are here today, and who are just as determined to eliminate racism.

[English]

One aspect of fighting systemic racism is better data and evidence. The lack of detailed disaggregated data, as well as its inconsistent collection, measurement, reporting and analysis, have been cited as underlying factors contributing to racism.

• (1430)

Canadian Heritage, along with Statistics Canada, Public Safety and Justice, are working together to better use data to understand and combat systemic racism. By demonstrating federal leadership, empowering communities, building awareness and changing attitudes, our government is taking action in building a lasting foundation for change. This plan is defined in our anti-racism strategy.

There's a lot more work to do, and we are committed to doing the work as allies and partners with communities. Fighting systemic racism will make our country better, safer and stronger for everyone, full stop.

Madam Chair, honourable senators, together as leaders and as Canadians, we must keep at this until hopefully we arrive at a day when this conversation is no longer needed.

I want to thank you for having us here. I want to thank you for your attention and your leadership and commitment. I will be pleased to answer questions. I do apologize to anyone I have my back to.

The Chair: Thank you, minister. We have blocks of 10 minutes per question and answer, just to make you aware.

Senator Plett: Ministers, I hardly think that COVID-19 is the reason why we have racism in this country or anywhere else. It was here before, and unfortunately, very unfortunately, it is probably going to be here for a while after.

As you know, ministers, this Committee of the Whole was struck to examine the government's role in fighting anti-black and anti-Indigenous racism. I find it very troubling — very troubling, indeed — that neither of our two ministers responsible for Indigenous affairs could bother to be here today, when we have it on good sources that they are in Ottawa and they are not in this chamber. That is a sad reflection of what their responsibility is towards this very serious issue. I'm going to focus my questions to the Minister of Public Safety.

Minister Blair, one month ago today in Minneapolis, George Floyd died while in police custody after an officer knelt on his neck for some nine minutes, sparking protests around the world against police brutality and anti-black racism. This has led us and others to question some of our own policies, both current and historic, to see how our systems may be disproportionately affecting the black and the Indigenous populations.

Minister, earlier this week you said:

I define systemic racism as deficiencies in the system that give rise to different outcomes for different racial groups.

The practice of carding has been widely denounced as racist and discriminatory and, of course, this was a practice, minister, that you implemented in Toronto while serving as Chief of Police. Over the past several weeks, you have been asked repeatedly to apologize for this policy, yet you have refused.

Minister, will you apologize to the black community today? If not, how can Canadians have faith that this government has the capacity to combat systemic racism when the Minister of Public Safety cannot even acknowledge where it exists?

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness: Thank you very much for the question, senator. If I may correct, when I said earlier in describing systemic racism, not racism, I talked about deficiencies in the broader system that give rise to disparate and disproportionate outcomes to racialized communities and Indigenous communities, particularly young black men.

With respect to the issue of carding, I would reference to the senator for his understanding of this issue that he perhaps might want to read Justice Michael Tulloch's very comprehensive report that he completed for the Province of Ontario on street checks, in which he very clearly defined carding as an arbitrary activity not based on evidence or the law, rather on arbitrary activity.

I can tell you that throughout my entire tenure in Toronto, the stops that were made by the police in street checks — which are also done in every jurisdiction right across Canada — had to be based on evidence and the rule of law. I can tell you without equivocation that a stop that is based on bias or racism in any form is abhorrent, unacceptable and unlawful. It is contrary to section 5 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it's also contrary to section 15 of the Canadian Human Rights Act. Therefore, it is not acceptable.

I can also tell you — perhaps if we have more time, senator — about the number of initiatives undertaken in my police service and in my city, working in racialized and with racialized communities for almost 40 years, a number of very important steps that were taken to serve that community with respect and dignity, and to ensure that racism was never acceptable in my police service.

So frankly, your reference to carding, which is not what we were engaged in — it might benefit from a better understanding of what street checks are and what the rules are around them. Again, I think Justice Tulloch's report could provide you with that better understanding.

Senator Plett: I will be happy to read that report. I don't think carding is acceptable, regardless of what reasons or excuses one uses.

I will just make a comment and an observation here. The RCMP commissioner, Brenda Lucki, the highest-ranking police officer in our country, has been undermined by the Prime Minister for admitting that she struggled with the definition of systemic racism before eventually acknowledging its existence within her organization. When his own minister Pablo Rodriguez denied the very existence of systemic racism, there was no comment from the Prime Minister. Likewise, when his Minister of Public Safety cannot acknowledge his own role in perpetuating systemic racism in our largest city, our Prime Minister is silent.

This past week, ministers, Jody Wilson-Raybould, Canada's first Indigenous Justice Minister, who was fired because she dared challenge and stand up to the Prime Minister's appalling and unethical behaviour, recounted her experience with this government. She stated that her ideas on criminal justice reform were met with paternalistic dismissal. Regardless of her experience, it became clear that she was seen as an Indigenous woman first.

I would strongly suggest that this Prime Minister stop patting himself on the back as a feminist when he has clearly demonstrated he has a problem with powerful and accomplished women. I would ask, ministers, that you take that message back to the Prime Minister and to your government.

With that, Madam Chair, I will yield the balance of my time to Senator Housakos.

Senator Housakos: Thank you. Minister Blair, I would like to follow up on the question my colleague asked regarding carding.

While dealing with legislation related to impaired driving and the legalization of marijuana by your government, our colleague Senator Batters put forth an amendment — and the Senate passed it — to guard against the systematically racist practice of carding by the police, but your government didn't accept that amendment and instead cleared the way for police to return to this racist practice.

Minister, why was that? Whose decision was it not to accept the amendment? Was it yours, minister?

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much, senator. In response to your question, I will repeat that carding — which is an arbitrary stopping of a person not based on the law and not based on evidence and, therefore, without articulable cause — is not acceptable. It's not only unacceptable, but it's unlawful in Canada. Every police service has received that in their training, and within my police service, there was a very clear articulation of what circumstances must exist before any individual could be stopped.

In addition to making it very clear to those police officers, and all police officers, that any activity or decision by the police cannot be influenced by bias, that training also existed. It helped

police officers to understand the impact that bias can have on their decision-making. There was also extensive training given to police officers to ensure they had that information.

When you suggest that we should make something unlawful that is already unlawful, sir, I would simply point out to you that decisions made by the police that are guided by bias or racism are already contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and contrary to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

• (1440)

Senator Housakos: Minister, that's exactly it. The question is: Who turned down the amendment in cabinet? Were you in favour of the amendment that the Senate sent back with regard to carding or were you not?

Mr. Blair: I was not in cabinet at the time of that decision, so I have no understanding of how that determination was made. I can tell you that in my experience, the amendments put forward by the Senate are always given full and ample consideration out of respect for the role of this house.

Senator Housakos: My next question is for Minister Hussen. Minister, last week the Parliamentary Black Caucus released a substantial statement calling on all levels of government to address systemic racism. It's a statement which, if given the opportunity, I would not have hesitated in signing. The statement calls for and outlines comprehensive, concrete measures that could be taken by your government.

Minister, what is the Trudeau government's position on the list of recommendations? It would be helpful if you can specifically reference the recommendations, please, and what your government intends to do with them.

Ahmed Hussen, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you very much, senator, for that —

The Chair: I'm sorry, but the block of 10 minutes is complete. We now have to move to the second block of 10 minutes.

[Translation]

Senator Mégie: Thank you, ministers, for being here with us this afternoon to take part in this Committee of the Whole. We greatly appreciate it.

My first question is for Minister Blair. During discussions on Bill C-46, which was passed, it was mentioned that the government is required to conduct, within three years, a comprehensive review of the implementation and application of the provisions enacted by the act, including an evaluation of whether they have resulted in differential treatment of any particular group based on a prohibited ground of discrimination. What is the status of the report that has to be tabled in Parliament a year from now, before June 21, 2021, and how can the government conduct such an evaluation if its agents do not compile disaggregated data?

[English]

Mr. Blair: Thank you, senator, for what I believe is an important question. The issue of having race-based data has been a controversial one in our country for some period of time. I remember quite vividly back in the late 1980s that there were a number of incidents where such data that did exist was being badly misused to stigmatize minority and racialized populations. So at that time, there were a number of very significant restrictions put in place around its collection.

Its absence has caused a great deal of difficulty. If you can't understand the disparate impact that the systems not only of justice but of health, education and housing, et cetera, are having on racialized populations or Indigenous populations, quite frankly, that information is valuable and essential to make good decisions.

There are challenges that I will acknowledge with respect to the collection of that data. I believe it's absolutely essential that we begin to do a better job in this country of collecting race-based data, do it thoughtfully and carefully so it is not subject to misuse, and have that data to inform our decisions.

There are a number of datasets that can assist us in the collection of data with respect to the violation of prohibited grounds, most of those arising from police activity or activities in our courts, and some from complaints within the police service. But that information is not as valuable as it could be if there was a more comprehensive collection of race-based disaggregated data that would inform that decision.

I don't have specifics. I apologize for where we are with that report. We know that within a year it has to be brought back to us. I also think it's important with new legislation, especially legislation such as Bill C-46. That had some very important and new legislative authorities to help us control impaired driving on our streets and to save lives, but it's very important that we have that review.

I will ensure that that information, as comprehensive as we are able to make it, is properly prepared and presented back to this house in the appropriate time.

[Translation]

Senator Mégie: Thank you, minister.

My second question is for Minister Chagger and has to do with the possibility of creating a special joint committee because, as you know, systemic racism is an important issue for both chambers. In your view, should we create, through a motion adopted by both chambers, a special joint committee to implement the recommendations for eliminating systemic racism in Canada?

Ms. Chagger: Thank you very much for your question. First of all, I want to thank you for your work and all your efforts to advance the dialogue in this chamber. I was one of the people who watched the debates. I know this is another step. I think a special committee could be created. In fact, I've been mandated to work jointly with the departments and agencies. I don't think we can wait for legislation to be passed. We need to take action

now. Each and every one of us can do things a little differently if we want a truly inclusive country. For me personally, this work began at a young age, and our government took action in that area during its first four years in office. I now have the opportunity to move this file forward, and I'm very proud to work collaboratively with you. The decision to create a new committee is the responsibility of this chamber and the other place. I want to work with anyone who wishes to make a difference and I will continue to participate in the discussions. I'm currently focusing my efforts on actions that will help us achieve the results we need.

Senator Mégie: My other question is for Minister Blair and concerns facial recognition technology. This technology misidentifies less than 1% of white males, but 35% to 38% of women of colour. Are we going to continue using this racist and sexist technology in Canada? Where is this data stored at present? Will we share this data with other countries?

[English]

Mr. Blair: Thank you. Regarding the question of technology such as facial recognition technologies, it's important that we develop very strong regulatory frameworks around their use that recognizes the limitations of these technologies, as well as recognizing and respecting Canadians' concerns and our laws with respect to privacy issues. There are some very significant matters that need to be addressed. There is currently work under way within the RCMP for the development of appropriate regulatory controls for the use of that data, but it's being done very much in cooperation and collaboration with our privacy officials, both federal and provincial, because that's important.

The sharing of data internationally is also strictly controlled. Frankly, Canada's laws with respect to privacy interests are stronger than those within those nations with whom we generally share criminal intelligence information and national security information. We will make sure that our laws are always respected in those decisions. There's a great deal of work to do with regard to these emerging technologies to ensure that they are used when appropriate, in a responsible way, and that there is an acknowledgment and awareness of its limitations and accuracy, particularly as it may affect different racialized groups.

[Translation]

Senator Mégie: Thank you. I have another question for you. Minister, given that body cameras are very expensive — it costs about \$100 a month to archive the video and about \$1,000 to purchase a camera — can you tell us if the millions of dollars to be invested will come directly from the RCMP's current budgets, which total approximately \$3.7 billion?

[English]

Mr. Blair: Yes, senator. Let me first speak to the technology. The technology has been evolving fairly significantly. I've been involved in a number of pilot programs with local municipal police services utilizing this technology. Calgary, for example, uses them widely within their municipality. But that technology has been evolving, particularly storage.

In the pilots previously done by the RCMP, there was a particular challenge with the technology and the cost of storing the data that is produced, because we also have a requirement that the data would be kept for a certain period of time. There are some emerging technologies, particularly cloud technologies, that have significantly reduced the price of that storage. We're mindful of the cost. At the present time, there is no budgetary ask in place for these cameras, but we've made a commitment. We see that they can have real value.

I've had a number of important conversations with Indigenous leadership and Indigenous communities, and there is a strong desire to have greater accountability and the use of body cameras in those jurisdictions, so we're working hard to do that.

• (1450)

I wish to be very careful with the taxpayers' money and make sure every investment we make is an investment in public value and public safety, so we'll be very thoughtful about how we bring that forward.

[Translation]

Senator Mégie: Mr. Blair, policies have been implemented in the United States, such as the 8 Can't Wait campaign, to deal with the inappropriate conduct of police forces. Can our government tell us if there have been any changes to our policies on the reasonable use of force by police? How is reasonable use of force defined?

[English]

Mr. Blair: I think we have seen an evolution in that as well in policing in Canada. The requirements for use of force training and the use of force models that are in place in Canada are very reflective of Canadian values and Canadian communities and Canadian law.

But what I think is very important is that all use of force models should begin with —

The Chair: Mr. Minister, I'm sorry, the 10 minutes has expired. We have to move to another questioner.

Senator McCallum: My first question is on behalf of Senator Boyer:

Intentional acts of racism are clearly a breach of human rights and looked upon as despicable by any decent person, though we have had our challenges in this very chamber.

The protests in response to the recent murder of George Floyd are not the first to rock the United States. As for Canada, we have documented the overt racial practices enacted by the Canadian state toward Indigenous peoples. We also know this intentional racism continues to affect Indigenous peoples, as made evident in the findings of the *Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, among other areas.

My question touches on a more nebulous problem. A 1993 Ontario Human Rights decision states how, unlike intentional discrimination, unintentional discrimination may

be less clear. Often it involves acting upon internalized prejudices, regardless of whether the prejudice is consciously appreciated as such by the actor.

How will the government structurally create a framework that addresses the racism against Indigenous peoples and black men and women in this country — one in part that they are responsible for cultivating — while at the same time root out all forms of discrimination, whether they are intended or not?

Mr. Blair: I'll do my best to answer that. I've actually worked in highly racialized communities for most of my adult life, working with the police in those areas. In Canada, racism tends not to be explicitly expressed by very many people. It's just simply unacceptable in our society, but it can be implicit and even unconscious. The impact is nonetheless devastating on the people being victimized by it. It's important to recognize that.

Implicit bias can influence decisions within a number of systems — the health system, housing, employment, education and in the criminal justice system. There needs to be much greater awareness and lack of acceptance of it.

The very first places we need to begin as a people is to acknowledge, recognize and respect the lived experience of Indigenous Canadians, racialized Canadians and young black men who, in their lived experience, have experienced that discrimination, bias and racism. We need to listen very carefully to that lived experience, acknowledge it, and acknowledge that there are things that we need to do better.

There are individual acts of misconduct that can happen, for example, in policing. We have systems in place to detect, prosecute and punish those individual acts of misconduct, but quite frankly, only dealing with individuals when you have a much broader systemic problem just perpetuates the problem. We've seen evidence of that.

So I think we need to also, as a society, stop and reflect on the broader systemic racism and discrimination that exists within our society and begin to address it.

Senator McCallum: My second question is for Minister Blair. I'm asking this on behalf of Regional Chief Ghislain Picard from the Justice portfolio from the Assembly of First Nations.

He would like to know, "With regard to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, strong federal leadership is required to undertake the essential reforms and cultural change required to dismantle overt and systemic racism. The fear and mistrust among First Nations is palpable and increasing. While a new co-developed legislative framework recognizing First Nations policing as an essential service is a necessary first step, more still needs to be done, especially with regard to reforms within the RCMP."

"Minister Blair, will you commit to undertake a review and make changes to the RCMP Act to establish a stronger and more robust civilian oversight mechanism that addresses complaints in a timely manner; establish zero tolerance policies on the use of excessive force; mandatory training on enhanced de-escalation and unconscious biases; higher recruitment standards for officers;

[Mr. Blair]

more robust supports for mental health, substance abuse and youth; the possibility of an elders advisory council; the collection and sharing of race-based disaggregated data; the recruitment and promotion of First Nations within the RCMP; and the mandatory use of body cameras for officers?”

While they want a written response to this, and we will provide you with the vice chiefs that you will need to respond, they wanted you to comment verbally as well.

Mr. Blair: Yes, ma'am. Thank you for the question.

I can also tell you that I have recently spoken to Regional Chief Picard and Regional Chief Teegee, both of whom represent their Justice portfolio on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations. I've also spoken, of course, to the national chief and all of the regional chiefs bilaterally and collectively on this issue. I've reached out to them and I've asked them for their help in co-producing a new legislative framework for Indigenous policing, which is recognized as an essential service. Indigenous policing can have a number of different components. It can involve, for example, the RCMP. It could also involve Indigenous-led First Nations policing services. It can have community safety officers, special constables; it has a number of different components.

I think it's important that the nations and their leadership define the policing they want and need in their communities.

All of the things that you have read to me from Chief Picard, I agree with. They are all necessary. My answer is yes, I absolutely commit to working on those things, but more importantly I want to commit to Chief Picard and to you that we're not going to do that in isolation. We're going to do that with the Indigenous leadership in this country that recognizes, acknowledges and respects their jurisdiction.

I think good policing requires good governance, and empowering the nations and their leadership to provide that governance, to have a say on how they will be policed and by whom they will be policed, and to ensure that the police officers in those communities are knowledgeable, culturally competent and respectful of the people whom they're there to serve. In order to do that, you have to make sure you're careful hiring, but also in your training, supervision and holding people to account where they engage in misconduct. There has to be sure, certain and serious consequences for misconduct.

Policing is a very important and essential activity in every community, and every community deserves professional, respectful and competent policing services.

I think we can do better than the current model. That's why we've made a commitment to develop a new legislative framework for Indigenous policing in this country, because it begins with the law. We are going to do that in partnership, collaboration and consultation with the Indigenous leadership in this country.

Senator McCallum: Thank you.

Senator White: Thank you very much.

To Minister Chagger and Minister Hussen, thanks to all three ministers for being here today. I know this is a difficult time in government and I certainly appreciate the hard work provided by the government, but in particular the federal public service as they continue to respond to Canadians' needs.

• (1500)

Can you advise if there has been a change to your mandate letter from the Prime Minister? I think one of you referred to your mandate letter being changed to respond to the unique challenges currently faced by people in Canada's black and Indigenous communities. If there has been a change, can you advise what those changes are? If not, can you tell us what you see as the path forward to try to improve some of these community challenges? In particular, I'm thinking of providing youth in those communities with the needed resources, both from a health perspective and from a forward-looking education one?

Mr. Hussen: Thank you very much for that important question. It is not a coincidence that Minister Chagger and I are here before you as the two ministers whose mandate letters make a commitment to further the government's goal of meeting the requirements of the UN's International Decade for People of African Descent, which Canada signed through the commitment of the Prime Minister.

The question that you asked is broad but, at the same time, narrow. You talked about more opportunities for black youth. That is precisely why we moved forward with the \$9 million fund for black youth — to create more opportunities for African-Canadian youth. It is a multi-pronged approach.

We have to make sure that our supports to businesses include black Canadians and other racialized communities, and especially Indigenous communities. We need to make sure that we increase the capacity of black community organizations to be able to deliver services by and for black Canadians, and we're doing that with the \$25 million fund to increase capacity and build infrastructure. We have moved ahead with the Canadian Institute for People of African Descent. I would submit to you, senator, that my mandate letter hasn't changed: it was already reflective of the government's ambition and desire to move forward with all these issues to combat systemic racism and make sure that black Canadians are included more in our programming.

Ms. Chagger: Thank you for the question, and I will build upon the comments of Minister Hussen.

Until the decision-making table changes, and until our institutions change or are at least informed by lived experiences, the outcomes will not change. The issue has been highlighted, but this is an issue that has been around since long before time. I believe that the transformation of the Senate over the last several years is part of the reason we have been invited here and this conversation is taking place during late sittings. This is an emergency. This is a conversation we must have, but it will take more than legislation; it will require a change in attitudes. We recognize there are people across our country who still don't realize that systemic racism and discrimination is real. It is. That is no longer up for debate; it is a fact.

My mandate letter has not changed, but we will be building upon it. The mandate letter has been strengthened by the will of Canadians from coast to coast to coast in saying that enough is enough. We will demand change. That is why I have focused on actions and outcomes in measuring what is taking place and making sure we are informed by better, evidence-based information to ensure the programs we bring about actually work for the very people we are here to serve.

Senator White: The next question is for either of you. I used to be the police chief here in Ottawa, and one of the biggest challenges found in our new-Canadian or refugee community was the fact that parents, in particular, found there were limited supports for children after coming from very difficult situations. Often they would find themselves on a list in our provincial health care system looking for support when it came to, for example, mental health.

Instead of pushing them onto the provincial health care system immediately upon arrival in Canada, is the government giving consideration to keeping them in a system where they have early or immediate access to mental health or other health care facilities that may be outside of the norm, at least for the short term?

Mr. Hussen: Thank you, senator, for that very important question on the integration of refugees. In addition to Canada being a global leader in the western hemisphere for a second year in a row for resettling the most refugees in the west, we also lead in terms of integration of refugees, but also newcomers in general. Part of that is the federal government's investments in community resettlement efforts through organizations. The programming in language, training, mental health supports and in many other integration efforts are not done by the government: they are done by community organizations that are trusted, local and knowledgeable. That has served us well.

In the last number of years, what has been highlighted is the need for more progress in the resettlement of refugees in the area of mental health supports. That is definitely something that has been highlighted, and our government has made many efforts to increase the capacity of local communities to do that, especially when it comes to particular sets of refugees who have endured unimaginable trauma, like the Yazidi refugees from Northern Iraq fleeing genocide. That support has included setting up community-based networks to strengthen the deployment of mental health professionals, as well as translators and other networks to settle those refugees in a way that is paced and ensures that there are wraparound social and psychological supports available. That is always possible. I believe that is an area in which the federal government's leadership will always be sought by local communities.

Senator White: Thank you, minister. Respectfully, I can say that the communities still feel that not enough is provided.

I have a question for Minister Blair. Police forces throughout North America and, more importantly, across Canada have been testing various facial recognition technologies. Significant privacy concerns have been raised, and I understand the RCMP is working with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada to create guidelines for their use. When can we expect the completion of

that work? More importantly, is or should the government consider legislation to regulate or monitor the use of such technology by policing agencies in Canada?

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much for the question, senator. As we know, facial recognition, as well as a number of other significant emerging technologies, is available in other parts of the world. The RCMP and police services in this country benefit from a strong regulatory approach in the use of these technologies. We have strong legislation with respect to privacy protection, and it's one of the reasons we are working so closely with the privacy commissioners, both federally and provincially, on ensuring that there is a strong regulatory framework around an acknowledgement of those privacy concerns regarding the use of any of these technologies. It's appropriate and necessary to provide that guidance to law enforcement to ensure that all such technologies are used, where necessary, in the public interest, but always in respect of Canadian law and of Canadians' privacy interests.

Senator Tannas: Minister Chagger, you mentioned actions and outcomes, and I'm glad to hear that. This is the place of sober second thought. If we invite you back here one year from now — and I hope we do — what are the two measurable things you will tell us you have actually accomplished? Keep in mind that we will read those back to you a year from now.

Ms. Chagger: Thank you, senator, for that question.

I'm going to come back with more than two things, and I will tell you it will take a whole-of-government approach and a whole-of-Canada approach. We have seen the will of Canadians to step up and demand better, and we will do better. I want to highlight some of the programs we have put in place.

When it comes to the \$9 million fund related to communities supporting communities, that money has gone to 56 projects and organizations. Over the course of the next two years, we will be able to see the outcomes of that work, and we will know if it is working or if it needs to be revisited. We had a \$10 million fund for culturally sensitive supports for mental health in black communities. Of that \$10 million, \$5.3 million has been shared.

Senator Tannas, invite me back anytime.

• (1510)

Senator Anderson: Honourable senators, my first question is for Minister Blair, on behalf of my colleague Senator Simons, representing Alberta.

Minister Blair, in recent weeks, we've read tragic stories from across Canada of Indigenous, black and South Asian Canadians who were experiencing mental health crises and who were killed after police responded to check on them. In Edmonton, for more than a decade, the Edmonton Police Service has assigned embedded officers who are based at a mental health clinic at a downtown hospital. Each officer works full time with a partner who is either a psychologist, a psychiatric nurse or a social worker trained in dealing with mental illness. Together, these eight integrated police and crisis response teams, who travel in

unmarked cars, respond to wellness checks and mental health and addiction crisis calls, and de-escalate such situations safely. They respond to 700 calls a month, with few incidents of violence.

More recently, Alberta Health Services has also begun partnering with two embedded RCMP officers from K-Division in Edmonton on a similar model.

Given the potential for violent and fatal outcomes when police officers alone respond to mental health calls, especially when the person involved is Indigenous or a member of a visible minority, would you consider encouraging the RCMP across the country to embrace a similar integrated-response model?

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much, senator.

I can advise you that in 2002, I implemented the first medical crisis intervention teams in Canada, in Toronto. As chief, we established 36 teams of a police officer and a mental health nurse working together as team. I can tell you that produces excellent outcomes for the people we serve who are in crisis.

Unfortunately, 30 teams — and it sounds like a lot of people, but in Toronto, just as an example — and I only use it as an example because it's the one with data I am most familiar with — they answer about 30,000 calls a year for those who are often referred to as “emotionally disturbed persons,” many of those in a mental health crisis or emotional disturbance. Those situations, overwhelmingly — 99.9% of the time — are resolved through de-escalation and appropriate intervention. The best outcomes were with the medical crisis intervention teams.

Unfortunately, some of those calls also began as being about a person with a knife, for example. It is a dangerous situation to send untrained personnel, like a nurse, into that situation.

There are a number of ways in which the police respond. I acknowledge to you that some of those recently — and not just recently — also ended in tragedy. So it is essential that the police receive the training they need.

I am in complete agreement of the use of such integrated teams. There are many discussions taking place around the world, certainly in North America, including in Canada, on issues of defunding the police, for example. I think what people are really talking about is finding better ways to respond to these critical situations that the police, with all their training and tools, may not be the most appropriate response, but they are the only available response. If they are the only ones at three o'clock in the morning to respond to such calls, they take their training, tools and limitations.

Through training, proper equipment and other means, we can continue to provide a safer response to these critical incidents.

I would commend to the senator that, in the aftermath of a similar tragic situation where a young man was shot to death by the police in my city, I contacted then-retired Supreme Court Justice Frank Iacobucci and asked him to do a very comprehensive study into how the police respond to people in crisis. He provided a remarkable report that identifies a number of significant things that can and should be done. He made approximately 74 recommendations, as I recall, to the Toronto

Police Service while I was the chief, and we implemented all of those. I have shared that with the RCMP leadership in this country. I have also shared it with every other police service in Canada, because I think there is value. There are lessons to be learned, and we must do better.

Senator Anderson: Honourable senators, my second question is for Minister Chagger, on behalf of Senator Deacon, representing Nova Scotia.

Visible minorities represent over 22% of Canada's population, and Indigenous peoples represent nearly 5%. Despite this, according to the 2017 Survey on Financing and Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises, only 12% of small businesses are majority-owned by people belonging to visible minorities and only 1% by Indigenous persons. Advancing entrepreneurship in Indigenous and racialized communities is a proven way to create sustainable opportunity, jobs and prosperity where there has traditionally been limited access to all three.

Visible minorities and Indigenous people face systemic barriers due to generational wealth gaps, underrepresentation in business networks, as well as systemic and even algorithm bias.

Minister Chagger, in your current role and as former Minister of Small Business, can you speak to what your government will be doing to advance entrepreneurship programs and success in marginalized communities?

Ms. Chagger: Thank you for that very important question. That is exactly why the conversations that are taking place will have to be whole-of-government and multi-pronged. There are inequities in our system.

One thing established by the Anti-Racism Secretariat in response to COVID-19, which I mentioned in my opening comments, was the task force in regard to equity-seeking communities. Minister Ng and I have been working closely when it comes to those opportunities, not only for small businesses but to look at the COVID-19 response and who benefited from them. The questions I have been asking and expecting responses to — and I feel I will get them — were: Who was applying; who was qualifying; and who is getting through the door? That's in terms of our appointments, within our systems, or in grants and contributions. At every single level, we need to look at who is applying, who is being considered and who is receiving those grants and contributions, or the loans for small businesses.

I am confident that your stats are correct. It will take a small business lens to ensure we are lifting people up.

One thing I did as Small Business Minister was to bring in the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy. We knew our stats when it came to women entrepreneurs. We knew that women-owned businesses were 9% of all businesses in Canada, and 15.7% of those businesses exported. We put an emphasis on that. We also encouraged procurement through the Government of Canada. Most recently, we have announced a procurement strategy for Indigenous-owned businesses, and there is no reason we cannot continue to push this further.

This is about equity and the hand up. There are also economic injustices in our country, so I can promise you the mandate letter commitment that I have, to work with all departments and agencies, is one that I wake up to every morning and is the last thing I think about.

So, yes, when it comes to what you're referring to, work is underway.

I will highlight that we are working with communities. We are informed by what communities are asking. That's why we are saying — even with the \$25-million fund that Minister Hussen referred to — it will be black-run organizations distributing that money to make sure it goes to community organizations that will have the greatest impact.

