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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, May 5, 2022

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Leader of the Progressive Senate Group who requests, pursuant to rule 4-3(1), that the time provided for the consideration of Senators' Statements be extended today for the purpose of paying tribute to the Honourable Terry M. Mercer, who will retire from the Senate on May 6, 2022.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the family and friends of the Honourable Senator Mercer: his wife, Ellen Mercer; his son, Michael Mercer; his cousin, John Mercer and his wife, Neena; and a former staff member, Sherry Petten.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE TERRY M. MERCER

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I didn't think it would be this hard. It is a difficult task to sum up into words such a fulsome career as that of Senator Terry Mercer. His contributions over his life in politics to the people of Nova Scotia, and indeed to all Canadians through his work in this chamber, are numerous. I have known Terry for a very long time, and I have always appreciated his insights and, more importantly, his friendship. We will certainly miss his voice in our deliberations in this chamber, and what an unmistakable voice it is, but I am confident that he will continue his advocacy as he turns the page on this next chapter.

Senator Mercer was appointed to the Senate in 2003 by the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien. This appointment came after many years of involvement with the Liberal Party of Canada. He served as Director of Fundraising and National Director of the Liberal Party of Canada. I would have to say that Terry excels when engaging with people. He is what we would call a people person. This is particularly true when engaging with youth. There was no better example than his youth days on the Hill with

Senator Munson. These events were a celebration of and for young people, and encouraged them to reach for their highest potential.

No one could accuse Terry of not knowing how to throw a good party, certainly not those of us for whom the annual Mercer Christmas party in his East Block office was a tradition not to be missed. Terry and his staff went above and beyond for these gatherings with plenty of food and live musicians. He always made sure there was a charitable connection too. Whether it was a monetary donation or a gift for those in need, the theme was giving, always giving. Terry is someone who just has a huge heart. I'm sure many of us have stories that highlight this admirable trait.

As Senator Munson wrote to me in reference to you, Terry, and to your retirement, and I'll quote him, this is from Senator Munson:

Terry, you always brought people together and it didn't matter to you who they were, or who they represented. Because it wasn't about politics, it was about people. We lived and worked in a special environment — the Hill — and you understood intuitively, whether someone was working in a cafeteria, or a cleaner in one of our offices who was going home for the night, you stopped and made sure they were recognized.

Senator Mercer was instrumental when we first formed the Progressive Senate Group. As we were figuring out the direction of this new group, Terry took on — without hesitation — the role of caucus chair. When Senator Day retired from the Senate, it was Terry who approached me about leading our group. In fact, as I remember it, he asked me to be the leader saying Senator Dawson had agreed to be deputy leader with the stipulation that I would agree to be leader. Little did I know, Senator Dawson was informed that I would only be the leader if he came on as the deputy leader. It was a crafty ploy, but it worked.

Terry, as I bring my remarks to a close, I would like to personally thank you for your years of friendship. I want to thank you for all that you have contributed to this place, and I want to thank you for your years of service to Canadians. As you listen to the many tributes to you and your accomplishments — and they are many — it is certainly not the end of your story. I invite you to remember not what you are retiring from but what you are retiring to. You can now dedicate your time to your wife Ellen, your son Michael and daughter-in-law Lisa, and perhaps the two people most excited about time with grandpa, Ellie and Oliver.

Terry, I will miss that wonderful, distinctive voice in the chamber, and I will miss your passion for this job. But most of all, I will miss having you in the Progressive Senate Group. You make things exciting. Best wishes always, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, on behalf of all my colleagues in the Office of the Government Representative, I also want to pay tribute to Senator Terry Mercer. Senator Mercer has represented Nova Scotians in the senatorial division of Northend Halifax for almost 19 years. He has done so proudly, passionately and, on many occasions, unabashedly loudly.

• (1410)

Seriously, colleagues, Terry's efforts with and for many charitable organizations and philanthropic foundations have been both determined and tireless. His interventions in this chamber on behalf of charitable causes close to his heart have shone a light on the work of those charities and on Canadians who need and benefit from their support. The Kidney Foundation, the YMCA, St. John Ambulance Canada and Diabetes Canada are just a few of the causes that have benefitted from Terry's efforts.

As Senator Cordy mentioned, he has experience as a professional fundraiser. That was invaluable when he sat on the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector. He understood as well or better than anybody the sector's struggles and challenges.