Senator Anderson: Thank you. I yield the balance of my time to another senator.

[Translation]

Senator Forest: To the three ministers, thank you very much for joining us to listen to our extremely important concerns about this fundamental issue for our society. I'm speaking on behalf of my colleague, Senator Keating. My question is for Minister Blair.

Minister, in early June, you said that you would not in any time accept any potential misconduct of police officers. It's one thing to condemn inappropriate behaviour from certain people, but it's another thing to admit that systemic racism has infiltrated the relationship between Indigenous people and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

In light of the sheer number of incidents that have taken place lately, do you acknowledge that the structure of the RCMP is not impartial? Are you prepared to overhaul the organization, including by creating an oversight mechanism that is fully independent and isn't designed by the organization being overseen?

[English]

Mr. Blair: Thank you, senator. Your question raises some very important issues. I will try to quickly respond to them.

First of all, I want to be very clear that neither I, nor the Commissioner of the RCMP nor their leadership tolerates racism or misconduct. I think it's a strongly held value of the RCMP. They are public servants, and they are there to serve and protect. Their greatest duty is to preserve life, to serve the communities with respect and with professionalism.

But they also recognize that individuals may be involved in misconduct. The commissioner has acknowledged that. There is always room for improvement, but those are very much the values held by the RCMP and with which I agree.

• (1520)

You also raise the very important issue of systemic racism. Systemic racism is a separate issue. It is not less of an issue, but it is a separate issue from the individual misconduct of police officers working within the RCMP or any other police service. What we're looking at there are the circumstances that give rise to disproportionate and disparate outcomes for Indigenous people, for example.

If I may give an example, decisions are made with respect to post-arrest release, either on recognizance or bail. Some of the systemic ways in which it is determined that a person is suitable for release can include their housing status, whether they are homeless, whether they are employed, whether they have roots and ties within the community, if they access to certain services and supports that they may require. We know, within our society, for many Indigenous people, the social conditions that may give rise to their arrest in the first instance can also be consistent with them not being as eligible as someone in a different circumstance to gain access to bail or release on recognizance. Systemically, that results in a disproportionate number of Indigenous people being incarcerated pre-conviction and making it more difficult for them to obtain bail.

Those are systemic issues that we need to address and look at. It is necessary, within the system, to keep people safe but, at the same time, when it has a disparate impact on racialized communities and Indigenous people, it means we have to go back and look hard at the system. Are there ways we can change it to create more equitable, fair and appropriate outcomes for all Canadians?

That is different from the individual conduct, which can never be acceptable. If someone is engaged in racist and inappropriate conduct, they must be held to account for that. There must be serious consequences for that. But there is additional work that we must do to ensure that the criminal justice system, writ large but including the police as an important component, is not engaged in decision making or conduct that results in inequitable outcomes for any part of our population and, in particular, racialized or Indigenous communities.

[Translation]

Senator Forest: Thank you. My second question is from Senator Dupuis, who is a long-time human rights advocate. She has questions for each of the three ministers about their values and commitment. Earlier you mentioned section 15 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This is the strongest, most robust act we have, because it recognizes that everyone is entitled to equal protection and equal benefit, free from discrimination of any kind. Section 15 sets out a clear process for combatting the direct and systemic discrimination most often experienced by people in racialized groups. The government and Parliament therefore have the tools they need to take real action and address this scourge. Are you, as individuals, prepared to commit to having your government and this Parliament pass legislation and implement

programs and activities designed to improve the situation for individuals or groups who are at a disadvantage, with respect to their race, national or ethnic origin, colour, or sex, as set out in subsection 15(2) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? The question is for the three ministers. Minister Chagger, as a courtesy, perhaps you could go first?

Ms. Chagger: I just want to quickly say that we have a plan, specifically Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy. This plan was created by Canadians to ensure that our government can create a foundation for making the necessary changes. Yes, it is true that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects everyone, but, as we can see today, that's not really the case. We therefore have a lot of work to do. I think that we need to listen to people and hear their stories. We don't need to see the videos to know that the stories people are sharing are real. I think that all of that has to be validated, that these people shared their stories, and we need to look at how we can improve our systems and decide what can help us do better. If the decision makers do not change, then the outcomes will not change either. I am going to try to change the voices that are heard and represented.

[English]

Mr. Hussen: Thank you, senator, for your question.

You point out a very important point. We as a country have to live up to the values enshrined in our Charter and the spirit behind that section, which is that people must have equality not only in terms of treatment but equality in outcomes.

We have to strive for that. It's an aspirational goal. To the extent that I can talk about the lived reality of far too many Canadians who are Indigenous, who are black, who are racialized, that reality is not there. That aspiration has not been met for them. The comprehensive answer that I will give is that, of course, you need legislation, you need policies, you need regulations. You need leadership that is definitive and deliberate about the measures that we take. You need to back that up with resources. You need to follow the evidence. And you need to educate those in positions of responsibility, whether in law enforcement or the health care sector or education or anywhere else, that systemic racism is debilitating for far too many Canadians. We have to live up to our values to make sure that reality is no longer the case by dismantling systemic racism as it manifests itself in different aspects of our society.

I second the comments made by my colleague Minister Chagger that we have to listen to the fact that for far too many Canadians, their reality is distinctly different from what is expressed in section 15 of the Charter.

Mr. Blair: I came before this Senate a few years ago when I spoke about the Cannabis Act. We had identified that the enforcement of the cannabis laws in this country had a significant and disproportionate impact on racialized Canadians. They were far more likely to be charged and to suffer far greater consequences through the enforcement of that law.

In changing that law and the way its regulations are enforced, we changed the systemic disparity that existed, the systemic racism that existed, in the way cannabis laws were being

enforced in this country. By changing those laws, we changed those circumstances and created better circumstances and better outcomes for racialized Canadians.

[Translation]

Senator Forest: It is often said that the last shall be first, so I'm going to yield my remaining two minutes to Senator Loffreda.

[English]

Senator Loffreda: Thank you. The question is for Minister Chagger. I will briefly touch on a topic we have not discussed — business in corporate Canada. Minister, can you tell us what concrete measures you are taking to diversify corporate Canada? Has your government considered establishing a new department of diversity within the public service to help Canadian businesses foster more inclusive work environments?

Ms. Chagger: Senator, there is no idea that our government would not consider. The former government leader in the Senate knows me well when it comes to amendments. There are definitely things that are debated, and I have all the time for new ideas. One thing we have been doing that I can speak to is the open, transparent, merit-based appointment process where the federal government has the ability to make Governor-in-Council appointments. We have seen somewhat of a transformation in who is being appointed.

I come back to the point that when the decision-making table reflects the diversity of our country, actions and outcomes will also be impacted for the better.

When it comes to the Business Development Bank of Canada — and the list goes on — yes, we are definitely diversifying the decision-making table. We are asking the right questions as to who is applying, who should we be considering, where are we looking for recruits, where are we sharing the programs and services that are available? Because if we keep doing the same old, same old, the outcome will be same. I'm not going to be here for too long, so I want to make sure my time is noted, and that we have actions and outcomes and deliverables for Canadians. They demand it and they should get it.

Mr. Hussen: I would add one last point in terms of the public service during my time here and prior to that.

• (1530)

I have noticed some progress has been made in terms of making sure that the Canadian public service, which is an example of a globally leading public service, is reflective of Canada.

I think some progress has been made to aspire to that, but there's absolutely a lot more work that needs to be done to make sure that the Canadian public service, which is the best in the world, can be even better by being more diverse and actually reflect Canada and the Canadians that they serve.

The Chair: The next block of 10 minutes is for Senator Munson.

Senator Munson: Thank you to the ministers for being here.

I have and we have the privilege of being present in person for today's sitting, but as we look around at each other, I can't help but think of all the missing faces in this chamber who might wish to participate in this very important debate.

You heard me deliver the words of my honourable colleagues Senator Lovelace Nicholas and Senator Lillian Dyck earlier this week, and I wish to do the same today. There's a bit of a preamble here, but I think it's important. This question to Minister Blair comes from my esteemed colleague Senator Dyck with a supplementary. In the words of Senator Dyck:

Recently, in March, Allan Adam, Chief of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and his wife were stopped by police in Fort McMurray; the licence plate on his truck had expired. What should have been a relatively routine check turned into a brutal encounter for Chief Adam.

The RCMP dashcam video shows one police officer tackling Chief Adam without any warning, punching him in the head and applying a CAROTID hold. A photograph of Chief Adam's badly battered face afterwards has shocked and shook the nation. Chief Adam stated, "Every time our people do wrong . . . (the RCMP) always seem to use excessive force and that has to stop."

Chief Adam's experience is an example of systemic racism by the RCMP.

The sad reality is that Indigenous men, like Indigenous women, face a greater risk of being met with violence.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2018, for example, the homicide rate for Indigenous men was 5 times greater than it was for non-Indigenous men.

These data are also evidence of systemic racism against Indigenous men.

It has been reported that in Saskatchewan 62% of people killed by police were Indigenous. And yet, as you know, Indigenous people represent only about 15% of the SK population. These data too are evidence of systemic racism against Indigenous people.

Mr. Blair, systemic racism has been the topic of much discussion in the last two weeks, especially after Commissioner Lucki struggled to answer whether or not it existed in the RCMP and then the next day decided that indeed it did. So it was completely surprising that Commissioner Lucki was unable to provide a correct example of systemic racism when she appeared two days ago at the meeting of the House of Commons Public Safety Committee on systemic racism.

As an Indigenous woman, I was floored by her lack of insight and knowledge. She mentioned the National Inquiry Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and girls, so she could have easily said that the denial by the RCMP for many years of the tragedy of MMIWG was an

example of systemic racism. And then she could have said but that's in the past, the RCMP now recognize the Indigenous women are more likely to be murdered and made missing. And that the RCMP now collect data on the Aboriginal identity and gender of homicide victims which they submit to Statistics Canada. But she didn't.

Furthermore when she said that only 0.073% of RCMP investigations are lethal, she could have said, the over-representation of blacks, Indigenous people and other racialized minoritie, among those who are unnecessarily beaten or killed by the RCMP is an example of systemic racism in the RCMP. But she didn't.

As a Canadian citizen, I was embarrassed that our Commissioner was not able to provide an example of systemic racism in the RCMP, when it has been THE topic across the country in the last couple of weeks.

This is simply unacceptable job performance.

As you know, I have called for Commissioner Lucki to resign or to be replaced.

Minister Blair, it is your responsibility to hold Commissioner Lucki to account, and it is also your responsibility to fix things that are wrong in the workings of the RCMP.

Senator Dyck's question, to which Canadians across the country deserve an answer, is two-fold:

It's even more clear now that Commissioner Lucki does not understand systemic racism. Minister Blair, how can she get rid of it when she doesn't know what it is?

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much, senator, for the question.

When Senator Dyck expressed her initial concerns, I reached out to her right away. I called her and we spent considerable time on the phone. I have a great deal of respect for her perspective and her concerns.

I met with Commissioner Lucki about those concerns the day following the difficult interview that she had. I don't give her operational decisions, but we did discuss at some length the RCMP and her responsibilities and my responsibilities. I would concur with you, sir — the commissioner runs the RCMP, but I am responsible for ensuring that the RCMP fulfills its legislative responsibilities and the commissioner does her job.

So I've had a number of conversations with her. I will tell you, sir, I respectfully disagree. I believe Commissioner Lucki does understand systemic racism. We've had a number of conversations. If I may — and I make no excuses for anyone — but I've been involved in this discussion, race relations and policing and the sometimes fraught relationship that can exist between the police and racialized communities and Indigenous communities across this country. Commissioner Lucki is not the first and not alone in finding difficulty in using the right words. But I also try to look at what's in a person's heart and what she's trying to achieve.

When we hired Commissioner Lucki and appointed her to that position two years ago, we gave her a very significant responsibility: to reform a number of different significant aspects of the culture, the policies, the procedures and the training of the RCMP. She has worked diligently on that. I've worked side by side with her, and I've seen how hard she worked. I have met with her and her senior command team.

I believe they are intent on trying to do the right things. But Senator Dyck is quite correct in that more needs to be done. We should all be judged not just by our words but by our actions.

I believe — and I am very mindful of my responsibility, senator, to ensure that the actions of the RCMP and in particular the actions of the commissioner are what is necessary to serve all Canadians with the dignity, respect and equity that everyone is entitled to.

That very much is work that we are committed to doing and will continue to do. I think there were a number of examples that I believe the commissioner could have shared. Frankly, I've become, through experience, perhaps a little bit more at ease in discussing this. I did share with the commissioner my own experience.

As we discussed systemic racism in policing and in the communities the RCMP serve, systemic racism, not just in policing in the RCMP but in the entire criminal justice system and in our society, I can assure you that the commissioner demonstrated to me a very deep and profound understanding of that and, more importantly, a real commitment to do the hard work that is necessary to make a difference.

Again, senator, I would ask that we be judged on our actions. We are prepared to act and do what is necessary to address not just the individual misconduct — and Senator Dyck made reference to Chief Adam. I've reached out to the Regional Chief of Alberta as well as the national leadership. It's quite apparent to me that there's a great deal of work that needs to be done there. We're prepared to do that work.

Senator Munson: Thank you, minister. I think you anticipated Senator Dyck's second question, but I still, on her behalf, have to ask it:

What are you doing right now — right now — to hold Commissioner Lucki to account for her lack of knowledge about systemic racism? What actions have you taken now — what managerial or ministerial directives have you issued to her?

Mr. Blair: A number of things, sir, that I think are relevant. We have had a number of discussions. We've appeared before committee, but we've also met on a number of occasions to discuss the path forward and how to respond appropriately.

There are a number of allegations that are currently under investigation. I've also reached out to the Commissioner of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission because I think that that's a very important function of independent oversight of the complaints process.

• (1540)

I've listened very carefully to Canadians across the country who have expressed concern about those investigations and, in particular, about the timelessness of response. I think when people make a complaint, they need a timely resolution of that complaint. They need to be kept informed of the investigation and the actions to be taken. I believe that the current legislation around the CRCC and the RCMP does not provide clear direction on timelines.

I will tell you that I'm working with my officials, the RCMP and the CRCC to clearly articulate timelines where the RCMP and the CRCC will be required to resolve these matters in a timely way. Right now it says as soon as feasible. That's not acceptable. I think we need to be clear with Canadians. I've met with some of the families. In particular, I've met with the family of Colten Boushie —

The Chair: Minister, thank you very much. We have to move on to the next block of 10 minutes.

Senator Moncion: My first few questions are from Senator Moodie. They are for Minister Chagger.

Systemic racism is the daily lived reality of millions of Canadians. In 2019, your government unveiled Canada's anti-racism strategy as part of the \$45 million effort to address systemic racism and discrimination in our federal institutions, empower racialized communities, religious minorities and Indigenous Peoples and to increase awareness of the historical roots of racism and discrimination.

While I applaud the intent and the ambition of this initiative, I do have some concerns:

First, the existence, as well as the scope of the work, of the Anti-Racism Secretariat does not seem well known.

Second, the \$45 million seems to me like not a lot of money to tackle such a big issue as addressing systemic racism and discrimination in our federal institutions, let alone achieving all the other goals of the Anti-Racism Secretariat.

My question to you, minister, is twofold: What kind of work has the Anti-Racism Secretariat engaged in since its inception and can you please provide concrete examples to the chamber?

Ms. Chagger: Thank you, senator. I want to start off by commending Senator Moodie for her leadership and the great work she's done. Senator Moodie is one of those people who has become very comfortable with being uncomfortable because changes need to be made, so I do want to put on the record that we appreciate her leadership. I know I do.

We know that systemic racism is real and prevalent, even in Canada. Our government is committed to fighting racism, including systemic racism and discrimination. In Budget 2018, we allocated \$9 million to support black youth through the Black Canadian Youth Initiative. We supported 56 projects that are addressing the unique challenges faced by black Canadian youth.

We are moving forward with the investment of \$25 million to support projects and capital assistance for black Canadian communities. Just last month, we announced the intermediary recipients who will be distributing the funds. Applications will open this Friday. Applications will be received and funds will be distributed by Tropicana Community Services, Black Business Initiative and Le Groupe 3737.

The Anti-Racism Secretariat has been hard at work since its establishment in October 2019. They hold regular informal and formal consultations, town halls and round tables with equity-seeking groups to ensure their voices are heard at the table.

As part of the Anti-Racism Secretariat's response to COVID-19, they are co-chairing the interdepartmental equity-seeking communities and COVID-19 task force. The task force provides an ongoing forum for federal institutions and grassroots organizations to share information, identify gaps and target our COVID-19 response so that racialized communities, including reiterating the need for disaggregated data, is being considered in the decision making.

Peter Flegel is the Director of the Anti-Racism Secretariat. On numerous occasions now where I have been invited to speak, I have brought him forward as a resource. I hear the point that not everyone knows about it. We are going to make sure people know. I have now decided to start repeating the same thing over and over again because it works, and I will do it.

With respect to the \$45 million comment, I want to say that yes, resources are necessary, but money alone is not going to fix systemic racism. That's why, if you look at the anti-racism strategy, it's about federal leadership. We have a role to play. The Prime Minister has been working with the premiers of provinces and territories, and today I understand that they actually issued a joint statement. That is a commitment. Now we need to hold them to account to ensure actions and outcomes will take place.

So yes, money needs to be available and, yes, we will fight for more resources. As the federal departments and agencies start using the Anti-Racism Secretariat as a stop on the path to decision making, we will ensure that they are resourced. It is something that is on my agenda. With your voices, we can ensure that it happens.

Senator Moncion: Senator Moodie's next question is as follows:

We all have unconscious biases, and those biases permeate our institutions ranging from our schools to the criminal justice system. Thankfully, studies have shown that with proper awareness and training we can overcome them.

Your government introduced earlier this year Bill C-5, which would make it mandatory for newly appointed judges to take courses on sexual assault law and get their commitment to "participate in continuing education on matters related to sexual assault, the law and social context".

As the Minister responsible for the government of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy, my understanding is that one of the primary goals of the Strategy is to address systemic racism and discrimination in our federal institutions.

Minister Chagger, I would like to know if you think unconscious bias training can benefit federal judges and whether you're intent to work with, or are working with, the Minister of Justice to make sure this important training is part of their curriculum?

Ms. Chagger: I want to thank you for that important question. I will start by acknowledging that I have unconscious bias. I have a lot more to learn, and I don't know what I don't know. We all have our own unconscious biases and often bring them into our daily interactions with people in our immediate environment, be it friends or colleagues. I think recognizing that we all have work to do is part of the challenging conversation we're having. We all endeavour to be the perfect human being, but I'm pretty confident they don't exist because we can always learn better and do better.

This is why I think everyone, including me and our federal bodies and institutions, can benefit from awareness training on biases because we sometimes don't realize that they're there. Our government is committed to evidence-based decision making that takes into consideration the impacts of policies on all Canadians, including racialized communities. The Prime Minister gave me the mandate to make sure I am looking across government and working with my colleagues in cabinet to make sure the plus component of gender-based analysis focuses on diversity and inclusion in all decisions that we make. So yes, we will continue to do that work.

I would like it noted that Bill C-5 does talk about cultural sensitivity training. The door has been opened to ensure that we can actually define what our expectations are as a society. I look forward to that legislation going through the house. I look forward to the debates at committee, and I will be pushing for better because better is always possible.

Senator Moncion: Thank you. The next few questions are from Senator Omidvar. I think you touched on some of them; you've already provided some answers.

In the last Parliament, the government moved forward with GBA+ throughout government, especially in the NC process for legislation. Senator Omidvar supported that move then and continues to, although she would welcome that the analysis be shared with us.

However, Senator Omidvar is concerned about the approach. The language of GBA+ somehow evokes priorities. The plus is second to the main. For too long have racial disparities been given secondary or no priority. It is high time that the government applies a separate, unique and robust race-based analysis on all legislation. In light of the context of the day, will your government commit to doing so?

Ms. Chagger: I would like to thank Senator Omidvar for her comments. She and I were able to exchange a conversation. It was interesting because there is a diversity of perspectives and experiences. As somebody who has been in these hallways knows well, for me the plus is not second, but it will be my focus moving forward. I think there has been a highlighting of the importance of my role at the cabinet table to ensure the plus is forward.

I am actually not going to get bogged down in terminologies. What I am going to do is make sure that the Anti-Racism Secretariat is a stop in every single policy and decision we make from all departments and agencies.

I do believe that when systemic racism and discrimination ends up in your backyard, that's when it's real. I think that's why the videos of George Floyd — I've seen these things happen my whole life. I am not able to relate to anti-black or anti-Indigenous racism, but I can learn more about it and I can represent it.

• (1550)

When people saw that face, they could relate to that face. I could see my friends, I could see the children of my friends, and it hit home in a very different way.

It's important that we get into people's backyards and that we do this work. What I am doing is challenging our appointment process, our departments and agencies, to really look at where they are obtaining information from; who they are inviting to the table.

When I was the Minister of Small Business and Tourism, the first thing I did, every table I went to, was to ask who is being represented to ensure that at least half the voices were new voices. That's what I will continue to push to do. I will make sure that the plus is not an afterthought. I will make sure that it is a priority.

Senator Moncion: Thank you. My time is up. I'm sorry, because I have more questions for you.

Ms. Chagger: Those were great questions.

Senator Moncion: There are still more.

Senator McPhedran: Welcome to all ministers who have joined us, and thank you for taking the time to do that.

I'm very honoured to be able to ask you questions from Senator Jaffer before I get to my own questions. It is actually building on some of the questions that Senator Moncion just posed by colleagues.

I will read the comment from Senator Mobina Jaffer. It is initially directed to you, Minister Chagger:

As minister for diversity and inclusion, I am sure that working on policies to ensure inclusion is a top priority for you. With recent events, and Prime Minister Trudeau's acknowledgement that systemic racism is a problem in Canada, we all have more work to do. My question to you is, will you be the lead minister in making sure that policies to eradicate systemic racism is out in place for implementation in different departments? and what is your immediate plan? Also, Would you consider adopting a Race Based Analysis, as a separate tool from the Gender Based Analysis Plus we currently have?

Minister Hussen, this is coming to you next.

Ms. Chagger: I will be quick, because I know time runs by quickly.

It is another tool in the toolbox. I am not leaving anything out of our toolbox right now. What I am doing is working with all departments and agencies, all ministers, any Canadian who wants to, to actually deconstruct our systems and look at what works, what doesn't work, and maybe what's mould infested and needs to go away. I'm looking at it as a renovation opportunity. With COVID-19, we have an opportunity to build back better and more inclusive.

I feel the roads have crossed at the perfect time. We are going to have to establish a new normal, so why not establish a new normal that's more inclusive and actually works for more Canadians, if not all Canadians? If that is a tool that will permit to us get there, yes.

In the immediate term, I am asking for metrics, and I'm trying to get information as to who is getting to government, who is applying, who is to be considered. That way I can see who is missing and who we need to bring into the fold.

As we create new systems, I'm also making sure that they are lived by the diversity of Canada and lived experiences. I also always ask, "Great program, great idea. Where did it come from?" I will push.

Senator McPhedran: Thank you, minister. A supplemental to that — and it also gets added on when Minister Hussen responds — is the way in which gender-based analysis plus, including whatever race-based analysis is being done, is essentially kept secret and treated as something that is protected by cabinet privacy. Can you commit to making this information more available and thereby increase the accountability of the government and this important approach to dealing with systemic racism?

Mr. Hussen: Thank you, senator, for that important question. That's part of the reason for the creation of the Anti-Racism Secretariat. It is supposed to coordinate action against systemic racism and discrimination across government; hold departments accountable.

One of the by-products of recent events has been a renewed emphasis and focus in all of us to do better and, as Minister Chagger has indicated, to deconstruct systems and see where we can have better outcomes, whether that is collecting better data, holding departments accountable, being bolder in our aspirations or listening to young people who are asking for building back better.

I agree with Minister Chagger. The recovery process from COVID-19 presents all of us with an opportunity to, not only rebuild, but rebuild better and not go back to normal, because normal was part of the problem, and to really reimagine our society and to include more people. That starts with listening to the lived reality of far too many Canadians who are simply not getting the outcomes that we wish them to get, whether it is in their interactions with law enforcement or in their access to services and benefits from various orders of government.

Senator McPhedran: Ministers, what about the secrecy?

Ms. Chagger: I come with a science background. Part of this conversation about disaggregated data I'm having a challenge with, because everyone is talking about disaggregated data, is what does it really mean, and what are we looking for? We have to do a deep dive as to what our expectations are.

Historically, data has also been used for evil. I want to make sure that data is actually used for good and to serve its purpose. I believe part of this conversation about disaggregated data should come with parameters as to how it is used and how it is made available to Canadians, first of all.

One step back, I would say the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force that has been established, they are working with provinces and territories and different departments at different levels of government to collect disaggregated data, so we're getting a window into this world. We have an opportunity to set some parameters as to how it is used and is it siloed. Part of the challenge with the federal government — and I can't speak to others — is that we silo information. If I ask for a list of everything that we've done as a government since we took office in 2015, it's very difficult to get.

I'm going to give a shout-out to my senior associate deputy minister, Gina Wilson, who is actually working across departments to ensure this information is available. She is ensuring that when it comes to the Anti-Racism Secretariat, it is a resource, and when it's not a resource — you know, add women, change the world — we are raising it, not at the table, but as the system unfolds. If that means we need to derail a conversation because it's not taking the proper steps that we are putting into place for better outcomes and better actions, then we are going to do that. We're committed to doing that work together.

Senator McPhedran: My next question is to Minister Blair. It's about RCMP leadership failing to disclose that the RCMP officers seen on the RCMP dashcam forcibly handling Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation — resulting in a demonstrably violent arrest, punching him in the head and using a chokehold over an expired vehicle licence — that this officer was still actively on duty while facing charges of alleged assaults last year.

Minister, you may not feel this way, but on your behalf, I have to say you've been embarrassed by Commissioner Lucki's failure to demonstrate a modicum of understanding about systemic racism on more than one public occasion. Minister, her words are actions. I am judging her on her actions; her words are actions.

This is a crisis. These recent RCMP and police killings and unrestrained violence demonstrate that militarism in the RCMP and police forces is real and entrenched.

Minister Blair, this is not a crisis where leaders can just be comfortable, where leaders can indulge in white ignorance and white fragility. Are you doing anything more, as the minister responsible, than what you've already told us?

Mr. Blair: Yes, senator. First of all, I understand the concerns, and I agree with many of the concerns expressed. I think it's very important that there be transparency and accountability in policing. Policing doesn't work if the people who are being policed don't trust the police. They need to trust that they will be guided by the rule of law and act in the public interest, and when there is misconduct, that they will be held to account.

My responsibility as a minister is to ensure that that actually takes place, and I will fulfill my responsibility in that regard. Also, there are some systemic things that need to be addressed and we are looking at them. For example, I have already spoken about the timeliness of response to complaint investigations because, again, it needs to be objective, comprehensive and timely, and it isn't at the present time. I've heard that from many people.

• (1600)

I also want to be clear that words matter too — I really do — and I think it's important. I'm not making excuses for anyone, but I also recall the day I became a police chief, the very first question asked of me was whether there is such a thing as racial profiling. I said yes, and at the time I believe I was the first police chief in North America to have ever said so. And they said, "You're admitting it." And I said, "I'm acknowledging it, because if you don't acknowledge it, how can you do anything about it?" And frankly, my world began to change very quickly at that moment.

The Chair: Thank you, minister. We now have to move to the next block of 10 minutes. Senator Patterson.

Senator Patterson: I have a question for Minister Blair.

This month I hosted a round table on the potential use of body cams by the RCMP in Nunavut. After a robust conversation with 34 representatives of the Government of Canada, the Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the RCMP, both from national and from V Division, some senators, colleagues who have impressive policing experience, as well as other interested stakeholders, including Captain Mercier of the Kativik Regional Police in our neighbouring region of Nunavik, who reported their pilot program on body cams had been well received and reduced police complaints, a clear consensus emerged that the accountability and transparency linked with body cams would be an important first step in rebuilding the trust relationship between the RCMP and residents of Nunavut.

It was also generally agreed that Nunavut, with its very high percentage of Indigenous community members — the highest in the country, as you know — and, sadly, with police-related deaths in Nunavut nine times higher proportionally than in Ontario, and the most recent in Clyde River in May, it was agreed that Nunavut would serve as an appropriate pilot project for the rest of the country. However, territory-wide deployment of body cameras is not possible without significant federal financial support.

Minister, given the commitment by the Prime Minister, I believe on more than one occasion, to deploy body cameras within the RCMP, will you commit to supporting funding the deployment of body cameras in Nunavut for use by RCMP V Division members stationed there? And I don't need a long answer.

Mr. Blair: Yes, sir.

Senator Patterson: Okay, great. Thank you. I appreciate that. And I will be pursuing this with great enthusiasm.

Minister Chagger, there was a December 2017 report by the Interdepartmental Circles on Indigenous Representation — headed by Canada's federal deputy minister champion for Indigenous federal employees, Ms. Gina Wilson, who I'm happy is here today — and it was found that bilingual requirements for executive positions in the government — EX-1 to EX-5 is the category, I believe — remain a barrier to Indigenous representation in the senior levels of the federal public service. You mentioned you have been working on this.

What concrete actions has your government taken in eliminating the barriers to Indigenous participation at the executive level of the bureaucracy? Can your departments provide updated metrics in follow-up to the 2017 report, please?

Ms. Chagger: Senator, would you be comfortable, through the chair, for Deputy Wilson, to respond?

Senator Patterson: Yes.

Gina Wilson, Senior Associate Deputy Minister, Diversity, Inclusion and Youth, Canadian Heritage: Honourable senators, thank you for this extraordinary opportunity to speak to you on this. I'm very happy to do so.

Progress in the federal public service has been slow and incremental, but there has been progress on employment equity and diversity. *Many Voices One Mind* was a product I prepared two years ago and it spoke to what was referenced by the senator. It is an excellent report that was the most comprehensive consultation of public servants across the country.

Last year we published a baseline of indicators on how each department was progressing. We are about to release a report that measures the first year data, so as far as I'm concerned, measuring accountability and performance is the way to go, and making departments responsible for that measuring.

Beyond2020 is an initiative that the public service has taken as well. It talks to being nimble, it talks to being agile, it talks to being equipped, but a very important pillar of that is diversity, so

I feel a commitment. I'm seeing a lot of my colleagues here in the room who are very interested in increasing representation, because as you go higher in the ranks in the public service the numbers of Indigenous people get lower and lower. There are very few of us — in fact, there is me, at one level. All that to say there is a commitment in the public service that I see. Thank you.

Ms. Chagger: One of the things I have noticed is that the acceleration of public servants in the public service does not work, so I am actually asking for a blueprint of what's taking place. Omar Alghabra, who is the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, is also tasked with this, to actually be able to measure and see what's taking place.

On your direct comment with regard to language requirements and so forth, there is also a revisiting taking place. What we have done in the open, transparent, merit-based appointment process, depending on the needs of the region, is where the skills have to meet the needs of the region, so there is a review of that work taking place as well.

Senator Patterson: Thank you. With due respect to the three ministers appearing today, I am concerned that we don't have ministers whose mandates are focused exclusively on Indigenous issues, such as Minister Miller or Minister Bennett. And, of course, this discussion on systemic racism goes far beyond recent incidents involving police.

With the indulgence of this chamber, I'd like to do what I did on Tuesday, in Minister Morneau's absence, and place on the record several questions that I would submit and request written answers from the responsible ministers.

The Chair: Senator Patterson, I remind you there are four minutes left in your 10-minute block.

Senator Patterson: I know.

The first question is: On May 28, 2020, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated submitted a complaint to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In their letter, the NTI president asserts that Canada has failed, and continues to fail, to fulfill its international obligations in relation to Inuit as an ethnic and linguistic minority under international instruments to which Canada is a signatory.

During consideration of Bill C-91, An Act respecting Indigenous languages, the Minister of Culture and Heritage in Nunavut lamented that Nunavummiut, particularly Inuktitut-speaking elders, cannot enjoy equal access to federal services that other Canadians take for granted in either English or French.

The language commissioner, Helen Klengenberg, also testified before the Senate on that bill, and tabled a legal opinion that she obtained, stating that the federal government is required to comply with Nunavut's Inuit Language Protection Act, which requires organizations to provide signage, personal services, Inuktitut service and reception services in the Inuktitut language, as well as to provide correspondence, translation and interpretation services to Inuit when they request services.

Will this government act and provide federal services to Inuit within Inuit Nunangat in Inuktitut?

And finally, recent decisions like the announcement of women's shelters for Indigenous populations have, in my view, shown a lack of consideration for Indigenous input. Despite repeated requests from Pauktutit, the national Inuit women's association, and one-on-one meetings with responsible ministers, and the relevant call for justice in the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report, no Inuit-specific shelters were announced.

• (1610)

How is this government ensuring that decisions reflect Indigenous input? How are decision makers incorporating the feedback of Indigenous leaders, community members and organizations?

I'd be grateful for written responses to those questions, please Madam Chair.

Senator M. Deacon: Thank you all for being here. I will try to go as quickly as I can with a number of questions from my colleagues Senator Bernard and Senator Busson.

The first one is a "point b" to Senator Patterson's question, and that was around the use of BWV cameras. You have committed to his response. I would like to add that it be a national commitment beyond that area, with all due respect. Is that something you will commit to nationally to improve the trust and mutual respect in all our communities?

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much for the question. I have had some discussion with the Nunavut government, the RCMP and a number of community organizations in Nunavut. That's why I can say with confidence, yes, we are prepared to move forward.

By the way, Senator Patterson, the work you have done is helpful in bringing people together and building a consensus around the value of using this.

In every other jurisdiction, I will remind everyone that we work closely with the provinces and territories. In most parts of the country, policing is done by the RCMP through contract to the provincial authority. There is necessary work that has yet to be done in working with our provincial and territorial partners about the use of such technologies within their jurisdiction for police under contract to their governments.

I undertake to this house to do that work, because I think there is value in greater transparency and accountability, and this technology can provide that. At the same time, I want to acknowledge the reality of working within a cooperative confederation with our provincial and territorial partners.

Senator M. Deacon: Thank you. We are hopeful.

Minister Chagger, thank you for being here. I would like to talk about the issue of an anti-racism directorate on behalf of Senator Bernard.

Two weeks ago, as I think everyone knows, the Parliamentary Black Caucus released a letter suggesting the establishment of an anti-black racism directorate at the Privy Council Office to monitor programming and coordinate interdepartmental efforts. You've talked a bit about that today.

We are currently in a civil rights movement with Black Lives Matter and calls for accountability for Indigenous rights, yet the web page of Canadian Heritage's Building a Foundation for Change: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019-2022 has not been updated since July 17, 2019.

The Prime Minister has committed to making change for black Canadians and Indigenous peoples, but what specific work has been done with ministers across the government to build on the spirit of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent? Which recommendations does the Government of Canada plan to adopt in order to act against continued racism in Canada?

Ms. Chagger: On the Anti-Racism Strategy and secretariat, that strategy was brought forward in June 2019. In October, the secretariat was set up, and shortly thereafter Peter Flegel was named director. Yes, COVID-19 happened. COVID-19 has not stopped us from doing the work, but it is important that Peter and his team be able to establish some of the parameters for the way forward because the decision-making table has to be representative and reflective of our country.

As the minister responsible for that secretariat, I need to be able to empower and enable him and his team to do that work, because I want better outcomes. I think that's an important step.

I recognize that the strategy has Minister Rodriguez's comments on it. That's when it was established. So we will be working with Peter to ensure that there is currency to it. Senator Bernard has been kind enough to raise that with me, so we are looking to make sure that it's actually profiling the work we are doing and the opportunities.

In regard to the International Decade for People of African Descent, we recognized it as a government in 2018. It spans until 2024. It's an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the important contributions that people of African descent have made to Canadian society.

It comes with an action plan that we are working with to ensure it is informed by the community but the advancements are made accordingly. Some of the commitments we made — including the \$9 million for black communities and \$10 million for mental health — are to ensure we are advancing those commitments. I am already looking at how we will go beyond the decade, because the work might not all be done. I'm going to try, but at the same time this is about laying a foundation for the future of our country. The commitment, I promise you, is there.

Senator M. Deacon: Mr. Hussen, I would love to hear a full answer to Senator Housakos's earlier question around the five areas and all the recommendations. I will dive into one of those, and that's the support for black community organizations.

Organizations that support black communities were already vulnerable, as we know, and have been impacted by COVID-19. Senator Bernard heard from the CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals, an organization offering support to black youth in which each of their employees chose to take a pay cut to continue offering services. They were already working under precarious conditions and should not be put in a position where they must choose between their own livelihood and offering services to their community. What specific initiatives to address mental health and support black youth have been made as per your mandate as Minister of Families, Children and Social Development?

Mr. Hussen: Thank you so much. In addition to Minister Chagger's comments on the \$9 million allocated for black youth and the \$10 million to put together a culturally sensitive approach to mental health supports in the black community, this \$25 million fund for supporting black community organizations will go towards supporting black youth programming, in part. But it's about building the capacity of these organizations so they can be in a better position to serve the community even more.

Second, work has already started on the Canadian Institute for Persons of African Descent, which is part of that funding.

In addition to that, the Emergency Community Support Fund that comes under my department that we announced on May 20 will be distributed in a way that takes into account the needs of all vulnerable populations, including black Canadians. As part of the government's response to community organizations that are under pressure due to COVID-19, we have asked the three national trusted agencies that are helping us distribute the funds to provide us with disaggregated data and rolling reports so we know where some of the gaps may emerge. Then we have the ability to address those gaps. We are very sensitive to making sure we get it right and not only take into consideration the geographic diversity of Canada, but also the demographic diversity.

Senator M. Deacon: Thank you. Minister Blair, thank you very much. Regarding public safety, this is tied into what we're all concerned about, and that is wellness checks that have resulted in death. There have been four people known to all of us who have been killed during wellness checks when attended by police in Canada. They have all been Indigenous, black and racialized people dealing with mental health issues. We have repeatedly demonstrated as a country that black and Indigenous people cannot afford to have a mental health crisis without their life being jeopardized by the very system that we know needs to support them.

What actions will you take to prevent the use of excessive force by police when responding to black and Indigenous peoples? Will you consider shifting funds — we've heard different language on this — from police to resource-based services for black and Indigenous peoples including housing, health and mental health services?

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much, senator. First of all, let me state unequivocally that excessive use of force is never acceptable. It's a criminal activity, and people who engage in such activity need to be held to account.

I want to acknowledge how challenging mental health issues can be for police and first responders, as they are for society. We know there are many examples, which need to be built out and invested in, of better responses to people who are in crisis, particularly in situations where they may be at risk of harming themselves or others.

• (1620)

Better outcomes can be achieved through various other models. I'm very supportive of a full examination of ways in which the mental health system can be improved in this country. Currently, in most jurisdictions, the police being the only responder at 3:00 in the morning, as has been said, can be enormously challenging. We need to make other investments as a society. Some of those are federal, and some involve municipal and provincial dollars. There is work to be done, and we are always looking at ways in which we can improve the training.

One of the fundamental notions, and the first principle of response, is that the primary responsibility of the police is the preservation of all life. Police need to be provided with robust training. I know that training exists within the RCMP, as it does for police services across the country, in terms of de-escalation and minimal use of force —

The Chair: Thank you, minister. I'm not picking on you; this is the situation.

Senator Forest-Niesing: Thanks to all of you for accepting the invitation to appear before us. Although I appreciate the presence of all three of you, my questions will be for Minister Blair. Minister Blair, I have a question on behalf of my colleague Senator Sinclair:

Bill C-3 is currently before the House of Commons and proposes to enhance oversight of the RCMP, as well as border services. Professor Stephanie Carvin of Carleton University has pointed out that this bill could be strengthened to address systemic racism. For example, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission of the RCMP does not currently report whether race was a factor in alleged misconduct, or track the racial or ethnic background of complainants. The commission could also report more details about the types of allegations made, and the outcomes of investigations.

Would the government be open to Senate amendments to strengthen this legislation, and would the government welcome the Senate taking an early look at this bill, such as through the special committee on systemic racism proposed in the Senate by Senator Lankin?

Mr. Blair: Thank you. These are important questions, because independent and objective civilian oversight and transparency are very important. It's one of the reasons we introduced at the first opportunity, in Bill C-3, a new oversight body for our border services officers that, as you said, also addresses enhancements to oversight of civilian complaints for the police.

I can tell you that I very much value the work of the Senate and its committees. In my experience, thoughtful work done in this house has improved a number of pieces of legislation. I'm very open to any way in which that legislation can serve the best interests of Canadians.

This is a priority for our government, and we introduced it quickly. Unfortunately, current circumstances have perhaps delayed its passage through the House. I'd be eager to get it into the hands of the Senate, as well as our committees in the House of Commons, in order to do that important work. I am very much open to the best possible legislation that will serve Canadians. This also serves our Border Services and police officers, because if they are not trusted by the people they serve, they cannot do their job. These instruments and this legislation can help them be more worthy of the trust of Canadians.

Senator Forest-Niesing: Thank you, minister. For my part, I certainly look forward to working with you on this.

I have a question on behalf of another colleague Senator Boniface, Minister Blair:

The First Nation Policing Program was originally funded for front-line policing only through the tri-partite process. The funding over the years has been sporadic and insufficient by successive governments.

Will the government finally make a commitment to provide a holistic service that is directed at community wellness, including social workers, health workers and police? Will they get beyond short-term agreements to create long-term sustainability and success for the communities and their services?

Mr. Blair: I appreciate the question, particularly from Senator Boniface, who I know is one of the most experienced and able experts in this area. I've worked with her for a number of years.

I've said we're going to bring forward a new legislative framework for Indigenous policing. It has to be recognized, first of all, as an essential service. This program has been in place for almost four decades and has received program funding. Many of the deficiencies are a direct result of the fact that it does not have a proper legislative framework with appropriate governance structures and recognition of its importance.

We've looked at a number of jurisdictions. For example, in the Yukon Indigenous policing has been effective in terms of using auxiliary officers, community safety officers and special constables — a number of people in the community employing different responses and approaches to community safety. These

comprehensive models need to be facilitated within that legislation. It is why we have committed to co-produce that legislation with Indigenous leadership, as well as to work with the territorial and provincial governments, because they all have a role to play. We need policing services that work for those communities, and the only way to get that right is to work with those communities. We are absolutely committed to that. I look forward to the support and advice from this house in terms of how we can do that better.

Senator Forest-Niesing: Thank you, minister.

[Translation]

I'll be happy to give the rest of my time to the next senator.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Thank you, ministers, for being with us today.

[English]

The first question is on behalf of Senator Nancy Hartling from New Brunswick:

During this pandemic, there is a growing concern around mental health issues related to the current climate and growing awareness of systemic racism. Are there strategies that examine and address the effects of racism and bullying? What resources are available? We are particularly concerned about the impact on children and youth, where bullying takes place on social media. They are vulnerable to mental health issues and suicide. How do you plan to protect them?

Minister Hussen?

Mr. Hussen: Thank you so much for this important question. The approach to reinforcing social cohesion can and must be led by government, but it's a whole-of-society approach.

In fact, one of the best programs I have seen in action is a program in Saskatchewan, where the Saskatoon district school board and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission came together to set up a program for kids as young as 6, through elementary school, to teach them the importance of learning about other cultures and religions, appreciating and embracing differences, and working towards strengthening social cohesion.

We need programs like that to reinforce mechanisms in our school system to protect young people who are victims of discrimination, either personal or systemic. We need to enable our society to strengthen means of redress for victims of discrimination, whether based on race, sexual orientation or disability.

For many Canadians, these institutions are the only places they can turn to when they are a victim of institutional discrimination based on their disability, race or religion. We have to do a good job to reinforce those institutions, and we have to lead by example.

I always say that federal leadership that reflects Canada can only make us a better country. Our civil service is an example of that, as well as our judiciary, police forces, law enforcement and educational systems. We must strive to be better, and that is a

journey that Canada is well placed to take. Canada can be an example for the rest of the world as a country that always strives to be better and more inclusive. That is a very powerful statement and example for the world, when in many areas people can't get along due to differences. We have demonstrated in Canada that not only can we come together through our differences, we can actually work together to build a strong society. But there is always more to be done and we have a lot of work to do.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Senator Miville-Dechêne: I have a second question for Minister Chagger. Front-line public servants, government employees who provide services directly to citizens, are the face of the Canadian government. Many studies have shown the benefits and the importance of making sure services are provided by employees who reflect cultural diversity. Knowing that, can you explain why some public institutions, such as the Canadian Armed Forces, still do not have or have not disclosed diversity targets for hiring and retention?

[English]

Ms. Chagger: Thank you, senator. I can speak faster in English. This is a conversation that has been needed. When our government came in 2015, we brought that conversation forward when it came to gender. When it comes to the diversity of our country being reflected, as my deputy Ms. Wilson mentioned, there has been some progress made within the public service.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Generally; the public institutions.

Ms. Chagger: Yes. Sorry.

Some progress has been made within the public service. When it comes to our agencies, whether it's the Armed Forces, or so forth — one thing I will mention about Minister Sajjan is that the way the Armed Forces are reporting, there is no gender affiliated; there is no description of the individual. The unconscious bias of individuals that would be defined by it is actually going to transform because of this decision that he made. He is looking within his Armed Forces as to what's taking place. There is work being done — he and I just had a conversation a couple of days ago — as to what our coordinated approach is going to be among ministers who are aligned regarding what direction, support and resources are needed for this change to take place. I believe that when it comes to our first line we're getting better, but people can advance.

I think that's part of the problem. If you look at people who have made it into our forces, whatever you want to use, there are also a lot of people leaving. That's a problem. That means our institutions are not inclusive and people don't belong. People are fearful of reporting, and so forth. That's why the lived experience bit is a conversation we need to have, and that's why I'm starting with myself and stating that I can do better. I want to do better. If I, at the head of a department, can make that comment, I think it's important that other people recognize that mental health is real.

Our public servants aren't able to explain that they don't have all the answers because they have to come with the answers. That's similar within all of our departments and agencies. That is part of the discrimination that exists. I need to help unpack it, and I need willing partners to want to. I can assure you, the ministers around the cabinet table, with the leadership of the Prime Minister, are willing to have those conversations. They've started, but we also need a change in culture so that people can have open conversations. I'm lucky to have a deputy who is willing to have them.

[Translation]

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Thank you. I'd like to ask one last question if I may. The public service has positive discrimination policies, which you talked about, to favour the hiring of visible minorities and people who are subjected to systemic discrimination. Do managers' performance assessments include meeting hiring targets? In other words, are bonuses and performance assessments linked to meeting targets for hiring visible minorities?

[English]

Ms. Chagger: I'm fighting for equity over equality; that's where I am at. There has been overrepresentation. We did it with women. It was important that when you had two people who were both merit-based and able to do the job, we picked the woman. That is what it's coming to when you look into diversity as a country. There are opportunities, but are you suggesting that there is a hand up to people?

Senator Miville-Dechêne: No. I'm asking you if, in terms of judging of the performance of managers, are you seeing if the target for hiring visible minorities is met?

Ms. Chagger: There aren't targets that exist.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Even in the public service?

Ms. Chagger: No. I wouldn't think so; no. I think there are goals we could establish. There is a need for that conversation. There's a transformation that needs to take place, and it's one that is taking place. Right now, there is still space-protecting happening. It's hard for people to look at the spaces they occupy and give a hand up to someone else. There is internal competition. If you go into a room and you see some diversity, people say "check, it's been met," and it's fascinating. I know the rooms that I'm in. I know the way I'm spoken to versus the way others are. There is a tone and temperament; it exists, it's alive and it's real. There's a lot of work to do.

I have the grit in me to fight, and that's why I really appreciate the opportunity to be here. I've seen these conversations take place before, but I've never seen a movement like we have right now where the desire is there. I've seen programs like this be put into place, and I've seen other governments come in and cut those programs. I saw those comments shared right on the floor of the Senate.

Senator Cormier: My first question is for Minister Blair. It's on behalf of my colleague Senator Kutcher from Nova Scotia:

Will the Minister commit to ensuring that an appropriately constituted public joint Federal Provincial inquiry into the Nova Scotia massacre will be established with a mandate broad enough to address the complex social and structural issues and policing practices raised by the incident?

Mr. Blair: The simple answer is yes, sir. I've been working very closely and spoke as recently as earlier this morning with the Attorney General of Nova Scotia. We have established a terms of reference for a very comprehensive review that has a number of significant components, but also has a great deal of emphasis on restorative measures, working with victims, their families and community, and getting Nova Scotians the answers that they want.

I'm very hopeful that matter will be announced more formally in the coming days, but we're absolutely committed to that. We understand the essential importance of ensuring that all Nova Scotians, all Canadians, but in particular the families of the victims of that terrible tragedy, get the answer that they need. If there are individuals who need to be held to account, they will.

Finally, I believe that there are significant lessons that need to be learned and then applied. We are committed to that. We want to make sure that we do that, inclusive of the families of those victims and people who were directly impacted by that tragedy, and we're ensuring that the terms of reference will comprehensively examine every aspect of that issue so that Nova Scotians can know the full truth.

Senator Cormier: Thank you for your answer, minister.

[Translation]

My second question is for you, Minister Blair and Minister Chagger. Recently in my province, New Brunswick, a doctor of African origin was the victim of racism on social media. The hateful comments were so bad that now the doctor fears for his safety and, according to a statement from his lawyer, he is under police protection because he received threats.

Your mandate letter states that you have a duty to fight hate speech online. What's more, Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy states that the federal government will continue its bilateral and multilateral efforts in cooperation with digital industry players, including social media, to fight against online hate and against using the Internet for extremist purposes.

Since the adoption of Canada's Digital Charter in 2019, what discernible progress has been made and are there any talks under way with web giants like Facebook and Twitter, whose policies seem to be quite lax, to combat hate speech in Canada on all social media platforms?

[English]

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much. I want to assure the senator and this house that a great deal of work is ongoing. Just last week, I met with all of the Five Eyes partners. Canada and its allies are closely aligned in addressing online hate, the

propagation of hate in those forums, and working with internet service providers and those responsible for that social media from engaging in that.

We're also working with our police officials. We have been able to identify a number of organizations and groups. We quite recently listed, for example, a number of terrorist organizations that were ideologically motivated in their hatred. I can also tell you from a police perspective that actually prosecuting these crimes as hate can be enormously challenging, but that doesn't mean we need to tolerate it.

• (1640)

We are addressing it, and we're looking at the people and the funding that is responsible behind that. There is a great deal of work that is being done and continues to be done by all of our officials. We are looking at a number of different legislative responses in order to ensure compliance for those organizations that facilitate this hatred online.

Senator Cormier: Education is a big component. What is the relationship that you have right now with the provincial and territorial governments toward the education aspect of the web?

Mr. Blair: I can tell you that this has also been the subject of considerable discussion at the federal, provincial and territorial table among officials, not just in Justice and Public Safety, but among others. It is the whole of government and all orders of government that are engaged in this.

Public education is a very important component, because we need to make sure young people, in particular, and vulnerable people have the information they need to protect themselves. Officials also have the responsibility to ensure that those places are not facilitating hateful speech and inciting violence. And —

The Chair: Thank you, minister.

Senator Cormier: Thank you.

Senator Martin: I want to acknowledge Senator Mégie, who has inspired this important Committee of the Whole. I'm also mindful of some of my colleagues who are not in the chamber with us but have been real champions in addressing a lot of these issues — Senators Ataullahjan, Oh and Ngo.

Minister, I'm going to go to the phrase that you used — and I've abandoned all the long wording — actions, outcomes and what we can expect. My questions will be for Minister Blair, but thank you for those words and for your energy, which is unparalleled. I think you have more energy than all of us put together. Thanks to all of you for being here.

Minister Blair, Minister Chagger mentioned anti-black, anti-Indigenous, anti-Asian and bigotry against any racialized group. We are concerned about what's happening. Since the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, we know there has been a rise in anti-Asian sentiment. There was a report, the Angus Reid report, that really has some very concerning numbers.

First, what will be your actions and outcomes in response to this report and what Asian Canadians are experiencing across Canada; there are some very alarming examples. I'm a Vancouverite, so this is not the city and the region that I know, but I know it's real.

Second, there's a lower rate of reporting to law enforcement, and there could be a lot of reasons for that. Again, what will you do to address some of the potential systemic barriers that may prevent people from reporting and the fact that in some of these incidents, the perpetrators are just getting away with warnings; there haven't been charges. Will there be some changes to that?

Mr. Blair: They are very important questions. Racism against any group is unacceptable. We have seen, and it has been well documented and raised by even members of my own government and cabinet, the experience of anti-Asian racism arising directly out of some of the misinformation, the hateful comments and conduct that has been evident in the aftermath of this.

Some actions are being taken. It's being closely monitored by the police. I will say that the limitations of our hate speech laws do not easily facilitate the prosecution of these things. That may also be affecting people's willingness and the likelihood they would come forward and report it. But one of the most important things — and certainly Minister Chagger has been outspoken about this — is calling it out for exactly what it is; it is unacceptable and potentially a criminal activity.

It is being carefully monitored. I also believe there is a responsibility, as I answered to an earlier question, with those media providers that facilitate the spreading of that speech. We need to do a better job of helping to regulate that environment.

Senator Martin: Minister, it is not just hate speech; there are various actions. They are pretty violent and physical. A 15-year-old boy was pushed off his bike by a man and then beaten. There are very specific cases.

We understand there are verbal warnings, but there haven't been charges. What concerns us is that the system is not punishing the perpetrators as they deserve; justice isn't being served.

Mr. Blair: Yes. And it is the responsibility of the police with jurisdiction to conduct an investigation to gather the evidence and bring forward the charges when the evidence supports those charges, and then it is for the criminal justice system to deal with those individuals.

We do have laws. With respect, that's an assault, but if it is hate-motivated and there's evidence to support that, that's also a hate crime. That's a very serious matter. But those matters do have to be brought forward by the police in jurisdiction. It usually requires the people who are victims of such crimes, or who have evidence of it, to bring that forward to facilitate those investigations.

They are taken seriously within our criminal justice system. However, I also recognize that it may be difficult for people to make that complaint or for the evidence necessary to effect a prosecution.

Senator R. Black: I have a couple questions for Minister Chagger and one for Minister Blair, if I get to it.

Minister Chagger, the black and Indigenous communities in Canada are badly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Black and Indigenous youth have higher high school dropout rates than others, are overrepresented in child welfare services and are more likely to live in poverty. There's also a correlation between income levels and crime rates between being young and getting involved in crime, and between feelings of exclusion and the likelihood of joining a gang.

How is your government working to address the difficult life circumstances faced by many black and Indigenous youth in Canada, and how do you propose to address the sense that many black and Indigenous youth have of being excluded?

Ms. Chagger: Thank you, senator, for that very important question. Without repeating the premise of your question, to help address this issue, Justice Canada is initiating engagement processes with black youth who have been in conflict with the law, as well as with other key stakeholders. The engagement process will help us better understand the challenges black youth face when navigating the justice system, including anti-black racism.

A comment I have been making in regard to working with the justice system is that if we can make sure a young person is not going into the justice system, we can build a leader out of them, rather than a criminal. We need to look at a restorative justice approach, and a whole-of-government approach.

We're taking a whole-of-government approach in making sure those resources, including a National Housing Strategy, exist. We have to have a good place to call home and have those resources in place. It's about making sure the most vulnerable in our society were the ones we gave a hand up to and helped out.

I'll pass it over to Mr. Hussen.

Mr. Hussen: Thank you for that really important question. It's also a question of priorities. Some of the solutions to divert people away from the criminal justice system can be found from the very communities that feel marginalized. These programs work. Ironically, even though they have very high rates of success, they are not resourced adequately.

One of the things we have to do as we re-examine the entire justice system is to reinforce those community supports and the community justice diversion programs that really help young people be diverted away from the criminal justice system. It's better for them and it's better for our public safety agenda, but it's also better for the court and justice system. One of the things you hear about constantly in terms of the examination of the court system is how hugely backlogged our court system is. Guess what? If we were to divert more young people away from that system who have committed non-violent crimes — or who have been charged with non-violent crimes — then the number of cases in our justice system would be reduced dramatically. Those people could get on with their lives, and get the skills training and other supports that they need.

One of the things I am astounded by is that, in listening to a lot of the comments and questions, a lot of solutions are not new. These solutions, targets, numbers and aspirations have been around for decades.

I remember in Ontario in the early 1990s, there was a very comprehensive report done on employment equity, on marginalization and the justice system, and on inclusion of black youth in society. We know the solutions; we just need to come together as political leaders to get the job done. That requires leadership.

• (1650)

Canadians have told us very loudly and clearly, especially the younger generation, that this is the time. They want a more equal and equitable society. They want us to dismantle the barriers that prevent far too many people in Canada from realizing their dreams, and from being truly included in Canadian society.

It is up to all of us — federal, provincial, municipal, private, non-profit sectors, Indigenous partners, and everyone else — to do the job. We can do our part as parliamentarians to lead on the federal level.

Senator R. Black: Thank you, ministers.

Larry Summers, the well-known American economist, recently noted that he felt like he was living through the Spanish flu of 1919, the stock market crash of 1929 and the summer of discontent in the United States in 1968, all at the same time.

This is a difficult time to be in government, Minister Blair. We appreciate the hard work of your offices and the public service as we struggle to respond to the many challenges that face us. During this difficult time, do you really think that you'll be able to make meaningful progress in responding to the unique challenges faced by people in Canada's black and Indigenous communities, especially regarding their interactions with law enforcement and the criminal justice system?

Mr. Blair: Yes, sir. I'm absolutely convinced not only that we can but that we must make a difference. I would like an opportunity to articulate all the ways we can do that.

Senator Pate: Thank you to all three of the ministers. Thank you to the government for the incredible work you've done during this period and during challenging times. I will be asking a question for both Senator Bernard and Senator Cotter. I will happily put my question in writing later.

I note that many of us were very pleased to see two thirds of the cabinet express renewed support for looking at mandatory minimum penalties, and the call for building a robust, comprehensive economic, health and social safety net. All of us here, I'm sure, are keen to be part of that process. Thank you.

Both questions from my colleagues are directed to you, Minister Blair. The first is from Senator Bernard:

When COVID-19 hit, you called on CSC and the Parole Board to develop strategies to reduce numbers in prisons in order to limit the spread of the virus. March numbers reflect

release of about 626 prisoners, close to the average number of prisoners who are typically released from prison each month, including due to statutory release requirements.