Now, I don't know what the statistics are relating to any one senator sitting on the same committee from the day he or she was sworn in until the day he or she retires — and I'm not a betting person — but I would hazard a guess, and probably put a few nickels down, that Terry Mercer's tenure on the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry might be right up there in the top tier. His presence on that committee over almost two decades represents one of the mainstays and strengths of this chamber: institutional memory. Witnesses appearing before the committee knew that when Senator Mercer asked a specific question, he expected a very detailed and specific answer, especially from government ministers and officials. He knew his stuff and expected the same from all of them.

As a colleague, one never had to wonder what Terry might be thinking on any given issue. He always made his views known, and spending time with you, Terry, was always refreshing. You deserve your retirement. We wish you and your wife, Ellen, health, happiness, new adventures and time with your grandchildren. But you will truly be missed.

Thank you, Terry.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise to pay tribute to my friend, Senator Terry Mercer.

Senator Mercer was appointed, as has already been said, by the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien to represent the great people of Nova Scotia. Prior to being appointed to this chamber, as Senator Cordy already mentioned, Senator Mercer was well known within the Liberal Party of Canada for having been the director of fundraising and the national director.

His loyalty to Jean Chrétien and his party has been undeniable. During his maiden speech, Terry said:

My support for Mr. Chrétien's legacy will be in the Senate not only for the opposition's benefit but also for honourable senators in the caucus. I will remind them not to forget the legacy of Jean Chrétien over the years and those of us who have been sent here by him.

Senator Mercer could not have foreseen the kind of strange predicament our institution would be forced into by Justin Trudeau's desire to cut ties in the name of Senate reform. Yet, it remains a testament to Senator Mercer's loyalty to his political party that even after the Prime Minister decided to break his allegiance with the Liberals in the chamber, Senator Mercer's allegiance never wavered. He was a team player from beginning to end.

For many years, Senator Mercer and I worked together on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Even though we were both very partisan senators, when it comes to farming, there is no such thing as a Conservative farming problem or a Liberal farming problem. Farming is farming, and the issues at stake were always the priority.

Senator Mercer and I also served together on the Transport and Communications Committee. Travelling together gave us an opportunity to become good friends. I recall the great times we had in Belgium during a study on wireless technology.

Colleagues, I will share a private conversation I had with Terry Thomas, our research analyst for the study. Mr. Thomas and I were walking down to get some chocolates for my wife, and I asked him to give me his opinion on who he thought were the two most partisan senators in the chamber. Keep in mind that these were the good old days when there were Liberals and Conservatives in the Senate. Our analyst, of course, hesitated in providing me with the answer, but I insisted. He eventually confessed that, in his opinion, Senator Mercer was the most partisan Liberal and I would take that position for the Conservatives.

I told him I had been hoping for this answer because I wanted to tell Mr. Thomas that Terry Mercer was probably my best friend in the chamber.

Colleagues, may this be a reminder that being partisan isn't a bad thing, and partisan or non-partisan isn't the issue at stake in this chamber; it is the well-being of Canadians. If Terry and I can be friends and work toward a common goal, it is possible for everybody.

Senator Mercer, I want to join the many Canadians in thanking you for the work you have done. But, colleagues, I could not speak today without mentioning that Terry Mercer will forever be known by Conservatives for denying leave, especially when the Liberals held the role of the opposition in the Senate. Many on this side of the aisle will forever hear the soft echo of your voice saying "no" to keep the government in check and ensure it doesn't always get its way.

Terry, you leave big shoes to fill on that front, but I will do my utmost to fill the gap left by your absence and step up my game.

Humour aside, Terry, your retirement is well deserved, and our caucus and I wish you and Ellen the very best.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I have the honour to rise today on behalf of the Independent Senators Group to express our heartfelt gratitude to our colleague Senator Terry Mercer.

Since his appointment in November 2003, Senator Mercer has proudly and faithfully served in the Senate. I am sure you all know the extraordinary role he has played here in the chamber as well as in countless committees. His time in the Senate is a reflection of a life spent in the service of Canadians.

Honourable senators, there is a saying that friends are the family you choose. This is exactly how I feel about Senator Mercer. Ever since I have known him, for over 30 years, he has always been there for me and family.

Terry, Nuralla is here as well today. During pivotal moments in my life, when I was running and serving as vice-president of the Liberal Party of Canada and as president of the National Women's Liberal Commission, Senator Mercer was by my side, always providing me with sage advice and cheering me on from the sidelines.

Senators, as you know, there have been several points in my Senate career where I have felt very lonely. But Senator Mercer has always encouraged me not to stay silent and speak out on diversity issues. He would say to me, "Speak up. If not you, then who?"

His kindness did not stop with me. I remember him becoming a father figure to my son, Azool Jaffer-Jeraj, who was also a vice-president of the Young Liberals of Canada. Senator Mercer encouraged him to remain engaged, reaching out to him, hiring him and taking him under his wing. He did this for several other young men and women from diverse communities, and although many of his efforts went unnoticed, Senator Mercer has very quietly and humbly led the Liberal Party's transformation toward diversity and inclusion. In his own way, he made sure that the Liberal Party belonged to all Canadians.

To close, I want to share a message from your B.C. grandchildren, Almeera and Ayaan, "Now you have time to visit us in British Columbia, Grandpa Terry."

• (1420)

Senator Mercer, as you have dedicated your life to the service of countless Canadians, you well deserve to spend more time with those who you cherish and who cherish you most.

To Ellen, Michael and his family, thank you for sharing Terry with us for so many years.

You will be missed, my friend. I will miss you. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I'm honoured to join numerous others today in celebrating the many contributions in the Senate and the life of our friend and colleague Terry Mercer. Some people won't know this person, but in the immortal words of former senator George Baker, I will be brief.

Stating the obvious — and I don't think anyone other than Senator Plett would be able to state it in better words — Senator Mercer was partisan to the core. The definition of "partisan" is a person who strongly supports a particular party, person or cause. In his case, he hit what is known as the trifecta. He staunchly represents, in all three categories, the people of Nova Scotia, his charity work and the Liberal Party of Canada.

I arrived here 17 years ago, and one of the first people I met was Terry Mercer. I remember former senator Jim Munson coming over and joining the conversation, and being absolutely overwhelmed by what they were talking about. It included his charities and what they were doing. They were going for Rolling Thunder on the Hill, if you remember that event. There was just so much going on, and I was, quite frankly, not sure if I was in the right place. Some would question it even now.

As we have already heard, Terry is devoted to charities. For the majority of us, charities are something that we give money to every once in a while or we might go for a walk for a charity, but until I met Terry Mercer, I never quite understood the depth involved in charities and, more importantly, how charities are so much a part of our Canadian fabric. From him and all of the different organizations that he had served with over the years, I learned that this was, in fact, something that had to be addressed on an ongoing basis by the Senate.

Once upon a time in this chamber, heckling was an accepted art. Senator Mercer was not familiar with the term "sotto voce," or "under your breath." His voice carries like the foghorn at Peggy's Cove. It rumbled and it rolled. Even with a mask on, and even at this distance, I can hear his "no" or "quelle surprise," as he taught me. We both are, of course, fluent in both languages.

Terry, you are a fierce partisan. Your passion and positive energy are supreme, but at a different time you were known to actually go and sup with what was known as "the other side" — a much different place then. When the bell rang for an hour, it was an opportunity for friendship to be enjoyed on both sides before we came back in and locked horns.

I do not remember much about the Mercer Christmas parties, quite frankly. Memory has a way of going on you as you get older. But I do know that they were joyous, and I do know that many people and groups in this city were benefited by them.

Terry's love for his family is known throughout this chamber; his love for his children, for his wife and for the people of Nova Scotia. I'm so grateful for our friendship, and I wish you all the best in your retirement. Be well, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Dennis Dawson: Honourable senators, I learned something today. I didn't know about that. Now I understand why he defeated me so often on campaigns.

[*Translation*]

I rise to pay tribute to the Honourable Terry Mercer, who is retiring from the Senate tomorrow. Let me be clear: I want to honour him for the right reasons. I want to wish him well in his retirement and thank him for the positive impact he has made on our institution. I rise not to rejoice in his departure from the upper chamber — as many of his friends who have heard about our skirmishes over the years might have thought — but rather to pay tribute to him.