On June 9, you reported that net numbers in federal prisons were down by 700 in March and April, which is laudable, but it seems that this is the result of fewer people being sentenced to federal incarceration, rather than CSC following your direction to develop release strategies.

Worse yet, most federal prisons implemented weeks of lockdowns, confining prisoners to their cells in conditions that amount to solitary confinement. Indigenous and black peoples have been disproportionately subjected to these torturous conditions which are prohibited under Canadian and international law.

Bill C-83 aimed to end solitary confinement but did not provide sufficient accountability measures to prevent its continued use by Corrections.

Will you now consider the judicial oversight of structured intervention units in conditions of segregation that the Senate proposed in its amendments to Bill C-83? If not, how do you plan to implement the vital oversight and interventions so clearly required? Second, given the increasing mass incarceration of racialized people and concerns about inadequate responses from CSC, will you commit to directing CSC to reduce both black and Indigenous prisoners by a minimum of 5% per year and implement judicial oversight of the sentence administration as well?

Both of these were the recommendations of Louise Arbour more than 20 years ago. I join Senator Bernard in respectfully requesting these options be pursued.

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much, senator, for very important questions. Of course, the federal inmate population is a vulnerable population, particularly during the COVID period, and a population for whom we have a very significant duty of care.

A number of very important measures were taken. As you rightfully indicate, there has been a substantial decrease in the overall population within our federal institutions — a net reduction of about 740 people as I recall.

But in addition we had to take a number of very significant measures within the federal institutions to protect that inmate population. As you've said, we have undertaken as much social distancing as possible. Even beyond that, we're working very closely with Public Health Agency of Canada, provincial public health agencies and even regional health agencies. We've done audits in all of the prisons to make sure that workplace health and safety audits, as well as infection control measures, have taken place. Everyone, inmates and workers, in the prison system has been issued with the necessary personal protective equipment.

Very successful measures have been taken. I'm pleased to report, notwithstanding that we had 5 significant outbreaks in our 43 federal institutions, there are no new cases. All of those outbreaks are now under control as a direct result of very assertive measures taken to protect the inmate population.

Unfortunately and tragically, in this COVID pandemic, two inmates did pass, but all the rest have now recovered. That is somewhat positive.

Throughout the entire period, I've been working very closely with the leadership of Correctional Service of Canada and Commissioner Kelly. We are very mindful of the impacts of the lockdown conditions. The social isolation measures that had to be put in place to keep the population safe had an impact. She's taken a number of very appropriate and necessary measures to provide additional support to those individuals.

Finally, in response, I acknowledge with you there are a terribly disproportionate number of people, and great disparities within the corrections system. We see a gross over-representation of our Indigenous population and of racialized people, particularly black males, in the prison system.

It's important to recognize that the problem is not residing only in Corrections. It's the police that sent those individuals to court. It's the court that sentenced them to periods of incarceration. When you look at the social determinants that gave rise to that disproportionality, it goes well beyond the prison system.

Senator, we all must be committed to eliminating and reducing the social injustice. We talk about the disparate impact of crime and victimization in racialized and Indigenous communities in this country, but the correlations are actually with social injustice — unemployment, poverty, no access to decent services and housing, poor outcomes in schools and even in the medical system.

It is incumbent upon us to do so much better in reducing that disparity and the disproportional representation of Indigenous and racialized people in our prison system. I suggest it goes well beyond just Corrections. A whole-of-society response is required to address that disproportionality by eliminating, or at least reducing, the social injustice that is apparent in so many parts of this country that gives rise to those disparities.

That's why we talk, quite frankly, about systemic racism within the criminal justice system, rather than just look at individual components. It's very important to look at the entire system, and to address all of the correlations and the causes of people ending up in those unjust circumstances.

Senator Pate: Thank you for that response. I'm tempted to leap in. I don't disagree with you, but there are certainly many areas within Corrections that could be remedied, such as the discriminatory classification assessment procedure, the lack of use of the current measures that exist within the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to release people. I encourage you to implement the targets as a way to encourage Corrections to do even better. Thank you very much for that.

The question from Senator Cotter is this:

Minister Blair,

Our most recent entry point to this very significant conversation on Systemic Racism was through the lens of the administration of justice, and most particularly policing — the seriously problematic behaviour of police officers in particular. My suggestion to you is that it is possible for you to take immediate, concrete steps to rebuild public confidence in our police services, and make them more responsive to the needs of minority communities. These steps, within your authority respecting the RCMP, could include changes to police policies, and, with respect to officer conduct, should include at least the following commitments:

That, pursuant to RCMP policy, wherever an RCMP officer serves in this country, he or she will be subject to:

- A. a Zero tolerance policy with respect to excessive use of force;

- B. assessments of officer use of force will ONLY be undertaken with the involvement of independent civilian members on Use of Force Committees; and

- C. officers' conduct MUST be subjected to independent civilian investigative oversight wherever in Canada the officer serves — that is, that incidents and complaints will be INVESTIGATED, NOT JUST REVIEWED, by an independent civilian agency, whether by the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission with additional investigatory authority and resources, or by provincial civilian oversight agencies or independent serious incident investigation agencies.

And that such approaches and oversight apply — at the RCMP's insistence — wherever an RCMP officer serves in Canada.

These measures and many more related to the RCMP are within your power to direct. Will you undertake at least these steps in an immediate initial effort to address the deficit in public confidence in the RCMP, particularly the deficit and distrust that exists within racialized communities in Canada?

• (1700)

Mr. Blair: Thank you very much, senator. Let me begin by saying that I believe there should never be tolerance of excessive use of force or any racist action by any police officer in any jurisdiction in this country, including, of course, in the RCMP. It's unacceptable. It's contrary to the law and to the values and the whole purpose of a police service. These are people who are sworn to serve and protect.

As I stated earlier, I believe that an objective and comprehensive complaints system needs to be timely, fair and objective to have public confidence. We have a civilian complaints review component, and I believe there are ways in which it can be improved. We've already had some discussions through Bill C-3 on some of those measures that could be and I am quite prepared to consider.

We work with jurisdictions right across the country. I think it's also important to recognize, as I earlier alluded, that the vast majority of RCMP officers serving in this country do so under provincial contract and are under the authority and jurisdiction of the provincial or territorial Attorneys General, so it's also necessary to work with them within the structures they have put in place.

[Translation]

The Chair: Honourable senators, the committee has been sitting for 155 minutes. In conformity with the order of the Senate of earlier this day, I am obliged to interrupt proceedings so that the committee can report to the Senate.

Ministers, on behalf of all senators, thank you for joining us today to assist us with our work. I would also like to thank your officials.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Honourable senators, is it agreed that the Committee rise and I report to the Senate that the witnesses have been heard?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

[English]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the sitting of the Senate is resumed.

[Translation]

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, the Committee of the Whole, which was authorized by the Senate to consider the Government of Canada's role in addressing anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and ending systemic racism, reports that it has heard from the said witnesses.

[Mr. Blair]

[English]

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

THIRD REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the consideration of the third report of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, entitled *Developments and actions in relation to the committee's fifth report regarding Senator Beyak*, tabled in the Senate on June 22, 2020.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 12-30(2), a decision cannot be taken on this report, as yet. Debate on the report, unless some other senator wishes to adjourn the matter, will be deemed adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate.

Is that agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Pursuant to rule 12-30(2), further debate on the motion was adjourned until the next sitting.)

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 2, 2020–21

THIRD READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Gagné, for the third reading of Bill C-18, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

Hon. Elizabeth Marshall: Honourable colleagues, I don't have a prepared speech, but I do have a few comments. You'll have to forgive me; I will be talking about a lot of numbers. For those of you who don't know my background, I was a Grade 4 teacher, so I feel I am going back and teaching a bit of arithmetic.

Before I begin with my numbers, I would like to thank Senator Gold for his comments. He was the sponsor of the bill, and I am the critic.

I want to say a few words. I will start back in February of this year, when the Main Estimates were tabled. It was for \$308 billion, and it outlined the government's spending plan for the year.

When you look at those numbers, the \$308 billion — and you have to break it down to see what's included in it — over half of it is called "statutory"; in other words, over half that money has already been approved by another piece of legislation besides the supply bill. So those numbers are called "statutory", and the

amount was \$183 billion. So \$183 billion of the \$308 billion spending plan has already been approved. When April 1 comes, the government can start spending that.

In previous comments in this chamber, I've mentioned that the dollar value is high. It's almost 60% now, just between 59% and 60%. Even though it's approved by other statutes, I've always felt that we should perhaps pay a little more attention to it.

I do have to give Treasury Board some credit because if you're interested in seeing what's in that \$183 billion figure, it is disclosed on the Treasury Board website, although every time I go to look at it, I can't find it, and it takes me a while to track it down.

Really what we're talking about is \$125 billion that has to be approved by the other place and by us. It has to be voted in a supply bill, and it requires parliamentary approval. It's \$125 billion that the government is looking for us to approve.

What happened in March just before we went home and everything was in a flux because of the pandemic was that Bill C-11 was passed. This is called the interim supply bill. That's usual. It happens every year that the government comes forward, and while we're studying what we call the Main Estimates, the two houses give government the approval to spend money for the first three months of the fiscal year. Before we end up in June, we usually approve the Main Estimates, the main supply bill, and then the government has its funding for the entire year, except for the supplementaries.

When the interim estimates were passed in March, there was no debate or study, and there usually isn't much study. There might be a bit of debate, but up to March, that was sort of like the normal process. They got approval for \$44 billion of the \$125 billion, leaving \$81 billion that they haven't yet gotten approval to spend.

Here we are, at the end of June, we're getting ready to adjourn for the summer, and the government needs access to that money. Ordinarily, it would already be approved in a main supply bill, but this is a very unusual year, so government came back and they have what you call a second interim supply bill, which is something that's very unusual.

That's what we're talking about today, the second interim supply bill, Bill C-18, and now we're talking about \$55 billion. Like I said, we started out with \$125 billion; \$44 billion was approved before we went home in March, which brought us down to \$81 billion. Now there is another bill for \$55 billion, so now I would say they will have approval by the end of the day to spend that, leaving what I call a mere \$26 billion left to be approved by both the House of Commons and us.

When Minister Duclos testified the day before yesterday, I asked what will happen to the \$26 billion. Will we see a third interim supply bill? Yes, he confirmed. I was surprised. He was very forthright. He said there will be a third interim supply bill, and we will probably see that in the fall. The issue for me is that these money bills are being approved without study and with very minimal debate.

• (1710)

I was asking the minister the other day, if the Main Estimates have been tabled and now we're just passing these interim supply bills and by the fall they'll have all their money to spend, what's the point of the Finance Committee wasting their time spending the Main Estimates? When I asked him that, he didn't say a lot but it was still interesting. He said, "... we are giving parliamentarians in both chambers the opportunity to further continue their study of Main Estimates ..." — even though it has all been approved, no doubt — "... and proceed to debate and vote ..."

We might be able to debate and vote on the third interim supply bill. We'll see. Maybe we'll study it; I don't know. That's something we will have to decide. I expect that my colleagues on the Finance Committee will have some commentary on that. I think we should study the Main Estimates, even though the money has all been approved for spending. We should take the opportunity to look at statutory expenditures. Also, we might want to look at the expenditure plan in relation to the departmental results reports because we don't really focus on them very much.

However, the biggest concern I have is that the money is being approved, government is spending it and there has been virtually no study of it, very minimal debate in both chambers.

Those are my comments. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I want to thank Senator Marshall for the work she has done on behalf of the opposition as the critic of this bill. She is certainly much more knowledgeable about these numbers than I am, but I want to make a few brief remarks.

Colleagues, the short title of the bill before us is Appropriation Act No. 2, 2020-21. At first glance, there is nothing remarkable about this bill. It provides interim supply for votable expenditures listed in the Main Estimates — and we have already heard this — totalling just over \$55 billion. On March 13, Parliament passed Bill C-11, as Senator Marshall said, Appropriation Act No. 1, which provided the first \$44 billion of supply for this fiscal year. This bill brings that total to \$99 billion out of an anticipated \$125 billion in votable expenditures.

The Main Estimates, colleagues, tells us that the government was anticipating \$308 billion in total government spending for the entire fiscal year. But as we know, this has now completely changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the government's latest update on its COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, COVID spending currently stands at \$154 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us this number is actually \$188 billion and that total program spending will hit an all-time high of \$553 billion. And yet, in the midst of this unprecedented rise in spending we find ourselves with a government that refuses to be transparent and accountable.

We are three months into the fiscal year and we don't have a budget. We don't even have an economic update. We're now being told that we're going to get a snapshot, but no one even

knows what an economic fiscal snapshot is. What we do know is that it's not a fiscal update, it's not an economic update and it surely is not a budget.

Colleagues, in the midst of a crisis, oversight is more important than ever, but all we get from this government is a never-ending stream of excuses about why it cannot be done.

So while the bill before us may appear to be routine, it is anything but. Parliament is providing the government with billions of dollars a day and yet they have no financial road map that they are willing to share with us. I understand that we are living in extraordinary times, but if the Parliamentary Budget Officer can provide us with a fiscal scenario every month and a half, why can't the government?

It's like switching back and forth between two different channels that appear to operate in different universes. Go to the Parliamentary Budget Officer channel and you learn that revenues are expected to drop by \$39 billion this fiscal year. Switch over to the government channel and we are told there is no way to calculate the numbers. Switch back to the PBO channel and we learn that personal income tax revenue is on track to fall by \$16 billion, corporate income tax by \$11 billion, excise tax by \$10 billion and EI premiums by \$1.5 billion. We learn that expenses are going to be up by almost \$200 billion and that the deficit is on track to be more than a quarter of a trillion dollars. Switch back to the government channel and all you get is white noise.

This, colleagues, is unbelievable. There is no reason why the government can't do these calculations. The Parliamentary Budget Officer works with a staff of 42 people while the Department of Finance has 20 times that many. Clearly, the only reason the government has not provided us with these numbers is because they don't want to or they don't know. That is scary. This is a dangerous precedent.

Look at how they are handling the infrastructure program. The government tells us it has 52,000 infrastructure projects under way, but it will only release a list of 33,049 of those. That's 20,000 projects that are unaccounted for.

Analysts at the Parliamentary Budget Office have tried to get the complete list for months, and the government has consistently stonewalled them, refusing to release it. This is a \$180-billion program, and the government feels no obligation to provide proper disclosure to taxpayers and parliamentarians on what they are doing with the money.

So here we are today with what should be the routine process of approving supply for the Main Estimates. But, colleagues, this is anything but routine. A government that refuses to release a budget and refuses to disclose spending details, refuses to be transparent, refuses to be accountable but still shows up requesting more money is contemptuous, not routine.

Colleagues, this kind of hypocrisy is not unusual with this government. It happens constantly. Even though it is becoming a familiar sight, it should still trouble us. If it doesn't, there is something wrong.

Today, colleagues, we will be allowing this bill to pass, reluctantly, because the essential operation of government programs relies on it. But it should be noted that we do so with deep concerns that this government is incompetent and unaccountable. And regrettably, it is all Canadians, colleagues — you, I, all Canadians who are going to bear the cost for that. Thank you.

Hon. Denise Batters: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on Bill C-18, the second interim supply bill. This bill provides the authority for \$55 billion in expenses not otherwise provided for. For a government that has basically spun its wheels since its election last fall and provided precious little by way of governance, the Trudeau government proceeds with much haste when it comes to spending billions of dollars of taxpayers' money. Then, they can't pass legislation fast enough. We have seen this first-hand in the Senate Chamber.

As I mentioned earlier this week, in one day alone, March 13 of this year, the Trudeau government pushed through Bill C-4, the new NAFTA agreement, after only 24 minutes of debate in the Senate. Bill C-10, a \$3.8 billion supply bill, passed through second and third reading in only a minute and a half. Another supply bill, Bill C-11, worth \$44 billion, whistled through the Senate in 46 seconds, an unbelievable rate of almost \$1 billion per second, honourable senators. Of course, in his hurry to push these bills through, the government leader in the Senate failed to mention that senators were also passing the \$115-million Senate budget in that legislation.

• (1720)

Imagine that, honourable senators, bills whizzing by so fast that Senator Gold didn't even have 20 seconds to spare to alert senators in the chamber that the \$115-million Senate budget was passing without any debate or discussion. In fact, the report on the budget from our own Internal Economy Committee is still on the Order Paper waiting to be debated.

This is a worrying pattern of this Trudeau government: spend wildly now; ask any questions later, if at all; dismiss any questions or criticism as partisan; and distract with the feel-good photo ops. After all, avoiding accountability is what this Trudeau government does best.

With the staggering debt load that will exceed \$1 trillion, the Trudeau government should respect Canadian taxpayers enough to provide details on the financial state of the country, but no, instead of a bona fide fiscal update telling Canadians where we are and where we are heading financially, the Trudeau government will present Canadians with a fiscal snapshot; fairly fitting for an Instagram government that governs by selfies and photo ops.

We are three months into the COVID crisis, and Prime Minister Trudeau is still hosting daily campaign-style press conferences live from the porch of Rideau Cottage. Just like Groundhog Day, the Punxsutawney PM emerges from his front door to announce, and in some cases re-announce, spending commitments. You would think with all his sunny ways, he would have seen his shadow by now. We are well past waiting six weeks for spring. It's now summer, and the spending promises just keep coming.

Prime Minister Trudeau is never so happy as when he gets to spend someone else's money, and he spent a lot of it: \$60 billion on the CERB, \$45 billion for the wage subsidy, \$13.7 billion for the CEBA, and \$9 billion for the financial aid to students. The list goes on and on.

While no one disputes that an emergency of this magnitude and the attendant effect of a nationwide economic shutdown would require some form of government support, the problem is that the Trudeau government refuses to be held accountable for the staggering amounts of money they are promising. When he can be coerced into coming out of his hidey-hole, Prime Minister Trudeau gives perfunctory, meaningless talking points. He has admitted before he is only interested in the ceremonial aspects of being Prime Minister. It shows. Meanwhile, his ministers regurgitate the party line ad nauseam in an effort to run out the clock and keep from answering uncomfortable questions.

The Trudeau government rams bills through Parliament in a handful of hours, minutes, even seconds. They refuse opposition calls for the House of Commons to resume regular but modified sittings, instead insisting on the virtual so-called COVID Committee on Zoom. That way, the Trudeau government can better control the issues that can be raised and how long he and his government are exposed to opposition questioning. Meanwhile, the virtual COVID Committee meetings have a disproportionate impact on regions of Canada that have already been worst affected by the Trudeau government. MPs in Western, rural and remote areas often have problems participating in the meetings because of spotty internet connection. They end up cut off and cut out of the meetings, unable to represent their constituents' concerns or ask the Prime Minister and his cabinet questions on their behalf.

Both the Senate and the House of Commons should resume regular in-person sittings at this point for the sake of the country. While everything in Ontario was locked down for the pandemic, the Trudeau government still insisted that construction workers working outside on renovating Centre Block on Parliament Hill should report to their jobs, all the while insisting that health conditions were simply too dangerous for Parliament to continue to sit inside Parliament. This Trudeau government maintains it is not safe for parliamentarians to meet for the purposes of holding regular sittings of the House of Commons, even with physically distanced, reduced capacity modifications. Meeting twice a week for in-person hybrid COVID Committee meetings in the House of Commons chamber, no problem, but for regular sittings of the House of Commons in the same chairs, with the same modifications but with extra accountability for the government, nope, no can do.

Parliament is an essential service. One of our primary duties as senators is to represent the views of our home regions in the legislative process. Especially at this time of economic crisis, parliamentarians should be voicing the concerns of their constituents, who are struggling with the pandemic, job or business loss, or just dealing with the repercussions of the disastrous policies of this Trudeau government.

Another critical role we have as senators is to undertake careful review of legislation, so that it is as good as it can be for all Canadians. Sitting with reduced numbers, we can be in here

safely. No MP or senator has developed COVID-19 from Parliament sitting. The Trudeau government though, it seems, has developed an acute allergy to accountability.

Millions of Canadians have already returned to their own jobs, modifying their workplaces in accordance with best public health precautions. There is no reason Parliament cannot do the same. Our own Senate has only been recalled a handful of times since March, when it has been deemed to be in the public interest. An immediate return to Parliament couldn't be more in the public interest, honourable senators.

This government is creating programs worth billions of taxpayers' dollars and steamrolling them through Parliament at breakneck speed. Sober second thought is needed more than ever, yet the Prime Minister is more concerned with holding on to the reins of power at all costs, by shutting down Parliament, silencing the opposition and thereby dodging accountability for his government's decisions.

Prime Minister Trudeau seems to be governing by infomercial. He has a bad habit of overpromising and underdelivering. He governs on the fly, without a whole lot of forethought or consideration of the consequences. He deflects or dismisses opposition suggestions to improve legislation, only to turn around after the fact and implement, too late, the changes the opposition suggested in the first place.

Finance Minister Morneau sat in this very chamber in March and condescendingly dismissed our opposition Senate leader's commonsense suggestion to raise the wage subsidy from 10% to 75%. Two days later, Prime Minister Trudeau announced his intention to raise the limit to — you guessed it — 75%. Of course, by that point, many employees had already missed paycheques and no money was yet flowing, so they had to wait even longer because of the Trudeau government's delay. Yet another Trudeau empty promise, which of course meant more workers laid off and more businesses forced to fold in the interim, never to reopen their doors.

Situations like this could have been avoided, honourable senators, if the government had submitted its legislation through the normal proceedings of parliamentary sittings, to receive the proper legislative scrutiny. The established parliamentary process, especially study in parliamentary committees, allows MPs and senators to review, revise and improve legislation, and to hold the executive level of government to account on behalf of all Canadians.

I understand the need for expediency in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is important to deliver emergency programs quickly to help Canadians keep their heads above water. If the Trudeau government presented their spending plans in good faith and were prepared to work constructively with the opposition, I am certain the process could be expedited while still maintaining proper legislative scrutiny.

But look at how this government proceeded with Bill C-13. The Trudeau government took one of the first legislative opportunities they had during the COVID-19 pandemic to make a bold grab for as much power and unprecedented spending authority as possible. Was that governing in good faith or in the best interests of Canadians? No. It was a cynical attempt to use a state of national emergency to grant their minority government practically unlimited spending without legislative scrutiny. This is not good governance. Thankfully, the opposition forced the Trudeau government to revise their original proposal and sunset most of the contentious powers.

One of the measures that did pass in Bill C-13, however, gave the Finance Minister alone the power to establish a giant government corporation. I asked Minister Morneau about this when he was here on Tuesday at Committee of the Whole. Bill C-14 contained a sunset clause on the corporation, but only if it had not been established by September 30, 2020. Of course, the corporation was established in May, so the sunset clause no longer applies. Bill C-13 sailed through the Senate after about 45 minutes of debate; Bill C-14 in just over two hours. Now Mr. Morneau's 100% giant government corporation is on the books for good, with no end date.

Other bills from this government are worrisome as well. Bill C-15, the Canada Emergency Student Benefit provided \$9 billion in funding for students, but the empty shell of a bill read more like a template. It didn't contain the amount of funding per student or even the timeframe for eligibility in the legislation. Both of these were to be determined by the minister and cabinet. Even the term "student" was not fully defined in the bill. It excluded students who had finished high school but who were not applying for post-secondary education. If the point of the program was to address the financial needs of students who were unable to secure employment due to the pandemic, you would think that students with a high school education should be included.

In any case, Bill C-15 once again flew through Parliament, passing through this chamber after about three and a half hours of debate. If we had proper parliamentary review of this bill and the others rammed through by the Trudeau government since March, I'm sure we would have discovered other flaws as well. As senators, that is our job.

• (1730)

Frankly, at this time of great vulnerability and insecurity for millions of Canadians, it is even more crucial than ever that parliamentarians are able to closely scrutinize legislation and point out shortcomings in the bills that could have major consequences in the everyday lives of Canadians.

Every day of the pandemic seems to bring another Trudeau photo op accompanied by yet another spending announcement, and still the government has given major sectors of our economy the most minimal COVID-19 funding. Two that are crucial to my home province of Saskatchewan are agriculture and the energy sector.

It's curious how the industries that are the lifeblood of the Prairies have received so little notice from this Trudeau government. Like they say, that might be too coincidental to be a coincidence.

I find it puzzling when the country is simultaneously in the throes of an economic downturn and a health pandemic, this Trudeau government isn't more concerned about the agricultural sector and the security of our food supply chain and preserving the energy industry, one of Canada's prime economic drivers.

The Trudeau government did propose an aid package for Canada's farmers, but it was a scant 10% of the aid that had been requested by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

The ag sector has been hard hit during the pandemic with outbreaks at meat processing plants and among temporary foreign agricultural workers, the closure of restaurants, institutions and hospitality industry customers leading to a growing and problematic surplus of food and animals.

Even before the arrival of COVID-19, my province of Saskatchewan was reeling from the downturn in oil and gas sectors. The bottom-of-the-barrel world oil prices combined with the anti-energy policies of the Trudeau government seemingly hell-bent on land locking the west resources, leaving a province like Saskatchewan with no cushion to withstand the devastating onslaught of COVID-19.

Finance Minister Morneau had the audacity to make the empty promise in the Senate Chamber that they would deliver aid for the oil and gas sector imminently, within hours or days. That was on March 25. More than 90 days later and we're still waiting. When I questioned him about it earlier this week, Minister Morneau tried to revise history claiming that he had not referred to the oil and gas sector specifically.

Unfortunately for Minister Morneau, we have this pesky thing called Hansard that records everything we say in the chamber. That record shows that his hours or days timeline referred to exactly aid for the energy sector and his government failed to deliver.

Minister Morneau danced around the fact that the Trudeau government has done nothing to specifically address the needs of the devastated and unemployed oil and gas workers or the struggling small- and medium-sized oil and gas companies that this pandemic has so affected.

In turn, the closure of these businesses and the laying off of workers chips away at the communities that depend on the oil and gas industry to survive. Long-time previously thriving businesses have been brought to their knees by this cumulative effect of a stagnant energy industry and COVID-19. Businesses that were family-run for generations — hubs of the community — have closed their doors for good because they can't wait any longer for assistance.

Their employees are now jobless and they may lose their family's homes. These are the people we need to keep in mind now, honourable senators, when we consider these bills. We are responsible to do our due diligence to apply our sober second

thought to the spending of taxpayers' dollars, especially when so many Canadians face these types of difficult financial circumstances. I hope you will keep them in mind when you vote on these bills. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Your honour, I would like to continue and enter debate at this time. I'm quite moved by what Senator Batters has just shared.

And, of course, Senator Marshall, I love how you speak about these big numbers and this very complex process and break it down so that we can understand it. So now I understand why. But I always appreciate how you're able to help us understand the scope and the breadth of what we're doing. It's mind-boggling at the best of times.

Honourable senators, I rise today to add my voice to this important debate on Bill C-18 during what has been an increasingly challenging time for Canadians and everyone around the world, and on a day after Canada's credit rating has been downgraded by Fitch, one of the U.S.'s big three credit agencies.

For the past few months we've been navigating our way through the COVID-19 crisis which has brought grief and financial difficulties to many. As a nation, we have lost loved ones, suffered job losses, made difficult decisions to shut down businesses and came face to face with mental health issues and growing anxiety as we overcome unprecedented circumstances and adjust to our new definition of everyday life.

Our front-line workers have proven themselves to be real-life superheroes who have courageously stepped forward into danger against their instincts, becoming pillars of strength and stability for our nation. I would like to take a moment and thank all the doctors, nurses, health care professionals, front-line workers, volunteers, paramedics, firefighters, police forces and the military men and women who have risked their own lives to keep us safe, provide essential goods and services and protect our most vulnerable during our fight against COVID-19.

This pandemic has impacted every sector of our economy. Some of the hardest hit are microbusiness owners who have already declared bankruptcy or are still just hanging on. In B.C. there are many mom-and-pop shops and start-ups that have desperately contacted my office over the course of this crisis. To protect our communities and stop the spread of COVID-19, store owners obliged with orders to shut down operations and put others first. They closed their doors at the orders of the government with expectation of support from their government should they need it.

These family-run microbusinesses have faced tremendous challenges and setbacks. I'm talking about barbershops, hair and nail salons, dental and chiropractic offices, contract workers and so many sole proprietors who depend entirely on their

business-generated income to keep a roof over their heads and their employees' heads and to be able to put food on the table.

Even with our economy slowly opening up, due to safety restrictions businesses will never be able to return to pre-pandemic operations. For example, it has come to my attention that dental clinics that are small businesses with rent, payroll, contracts and obligations are under extreme threat. The health and safety requirements imposed on them make it impossible for many of these offices and clinics to remain viable, especially because they can only take a handful of patients each day compared to normally seeing 50 patients a day. I'm told that, in adhering to mandatory safety protocols, it takes upwards of two hours between patients.

So doing the math, which is black and white, you can see why closures of some or many dental clinics across our country are a real threat to all of us.

Let me remind all honourable senators that accessible financial support under the Canada Emergency Business Account, or CEBA, was not available until April 9. Then, finally, on April 16, it was announced that businesses with a minimum payroll of \$20,000 could apply. One month later, on May 19, the government announced that microbusinesses with no payroll would soon be able to access the CEBA. However, it is now June 25, over three months since businesses were asked to shut down, and the CEBA loan is still not available to them.

The fact that the CEBA delay was mentioned through a tweet by Minister Morneau the night before the expected release date is telling of the government's respect and attitude toward small business owners who are the backbone of our economy.