[*English*]

As some of you might know, we sometimes have painful experiences in politics. Nothing is more difficult in a political party than internal politics. I look at my friend Senator Housakos, who is not necessarily agreeing with all of his colleagues on the leadership campaign. Most of them don't agree with him, but that's another issue. It can lead to serious disturbances that derail our best intentions, objectives and characters.

As we are witnessing in the acrimonious campaign right now, in convention after convention, the potential for internal division is very strong. Yet, the story between Senator Mercer and myself has turned out to be a positive example of what can be achieved when we throw in some goodwill and good faith in spite of the fact we opposed each other for over 30 years.

In and through the Senate, we reconciled. It's a word "à la mode," and I am happy to say that we did. I supported John Turner in 1984; he supported Jean Chrétien. I was against the review in 1986. I supported Paul Martin in 1990; he supported Jean Chrétien. Now I know why I lost. He was doing deals in the back.

These battles were long and painful. Terry and I have always found ourselves on opposite sides of the political fence inside our own political party. The only thing we agreed on was being Liberals. But I am standing up here today to praise Terry. We are living evidence that such divisions can be healed.

Reconciliation has many aspects these days. One modest signal is Senator Mercer and I coming to terms through our best work together and working in harmony to serve Canadians. After 17 years, we're finally sitting beside each other — the day he is leaving.

Senator Mercer: He just wants to be sure I get out the door.

Senator Dawson: Senator Jane Cordy was getting vengeful. She put his name there so that he would have to endure me.

Representing the province of Nova Scotia, he was appointed in 2003. My term came in 2005. The bad blood that had percolated between us over the years, at first it seemed hard — if not impossible — to put it behind, but we did. We made it. I take pride and satisfaction, as I hope he does, in having reconciled and

done our best together through addressing so many causes and issues to improve the lives of our compatriots over the years in the Senate.

The creation of the Liberal senators group following our gracious expulsion from the national Liberal Party caucus triggered our determination for renewed cooperation among ourselves. In finding a common approach to working effectively in a united manner, we helped create the Liberal caucus at that time. When the disappearing breed was disappearing, we had to find a new approach. As Senator Cordy mentioned before, the creation of the Progressive Senate Group was another opportunity to put our strengths and drives together in addressing the issues of the day.

Navigating across many changes that the Senate has gone through for many years, Senator Mercer can be proud of his achievements and his formal capacity to make people work together — on philanthropic causes, et cetera — many of which were mentioned before.

Senator Mercer served as National Director of the Liberal Party for over six years. Prior to that, he held various positions in the world of fundraising.

[*Translation*]

Senator Mercer, thank you. The stars were not really aligned for the two of us to collaborate here in the Senate, but I must tell you that I took great pleasure and satisfaction in working with you on the causes we hold dear.

[*English*]

Some of my former Liberal friends and colleagues of past campaigns who were close to those conflicts will be surprised by my comments. But I stand by them, Terry, and I am proud to say it has been a pleasure working with you. I wish you a long and healthy life.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, Senator Mercer — a ferocious, partisan, Liberal senator; fundraiser; bagman; organizer; winner. That's what I always knew and understood and heard about Terry Mercer when I was summoned to this place. I had the pleasure of meeting him only in 2009, but everything I had heard about him was that he was a ferocious, partisan winner; that he believed in causes; that he was an unbelievable organizer and a legend amongst legends in the Liberal Party.

• (1430)

I came here to this chamber, and one of the first committees I sat on was the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, and many of you know I have a dear and fond love for that particular committee. I think it's the best committee in the Senate, in this institution. In large part, I look back and realize I have such fondness for that committee because that's where I met individuals like Terry Mercer.

I realized very quickly, besides the legend of the man in politics, there was a lot more to him than that. He was somebody who was kind, warm, sincere and intelligent. Even though, as you can imagine, colleagues, we rarely agreed on the politics at committee or in this chamber and we always fought on different perspectives, we fought with sincerity, with courage and with respect. Once the cameras were turned off and the mics were done and the debate was over, we spent a lot of personal time together. We did some studies that I think will make a great contribution to society and to this institution.

The times that I spent with Terry are where I saw that you can be fiercely partisan but very human. Because as we all know, in public life, we have moments where you receive some bodychecks. Isn't that the case, Senator Mercer? When those moments happened to myself, believe it or not, Senator Mercer was the first to come over with some kind advice and a pat on the shoulder and to say "hang in there" and to share some experiences. That's something on a personal level you never forget.