Small- and medium-sized businesses employed 10.7 million people in 2019, accounting for 89.6% of the labour force in the private sector. In five days, it will be July 1, when commercial rent is due again. For tenants with landlords who have not applied, or worse, refused to apply for the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program, they are drowning in unpaid bills and debt.

I was going to speak to Bill C-19, so some of these numbers I'll have to adjust. But for now, in the next bill, Bill C-19 allocates \$3 billion for CECRA, yet according to a survey done by Merchant Growth, 80% of Canadian small business owners say their landlords have not applied for the commercial rent subsidy.

Again, this program has come much too late. July 1 marks four months of commercial rent owned with little or no generated revenue or access to credit for many microbusiness owners and new start-ups.

On Tuesday, during Committee of the Whole, Minister Morneau gave a long response to my question about how quickly the government moved in getting financial resources into the hands of business owners. Yet my office has been flooded with calls and emails from constituents across Canada who have fallen through the cracks and are desperately seeking help. To make matters more complicated, businesses who borrow from credit unions could not even begin to apply until the beginning of May because it took nearly a month for all credit unions to become accredited under EDC as approved lenders.

• (1740)

Minister Mona Fortier said in the House that the CEBA program has assisted 669,000 businesses so far. However, these numbers pale in comparison to the number of small- and medium-sized businesses registered in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, in January 2019, there were 1,174,695 small businesses with fewer than 500 employees.

The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy was not made available until the end of April. Due to the eligibility requirements, employers who started new businesses last year in markets that have low winter — January and February — revenues are unable to apply. Those small business owners cannot prove the necessary revenue decline to qualify for CEWS. To make matters worse, many start-up owners in B.C. and across Canada were also excluded from the CERB as well because they did not earn \$5,000 in employment income since many spent their personal savings starting their business the previous year.

The Trudeau government has not given adequate attention to the crucial factor of timing in enacting policies that stimulate the economy. The particular timing of the implementation of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy renders both to be less effective. Both CEWS and CERB are meant to stabilize the economy, but the combination of CERB's possibility of financially disincentivizing workers and uncertainty of entering the labour market has so far proven to be inefficient for stimulating the economy.

If businesses generally were benefiting from the CEWS, the assumption would be that they can gain back employees that they lost due to CERB both before and after CEWS was introduced. However, businesses are still in a tight spot. They lost employees due to COVID-19 and the late introduction of CEWS. As businesses try to reopen, they are faced with further difficulty in hiring employees due to the uncertainty of the labour market and the financial disincentives created by CERB.

The Canada Emergency Response Benefit was a needed program that has helped Canadians brace the initial impact of COVID-19 as they lost their jobs. However, the continual extension of the program may become detrimental to the long-term economic growth of the economy as it coexists while the labour market reopens. The government must ensure that there are strong incentives for the unemployed to search for employment. Furthermore, there needs to be changes made to the eligibility of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy so that a wider net of businesses qualify and unemployment rates can slowly drop.

Unemployment rates are already at 13.7%. Per person spending by the government is estimated to increase to \$13,226, compared to the \$9,306 before COVID-19, according to the Fraser Institute. The debt is increasing and unemployment is rising. If this is combined with any other blows to the economy, such as a continuously falling consumer confidence — which is likely in the case of a second wave of the pandemic — and increasing corporate debt, in addition to the central bank no longer being able to lower its interest rates, Canada may face yet another financial crisis. Because the central bank's interest rate is among the most potent cushioning tools to alleviate economic stress, this could possibly make Canada more vulnerable to both predictable and unpredictable economic shocks.

Again, what Canadians needed was timely support and accessible capital, not support that came so late. My concern is that small business owners may see similar consequences from hikes in capital gains taxes as they might in a credit crunch. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Canada's expected debt is \$256 billion, which is estimated to increase by \$17.9 billion with the extension of the CERB for eight more weeks.

For all these reasons and more, Canadians expect complete transparency from the government, yet Minister Morneau could not even answer or did not want to answer two simple questions asked repeatedly by Senator Plett: What is Canada's current federal debt? Who owns this debt?

The current Liberal government has said time and again that transparency is important. However, that has not been what they have always shown during this global pandemic.

Underscoring the importance of transparency, the Parliamentary Budget Officer clearly expressed during a National Finance Committee in May that his concerns with the unprecedented powers granted to ministers in Bill C-13. In his words, he said:

I'd say I'm very, very concerned about this because even though we are in a crisis situation, providing that amount of power together with all the other powers that you mentioned — borrowing almost without any limit, without any immediate oversight — in one person, it's something that, in my opinion, is unprecedented in the current regime and in Canadian history. . . .

In the Speech from the Throne, Governor General Julie Payette read that the second bedrock of our stability is our parliamentary system. However, today we have a government that refused to restore Parliament and answer hard questions from opposition parties. It is these tough questions that our nation's health, jobs and financial systems depend on. It's a good thing that we're a bicameral system and that in this chamber we have been able to take more time. Still, we are worried about what will happen in the future.

We must not accept this government's actions during the pandemic as the "new norm." It is an affront to democracy and all Canadians who have made sacrifices, lost their jobs or permanently closed their businesses. We must ensure there is complete transparency to properly review all legislation so that all sectors of our economy and individual Canadians do not fall

through the cracks any longer. We must support our small businesses, especially our mom and pop stores, because they are the backbone of our economy. On the other side of this crisis, it will undoubtedly be the small businesses that put Canada back on the path to prosperity.

To conclude, I remain highly sceptical and critical of the government's lack of transparency on how they are spending or deficit spending our way beyond our means. I'm exasperated with the oversights and delays in the programs that have been too hastily announced but too slowly implemented, resulting in the devastation of many businesses.

In spite of my growing concerns at the debt that we are burdening our children and several generations to follow, standing on the shoulders of those who have sacrificed so much before us, on this sacred ground and in this historic railway station where Canadians left their loved ones to go off to war overseas, including those who served in the Korean War, and with my faith in God and in Canadians, including our small business owners who have and will continue to be incredibly resilient, selfless and courageous, I have hope.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: I wonder if Senator Martin would take a question?

You've listed a litany of very difficult challenges that the economy is facing, but your list of challenges runs in different directions. I'm trying to get a better understanding of how we might resolve them.

On the one hand, you point to what you term excessive spending on the part of the government and the mounting debt, which is a serious concern that many of us have. You are also concerned about the lowering of the credit rating by one of the agencies. On the other hand, you talk about how there isn't sufficient funding for, particularly, the micro businesses. Then you also talk about how the CERB being extended is a problem because of disincentives to businesses to rehire. The CERB, of course, is the one mechanism that micro businesses have access to in order to get some funding for those who do not have payrolls that qualify under the CEBA program. You are well aware of that, I'm sure.

I'm trying to understand this. A lot of what you said will increase the deficit, unquestionably. You're against a higher deficit and you're against higher debt. What is the level of deficit that you would be comfortable with so that the government can get some idea of what the comfort level of the opposition is when it comes to further measures to stimulate the economy? We're at \$250 billion or something like that right now. Would you tolerate \$300 billion, or are you saying come down to \$200 billion? What is the debt-to-GDP ratio that you will be comfortable with? Because that's the measure that the government has been using. Are you comfortable with it going up, or are you insisting that it go back down?

I'm not trying to be technical, but these are crucial questions. If we don't get to these essential questions of measures, we're not going to be able to come up with solutions. We are only going to identify more problems.

• (1750)

Senator Martin: Thank you for the question, senator, and thank you for listening to the entirety of my speech.

The Hon. the Speaker: I'm sorry, Senator Martin, but your time has expired. Are you asking for five more minutes to answer the question?

Senator Martin: I thought we had agreed not to grant extensions on speeches.

The Hon. the Speaker: It's up to you, Senator Martin. Are you asking for five more minutes?

Senator Martin: No.

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Honourable senators, I rise to speak on this bill with concerns about how the two major federal programs responding to the COVID-19 pandemic have actually unfolded. While I did want to see the CERB program accessible to persons like carvers and artists who don't have internet access or access to banks — and many Nunavut residents live in communities without local banks — the rolling out of the program has been flawed and ripe for fraud, in my view.

Don't get me wrong; there were many people who lost their jobs or their self-employment due to the pandemic, and they did need help. However, there are also many abuses of the program due to unqualified applications. The government seemed heedless of this potential from the beginning. A May 12 memo distributed by Employment and Social Development Canada even specifically instructed staff to continue payments, even if evidence of potential abuse of the system was involved.

The existence of this memo has never been denied by the government, as reported by the *National Post*. Apparently, according to that report, early in the program some 200,000 applications had been red flagged by officials because of dubious claims. When this report of 200,000 applications having been red flagged as possibly fraudulent came out, Employment Minister Qualtrough stated that the 200,000 figure was not "remotely near" the real number. She presumably meant that number was way too high.

Now, as it turns out, that number may have been way too low. In early June, Statistics Canada released its latest Labour Force Survey, suggesting that fraud and error under CERB may have been even significantly more pervasive than previously found. By the middle of May, CERB had been paid to 7.8 million people, but the Statistics Canada survey found that from February to May, only 5 million Canadians had either lost their jobs or worked less than half their normal hours. In other words, there may have been 2 to 3 million claims paid that do not appear attributable to COVID-19 job losses.

Then, perhaps realizing it had created a problem, the government decided to clamp down, drafting legislation that would have increased fines for fraud, cutting off folks who fail to return to work when it is reasonable and fail to resume self-employment, or decline a reasonable job offer when they are able to work. The legislation was not proceeded with, but the CRA updated its program formerly known as Leads online to allow Canadians to snitch on other Canadians suspected of fraud. Statements were made by the government about recovering monies fraudulently paid.

Colleagues, stories of CERB scams are rife on social media. Many cheques have been sent to unemployed prisoners in jails and to homeless shelters. The word went out in Nunavut that all you had to do was call CRA and say your cheque had not arrived and another cheque would surely be sent. Then you could even call again and say that cheque did not come in and another cheque would be sent. I'm talking about mailed cheques. We also know that social insurance numbers were used by criminals to successfully apply.

So what resulted? CERB dollars fell freely from the skies in Nunavut, where it's fondly known in some quarters as COVID money or free money. Employers couldn't get people to work or come back to work. Employers have complained that the program was implemented with no incentives to work or to return to work.

I want to make it clear that the money was appreciated and needed by many people. The situation of persons out of work in the performing and applied arts economy, which is significant in Nunavut, and people employed in the service industry, were greatly stressed about feeding their families in a region that already has the highest cost of living in Canada.

But some of the applicants who abused the program and did not meet the conditions of having been previously employed did not spend the money wisely to support their families and pay their bills, it seems. It has been noted that alcohol-related emergency room visits in the Qikiqtani General Hospital in Iqaluit were up by 18% during the pandemic compared to averages in the previous years. The RCMP also reported that alcohol-related calls were up 20% compared to previous months. Also, 92% of all calls in April involved alcohol. This has actually resulted in residents of previously quiet neighbourhoods complaining about public disturbances and police-related calls for disturbing the peace.

Citizens have observed to me that dangerous drugs like crack cocaine are now present in increasingly alarming situations among vulnerable citizens in Iqaluit.

It seems to me now that the government made errors when it introduced CERB. First, it sent signals publicly and within the public service that there would be very little vetting of applications. It was more important to get the money out the door, the Prime Minister said in one of his daily briefings. The initial legislation had no penalties for wrongful claims.

This was such a widespread situation in Nunavut that our premier made a public statement, warning citizens not to apply if they were not qualified. Instead of going after cheats after the fact, as it now apparently intends, the government should have put in place tighter controls before the claims were paid out to unqualified applicants. I'm concerned that many people who were lured into easy money will face future consequences, jeopardizing their status with the Government of Canada, and also that, in many cases, it will be impossible to recover monies paid out by mistake.

CERB applicants need not to have filed a tax return, even though the program requires applicants to have been employed in the year before the pandemic. What will be the consequences for them, having these black marks against them linked to their social insurance numbers? Will this jeopardize their future entitlement to Canada pension or other federal benefits?

Given these facts and wide social media chatter about CERB scams, it is no surprise that CERB costs have exploded. I remember when the CERB program was first announced. It was estimated that the costs would be \$21 billion. I heard this in a briefing for parliamentarians early in the launch of the program.

As of June 23, the costs had ballooned to \$43.5 billion paid to 8.41 million people. Now the government has decided to extend the program for two more months at a cost of \$17.9 billion, which will result in the program ending up costing about three times the original estimate.

The wage subsidy program designed by the government had a hefty budgeted cost of \$71 billion. However, many companies — and many northern companies — have found that the Ottawa-centric guidelines, which I have complained about in this chamber already, do not fit their needs. This applies to junior mining companies and exploration companies that do not generate revenue — their revenues come from flow shares and investors — and for seasonal companies in construction and tourism that cannot fit the timelines —

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it's six o'clock. I apologize, Senator Patterson, that I have to interrupt. Pursuant to rule 3-3(1), I'm required to leave the chair until 8 p.m., unless there's an agreement not to see the clock.

Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Patterson: Thank you, colleagues.

Minister Morneau has pledged to review and make changes to the wage subsidy program. He actually made that pledge in this chamber when one of the first bills was introduced back in April, but we are still waiting eagerly for the results of that review well into the current financial crisis which is crippling many companies.

The government lowered the wage subsidy budget to \$45 billion from the planned \$70-billion level and, as of June 15, the government had only approved \$13.2 billion in payroll subsidies.

• (1800)

Therefore, the wage subsidy program was under-subscribed because of restrictive eligibility rules and the CERB program seems to have been oversubscribed due to laxity preventing fraud and a failure to bring in penalties for fraud and incentives to work.

Many political leaders have suggested that the CERB program should be an inspiration for developing a guaranteed annual basic income program. However, in my view, this program has in some ways not been exemplary. We also have not had the opportunity to examine these important questions in the houses of Parliament and it is widely considered to have been a disincentive to work.

These are unsettling conclusions. It is unfortunate that, in my opinion, there have been very few opportunities for parliamentarians to ask questions about these very expensive programs and their flaws, and it astonishes me that, with all the serious concerns emerging, the government led the proposal that the House of Commons should shut down until September 21, when these programs will mostly have run their course.

And with the greatest of respect, Your Honour, I was also concerned when your office stated that the June 2 session of the Senate, previously scheduled, would not reconvene and that in fact it was not in the public interest that it do so. I think it is unfortunate that parliamentarians have not had more input into these important and costly programs. We should not have to spend months and years after this pandemic picking up the pieces and trying retroactively to see where Canadians have fallen through the cracks, how guaranteed income programs like CERB could have been better designed and how the wage subsidy program could have not missed important sectors of our economy. Thank you.

Hon. Kim Pate: Would you take a question, Senator Patterson?

Senator Patterson: Yes.

Senator Pate: Thank you very much. I was very interested and listened carefully to your comments about the importance of examining a guaranteed liveable income, and it probably won't surprise you that I couldn't agree more. I am concerned, though, about the information you put forth about the degree and extent of CERB fraud being reported. The information that I've been receiving and the information I've been requesting has shown just the opposite; in fact, that there is very little fraud.

Aside from the anecdotes that you presented, I'm curious where the data is and where the evidence is coming from that you reported. You probably recall during the Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, we asked those questions about how much is being

lost to fraud versus how much is being lost to corporate tax avoidance and evasion, and the fact that we haven't even looked at whether wage subsidies has been a concern. The focus seems to be on the people who have the least and are the poorest, not those who may be benefiting more, whether it's from offshore tax evasion or seeking wage subsidies without backup.

Could you please advise where you're getting that data from?

Senator Patterson: Thank you for that question.

Honourable senators, I want to pay respect to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, which have worked hard in a very short time frame during this pandemic to examine the government's response to COVID-19. However, I still don't think there have been proper opportunities to thoroughly examine these questions, as we ordinarily do in both houses of Parliament. I would assure Senator Pate that I do feel that there were many deserving low-income people who needed the CERB program, but I was also concerned that there were many people who were not qualified and who were not in a position to handle that kind of money. I'm talking about what I observed in my region.

I was also alarmed by the bureaucrats' direction to overlook red flagging fraudulent cases, because I don't think it's in the interests of those people who were allowed to abuse the program to now be facing consequences that have been threatened by the government to go after them and collect that money.

I don't pretend to have a detailed knowledge of the question you asked about how much fraud there was, but I don't think we've had the proper opportunity to scrutinize these very costly and hastily designed programs. Frankly, I am not convinced that Parliament, even with reduced numbers in both houses, could not have met to do its job of demanding accountability for public funds. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

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

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 3, 2020–21

THIRD READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Gagné, for the third reading of Bill C-19, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

Hon. Peter Harder: Honourable senators, I'm surprised to be called so quickly and I'm delighted to be here to say a few things about Bill C-19. Rising to speak on a supply bill is a courageous act for anybody, but it is a subject on which I've had some experience over a number of years. As I stood, I was reflecting on the story of Elizabeth Taylor's seventh husband who, on the night of the marriage, said, "I know what is expected of me. I just don't know how to make it interesting." So, colleagues, I know what is expected of me, but I will try to make it interesting.

Supply is normally, and rightly so, the role of the House of Commons to establish. Those of us who remember Anne Cools, in her parting weeks will know she offered her personal experience and she started with the Magna Carta, and she was a little younger at that point, in 1215, but she reminded how the bargain at Magna Carta is really the basis of our supply, and that's true.

When I first came to Ottawa, supply was even more obtuse than it is now. The documentation for supply was literally just binders and binders of numbers by vote, and the supply process was highly complex in the House of Commons, particularly, and that led to a reform in the Mulroney government, chaired by Jim McGrath, later Lieutenant Governor McGrath, and it was an attempt to provide parliamentarians with a more understandable time frame for supply, so it dealt with the process but not really the content.

When I got to the Treasury Board 25 years ago, and went through my first supply process, I said to my staff, "This reminds me of Brezhnev's Moscow." "What do you mean by that?" "Well, workers pretended to work and managers pretended to pay them." So we pretend to give information to Parliament and they pretend to hold us to account.

The level and complexity of the documentation was beguiling and incomprehensible, and there began a process called The Improved Reporting to Parliament Project, which started with listening to parliamentarians, including Anne Cools, and that's when I first met her. It was based on the belief that if we had better information presented to parliamentarians on departmental plans we would have a better and a more engaged process on supply.

• (1810)

Now, I suspect we were more hopeful, as it turns out, than perhaps realistic, but the thought was that we could learn from some of the reforms being undertaken in various jurisdictions, in terms of how to improve the engagement with Parliament, or

legislatures, on information that was relevant to an understanding of what departments were trying to achieve — not just the input of dollars but the outcome of resources being applied.

It would hurt my former seatmate's feelings; Grant Mitchell, as you know, spent a good deal of time trying to become premier of Alberta. Surprising as it sounds, one of the surprising areas of innovation on supply was Ralph Klein's Alberta, where they began some of the early experiments on how to package information on outcomes that could engage parliamentarians more helpfully. As Tony Dean was in a very senior role in Ontario, that same process began under, surprisingly, Mike Harris.

The feds played catch-up, but we actually accomplished a fair degree in terms of advancing the notion that it wasn't inputs and numbers — although they are important — but trying to articulate, what are we trying to achieve, what are the outcomes and how do we become accountable for those outcomes? We have accountants to tell us about the numbers. Parliamentarians, I would argue, ought to be those who judge whether or not the outcomes or the results are achievable.

One of the innovations brought at that time was the recognition that the departmental results were fine with respect to the departments, but that so much of government is cross-departmental, and how do you aggregate the results that are government-wide?

There was a process called "reporting to Canadians on results," which aggregated some of the departmental work and committed governments — and they were somewhat cautious in adopting this, I should add — to certain achievements government-wide, nationwide, for a period of time. But we began discussions with provinces: Could we actually have a document where we had cross-jurisdictional alignment of results?

That work was under way. The whole notion was that we needed to adapt what was called modern comptrollership within the public service, to go from just the verifying of the numbers to actually having our audit function, our control function within government, focusing on results and outcomes. The then-Auditor General was actually involved in this. Some of that work lives on today; you see the Departmental Results Reports and the Departmental Plans.

However, there were some challenges along the way. One is the development of parliamentary agencies, which, as I commented on when we interviewed the then-Auditor General designate — the notion of value for money being assessed by the Auditor General, which is not the way I would do it. I would have the Auditor General auditing, as auditors do, the verification of the integrity of the numbers; and Parliament should do the auditing with respect to whether value for money has been achieved.

That's a rather subjective notion. Senator Patterson isn't here, but I might have a different view than he does on the value for money of the CERB, for example.

Parliamentary Budget Officers were included. We've recently added the parliamentary budget office to this. I would encourage you to read the works of Donald Savoie, who has been a lone

critic of the development of parliamentary agencies. Governments hate them when they're in government and love them when they're in opposition, and for very good reason. They're the brains of the opposition — of course, excluding the opposition in the Senate — and are often the bane of existence of governments.

A few things came along to disrupt this, I would say, modernization of comptrollership. One was the HRDC scandal. The moral equivalent of the HRDC scandal, to help senators understand this, is the helpful way in which the Auditor General undertook the study of the Senate. It froze the system of innovation in the public service. What surprises me is that senators are affronted by the AG, and they want the AG to do the same thing in other departments. But I leave that for another day.

The financial crisis, of course, totally disrupted the work underway. There was a government change, and that government came in with what they called the Federal Accountability Act, which was about restoring rules and regulations and removing innovation — what I call developing a team of goalies.

Lo and behold, the Auditor General becomes the newsmaker of the year for the HRDC scandal. The Auditor General should have become perhaps the person of the year for the Senate.

So we develop the comptrollership, the whole concept of more rules will lead to this never happening again. How many governments have you heard, in the light of an issue in which there has been a clear abuse of funds, say, “We called in the Auditor General. We’ve had a review. We’re imposing new rules. This will never happen again” — until it happens again?

I would argue that we need to return to focusing more clearly on results and outcomes, and have an intelligent discussion on accountability that is certainly more appropriate to a chamber that views itself as sober second thought.

I ask the question: What does parliamentary oversight and accountability look like in the context of COVID-19? At least for consideration, I would give you five points that we should think about in terms of the implication of what I am saying for the supply cycle, the estimates and the work of the Senate.

The first point I would like to make is this: Get used to scenarios and not one plan. During questioning, Senator Massicotte has referenced a couple of times the excellent document from Bennett Jones, a law firm with which I was not associated, led by David Dodge and a couple of deputy ministers, including former deputy ministers of finance. The document provides two scenarios — because who knows how this will unfold — in terms of their analysis of Canada’s fiscal and economic well-being. A week after Dodge issued his report, the OECD — which is a highly reputable organization — in its report on Canada, came up with two scenarios, not dissimilar to Bennett Jones, because they couldn’t come up with one.

My admonition to parliamentarians is this: Don’t demand one plan; demand a more intelligent discussion on scenarios. If I can predict one thing for Minister Morneau’s statement next month, it’s that he should keep away from predicting one plan going forward. And if I could make one other prediction: Whatever he says, Senator Plett will denounce.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

Senator Harder: The second point I’d make is that we need to reward innovation, adaptation and quick adjustments to fill gaps. The innovation that has been used — even in the coming forth of the legislation we are dealing with today and that we have dealt with in emergency legislation earlier on — is quite formidable in terms of how it was handled differently than usual. Draft bills were shared confidentially with leaders in the other place. Amendments or concerns generated by those drafts were incorporated before governments tabled a bill.

• (1820)

One could argue that’s logical in a minority Parliament, but it is an innovation that we should reflect on because, obviously, if there has been that degree of consultation before, there will be less debate on the floor. That’s just the nature of deal-making. I regret, for example, when that fell apart in the other place, the disability benefits, which are so necessary for disadvantaged Canadians, fell by the wayside as well. So be careful what you wish for when you want old processes; they may not be appropriate in the circumstances in which we are. We should expect and reward agility and adjustments to deal with gaps.

Three, our toolkit of both policy and systems was inadequate in the face of COVID, and the government had to act quickly on the policy innovation but also on the system innovation.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Harder, are you asking for five more minutes?

Senator Harder: Five more minutes, please.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Harder: New York City Mayor Mario Cuomo said, “Good public administration is a combination of poetry and plumbing.” Supply is a lot about plumbing. I think we need to spend some time appreciating the innovation around the systems in government as a result of this. Who would have thought ESDC could almost seamlessly deliver the degree of system changes required to deliver the policy innovation that was brought?

I want to say a few words on the balance of public accountability and transparency because I think the trade-off between policy innovation has been a greater degree of transparency. Again, I would dispute some of the comments made; daily calls, the Finance biweekly report, take a look at it. It is the most interesting document coming out of the Government of Canada in years, and it’s from the Department of Finance. I would argue that we are seeing more information and more real-time information than heretofore, and we should keep demanding it.

My fourth point is to learn and adapt our supply process. I would suggest that with the work being done by National Finance, it was easier for us to deal with the supply bill because we had weeks of review of the COVID measures, and there was overlap. It should continue at least until we are in a more normal process.

My fifth and last point, I didn't think I was going to add, but I will. Belligerent and disrespectful questioning of witnesses, be they ministers or officials, is no substitute for substantial engagement. Thank you.

Hon. Elizabeth Marshall: Does Senator Harder have time for a question?

The Hon. the Speaker: He has two minutes.

Senator Marshall: As you know, I had to laugh when you talked about the big binders from years ago. Well, guess what? We still have them.

One of the issues that I see is the quantity of information. In order for parliamentarians to keep on top of what's happening, it's an all-consuming job. I can't say it's a 24-hour job, but it's a very demanding job. You have all this information out there, and parliamentarians really do need to access both the numbers and things like the departmental results reports. In addition to bringing this all together, there are still holes that need to be plugged.

Do you have any foresight, commentary or suggestions? I would like to hear your views on that. I was cleaning out my office last night, and I picked up an old report of the Auditor General. Leave it to me to open it up to see what was in it. It was one of Mike Ferguson's reports, and he was talking about all this information that's not put together; it's all over the place. And it's an issue.

I would really appreciate your comments on that because you might be able to shorten the time I spend working.

Senator Harder: I was trying to get at that in my questioning of Minister Duclos the other day, when I talk about lots of transparency, but it's windows of transparency, and how do you get a panoramic view? It seems to me that one of the things we need to consider is what would a dashboard of what we really need to know look like? Could we engage with Treasury Board, from a parliamentarian point of view, on a dashboard giving up-to-date and regular information on these sets of issues, which would help on parliamentary oversight and accountability? That might be a different set of issues than Treasury Board is using with its departments, but that would at least be a start.

I'm with you; I think that real information gets lost simply in its overwhelming presence.

Senator Marshall: You were saying the biweekly report is interesting, but there are still holes in it. So where do you go to find the information to plug the holes? Do I have time to ask one more question?

The Hon. the Speaker: Sorry, Senator Marshall —

Senator Marshall: I would like your views on the departmental reports.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Marshall, the time has expired.

Hon. Marty Deacon: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on Bill C-19, or more broadly, the business of supply. While I would love to read for you line for line the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, which was tabled here on Tuesday, I'm not sure that would be appreciated. Instead, I would like to highlight some of the items that caught the eye of my ISG colleagues from the Finance Committee who cannot be in the chamber today. I'm also super tempted to spend all my time elaborating on Senator Harder's five big suggestions, but I will try to stay on track.

The first specific issue is the delay in the procurement of the two joint support ships for the Royal Canadian Navy. As the report illustrates, we had a great deal of concern around this process given the costs, overruns and delays. We believe the Deputy Minister of the Department of National Defence should be invited to our Finance Committee to explain the management of the Strong, Secure, Engaged defence plan. Reliable procurement is critical to the long-term planning of our Canadian Forces. Further delays only cloud these efforts.

Another concern is the disclosure practices of the Canada Account, which is used for transactions that the government deems to be in the national interest. Suffice to say, there is room for improvement. Information is not made public about whether businesses that received a loan delivered on a job as promised, whether the loan requires top-ups, was repaid as scheduled or even if it was ever repaid at all. The Canada Account uses public funds and therefore risks government resources and taxpayer contributions.

Bill C-13 enabled the Minister of Finance to increase the liability amount for the Canada Account, and he did so to the tune of \$93 billion. Parliamentarians and Canadians they represent have the right always to know how this money is being spent and if it's being spent wisely.

Furthermore, Export Development Canada's payments have been excluded from the supplementary estimates as well on the basis that their programs do not receive payments from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. These are huge sums we're unable to look at and examine. It's critical that we see more detailed reporting from the EDC about Canada Account transactions, as well as the inclusion of funding provided to EDC in the supplementary estimates.

Our National Finance Committee chair, Senator Mockler, reminds us every meeting at least once that on behalf of Canadians, we must ensure transparency, accountability, predictability and reliability.

• (1830)

It is on this that I wish to focus my own remarks. No question, no new news; it has been an unusual year to put it mildly. On March 13, we passed the first appropriation act with no debate or study by the chamber. We all understood the rush, and even with

the benefit of hindsight, we did not question that decision. We were staring down a pandemic, and we did not know when we could or would return. The government had to be able to spend, and that's what we facilitated. It's truly remarkable to reflect on the speed and possibility of being agile when we required almost daily changes to support Canadians. We must not forget this.

Fast-forward to now and we are still not able to give the spending the kind of scrutiny it deserves. In addition to the Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, our Finance Committee held one meeting on the supplementary estimates. We are, of course, studying the spending around COVID-19 measures. I want to thank Senators Mockler, Forest and Richards for their leadership in navigating this complex task, as well as the very capable and intelligent staff who support us on the committee.

We have listened to and challenged dozens of experts and witnesses on short order. But while this report will no doubt pull back the curtain for Canadians on government spending on this crisis, it will do so after these two appropriation acts are dealt with here today.

We are in extraordinary times. I understand that we can't give this spending the kind of examination we would have preferred. However, I must admit that for some time I felt the Senate's role in the business of supply was a little bit foggy, a little bit unclear.

I suspect this is a symptom of section 53 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which somewhat ties senators' hands in financial matters. Further to that, there is nothing in our rules that states we have to study the supply bills. We do not refer them to committee, although Finance does, of course, study the estimates which, year in, year out, is a bit of a Herculean task.

Through these studies, I quickly came to realize, as no doubt many of you have, that we are here to shine more light on government spending. The role is even more important when a party has the majority of seats in the other place or, in this case, when spending is being pushed through quickly as we react to a national and global emergency.

Not many Canadians have the time to line up horizontal items in the estimates with the appropriation acts that routinely reappear before us. It is not light reading. But as taxpayers, they have the right to understand how and where the money is being spent. And that's where we all come in.

So, colleagues, I'm going to put on my educator hat and try to give us extra-credit assignments over the summer. You may find yourself a bit uncomfortable with this process, as I know I did when I arrived here, but it's worth getting to know it.

This is not to call into question the ability of any of my honourable colleagues, ability, which we saw in spades during Tuesday's Committee of the Whole. I just know that, when I sat down at my first National Finance Committee meeting, it was neither English nor French I was hearing.

Moreover, and most importantly, if Senator Marshall says she's having trouble tracking the money this time round, I can say with certainty the rest of us are struggling as well.

I am still learning, but what I have learned thus far has made me a better senator. One thing I have learned is that the more eyes we have on the money trail, the better off Canadians will be. This will be all the more important in the years to come. The government has turned on the fiscal firehose to stave off economic disaster and has racked up a significant debt. There's a range of opinions in this chamber over the wisdom and effectiveness of this spending, but we can all agree that where and how the money is spent will be priority number one in the years to come.

If we return in the fall with upwards of 105 sets of eyes poring over every detail of estimate documents, the country will be better off. I'm not just referring to the big-ticket items, but the seemingly monotonous and benign items as well. It will raise the level of debate over these matters. It will make ministers uncomfortable when they know they need to be ready to justify and account for every dollar they are being asked to spend. And it will let the government know that their spending habits will be laid bare once they hit the Senate floor.

Thank you, colleagues, for indulging me on this. I wish you all good health and happiness until we meet here again.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, I rise to speak to Bill C-19 and to add my voice of concern over what's been going on with our country and in this Parliament over the last few weeks and months. It's a pattern that has developed not only due to the last few months and the crisis we're facing, but it's a pattern that has developed before that, even before COVID.

I know COVID is the justification for why we've added a quarter of a trillion dollars to our debt in just a few weeks. But the truth of the matter is, the fiscal irresponsibility of the current state of affairs has been evident and pronounced since 2015.

Senator Harder points out that whatever plan the government would put forward, he's certain Senator Plett would be opposed to it. But I'm equally certain, even in the absence of a plan, Senator Harder will get up and compliment and start the wave of, "What a great job this government is doing."

I don't think that necessarily is an answer, in terms of the troubling concerns that I have currently. No doubt, we've gone through a pandemic and we're still going through that pandemic. We're learning every day if we could have managed it better or what we did well and what we didn't do so well. In due time, we will get the final report card. That will come in. One thing is certain. If the pandemic doesn't kill us, there's no doubt, if you look at the state of economic affairs right now, that certainly will over the next few years.

The government has to show the same degree of urgency in dealing with the fiscal state of affairs of the country as they have shown over the last few weeks in dealing with COVID.

We, colleagues in this place, have a fundamental responsibility to be the voice of people in this country. This is the chamber of Parliament and this is a chamber that represents our citizens. We're also the custodians of the taxpayers' rights and privileges that they have. We have to be the ones that are the last line of defence in questioning the government, and calling them out whenever we think they need to be called out, and holding them to account.

I ask each and every one of you to look in the mirror and say to yourself: We just spent \$250 billion over the last few weeks. In the course of the next few weeks, we will have added a quarter of a trillion dollars to the debt of the country — a country that's 153 years old. Then ask yourself, as you look in that mirror: Did we do the scrutiny that was needed on behalf of taxpayers? Or were we cajoled, as is so often the case in Parliament, by a government using the urgency of circumstance to say, "Don't worry. We've got to get it out the door. We need to do this in a hurry or else."

Of course, it's a strong argument. They put our backs to the wall. Who will dare to stand up and say, wait a second, we don't want to get it out the door in half an hour; we might want to get it out the door in three hours or in three days or in four days. Let's call a spade a spade. Certain programs went out the door in a hurry back in March and April. Other programs were promised and committed to by the government, but we are still waiting for them.

At the end of the day, politicians always make choices based on politics. Governments always make choices based on politics. It's incumbent on parliaments to make choices based on the interests of Canadians.

Senator Harder said earlier in his compelling speech that, in the House of Commons, all parties are consulted and all negotiations are done in a matter-of-fact basis, a business-as-usual basis, and nothing is done in a vacuum and that, of course, there's ample opportunity on that side for them to scrutinize the bills.

The opposition on that side doesn't necessarily feel they had adequate time to scrutinize things, but that's neither here nor there. I'll speak for this place. Have we had adequate time? Are one or two committee meetings adequate time to put forward a supply bill of \$18 billion or \$53 billion? Clearly not. We have been cajoled to get things out the door on an urgent basis. The truth of the matter is, we haven't been the custodians on behalf of taxpayers, that they pay us quite handsomely to come here and be.

I'm concerned. I came here in 2009. I have seen, year after year — it's not exclusive to one political party or another — the eradication of the influence and the responsibility of Parliament, because the truth of the matter is, the upper chamber, the other place, politicians who get elected on the executive branch of government, consider us to be an impediment. We all know, at

the end of the day, they have their plans; they feel that they have an obligation to the electorate and they have to respond now. But we also have an obligation.

When we came here, we were sworn in, summoned to this place to be the custodians of the taxpayers and the citizens of this country. And to ask ourselves where every dollar is going. They take the final decision but we have to ask the hard questions.

• (1840)

The truth of the matter is, in 2015, when this government was elected, they received a balanced budget. They will argue that it was \$2 billion over, \$2 billion less. For all intents and purposes, if we look at the financial balance sheet of 2015, it looked pretty good. By today's standards, it looked pretty good even by pre-COVID standards in 2019.

We have the current Prime Minister who got elected in 2015 touting in debate after debate how Canada is the best-situated country in the world in terms of debt-to-GDP ratio. He was right. We were the best-situated debt-to-GDP ratio country in the world in 2015. No doubt.

The reason we were is that there were two decades of successive efforts — not just by the former Harper government, but by the Chrétien government before that — to balance the books.

Of course, the previous government also inherited a crisis. Crises aren't new. They come and go all the time. Governments in those good periods of economic times prepare themselves for the bust that invariably comes at one point or another.

The truth of the matter is — again, Senator Harder says that this government — it's not one plan, they must have a bunch of plans. Well, the truth of the matter is when it comes to planning and when it comes to numbers, they are not as good as they are on rhetoric.

They are excellent at navel gazing and excellent at rhetoric. I had the minister earlier in the Committee of the Whole say here, "Thank God for their Senate reform because if it wasn't for Senate reform, the ministers wouldn't be before us today." Come on. Colleagues, we all know how Parliament works. There was no Senate reform.

The Senate as a whole has always had the power to invite a minister of the Crown to the Committee of the Whole and they always have done so in the past when required. That's a right and obligation we have as parliamentarians. There was no change made by any government, this one or any one before.

But where they do have the ability, I think, to be accountable is on numbers. They got elected in 2015 saying they will increase the budget — that's the commitment they made to the public when they got elected — and the deficit will not be any higher than \$10 billion. It will be manageable. They made a commitment that it will be balanced by 2019. Well, 2019 rolled around, and the truth of the matter is that balanced budget never came. The controlled deficit of \$10 billion — moderate, reasonable — became \$30 billion dollars, which was \$30 billion less you were able to use in this particular COVID crisis.

We had a situation where they didn't take care of the financial fiscal situation of the house. Our foreign investment went from a record \$41 billion or \$43 billion in 2014-15, down now by 50%.

Our dollar took a pummeling from where it was between 2008 to 2015. Our natural resources sector got pummeled and beaten to death. The truth of the matter is that was a cash cow during good times in order to give us the opportunity to deal with crises, and we did in 2008 and 2009.

Now we have a situation where the Parliamentary Budget Officer on the other side, he's trying to make heads or tails of what the fiscal state of the country is, and he's projecting a \$280 billion deficit for this year. The government is saying, "No, we see \$240 billion." They're not off by a few billion dollars, colleagues. They're off by \$20 billion.

You know why they're off by \$20 billion, and they might even be off by \$30 billion? Because we currently have a government that has no fiscal responsibility as a reflex. They have no plan. Colleagues, when is the last time we saw a budget from this government? The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance admitted over and over and said for weeks they can't even provide a financial statement because they don't know what the figures are. They can't really calculate what the numbers are.

Can you imagine the CEO of your former bank, Senator Loffreda, saying, "I can't give you a financial statement or a budget for this year because I can't tell you what the numbers are going to be?" How far would that go with the shareholders? If the shareholders of the Royal Bank wouldn't tolerate that, if the shareholders of any medium- or large-size corporation wouldn't tolerate that, why would the taxpayers of this country tolerate it? Why would we in the upper chamber allow this to be tolerable? Why do we tolerate this?

I will allow all of you to contemplate that and think about that for a while, and when we look at ourselves in the mirror when we go home when we rise in a few days, ask ourselves those questions. I think we all know what the answers are. It's just not acceptable.

We just recently, of course, found out that our country got downgraded in terms of our credit rating from AAA to AA+. Again, it took two decades of work to get that AAA rating. It's not an easy thing.

Colleagues, it's not enough to say it's because of COVID. No, it's not just because of COVID. It's because we didn't have the fiscal plan in place during the good times, while our economy was going relatively well, to be in a position to deal with the storm that we're dealing with right now.

Colleagues, Australia, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Singapore — these are countries with a AAA credit rating. They've gone through COVID. It's not unique to Canada. They've gone through it. They have managed, some better, some worse. That's a whole other debate for another time.

But in a country like Canada, with the economic capacity that we have, with the world's largest middle class market to the south of us, with the strength in human resources that we have in

this country, to be in a situation where we're slipping, our debt-to-GDP ratio — trust me — in a few months will be a catastrophe — from the best in the world to a catastrophe.

We have colleagues that are saying, "What's the rush, why are we criticizing the government and why are we hard on ministers?" Ministers parading through the Committee of the Whole here for an hour or two and a half hours to spew their political lines while we get five minutes to ask critical questions isn't sufficient — not about racism, certainly not about the fiscal state of affairs.

When we're passing a bill that is going to be expending \$53 billion in a very short period of time, and we do that over one or two meetings of the Finance Committee, and we're doing second and third reading debates here, like it's Formula 1 — let me tell you. I just replaced the air conditioning system in my house. I replaced the compressor. Trust me, I was more diligent in doing that than we are here today spending billions of dollars.

So why are we treating the fiscal pocket of our taxpayers and the people we represent with such neglect when we take care of our own personal finances with such diligence and interest?

Colleagues, I understand how this place has evolved through the years, and I understand how Parliament is starting to erode and it has eroded. I've seen it since 2009 when I came here and we had a Prime Minister back then who was very belligerent toward this institution. I'm a Conservative. I admit it. I've had arguments with him many times.

At the end of the day, I've seen it time and time again, from Prime Minister after Prime Minister. When they're in opposition, they have all the time for the House of Commons, all the time in the world for the Senate, and they think we have to do our due diligence and ask the tough questions. As soon as they become Prime Ministers, they want to get their agenda through. They want to do what's politically expedient. They're in a hurry for the next election. I'm not. You're not. We shouldn't be because of our tenure, not because of anything else, not our political stripes. We have our opinions. At the end of the day, we owe it to the people who have summoned us here to be diligent with taxpayers' dollars.

So colleagues, I reluctantly will pass this bill because, like the rest of you who are doing it with a gun to our head, that's what we've done here over the last three months. That's the truth. But once the dust settles, we are just as responsible for what will be by the end of this year a deficit that's going to be a quarter of a trillion dollars or more. We are also directly responsible now — I think as we stand today, Canada surpassed that magic mark and we're at over a trillion dollars in terms of a debt.

I don't have all the solutions — and I don't profess to have all the solutions — but I am raising some red flags about some of the issues that should concern each and every one of us today and going forward. The hole that we have dug for ourselves right now is a hole that will take at least three decades to get ourselves out of. Thank you, colleagues.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette (The Hon. the Acting Speaker): Senator Housakos' time has expired. If he wants to answer the question, he will have to ask for five more minutes.

Senator Housakos: If the chamber would grant me five more minutes, I'd be happy.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: You agree to five more minutes? Agreed.

• (1850)

[Translation]

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: Senator Housakos, I listened closely to your speech. It's true that, even before this crisis, the Liberal government was spending a lot, and it's also true that we spent a lot. That said, I think it's always easier to lecture after a crisis than during.

I'd like to ask you more specifically about one of your statements. You said that when the government started announcing the programs, we could've taken two or three days to debate them seriously in the chamber. I'd like to remind you of the state and the mindset this country was in when we adopted the first program, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. People were losing their jobs left and right. Not everyone has a healthy bank account. Some people live day to day, week to week. There was a sense of urgency. I must say that I, as a senator, didn't feel comfortable telling these people, "Hold on, we're going to study this. We're going to talk about it for three days and we'll get back to you later."

If we're talking about coming up with an amendment or a solution to ensure that there might be fewer errors or perhaps prevent any fraud associated with the CERB, if we're talking about finding the perfect solution to be able to issue cheques quickly, while controlling whom they're sent to, then, quite frankly, that is not a question of legislation, but rather one of bureaucracy. The Senate has very little influence over that aspect.

Regarding that part of your argument, I must admit that I'm not sure the Senate has the right reputation or the standing needed to put the country on pause for three days and say, "Just wait; we're going to discuss it and we'll get back to you in a bit." What are your thoughts on that?

[English]

Senator Housakos: Senator, I appreciate the question. First and foremost, the beauty of government is those of us who have been in Ottawa long enough, we all appreciate politicians coming to the forefront and they ask for money quickly because they have to get it out the door quickly. As we saw, they got supply bills through quickly. But programs didn't get out the door nearly as quickly as they are promising. The oil sector, for example, is still waiting for promises this government made.

Having said all of that, we also have to recognize that the Canadian public went through a transitional state. The government didn't have — let me just rephrase the answer here.

My criticism is that in the first four years of power before COVID, we spent \$30 billion of debt where that money could have been very useful out the door right at the outset.

Since the crisis began in March, three months later, we still haven't got a grasp on spending. It seems to be accelerating while we still don't know where to draw the line and for what purpose.

Three months is a long time for a government to operate and to react and so on and so forth. That's my criticism. My criticism simply is if we as parliamentarians would have taken a few days more, a week longer, 10 days longer, three weeks longer, I really don't believe that would have been a question of life and death.

Furthermore, we've seen now how this government is not in a hurry to recall Parliament. Grocery stores have been working full throttle. People are going back to business full throttle. The first thing that was suspended in this country by government was Parliament. The last thing right now that will be brought back in full operation is Parliament. That is what doesn't make any sense to me.

We all understand the urgency. I was prepared to sit here during that emergency and work. I know most of you were as well. Again, you notice how this chamber is sitting much more intensely than the other chamber. Could it be that on the other side of the chamber they have minority standing as a government there and they're less likely to have that place operate as much as this place should be?

I'll take it a step further. I think all parliamentarians had an obligation not to be the first to pack up our tents and go home during the crisis. During a crisis, leaders lead. That's where I think we should have been.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Question, Senator McPhedran?

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

Senator Housakos: Absolutely.

Senator McPhedran: Senator Housakos, I don't recall — I may have missed you being on the briefing calls that have been made available on pretty much a daily basis now for three months where department officials come on to the call and parliamentarians can ask questions. Have you been on any calls?

Senator Housakos: I haven't.

Senator McPhedran: One of the most interesting things, to me, as someone who has fairly regularly been on those calls, is that every party, every partisan group is represented on those calls. A number of senators are regularly on the calls as well. What's happening on every single call is that parliamentarians are talking to senior officials about people who are suffering. They are asking very specific questions, and they're giving very detailed, factual cases of people who are not getting help.

The overwhelming theme, call after call after call, is "we need more help." So here's my question to you: What would you have done instead?

Senator Housakos: Senator, I've also reached out. I've been in constant communication with Minister Morneau's office, with Minister Champagne's office. I have constituents with issues as well, and I've been addressing them directly through ministers' offices. These briefing calls are great but they're after the fact. What they do is you have bureaucrats going before parliamentarians to tell us what's available to us. Decisions were already made on those calls. By and large, what they're doing is briefing us on the programs, senator. When they're briefing on the programs, they have already left the train station.

Senator McPhedran: And adjusting the programs —

Senator Housakos: As they're going along, no doubt. But what I would have done is had parliamentary committees intensely sitting. I would have had stakeholders brought to the table to be able to talk directly to stakeholders and find out what their needs were. I think that's the best way Parliament could have addressed this issue. All these stakeholders have a right to come before their parliamentarians. We have how many standing committees in the Senate? How many standing committees in the House of Commons? All of them should have been in action and should have been responsive.

More importantly, the government should have been using those mechanisms as a consulting apparatus to get an understanding of where the people are, what their concerns and needs are. I can tell you one thing in this country; the first program this government did was CERB for —

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Sorry, Senator Housakos, your time has expired.

Resuming debate.

Hon. Thanh Hai Ngo: Honourable senators, today we have in front of you Bill C-18, the government's second interim supply bill, and then Bill C-19 for the supplementary estimates and so on. My remarks will be very brief and general.

Here we are. Canada's debt, thanks to Trudeau's government, could probably exceed \$1 trillion. Colleagues, that will only be worth an economic snapshot. No budget, no economic update, no details, no projections, no economic plan to officially reopen our economy and, of course, what this government has done so far since it has been in power, no accountability, no transparency.

The first interim bill, Bill C-11, passed through the Senate at the speed of light, for the amount of \$44 billion, without any debate. Now we have the second bill, Bill C-18, for the amount of \$55 billion. No detailed and thorough study has been done except what has been done in the Senate.

Then there is a Supplementary Estimates (A) that was only studied at the committee level for four hours — four hours to study \$87 billion in budgetary authority, with \$6 billion in votable authority and \$80.9 billion in statutory authority that have already been approved. As for the anticipated extension of the eight weeks to the CERB program, yesterday the PBO announced it will cost Ottawa another \$17.9 billion.

Colleagues, we learned during the Committee of the Whole that there will be a third supply bill that will come this fall. Let's hope at least we will be able to study that one properly.

It's true we are faced with unprecedented and extremely challenging times, but that is simply not an excuse not to provide a real economic update. Now, more than ever, Canadians need to know how the economy is doing and where we are at. What will the impact of the pandemic be on our economy? What will the government plan be moving forward once the pandemic recedes — the revenue, the expenditures, the borrowing, the deficit, et cetera? Canadians have the right to know how public funds are being spent, and they have the right to hold the government to account. This is happening all while our government and democracy has been shut down and replaced with the Prime Minister's daily morning sideshow, where he teases us by finishing his press conferences with the usual "stay tuned; we will announce other measures tomorrow and this week," as if Canadians and Canadian businesses that struggle to stay afloat, and those who are contemplating suicide, actually have the luxury of staying tuned and waiting.

• (1900)

[Translation]

Now that the Prime Minister is using his morning press conferences to make his way into every home, there is no need for him to knock on doors to prepare for an election. At least this time he won't be needing two planes, or even one.

[English]

He does so comfortably from the steps of his cottage where he announces help and makes people wait weeks, even months, before that help is provided. Unfortunately, in some cases, help is announced, but that help never comes, like the aid promised to the energy sector within hours, probably potentially days, on March 25. That was three months ago, and still they have seen nothing.

Another heartbreaking example is our seniors. Also at the end of March, the Prime Minister said that aid was coming for seniors. After building up the excitement that significant aid was coming for seniors for nearly a month and a half, the aid was announced on May 12: a one-time, tax-free payment of \$300 for those who qualify for Old Age Security. To top off this truly exceptional, amazing offer, they offer an extra \$200 for those who are eligible for the Guaranteed Income Supplement, which amounts to a total of \$2.5 billion. That is \$2.5 billion for our seniors compared to \$9 billion for students.

Let's put it into perspective. This government has miserably failed our brave Canadians — Canadians who helped build this country, put their lives at risk to defend this country and have contributed decades in taxes to federal coffers. What does the government do? It implicitly tells them that they are not as important as students and are not contributing enough to this country for the government to think they are worthy of substantial financial aid. What a shame.

I think the majority of Canadians have been taken aback by the never-ending lack of respect from the government towards them. Last week, during one of his daily briefings, the Prime Minister said:

There are so many things we simply don't know . . . making projections about what our economy would look like in six months from now or a year from now is simply an exercise in invention and imagination. . .

You have this government, which has the financial and human resources available to put forward a real and detailed economic update, yet it intentionally refuses to do so while provinces have done it. Even the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Mr. Giroux, is constantly working hard to update his findings on a regular basis and trying his best to put forward details for parliamentarians and Canadians so they can get a sense of how the economy is doing, and he is doing so with less human and financial resources. On top of it all, Mr. Giroux doesn't even have access to all of the information the government does. Honourable senators, he has been doing a truly incredible job so far. He said at the beginning of June, "It's not rocket science," for the feds to provide a fiscal forecast.

Colleagues, to be honest, I am puzzled and even distraught. When you have a former auditor general like Senator Marshall telling us that she has a hard time figuring out the numbers after doing research, looking at all the websites and looking at the Bank of Canada's graphs, that's quite worrisome. Senator Marshall, I want to thank you for the exceptional and amazing work you do.

In closing, I guess the only thing left to do is to wait for that economic snapshot. What will be will be. *Que sera sera*. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Pate, seconded by the Honourable Senator Petitcher, for the second reading of Bill S-208, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (independence of the judiciary).

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-208, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (independence of the judiciary). I would like to thank Senator Pate for her initiative.

[English]

Bill S-208 will return sentencing discretion to judges for 73 offences that currently carry with them a mandatory minimum sentence. This is not a radical or brand new approach to trying to

deliver justice in Canada's justice system, which, in truth, often fails to deliver fair, just results, and more accurately should be described as a legal system. With Senator Pate's bill, judges would regain the authority to impose just sentences with attention to the context and specifics of each case. The word "case" is general and abstract, so please bear in mind that we are talking about human beings here, and that, indisputably, many of these human beings enter the criminal legal system as members of peoples who have been living under deeply entrenched systemic racism. Bill S-208 offers us, as lawmakers, the chance to make a law that is in accordance with long-established principles of sentencing and, even more important, with our constitutionally entrenched Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Honourable colleagues, we owe it to survivors of crime, and to Canadians collectively, to pursue changes to the Criminal Code that will lead to a more equitable application of the law, because more equitable application of the law benefits us all. Mandatory minimum sentences fail to deliver equitable outcomes. Equitable outcomes are the buttress for the credibility and viability of our legal system.

The literature on sentencing and corrections has a high degree of consensus that mandatory minimum sentences fail to produce any tangible deterrent effect. The Supreme Court of Canada explicitly acknowledged this fact in the *Nur* decision, stating:

Empirical evidence suggests that mandatory minimum sentences do not, in fact, deter crimes. . .

• (1910)

Mandatory minimum sentences are essentially a security theatre being played out at the price of accused individual's Charter rights. Moreover, research shows that mandatory minimum sentencing may very well contribute to increased recidivism; lengthier sentences in prison are correlated with reoffending.

Mandatory minimum sentences cannot be justified in the name of community safety and deterrence. The facts don't support it.

Beyond the self-defeating nature of mandatory minimum sentencing, there is also research that shows that many of these sentences lead to the application of overly harsh penalties. This leads to constitutional issues, as well as issues of compassion and fairness, but also of efficacy. In the Supreme Court of Canada's reasoning in *R. v. Lloyd*, the majority opinion notes:

. . . mandatory minimum sentence provisions that apply to offences that can be committed in various ways, under a broad array of circumstances and by a wide range of people are constitutionally vulnerable. This is because such provisions will almost inevitably include an acceptable reasonable hypothetical for which the mandatory minimum will be found unconstitutional. . .

The Supreme Court is telling us here that in case where mandatory minimum sentencing applies to a range of impugned conduct, it is almost always possible to think of a real-life situation in which the application of that sentence becomes grossly disproportionate; it is, therefore, a violation of an accused's section 12 Charter rights.

Bill S-208 effectively captures the spirit of the solutions proposed by the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Lloyd*. The Supreme Court provided two solutions through which Parliament could reform mandatory minimum sentencing to ensure their constitutionality, without excising them from the Criminal Code entirely. Both recommendations by the court revolve around nuancing the application of mandatory minimums. Bill S-208 provides for nuance in sentencing where a mandatory minimum may be in play by allowing judges to use their familiarity with the facts of the case to ensure that sentencing does not result in unjust, grossly disproportionate and therefore unconstitutional outcomes.

We are discussing Bill S-208 at an opportune time. Why have thousands and thousands of people taken to the streets across North America and across the globe? Because thousands and thousands of reasonable people are protesting against systemic inequalities and police militarism that has spawned disproportionate violence and killings. They have been marching in solidarity to reinforce the truth that black lives matter, that the lives of Indigenous people matter and that the lives of people of colour matter. People matter. And injustice matters.

While the spark for this latest chapter in the ongoing struggle for civil rights flared in the United States, Canadians have mobilized in response to police killings and violence, as well as numerous demonstrations of systemic racism and intentional individualized racist conduct.

As we witnessed last Thursday during the Senate's emergency debate, requested by Senator Rosemary Moodie, Canada is owning up to more of its own history and the inequalities still blocking Indigenous peoples, other minorities and marginalized groups within our own borders. The Canadian government has taken some significant and substantial steps and said many of the right words with respect to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. However, as a country, we have many major steps toward the practical realization of the commitments that follow from those words.

One such issue, mentioned both by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is with mandatory minimum sentencing. One of the findings of the national inquiry was that mandatory minimum sentences are especially harsh for Indigenous women and girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, as *Gladue* principles for sentencing cannot be applied. This leads to higher incarceration rates.

Further, sentences fail to meet the rehabilitative needs of Indigenous women, girls and rainbow people. As part of its calls for justice, the report asks all levels of Canadian government to evaluate the impact of mandatory minimum sentencing as related to the sentencing and over-incarceration of Indigenous women, girls and rainbow people, and to take action based on their findings.

For its part, the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, chaired by our esteemed colleague Senator Murray Sinclair, states that the implementation of mandatory minimum sentencing undermines the criminal justice reforms of the mid-1960s that required judges to consider all reasonable alternatives to incarceration for punishment, especially with

regard to Aboriginal offenders. Restrictions on sentencing discretion in this way exacerbate Aboriginal overrepresentation in the correctional system.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission went on to issue a Call to Action regarding getting rid of mandatory minimum sentencing, asking the federal government:

... to amend the Criminal Code to allow trial judges, upon giving reasons, to depart from mandatory minimum sentences and restrictions on the use of conditional sentences.

Just as Bill S-208 is a fair, principled response to the Supreme Court of Canada's findings in *R. v. Lloyd*, its provisions dovetail well with the calls by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. In fact, Bill S-208 would implement the same fix the commission recommends.

The Canadian government has made a commitment to fully implement the commission's Calls to Action. Given that sentencing reform failed to make an appearance in Minister of Justice David Lametti's mandate letter from the Prime Minister, the Senate is in a position to pick up this dropped ball and pursue informed, evidence-based sentencing reform in satisfaction of that commitment on behalf of Parliament.

I highly recommend that this bill be sent to committee for further study. Through this bill, the Senate has the opportunity to roll back regressive criminal law that amounts to a vicious indulgence in systemic racism. This bill provides us with an opportunity to hear the voices of correctional experts, and the voices and stories of survivors of crimes that have mandatory minimum sentences. We can hear the truth behind the supposed benefits of mandatory minimum sentences, such as deterrence and denunciation, and grow to understand the effects of forcing a retributive, punitive, inflexible approach to justice.

One thing we might find — and this is supported in the research — is that satisfaction with the justice system on the part of people affected by crime is not generally tied to the length or severity of the sentence imposed. Instead, it is much more impactful to ensure that survivors are kept informed throughout the proceedings and allowed to participate meaningfully in those proceedings. In situations where judges have discretion over the sentencing of an offence, they are able to use victim impact statements to ensure the survivor is heard, the punishment fits the crime and that justice is meted out in a manner that is not grossly disproportionate and unconstitutional.

Honourable colleagues, let us take this opportunity to commit to an evidence-based approach to criminal and correctional law. Let us commit to an approach that focuses on ensuring just outcomes for offenders, survivors and Canadian society by moving past the perception that justice is a hammer that must be applied with decisive force, regardless of the details of the case and in the name of being "tough on crime."

• (1920)

With the information available to us on how damaging mandatory minimum sentences can be — which Senator Pate and other speakers in this debate have done an excellent job of demonstrating to us — it is no longer tenable to rely on the so-called common sense notion that more punishment equals more justice when, instead, more punishment is often just a vicious indulgence of de facto prejudice against less advantaged Canadians by more privileged Canadians.

Let me close by citing the blunt compelling facts that compare mass incarceration of Indigenous people in Canada over the past two decades. In 2000, 34,283 prisoners identified as Aboriginal in provincial and territorial prisons, and 1,252 prisoners identified as Aboriginal in federal prisons, making up almost 18% of the total prison population 18 years ago. The most recent Indigenous mass incarceration numbers are for 2018, and look what the facts tell us about systemic racism: 72,392 prisoners in provincial and territorial prisons are of Indigenous origin, and 2,019 are in federal prisons, bringing the overall percentage up from 17% to almost 30%. What is the percentage of Indigenous peoples in this country? It's 5%.

Bill S-208 gives us, as lawmakers, an excellent opportunity to seek an effective remedy for the constitutional vulnerability of mandatory minimum sentences in the Criminal Code of Canada, and to address the systemic racism that is embedded in mandatory minimum sentences. Let's do everything we can to move this bill into law. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Moncion, for Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—
DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Pate, seconded by the Honourable Senator Petitcher, for the second reading of Bill S-214, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support of Bill S-214, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation. Again, I would like to thank my colleague Senator Pate for this bill and for her impressive and tireless advocacy for criminalized Canadians.

Bill S-214 is an honourable amendment to the Criminal Records Act. It takes meaningful steps towards removing systemic barriers related to criminal record suspensions. Removing these barriers will help criminalized Canadians build towards a successful reintegration into the community and positive contributions to our society as a whole.

When Canadians finish serving their time in prison, what kinds of opportunities do we as a society want to offer? It should be a just and humane offer. It should be an offer that creates positive outcomes for the community, the criminalized individual and their families.

We should have a system that promotes successful reintegration. If we want to reduce crime, recidivism and promote safe and healthy communities, we must be honourable and humane partners in supporting reintegration.

Our current record suspension system is not just, nor is it efficient. Application fees for record suspensions have risen from \$50 to over \$630 in the past 25 years under the guise of "cost recovery." But \$630 is not the final cost. One must factor in the price of extra costs such as fingerprinting and obtaining certain records. After accounting for all costs, it is estimated that the cost of applying for a record suspension could rise to over \$1,500. We levy a financial barrier on a criminalized individual who has paid their debt to society in the name of cost savings when doing so decreases their chance of successful reintegration and increases our chance of there being a less than optimal outcome for our communities.

A solution is presented in Bill S-214 in the form of an automatic record expiry. An automatic record expiry conditional on lawful behaviour serves as a just and efficient mechanism to reduce barriers to successful reintegration. In the past decade, 95% of those who had received a pardon or record suspension did not reoffend.

Having a criminal record is usually a barrier to employment, volunteering, housing, education and reintegration into families and communities. If we as a society have agreed that people are able to suspend their criminal record, why do we allow for a system that creates a significant barrier to establishing a life with stable housing, community participation and employment? Are these not the components of our own lives that we value and need?

I urge us to reconsider the priorities implicit in the current record suspension system. The high cost reduces the likelihood that criminalized Canadians can contribute to their communities from a stable foundation of housing and employment. Can we justify this discrimination in the name of saving money?

If we let the current system chug along, we are demonstrating our collective comfort with placing disproportionate financial burdens on criminalized Canadians that will reduce their success of community reintegration resulting in a collective loss for us all. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Moncion, for Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the consideration of the second report of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, entitled *Consideration of an inquiry report of the Senate Ethics Officer*, presented in the Senate on June 18, 2020.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 12-30(2), a decision cannot be taken on this report, as yet. Debate on the report, unless some other senator wishes to adjourn the matter, will be deemed adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate.

Is that agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Pursuant to rule 12-30(2), further debate on the motion was adjourned until the next sitting.)

• (1930)

[English]

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO REFER WORKPLACE ASSESSMENT REPORT COMMISSIONED BY THE COMMITTEE DURING THE SECOND SESSION OF FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Housakos, seconded by the Honourable Senator Mockler:

That the workplace assessment report commissioned by the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration during the second session of the Forty-first Parliament, entitled *Report of Evidence Relating to the Workplace in the Office of Senator Don Meredith*, dated July 13, 2015, be referred to the committee during the current session for the purposes of its work on related issues, subject to normal practices relating to confidential documents.

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Honourable colleagues, I rise today to speak on Motion 25, a motion brought forward by Senator Housakos on February 25 of this year.

The motion provides for the *Report of Evidence Relating to the Workplace in the Office of Senator Don Meredith*, commonly known as the Quintet report, to be referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, or CIBA.

As an employer, a woman and an advocate for women's rights, it is with great compassion and a sense of responsibility that I wish to see this motion adopted. It is important to note that there was a leaders' agreement not to call votes on non-government business because many senators were unable to attend the sittings last week and this week due to COVID-19. This motion, however, should be considered an exception given the impact it could have on the people involved in these proceedings. I hope we will in fact call the question on the motion after my speech. It is in the best interests of the victims to move this process forward.

I wish to speak to certain issues with regard to this motion, but first I would like to acknowledge the progress that was made to date on this file.

The Subcommittee on Human Resources adopted a report recommending that a statement be made to acknowledge the experiences of the former employees and that an independent expert be appointed to determine financial compensation for employees impacted by the conduct of the former senator. Despite numerous delays, I commend this progress.

I will now raise some important questions about how the Senate has dealt with this issue over the years. More specifically, I would like to point out to my colleagues a questionable timeline and the timeliness of this motion. I'm particularly concerned with the circumstances that have lengthened the process to proactively and constructively deal with this matter. Providing CIBA with access to this report is a mere step in the right direction when compared with what needs to be done by our institution.

Allow me to briefly go back in time in order to explain where my concerns come from.

In or around June 2015, Senator Nolin asked a private accounting firm, Quintet Consulting, to conduct a workplace assessment of the office of former Senator Meredith. Senator Housakos, who had just been appointed as the Speaker of the Senate, confirmed through a press release issued on July 16, 2015, that the report was received.

Almost five years have passed since. In February of this year, we received a motion to give access to the report to CIBA. One can reasonably question the gap in the timeline and whether some were preventing the survivors, actively or passively, from accessing the Quintet report during all these years.

I would also point out that one of the explanations given by the Senate Ethics Officer to justify delays in the submission of his report was the fact that parliamentary privilege applied to the Quintet report. Why have we not worked on ensuring this investigation could be done in a timely fashion by lifting some of those privileges for certain relevant sections of the Quintet report? I have no doubt that it would have been done at the time while respecting the anonymity of the survivors and

confidentiality of the report, as we intend to do today by moving forward with this motion. Since 2015, senators knew full well that, under the rules and practices of the Senate, this could have been possible.

On February 27, 2020, Senator Housakos first spoke on his motion. I put to him the following question:

[Translation]

We have been working on the harassment file for nearly two years and maybe even longer. We have heard from witnesses and done a lot of work. This much-talked-about document has never been made available, and we were told several times that we could not have access to it. Can you tell us why we can have access to it now? Why now, after all this time?

[English]

Senator Housakos did not provide information relevant to the timing of this motion or if and why access was denied since 2015. He spoke to me in private, saying that we could access any report at any time. All we must do is bring the request to the Senate, where it will be debated.

Senator Verner then asked Senator Housakos:

[Translation]

Senator Housakos, you heard and read the victims' testimony in the media. My question is this: Why did you deny them access to a document that was about them at the time the Senate Ethics Officer, Pierre Legault, was conducting the investigation?

[English]

To which Senator Housakos replied that the intention at the time was to protect the victims' identities. I'm not sure what has changed now, as we know that their identities can be protected throughout this process, especially since some of them have been demanding access to the report through the media. Since protecting the victims is of paramount importance, the report could be redacted to replace the names of victims with Xs or numbers. That way, if it leaks, it is less damaging to the victims. They have suffered for far too long and have been treated far too badly by this institution.

This situation has been ongoing for much longer than the debate that relates to this motion on the disclosure of the Quintet report to CIBA, which makes evident the urgency to take meaningful actions in the management of this matter.

The Senate Ethics Officer, Pierre Legault, ruled in June 2019 that former Senator Meredith had engaged in behaviour that constituted harassment and sexual harassment. Since that date, CIBA has had the ability — and I should say the responsibility — to ensure justice is rendered in due course and within a reasonable time.

I would therefore like to emphasize that this motion, by allowing the disclosure of the report to CIBA, is not essential in the decision making of the standing committee as it relates to

reaching a resolution. Enough time has passed, and this motion is important, but this initiative cannot be seen as being sufficient when we assess, in the grand scheme of things, how this whole situation has unfolded in the Senate. The Senate cannot abide by completely different standards than that of other employers when responding to complaints of such nature.

I urge you, honourable colleagues, to try to act in order to move well beyond the adoption of this motion. Thank you for your attention.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

The Hon. the Speaker: Question, Senator Housakos?

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Moncion, what I would like to know is: Why is it that you insist on drawing conclusions on this particular case, a case that's seven years old? It commenced seven years ago. There are a lot of details that you wouldn't be privy to because you weren't even in this institution. You continue to arrive at conclusions without having read the report.

• (1940)

You haven't read this particular report of the investigator. I assume you haven't read the HR report either. So I think you should refrain from coming to any quick conclusions before you read the reports and gather all the facts. I would like to know why it is that you're so insistent on coming to conclusions before reading the report.

Furthermore, I moved this motion a number of months ago, when it came to my attention that the new members of CIBA were interested in this case and were told that they didn't have access because of privilege. I did not know about it prior to that. If members of CIBA were given misinformation in terms of the procedures of this institution and how it works, you were free to come to me and ask me, and I would have resolved it in a matter of seconds, as I did when it came to my attention.

My second question is this: Why have you waited six months to pass this motion and provide the relevant information to the members of CIBA, like yourself and others?

Senator Moncion: To answer your first question, you had colleagues on the CIBA committee who knew that we were asking for access to this report. I was on the HR subcommittee and we were working on the harassment policy, so you knew about the work that we were doing on that policy. You knew that we were also trying to report on the issue of the harassment complaints.

This was information that was provided, and your colleagues on CIBA knew about this. I know that, as a caucus, you speak to your groups, to each other and provide information. Your colleagues knew about this, and we've been asking for this for two years. This was not an overnight thing.

If I may, just a final few words so that I answer completely. Why am I speaking now?

Senator Housakos: Well, six months later. You were in a hurry to get the report six months later.

[Senator Moncion]

Senator Moncion: We received your motion on February 27, we stopped sitting on March 13, and we had a break. I think we were in the chamber for about five days. Since then, we can speak on motions, but we cannot vote on them. Last week, Senator Dalphond spoke on this motion, and I took the adjournment. I am speaking today in the hope that we will be able to have a vote on this motion to advance this process further.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Your Honour, I am not going to speak to the motion, only to say that Senator Moncion, in her remarks, referred to an unofficial agreement, if you will, amongst leaders that we would not vote on non-government business. She said this was an exceptional case. I would tend to agree with that, because I think the leaders have all indicated that they are okay with this particular item going to a vote.

I would simply like to be on the record to say that, even though we would agree here, that in no way should lead anybody to believe that we will be in agreement with other non-government business being voted on. However, we agree that this is an exceptional case. I know Senator Tannas sent an email to Senator Cordy, as we all did, saying that we would agree. If nobody wants to adjourn the debate, then certainly we would be okay with it going to a vote. However, if somebody wants to adjourn the debate, we would also accept that.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

The Hon. the Speaker: It was moved by the Honourable Senator Housakos, seconded by the Honourable Senator Mockler, that the workplace assessment report commissioned by the standing — shall I dispense?

Hon. Senators: Dispense.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO STRIKE A SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SYSTEMIC RACISM—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Lankin, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Pate:

That a Special Senate Committee on Systemic Racism be appointed to conduct a review of systemic racism in Canada;

That, without limiting its mandate, the committee be authorized:

1. to review the extent and scope of anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and systemic racism in federal institutions and agencies;
2. to review the federal government's role in eliminating anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and systemic racism both within federal institutions and agencies and in Canadian society generally; and
3. to identify priorities and recommendations for government action to combat anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, and systemic racism;

That the committee be composed of 12 members, to be nominated by the Committee of Selection, and that 5 members constitute a quorum;

That the committee have the power 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;

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practices, and taking into account the exceptional circumstances of the current pandemic of COVID-19, the committee have the power to meet by videoconference or teleconference, if technically feasible for any purposes of:

1. the study authorized by this order;
2. an organization meeting pursuant to rule 12-13; or
3. electing a chair or deputy chair if there is a vacancy in either of those positions;

That both senators and witnesses be allowed to participate in meetings of this committee by videoconference or teleconference, with such meetings being considered for all purposes to be meetings of the committee in question, and senators taking part in such meetings being considered for all purposes to be present at the meeting;

That, for greater certainty, and without limiting the general authority granted by this order, when the committee meets by videoconference or teleconference:

1. members of the committee participating count towards quorum;
2. priority be given to ensuring that members of the committee are able to participate;
3. such meetings be considered to be occurring in the parliamentary precinct, irrespective of where participants may be; and
4. the committee be directed to approach in camera meetings with all necessary precaution, taking account of the risks to confidentiality inherent in such technologies;

That, when the committee meets by videoconference or teleconference, the provisions of rule 14-7(2) be applied so as to allow recording or broadcasting through any facilities arranged by the Clerk of the Senate, and, if a meeting being broadcast or recorded cannot be broadcast live, the committee be considered to have fulfilled the requirement that a meeting be public by making any available recording publicly available as soon as possible thereafter;

That there be a minimum of 72 hours' notice for a meeting of the committee by videoconference or teleconference, subject to technical feasibility;

That, the committee be authorized to report from time to time, submit a comprehensive interim report no later than six months after its organization meeting, and submit its final report no later than six months after the tabling or presenting of the comprehensive interim report;

That the committee be permitted to deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, with the reports then being deemed to have been tabled or presented in the Senate; and

That the committee retain the powers necessary to publicize its findings for 60 days after submitting its final report.

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, It's good to be back.

I'm making a statement on behalf of Regional Chief Ghislain Picard. This is a message from the Assembly of First Nations, Québec/Labrador on racism and discrimination:

I am a member of the Innu Nation of Eastern Quebec and Labrador. I have had the privilege of representing the First Nation leadership from ten different Nations, and these two jurisdictions, and I have for almost three decades now. The work from where I stand has not brought on many opportunities to celebrate successes. In fact, almost every single day is a reminder of the long journey ahead where we aspire as should be our right, to govern ourselves, as you do. I also have the privilege along with my colleague Regional Chief Terry Teegee from Takla Lake First Nation in British Columbia to carry the portfolio of justice on behalf of our colleagues from the executive committee of the Assembly of First Nations.

A little more than ten years ago, a former Prime Minister, before a G20 Summit, denied that Canada had a history of colonialism. This happened after the official apology made by the same government in this Parliament, in 2008, for the residential school system that aimed explicitly to "kill the Indian in the child". This is an important part of recent history that explains, in part at least, the current debate around systemic racism and discrimination in this country. Although we cannot rewrite history, we can certainly do what we can to right the present and set the course for a brighter future. This is what I consider to be my work from where I stand.

We know just about everything there's is to know about racism and discrimination. There have been many different faces and every single Indigenous person has had an encounter with discrimination at least once in their lives. There are many reasons why we refer to this as systemic racism but the most compelling one is found in the relationship between the Canadian State and our Peoples, for the past 150 years. This legislative framework imposed on our peoples since 1876, the Indian Act, is the prime example of the failed attempts by the State to eradicate our Nations. The irony is that this piece of legislation although amended a number of times since its inception, is still guiding the governance for many of our nations.

Systemic discrimination must be looked at as having been part of the colonial past of our country. Law enforcement played a major role in the colonization process. Must we remind you that it is the police that took away our children to forcefully enlist them in residential schools, it is the police that prevented our peoples to engage in their ceremonies and spiritual practices. Where others looked at police as a service to ensure their protection and safety, our peoples looked at them as the oppressor. So much that in many of our Indigenous languages, police translates into "those who take us away".

Despite the constitutional guarantees and after several Supreme Court decisions, First Nations constitutional and treaty rights continue to be violated. We look at access to public services, including the right to protection and security, something that other citizens take for granted, as part of those rights.

Yet, let's face it, there are politicians who do not dare name things for what they are. Although racism and discrimination are widely recognized and documented, some prefer to look at them as the problem of others, denying the fact that it is entrenched in the very fabric of Canadian society.

• (1950)

Denying the existence of systemic discrimination or racism is not a good path forward if we are to commit to a major reform of the justice system. It leads to denial there is a problem, although so many commissions of inquiry and studies have concluded its existence and its impacts on our lives.

So when will the Canadian state, the one behind this systemic discrimination, be fully on board on the urgency to act. We feel compelled to appeal to everyone who has a say and has the power to change things. This issue like all Indigenous issues should not be the subject of partisan debates. Instead, you should work together, with us, to eradicate this institutionalized treatment that continues to destroy lives.

Denying the existence of systemic racism is itself a form of discrimination. Especially at a time when the federal government, provincial governments, several city mayors,

the RCMP itself, the Montreal Police and many other police services across the country and even the Supreme Court of Canada, recognize its existence.

There have been at least 13 reports since 1967 that have looked at the relationship between the justice system and our peoples. They touched on almost every facet of the situation from the troubling incarceration rates of indigenous peoples to their relationship with the law and those who enforce it. 13 reports with conclusive evidence that Canada has failed. Add to that, probably hundreds of papers from academia that more than likely, came to the same conclusions. One of those first studies is the Laing report dating back to 1967, 53 years ago. This report dealt with the situation of the indigenous population in correctional facilities in the country.

Those who may still doubt that the justice system has failed our Peoples may want to take a good look at this reality as it is still more than relevant today. How does Canada compare with other countries? Let's look at those who share the same patterns and the same colonial history. In Australia, Indigenous people (including those from the Torres Strait) represent 28% of prisoners while they represent 3% of the population. The need for a reform in Australia has been expressed time and again. In New Zealand, Maori make up 51% of the prison population, while they make up 12.5% of the total population of that country.

In Canada, Indigenous people count for 4% of the total population, yet they represent 30% of the inmates in Canadian prisons.

As for Indigenous women, not only are their numbers high in Canada's correctional institutions, it is actually growing. The Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI) of Canada notes in its latest report that the number of Indigenous women in correctional facilities has increased by 74% over the past decade. Indigenous women now represent 41.4% of federally incarcerated women. Again, more findings that are both alarming and troubling.

Why is the issue of the relationship of Indigenous people in Canada to law enforcement such a difficult issue to address? The strained relationship between Indigenous people and the police has made the news so many times since the 1960s and has been documented so many times over. These are things that we know, can you imagine what we don't know?

Moreover, numerous studies have confirmed that Indigenous people are more likely to be detained by a police officer following an arrest, more often than not, on the basis of prejudice and racism. They are also more likely to be detained for longer periods as part of the bail process. They are more likely to be sentenced to imprisonment, and too often this is for a long period of time. Finally, they are more likely to be imprisoned for non-payment of fines. You can add to these sad indicators that Indigenous people are more likely to be killed in police actions.

Over the years, in an attempt to redress these sad indicators, the State has adopted various accommodation measures aimed at mitigating the impact of the imposition of Canadian law on Indigenous people. However, these have resulted with very mixed results. The Gladue reports represents one such measure. Almost twenty years later, with the above incarceration figures, it is clear that section 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code has not produced the desired effects within the Canadian justice system.

These are the things we know. These are the things we know, can you imagine the things we do not know? Who knew that our most vulnerable citizens may have been the subjects of a guessing game on their alcohol level by health care practitioners in health care facilities, those are the very institutions that should ensure their wellbeing. Here again, a breach of trust. Who will respond for such horrible and reprehensible acts?

Despite numerous recommendations and calls for action, Indigenous-specific issues of systemic discrimination are still not being addressed in a manner that reflects the urgency of the situation. Violence against Indigenous people is still making headlines. More studies or inquiries will not tell us more than what we already know. Canada must take immediate action and introduce a national plan to commit the provinces to officially recognize systemic racism. This action plan must also commit all governments at every level, to eradicate all forms of racism and discrimination against Indigenous people in its institutions, starting with the police services.

This task is before us. It must be looked at as a national emergency, it has gone on for far too long!

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I rise today to add my voice to support Senator Lankin's motion to establish a special Senate committee on systemic racism to conduct a review of systemic racism in Canada.

Thank you to Senator Lankin and Senator Bernard for this initiative. And thanks also to Senators Mégie and Moodie for their leadership on this important topic of systemic racism. Thanks also to the many colleagues who have delivered very moving and passionate speeches in this chamber.

Sadly, racism is deeply embedded in the history of our country and in all of our institutions. Racism in Canada exists in many forms, but two of the most pervasive in Canada are anti-black racism and anti-Indigenous racism.

The creation of Canada, as we know it, came about through the colonization, forced assimilation, widespread violence and extermination of the Indigenous peoples, who lived here long before the arrival of European settlers. In the centuries that followed, Canada continued to subject Indigenous peoples to horrors that white Canadians have trouble fully understanding: The forced removal of First Nations babies from their parents over the course of decades; the residential school system, which took children away from their parents and attempted to remove all traces of their heritage, language and culture, while abusing

and killing thousands of children; the murders and disappearances of as many of 4,000 Indigenous women and girls since the 1970s; and forced sterilization of Indigenous women, which still goes on to this day; and much more.

Still today, Indigenous Canadians face unimaginable discrimination. Though they make up only 5% of our country's population, Indigenous Canadians represent 30% of those incarcerated. Numbers indicate Indigenous Canadians are 10 times more likely to be shot and killed by a police officer than white Canadians.

In the past few weeks alone, we've seen two Indigenous people in New Brunswick, Chantel Moore and Rodney Levi, killed needlessly by police officers. How is that acceptable?

Being black in Canada also means dealing with constant discrimination.

• (2000)

The topic of anti-black racism has been centre stage in recent weeks sparked by the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Many in Canada would like to think this type of racism does not exist here in this country, but it does, and it is pervasive. In Toronto, black people make up about 8% of the population but represent 37% of the victims of police shootings. And far too often, there are few consequences for the perpetrators.

Black and Indigenous Canadians are also much more likely to be stopped arbitrarily by police. Of course, the police are not the only Canadian institution mired in racism. People of colour have a much harder time when applying for jobs in Canada. In fact, visible minorities in Canada are 11% more likely to face discrimination in hiring than in the United States. In workplaces, 54% of black Canadians and 53% of Indigenous Canadians face ongoing discrimination. Human resources in our country have not adequately addressed discriminatory hiring practices and racist workplace cultures.

Even here in the Senate of Canada I am aware that employees and even senators of colour face racism and discrimination.

We have heard many eloquent and important speeches from our colleagues in this chamber in recent days on this topic of systemic racism. I would like to thank Senator Bernard, Senator Moodie and Senator Mégie for leading the charge on this issue and Senator Lankin for bringing forward this motion.

Like Senator Lankin, I was hesitant to speak on this issue at first. Like Minister Chagger said of herself this afternoon, "I too can do better."

As a white man, I have not experienced racism and I will never fully understand its deep and harmful effects. However, I think it is important for us all to show our support for what is right. White Canadians need to use our privilege to fight for and with our black, Indigenous and racialized brothers and sisters. We need to be allies. I will be an ally.

[Senator Black (Ontario)]

I am very supportive of the creation of a special committee to tackle these issues. Do I expect that this committee will be able to fix centuries of systemic and institutional racism and discrimination? No. But I think it will be an important step in the fight against racism. Such a committee will be able to examine the many reports and recommendations on systemic racism that my honourable colleagues have outlined and that have not been acted upon.

It will also provide opportunities for senators to hear from Indigenous, black and racialized Canadians who need to be the ones leading the way, and from groups and organizations doing work on this serious issue. I look forward to that change.

Thank you for listening. I know many people feel a certain level of discomfort when discussing this topic, but we must discuss it anyway. And we must keep discussing it and acting on it until change happens.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

GUARANTEED LIVABLE INCOME

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Pate, calling the attention of the Senate to the need to examine and evaluate concrete measures available to the Senate to support the implementation of guaranteed livable income initiatives and to promote substantive equality for all Canadians.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable colleagues, I rise today with thanks again to Senator Pate and Senator Lankin for their leadership in advocating for a guaranteed livable income or a basic minimum income for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

I'm pleased to rise in this chamber not only to voice my own support for this initiative, because I'm an activist myself, but also to share the ideas thought up by my youth advisers, who have used advocacy tools to rally behind senators on this important issue.

[*English*]

This initiative of bringing this inquiry before our chamber is one that allows many of us to speak at a somewhat different angle on a very important program. Support has been garnered from across many of the lines that sometimes divide us.

I'd like to thank Senator Miville-Dechéne for her contributions to this discussion just prior to COVID-19, which shut us down for a period of time. I'd also like to begin by reminding this chamber, our colleagues in the other place and by inviting Canadians to read the letter that was sent to our Prime Minister

and cabinet on April 21, 2020, amidst the ongoing pandemic calling for a minimum basic income in Canada at a livable threshold.

Colleagues, it's not often that Canada has seen more than half of its senators, over 50, make such a public declaration in favour of a transformative policy pivot in national programming. This is reminiscent of when our national medicare program was established after the Second World War.

Following the leadership of senators, some of my youth advisers with the Canadian Council of Young Feminists — who are also members of the Basic Income Canada Youth Network — coordinated a supportive letter sent on May 5 to the Prime Minister and cabinet sharing youth perspectives on why we need a guaranteed liveable income in Canada. This second letter was signed by youth leaders, youth-oriented organizations and researchers across the country, a reach of over 1 million mostly young Canadians.

Just a few statistics highlight the reality of poverty in Canada. Almost 5 million Canadians live in poverty; one fifth of single mothers in this country live below the poverty line; and 1 in 5 racialized families live in poverty, compared to 1 in 20 white families.

What is more important to note is the human impact that poverty has on poor Canadians, their families and their communities.

I would like to give voice in this chamber today to testimony from poor Canadians presented by Canada Without Poverty to a parliamentary meeting recently.

Leila from Ottawa wrote:

... What is poverty? It is stress, isolation, and poor health; it is unacceptable.

Laura from Hamilton pointed out that:

... poverty can be simply a lack of food. But it's something more than that. It's a sense of determining ... worth ... relative ... to others. Poverty is about where I belong and if I belong. ...

Wayne from Halifax explained:

When living in poverty, you lose opportunities. It's amazing to me when people say that Canada is a land of opportunities, but the reality is that you need a way to access those opportunities.

The opportunities that Canadians living in poverty lose are reliable access to food, shelter, adequate health care and education. This could be living in overcrowded house or spending half of your monthly income or more on rent. It could be understanding the fact that men who live in poverty are likely to die four years earlier than men in the wealthiest 20% of the population.

We know that income levels are directly tied to health quality. On the Public Health Agency of Canada's web page, the first factor listed in the determinant of health is one's income and social status.

In an article on the impacts of poverty on Canadians' health, Dr. Dennis Raphael from the York University School of Health Policy and Management highlighted that:

... individuals living within the poorest 20% of neighbourhoods [are] more likely to die of just about every disease from which people can die of, than the more well-off. These included cancers, heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory diseases ...

• (2010)

Poverty undermines mental health in addition to undermining physical health. A study from the United Kingdom on the impacts of poverty on mental health found that.

Poverty increases the risk of mental illnesses, including schizophrenia, depression, anxiety and substance addiction.

The study also found:

Poverty during early childhood is associated with genetic adaptation, producing a short-term strategy to cope with the stressful developmental environment. This comes at the expense of long-term health, with increased susceptibility to cardiac disease and certain cancers.

A guaranteed liveable income can provide the resources needed to lift Canadians out of poverty more efficiently and respectfully than our current patchwork of social assistance programs. We do not need to continue the model of having our public service acting as welfare police, and requiring Canadians in poverty to prove their poorness and fall under the stigma of welfare. A basic income can provide a more efficient solution to poverty by providing a judgment-free source of income stability that is easy to administer.

The idea of a basic income is not new. As Senator Pate mentioned when she introduced this inquiry, it was in 1971 that the Croll report recommended a guaranteed liveable income as the first step towards fighting poverty in Canada.

In my home province, between 1975 and 1978, a basic income pilot was launched in Dauphin, Manitoba, not that far from the town where I grew up. In 1975, the Government of Ontario introduced an unconditional cash transfer to lift seniors out of poverty. Such a model was adopted by the federal government and still stands today as the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

In 2017, the Government of Ontario launched the basic income pilot that was designed by former Senator Hugh Segal, who worked for many years, also in collaboration with retired Senator Art Eggleton.

I must commend the other place for establishing a national poverty reduction strategy in 2018. The strategy does good work by legislating targets to reduce poverty in our society, but it does not include a guaranteed basic income for every Canadian that needs it. It reflects the cross path that we are at in our fight to

solve poverty, because no honest person in this country can hold the opinion that Canada is not capable of having no poverty in our country. If there is any country in the world with the resources and the capacity, it is Canada.

We can either be static and accept the often condescending social assistance programs as they are, or we can respond to more than 50 years of studies, reports and the lived experiences of those who demonstrate the effectiveness of guaranteed liveable income.

We have generally agreed as a society that it is beneficial to provide financial support to economically vulnerable people in our society. Economics and ethics argue in favour of supporting someone when they don't have the capacity to buy enough food or shelter. We've adopted the idea of Canadians receiving income assistance. We already have a wide range of patchwork income support across provinces and territories.

This pandemic has exposed the insufficiency of unemployment insurance at the federal level. We have seen how impressively rapid the Canada Revenue Agency has been in mobilizing CERB payments to those who very much need it.

A guaranteed liveable income, a minimum basic income, could become the largest, most effective paradigm shift in poverty reduction since the expansion of the modern welfare state. Our system should be efficient and transparent. It should be imbued with respect for the dignity of all Canadians, and not just because it's the right thing to do or the good thing to do. Let's move forward toward a more equitable future that provides Canadians the opportunity to escape poverty and to make our democracy stronger as a tangible result.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

(On motion of Senator Moncion, for Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

Hon. Judith G. Seidman, pursuant to notice of June 23, 2020, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology have the power to meet on Friday, June 26, 2020, even though the Senate may then be sitting, and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

She said: Honourable senators, I move the motion standing in my name.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Senator McPhedran]

PRESENCE OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION WITHIN CANADIAN INSTITUTIONS

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition) rose pursuant to notice of June 16, 2020:

That he will call the attention of the Senate to the presence of racism and discrimination within Canadian institutions.

He said: Honourable senators, I do sincerely apologize for doing this at this late hour, but it is a very important inquiry, and if we don't do it today, it won't be done until fall. Please indulge me and bear with me.

Honourable senators, I rise today to launch an inquiry into the presence of racism and discrimination within Canadian institutions.

Colleagues, many of us in this chamber have not personally experienced racism. For that reason, we are often blind to what visible minorities continue to face on a regular basis. It is easy for us to recognize blatant expressions of racism, however, we are far less perceptive and aware of the subtle ways many in this country face oppression. It is frankly tragic that it would take the senseless murder of a man in the United States to bring this conversation to the forefront.

Colleagues, we have a duty to represent minorities in this chamber. As parliamentarians and policy-makers, I believe it is imperative that we are part of the ongoing conversation on racism in Canada. It is for this reason that I raise this inquiry with you today. Last week, we had an emergency debate brought forward by Senator Moodie. I took great interest in the debates that occurred within that forum. Today, we had a Committee of the Whole on the same problem.

The issue of racism and discrimination within Canadian institutions is one that requires a thorough review. My hope is that this inquiry will allow us to build upon last week's debate, as this issue is complex. I believe it is important that we allow for extensive dialogue within the parameters of an inquiry. This will provide us with time to reflect on what we have heard, and more importantly, will allow all members of this chamber to take part in the days, weeks and months ahead, if that is the will of this chamber.

Unique regional perspectives will be critical to understanding the scope and prevalence of racism and race-based discrimination in Canada. As parliamentarians, we are afforded a platform. More importantly, we are given a responsibility to give a voice to the under-represented groups. That responsibility does not include speaking in platitudes, offering condescending lectures or producing another report to collect dust on a shelf.

Around the world, people are encouraged to have the difficult conversations, even when they are uncomfortable. The freedom to have those conversations is absolutely essential. It is the only way we can learn from one another and ultimately grow as a society.

• (2020)

Sadly, in the past few weeks, this is not entirely what we have seen. We have seen a peak in cancel culture, calling for the firing and dismissal of individuals who do not strictly adhere to an identity politics philosophy.

Colleagues, when one disagrees with the removal of statues of imperfect historical figures, when one questions the validity of the concept of privilege based solely on group identity, when someone questions the level of systemic racism in an institution or disagrees with the particular style of protest, that person should not be dismissed out of hand. How can we expect to educate one another and learn from each other when we pre-emptively remove individuals from the conversation?

The Senate is one place that must be permitted to have the difficult conversations. It was designed precisely for the purpose of thinking soberly, which means entertaining all sides of the debate and a diversity of opinions. As we take part in this important discussion, let's give each other the benefit of the doubt. Let's be gracious. Let's be permitted to have the difficult conversations. As public speaker Peter Bromberg stated:

When we avoid difficult conversations, we trade short term discomfort for long term dysfunction.

Colleagues, while there are many things we can acknowledge in our history with pride, Canada, like all nations, has its own dark history, full of divisions and struggles for equality since its conception. What makes Canada exceptional, however, is growth, progress, a willingness to learn, a willingness to admit when we have wronged and a willingness to change.

Prior to Confederation in 1867, many people were drawn to this new country, seeking freedom from persecution and a chance to pursue a better life. The arrival of the European settlers and the subsequent displacement and assimilation of Indigenous peoples, followed by the struggle between Catholic France and Protestant Britain for political control of Canada are tensions that are well documented. There was bound to be a long road ahead with respect to mending divisions and achieving unity, fairness and equality.

The establishment of treaties, the abolition of the slave trade, the suffragette movement granting women the right to vote and hold elected office were some of the early steps toward bridging the divide. The rights of workers started to come to fruition during the First World War, where protests in the streets ultimately led to the right to safe working conditions and a living wage.

The pressing issue in conversations around the world today is racism. While it is impossible to capture the entirety of the lived experience of racism in our history, allow me to walk you through a few examples of historical policy and decisions that were rooted in antiquated, racist beliefs and that have been subsequently acknowledged by Canadian governments.

The Chinese head tax was imposed from 1885 to 1923 as an explicit effort to reduce immigration from China. Prime Minister Harper, on behalf of the federal government, officially apologized on June 22, 2006. The *Komagata Maru*, a boat

carrying 376 prospective immigrants from India, was prohibited from making port in Vancouver in May 1914, only because the passengers were Sikh. People of Ukrainian descent were designated as enemy aliens during the First World War and were interned in camps.

The MS *St. Louis*, a ship carrying 907 German Jewish refugees that arrived in Canadian waters in 1939, after being denied entry into Cuba and the United States, was also denied entry into Canada. The ship returned to Europe, where at least 255 of its passengers later died in the Holocaust. There was the internment, relocation, property confiscation and deportation of Japanese and Italian Canadians between 1939 and 1945.

As for our Indigenous populations, we should note that the Indian Act was only changed in 1960 to allow First Nations people to vote in federal elections without losing their legal Indian status. And we all know the impact of the Indian residential school system on Indigenous populations.

Clearly, colleagues, this is not an exhaustive list. To look back at these very moments paints a grim picture. Yet it also paints a picture of a culture of reparation. I believe this context is important as we embark on this critical discussion. As has been said before, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

So, where are we now? According to Statistics Canada, in 1871, the year of the first Canadian census following Confederation, about 20 origins were listed within the population. As of 2016, over 250 origins were reported, with more than 41% of the population having recorded more than one. More than 2 million people have reported being of Aboriginal ancestry.

Colleagues, these figures matter, as they paint a picture of who we are as a nation. Canadians are proud of their unique Canadian identity, including their individual, personal heritage. The promotion and celebration of multiculturalism is one of our many great attributes.

In 2020, I would say that Canadians feel fortunate to live in a country that is overwhelmingly welcoming, tolerant and inclusive. That said, on May 25, 2020, exactly one month ago today, the world's eyes were opened and remain open as to the work we still have to do, including here at home.

For example, the Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde expressed his frustration last week regarding a series of violent, sometimes fatal, confrontations between police and members of the First Nations across Canada. He made a plea for real action, saying that the lack of action when it comes to different recommendations is what is "killing our people," adding that this was not the time for another report.

I agree with him on this. As I said before, this is not the time to add another report to an already overstocked shelf.

Last week, I briefly mentioned the mistreatment of Canadians of Asian heritage in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is hard to comprehend that this level of ignorance exists within our borders. However, it is undeniable. There were reports in Toronto and Vancouver of people shouting racist remarks and spitting on

individuals of Asian descent on the street. The Vancouver police department noted a 600% increase in reported hate crimes targeting the Asian community.

There is no place for this kind of intolerance in Canada.

According to a Canadian Press article, the number of police-reported hate crimes reached an all-time high in 2017, largely driven by incidents targeting Muslim, Jewish and black people. Statistics Canada indicates that hate crimes have been steadily climbing since 2014 but increased by an alarming 47% in 2017. The latest data show that the numbers have remained elevated.

In the same article, it is noted that 2,073 hate crimes were reported this 2017, and this number only reflects reported crimes. How many more hate crimes have occurred without having been reported? It is devastating to consider that for those crimes, Canadians have been targeted because of their colour, race, religion or sexual orientation. Too often the victims of discrimination and racism suffer in silence.

Unfortunately, while our current government talks a good game on equality, they have not instilled any confidence in the Canadian public that real solutions are on the horizon.

• (2030)

There have been many Calls to Action and promises made by the Trudeau government with respect to Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, but many of these promises have not been fulfilled.

As Jody Wilson-Raybould said in a special to *The Globe and Mail* this weekend, as much as she wants to be optimistic that our current government has the will, understanding and courage to make foundational, transformative change to address systemic racism, including through new laws, policies and practices, based on her experience she has no such optimism. She stated:

Time and again my experience was symbolic inaction and ineffective baby steps were privileged over transformative efforts to address Canada's colonial legacy, systemic racism and the challenges with our criminal justice system. Too often, political expediency triumphed over bold and necessary action.

As for the Prime Minister's latest symbolic demonstration, Ms. Wilson-Raybould stated:

The Prime Minister choosing to "take a knee" and "listen" on June 5 is a sign of cynical practices we should condemn and reject. It is, once again, merely symbolic inaction.

The words of Jody Wilson-Raybould.

With respect to symbolic inaction, we need to look no further than this government's sentiments toward the removal of historic statues and the renaming of places and street names.

Last week, Prime Minister Trudeau would not even rule out changing the name of the Laurier Club. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, colleagues, has long been lauded as one of Canada's great Prime Ministers. Jean Chrétien called him, "A visionary who opened Canada's doors to the world and who settled the West. A pioneer

of Canadian independence. . . . I often found myself wondering, when facing the difficult questions of the day, how to apply his lessons and wisdom."

I have countless other examples from former Liberal and Conservative leaders and prime ministers about his profound contribution to Canadian history.

Colleagues, historical figures should be assessed on the whole of their contributions and not solely on their worst moments. If the Prime Minister supports the removal of Laurier's name, what's next? The Famous Five? What about Pierre Elliott Trudeau? If the greater contribution to history is not relevant, and we are to judge individuals by today's standards, the goalposts will continue to move until we have no one left to commemorate. Is that progress, colleagues?

I would agree with French President Macron that these types of gestures do nothing to stamp out racism and are tantamount to a false rewriting of history. Perhaps, instead of pontificating about the knocking down of statues, the Prime Minister could have listened to the most powerful Indigenous voice at the table, his Minister of Justice, when she pled with him for criminal justice reform.

Colleagues, now is not the time for symbolic gestures, platitudes and pandering. As hate crimes continue to climb, our country needs leadership. Without meaningful action, there is no meaningful change.

While we consider how we can do better as a society and how we can move forward, it is important to view Canada in a global context. As Rex Murphy stated in a recent column, "Most Canadians, the vast majority in fact, are horrified by racism and would never participate in it."

I believe it is safe to say that around the world, most would look at our institutions, our schools, the overwhelming emphasis on tolerance and acceptance, our immigration policies, our promotion of multiculturalism, and would look upon us fondly as an example even.

Colleagues, in no way am I mitigating the bigotry that exists within our society, as it does in all societies. However, to view Canada as a racist country does not paint a complete and accurate picture.

As to whether racism is systemic in some of our institutions, I believe it is worthy of further examination. But Prime Minister Trudeau has not offered a single meaningful solution on how to address issues of racial inequality, and yet is proud to stand publicly and denounce our country as a racist one, one we should be ashamed of. This is Canada, the country lauded historically by Liberal and Conservative Prime Ministers alike as the greatest country in the world. In these challenging moments in our history, our Prime Minister should be our biggest champion, and instead he has used this opportunity to be our biggest critic.

So, colleagues, where do we go from here? We would be remiss if we did not explore the issue of police brutality in the context of this discussion. While the data is unclear on how race

plays a factor in fatal interactions with the police, I think the historically tumultuous relationships between law enforcement and certain communities cannot be ignored.

For example, in 2019, a YouGov poll in the United States demonstrated that black people are far more worried about being the victim of police violence than being the victim of a violent crime.

Washington Post contributor Radley Balko, in a powerful column, also made the point that in the United States, white people can compartmentalize police brutality while black people do not have that luxury. He states:

When white people see video of unjust police abuse of a white person, it may make us angry, sad or uncomfortable, but most of us don't see ourselves in the position of the person in the video. If we're polite and respectful, we think, and don't put ourselves in scenarios that lead to confrontations with police officers, there's little chance that we'll ever end up like Daniel Shaver. When black people see video of Officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on George Floyd's neck, their reaction is much more likely to be *that could have been me — or my son, or friend or brother*.

Colleagues, these issues are layered. There is a historical context to consider when understanding why certain communities have developed an overall mistrust of law enforcement. Both in the United States and here at home, meaningful action will be required to make effective reparations.

However, I still say that defunding our police services is not the answer. I find it truly frightening that our Prime Minister would not rule out whether he would defund the RCMP when asked recently by the media. If the goal is to mend the relationship between police and the communities they serve, how exactly would defunding the police achieve that?

The idea that most RCMP officers or most police officers, for that matter, are racist, dangerous or malicious, with anything other than the intention to protect and serve in mind, is simply not rooted in reality. Our approach to these issues cannot be reactionary or made out of anger. We need to remain united in demanding improvements like increased transparency and improved de-escalation training to start to rebuild trust in these fractured relationships. When we see horrific cases of police violence against a visible minority, the easy answer is that the police officer is a racist. But I suspect the issue at hand is much more complex than that.

In preparing for this inquiry, I went back to the report from the other place, prepared by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage from February 2018 entitled "*Taking Action Against Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia*." The report delves into systemic racism. I found Senator Murray Sinclair's explanation quite interesting. Allow me to read just a portion:

People have a hard time understanding what systemic discrimination is and what systemic racism is. This is because it's not the kind of racism that comes necessarily from the behaviour, words, and actions of individuals, other than the fact that they are guided by the system in which

they are functioning. The phrase that I always like to use is that systemic racism is the racism that's left over after you get rid of the racists. Once you get rid of the racists within the justice system, for example, you will still have racism perpetrated by the justice system. This is because the justice system follows certain rules, procedures, guidelines, precedents, and laws that are inherently discriminatory and racist because those laws, policies, procedures, processes, and beliefs—including beliefs that direct individuals on how and when to exercise their discretion—come from a history of the common law, which comes from a different culture, a different way of thinking.

• (2040)

I would like to thank Senator Sinclair for his thoughtful explanation. While we examine whether systemic racism exists in certain institutions — and if it does, to what extent — it is helpful to be on the same page with an understanding of the concept.

That said, we need to consider the comments of systemic racism made by the RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki. Regardless of whether you agree with her about the level of systemic racism entrenched in RCMP policy and procedures, she too admitted that the concept is difficult to define. She said she had heard 5 to 10 different definitions of the concept, as I'm sure we all have. After struggling to define the term, the commissioner later expressed her belief that there is systemic racism in the RCMP.

The Prime Minister's chastising comments on this matter, once again, demonstrate the glaring hypocrisy of his government. In October 2018, Minister Pablo Rodriguez questioned the very existence of systemic racism. He did this while being the Minister of Heritage and Multiculturalism.

Honourable senators, how is it unacceptable for the RCMP commissioner to acknowledge that she struggles with a definition of a concept that is notoriously difficult to define before conclusively acknowledging its presence in the organization, and yet to the Prime Minister it's no big deal when his Minister of Heritage and Multiculturalism questioned its very existence. I do not recall anyone asking for the minister to resign at the time, and he certainly was not the subject of a Trudeau public scolding.

Honourable senators, the objective of this inquiry is that together in this chamber we can collaboratively examine the presence of racism and discrimination within our Canadian institutions. We first need to determine where it exists before we can focus on solutions. We still have a long road ahead of us, but I believe that the wide range of regional and cultural perspectives in this chamber will add tremendous value to this conversation.

Some of the questions we need to consider are: Where are the racial divides in this country? How do we rebuild relationships of trust between law enforcement and some of the communities they serve? Is there unconscious bias that we need to address? Are racism and race-based discrimination present at the executive level of our institutions? Is it present in all Canadian institutions? Is there room for improvement in our hiring processes? What factors have led to such a profound disparity in income between races in this country? Are there systems in place that guide us

toward inadvertent discrimination of individuals? These are just a few of the questions I hope we will explore throughout the duration of this inquiry.

What I take solace in is this: With vastly different political philosophies and ideologies governing how we in this chamber view the world and approach solutions to the problems we are faced with, we have come together to debate how — not whether — we can achieve equality in Canada. That, colleagues, is what makes a country like Canada unique on the world stage. The fact that we are constantly striving to do better is what makes Canada a country to be proud of.

Honourable senators, it has been 57 years since Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech. This speech still resonates today around the world. Today the most quoted lines of that speech are:

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. . . .

I have a dream today. . .

Why did these words resonate so powerfully? Because it pointed out an uncomfortable truth. There are deeply ingrained ignorant and racist beliefs held by some in our society that will undoubtedly impact the way visible minorities will move through this world. The reason these words are still powerful today is because, while we have made significant strides, this is still a reality.

Honourable senators, it is tragic that it would take a horrific example of police brutality to blow the doors open on this long overdue conversation. However, there are parallels to be drawn with the Harvey Weinstein case, which subsequently led to the #MeToo movement. There were many discussions that took place at the time and that continue to take place. These conversations were uncomfortable, full of disagreements, and yet these conversations led to learning and ultimately to meaningful change.

Similarly, we have the opportunity now to listen and to hear groups in our society who feel undervalued and disrespected. The fact that there are those who are still fighting for equal treatment under the law and who feel they are not full and equal members of this society simply because of the colour of their skin means that there is much work to be done. It is my sincere hope that we can continue the legacy of progress that Canada is known for on the world stage and seize this critical moment in history.

Let me conclude with this, colleagues, a scripture from Psalms 34:18, which says:

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted

And saves the crushed in spirit.

That, colleagues, is our obligation to stand up for the brokenhearted and the crushed in spirit. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: I want to thank Senator Plett for starting this inquiry.

I want to acknowledge the article *Race, Power and Policy: Dismantling Structural Racism* by the Grassroots Policy Project because I've grown up in institutions. When we grow up in institutions, we internalize a lot of what has been taught to us. So many times — I have to dig deep and bring that out and see that part of myself.

"What can we do for you today?" I asked the patient as I put the chair down. She sat in the chair, sad, looking pale and withdrawn, not wanting to look into my face, even though she had been a patient before. I asked her, "Is something wrong?" and I touched her arm gently. She burst into tears and I raised the chair back up and asked the assistant if she could leave us, and the patient told me her story of deep trauma. I advised her that today was not a good day for dental care, but that she needed help to look after her mental state, that we would go to see the nurse together, that she needed help with her withdrawal, as well as added support. I told her I would book her for Tuesday the following week.

Provision of holistic care when you work on the First Nations communities — which I have for over 30 years — is frowned upon. When you go in, they tell you: "You drill. It doesn't matter what that patient is going through." I never really looked at that before, but over time I realized I was delivering care inappropriately.

Many patients have mental health issues that are the foundation of their problems. So on that date it wasn't dental care that was the problem, it was mental care. When I work like that, then I get penalized by the system because the government will judge that I didn't do my work.

On Tuesday, she called me to say that she would be unable to attend the appointment. I told her that when she was ready she was to give us a call and we would squeeze her in.

• (2050)

On Thursday evening, she was brought into the nursing station unconscious. She was released by the nurse, still unconscious, to go to the jail cells. That is against the standard of care. She shouldn't have been released, nor should the RCMP member have accepted her in that state, for RCMP are unable to monitor unconscious people appropriately.

On Friday morning, she was brought into the nursing station from the cells with no life signs. We were later informed by the people who shared the cells with her that in the morning she had been crying and she was in pain and asked to be taken to the nursing station. The RCMP member told her, "Quit faking." Only when she became unconscious again was she transported to the nursing station.

At two o'clock that afternoon, after several unsuccessful attempts to revive her, she passed on, a young woman, to many just another statistic. No investigation was made, and both the nurse and the RCMP member were transferred to other reserves.

Who is there to protect Indigenous peoples if not the RCMP? A swift and strong response by law enforcement can help to stabilize and calm the community as well as help the family to heal. She was denied health care and denied safety by the RCMP. This failure to respond forces community members to be made aware of how powerless they are and feel further victimized and vulnerable by the very people who are sent to help them.

What happens when it's law enforcement and health professionals who contribute to the problem of injustice? Shouldn't the supervisors have requested an investigation? What about the rule of law?

As they were trying to revive her, I was down the hallway drilling teeth, and I remember thinking about her and the family, but I had patients to see, and it really put me in a position of questioning how we did our jobs in the North. It was a hard day for me.

Honourable senators, today I share with you stories of systemic institutional and structural racism I have experienced first-hand while working as a dentist in the North. These are true events that happened on reserve to Indigenous people, including myself. Sometimes stories are the only way people understand how the daily lives of Indigenous peoples are filled with unfairness, powerlessness, lack of voice and violence.

I want to tell you here that there are many good nurses that I have worked with, awesome nurses and doctors, as well as RCMP. There are always good people around. I just wanted to put that on the record.

In the first *World report on violence and health* dated October 3, 2002, violence was defined as:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in . . . injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

Structural violence is “. . . any constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures.” That is a quote from Johan Galtung in 1969. It involves “Unequal access to resources, to political power, to education, to health care, or to legal standing . . .”

Structural violence is not an accident, but rather an outcome of human action that generates these systems in the first place. It is present as exploitation, poverty, misery, denial of basic needs and marginalization. In other words, equality can be seen as structural violence.

As you know, I grew up in the institution of residential school for 11 years. In that system, I realized that I had to come to believe in racism because I internalized it and directed it at myself because that was what was happening to me. I was raised with the belief that there are structures of domination created by the government and enforced by the Catholic Church in my case. In the end, I turned that racism toward myself, absorbed it and learned it very well.

To date, I still live with the danger of that genocide within me. Isn't that something? That genocide is here. It was planted there. I have the ability to erode my spirithood when and if I choose. Just because I became a senator doesn't erase the effects of the racialization I underwent.

How do we get to the bottom of that accumulation and incorporation of long-standing racialized practices and come to understand and acknowledge them? That is one of the things I am looking at now.

In one of the communities, I agreed to volunteer as the chair of the school committee. Some of the parents came to me to inform me that two RCMP members were drinking with two young girls from the reserve. In this community, as with many others, RCMP members were flown in every two weeks and they stayed for three or four days. I went to speak to the girls, and they confirmed that they had been drinking with the RCMP members.

These two people had confiscated alcohol from one of the teachers who lived on provincial land while allowing the non-Indigenous teachers to have alcohol in their residence. I advised that teacher to go and get her bottle, as she had the right to have social drinks, like any other Canadian. It is not a crime to have alcohol for social drinking.

What was I going to do with this situation? I spoke to one of the nurses about my dilemma and asked her to speak to one of the members. She did, and when he walked into the nursing station on the next visit, he said to me, “How long will you remain here?” And I said, “For a very, very long time.” He transferred by the end of the month.

The other problem with this is that all baggage going to reserves are checked before they are loaded onto the plane. As passengers, we are searched when we land on provincial land to get to the reserve. How can the RCMP or their representatives do this? It was because it was at the request of chiefs and councils so alcohol wouldn't be brought onto the reserves, and it was especially to stem bootlegging, which is a big problem on many reserves.

However, the bylaws of the chiefs and councils are not normally recognized outside their jurisdiction of federal land and even sometimes within their own jurisdiction, as we saw with the marijuana bill.

When the RCMP asked if he could pat me down, I said, “No, this is illegal.” And he said, “Well, you can get back on the plane.” I said, “No, I haven't done anything wrong. I'm just coming here to work. If you want to search me, you do it on federal land, not on provincial land.”

This system of searching people and baggage hasn't worked. The bootlegging is still happening.

What I want to impress upon you here is that the first action is one of negative law enforcement. It's already like we have all committed a crime, and this has been happening for many years. That's the first interaction that the police, the RCMP, and the community people have.

Where is the rule of law? How did racialization set the stage and contribute to the various arenas of injustice in the story I have just told you? Racialization showed up in those young girls' lives and experiences, in their own neighbourhood, and now what was their impression of law enforcement? How did it reinforce marginalization? How does it define "illegal"? You can't do it but I can because I have the power.

As adults in the community, we also have to struggle around all the ways our youth are threatened and to protect them, not only from there but from law enforcement officers.

• (2100)

Theses stories about systemic and structural racism on reserve involve the institutions of policing and health, but within this story there are also accumulations of deeply embedded historical, long-standing racialized practices of the institution of education, food insecurity, residential schools, homelessness and domestic violence, all contributing to these two stories.

With education, INAC will give \$6,000 if it's band operated. Those same kids on provincial land will get \$12,000. The reserve said, "Do you know what? We can't afford to do this to our children," they took the children and put them on provincial land, and the next day the province gave those kids \$12,000 each. With food insecurity, everything adds up.

When these people walk, they are walking with all those social determinants of health around them. There are many examples of morbidity and premature mortality, what people call "social murder."

How, then, do Indigenous people make sense of the system they live in, a system that was created for them politically and socially? How do non-Indigenous people then justify the maintenance of these systems? There is differential application of law enforcement and health care, blatant abandonment of duty of care, disregard of human life and other human rights including security, integrity and safety.

These stories and many more exist. When we walk into the reserve — we fly in on Monday and fly out on Friday — I see this almost every week. It might not be all the officers, but it's the life people live up North.

A nurse I was working with on the reserve said to me that as health professionals and as senators, we have to be aware of two lifelines when we deal with people. The first lifeline is the moment when people communicate their needs to us, and they may be fearful and in great despair.

The Hon. the Speaker: Excuse me, Senator McCallum, but your time has expired. Are you asking for five more minutes?

Senator McCallum: Yes, please.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator McCallum: The first lifeline is the moment when people communicate their needs, requests and concerns to us as senators, and they may be fearful and in great despair. We must remember that the second lifeline is the moment when we touch their lives. How we fulfill their requests will forever leave a lasting impression on them, but also on ourselves. Thank you.

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Plett's inquiry. I would like to thank Senator Plett for ensuring that the Senate uses every tool at its disposal to ensure that we, as a chamber, are working on solutions aimed at ending systemic racism in Canada. That is a large task that will require many incremental steps, in my opinion, as it will take time and planning to undo generations of discriminatory and racist policies, attitudes and practices that are deeply entrenched in our institutions.

While I would like to take more time to formulate a thoughtful contribution to this debate, I think that we cannot rise for the summer without first emphasizing why this inquiry is important. Like Senator McCallum, I'd like to tell a few current stories.

Regis Korchinski-Paquet, 29, an Afro-Indigenous woman living in Toronto, Ontario, died on May 27 after her mother called the police pleading for her to be taken to a mental health facility after they'd had an argument. Sometime after five officers arrived at the family's twenty-fourth floor apartment, Regis Korchinski-Paquet fell to her death from the balcony. While details remain unclear, the family continues to assert that this young woman would still be alive if the police had intervened differently.

Chantel Moore was a 26-year-old Indigenous woman whose family and friends say was trying to start her life over to be a better mother. She was shot repeatedly by an officer in Edmundston, New Brunswick, during a wellness check.

Mona Wang from Kamloops, British Columbia, says she suffered emotional and physical abuse while in mental distress. Video footage from her building shows this young nursing student being dragged through a hallway while handcuffed, in pants and a sports bra. When she lifts her head, the officer can be seen stepping on her head with her boot and later lifts Ms. Wang's head by pulling her by the hair.

Chief Allan Adam of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in northern Alberta was violently arrested by RCMP officers for a vehicle offence outside an establishment in Fort McMurray. Following a verbal confrontation in which Chief Adam accuses the RCMP of harassing him, Chief Adam's wife is forcefully shoved against a truck and yells, "Ow!" Naturally, Chief Adam went to his wife's defence, only to be tackled to the ground and repeatedly punched and then put into a chokehold. The arrest was so unnecessarily forceful that all charges against Chief Adam were later withdrawn.

In Kinngait, Nunavut, an intoxicated Inuk man was struck by the open door of an RCMP officer's truck, tackled and forcefully subdued by five officers. The tactics used included kneeling on the man's neck. He was later placed in a cell where he was assaulted by another detainee.

Colleagues, these are not isolated instances. They are only some of the many instances that unfortunately showcase the maltreatment of black, Indigenous and persons of colour — Canadians — by Canadian institutions. In these cases, the incidents are related to policing.

Let me be clear: As Senator McCallum also said just now, I don't mean to diminish or demean the good work of the many hardworking, honest, caring and compassionate officers. I know some have been hurt deeply by these recent publicized events. I know that several of our colleagues served in police forces and are good, honourable people. However, it is important to call out incidents of excessive force and violence. It is important to say the names of those whose stories are at the centre of our

deliberations. We must say their names; we cannot allow them to become faceless, forgotten incidents. These are people from coast to coast to coast in Canada who have felt the sting of systemic racism, and we cannot allow their suffering to go unanswered.

With that, Your Honour, unless anyone else wishes to speak, I would like to adjourn the debate for the balance of my time. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Patterson, debate adjourned.)

(At 9:09 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 9 a.m.)

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