Then I delved deeper into the man, and I met people from Nova Scotia and I mentioned Terry Mercer and how ferocious and tough he is. They said, "Senator, he hails from the North End of Halifax. It's the toughest, scrappiest part of Nova Scotia, maybe the country." So I guess that's where you get your toughness from. I know you are very proud of your province and proud of where you come from.

Your kindness has also been exemplified through the years through causes, Terry, that you have supported. They are worth highlighting, colleagues. He worked with tremendous fervour to support causes like the Kidney Foundation of Canada, St. John Ambulance Canada, the Lung Association of Nova Scotia, the YMCA, Diabetes Canada and is currently past chair of the AFP Foundation for Philanthropy – Canada and, of course, he is a tremendous advocate, as we know, for ovarian cancer research.

Terry, you are a wonderful senator. You are a wonderful human being. You have brought honour to politics and to this institution, and you will have left your mark on this institution and on so many people whom you have touched here. Thank you so much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Honourable senators, I rise today to join others in recognizing the contributions made by Senator Mercer during his career in this chamber.

I will focus on Terry the person, for after all, it is who we are as people that underlies how we behave and how we work with others to achieve meaningful goals.

Terry proudly says he represents not just Nova Scotia, but specifically the community in the North End of Halifax that helped form him.

He was the third of five children, which, if anyone is familiar with the "middle child syndrome," may explain some things. For those who are unfamiliar with that piece of psychological mythology, here are the characteristics that are purported to be

present: peacemaker, competitive, team player, independent thinker, friendship-focused and "they act out to get attention." Each of us can ponder the aptness of that description.

Terry's father was a chief engineer in the navy in World War II and in peacetime worked in the Halifax dockyard. His mother not only took the lead in raising the children but ran her own catering business, focusing on cakes, cookies and other sweets. That might help explain Terry's prodigious sweet tooth. Indeed, in pre-COVID days, I could always tell if Senator Mercer had entered a committee room first — all the good treats were gone from the hospitality tray.

His upbringing instilled a strong sense of community and the necessity for working hard to overcome the slings and arrows that outrageous fortune sent his way — and it did. Without going into the details here, Terry did just that.

He attended university at Saint Mary's where he and Ellen met, beginning their long and mutually supportive life together. When she came down with ovarian cancer, they fought it together, and they continue their work to help find a cure for this terrible disease. They are a team. We acknowledge and celebrate your teamwork. However, I also feel compelled to point out that many who know them both consider Ellen to be the brains of the operation.

Their son Mike grew up in a household where politics was like oxygen. When he answered the phone, it could have been the Prime Minister calling. But Mike used this to his advantage. When he first met Lisa, who now is his wife, he wanted to impress her so much. So on their first date, he took her to a garden party at 24 Sussex Drive. That seemed to work, and now Terry and Ellen have two wonderful grandchildren, Ellie and Oliver. Terry, now you and Ellen will have more time to spoil them.

Terry respects and cares about the people he works with. David Sheppard, his director of parliamentary affairs, once told me that it didn't matter who you were; the boss always asked after how you were doing.

After I was appointed to the Senate, Terry was one of the first to reach out and give advice. He said, "It's not just the position of senator that is important but how you fill that role."

Thank you, Terry. God bless and may the wind fully fill your sails.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, and most of all, my Progressive Senate Group colleague, the Honourable Terry Mercer, and his family, what a day. After all these years of your serving Canadians as you have, with integrity, honesty and commitment, we in this chamber are going to be bereft of your wisdom, humour, advice, friendship and collegiality. Transitions are hard, so as you transition into the next chapter of your life, think of us transitioning without you in our committees and chamber deliberations.

Terry, in wishing you all the very best going forward, I want to thank you. I have learned so much from you in my few years in the Senate, from your leadership, to your knowledge of how the place works, to knowing all the precedents drawn from your keen archival memory, to having a vision for change and finding better ways to work on behalf of Canadians. You have served on many committees and taken the goals of each to heart, contributing with passion and with your unique sense of practicality.

I remember that bus ride to Kanata a number of years ago, when the Transport and Communications Committee was doing the fascinating study on autonomous vehicles. It was a field I knew nothing about when we began but, as you know, I soon became hooked. But that's not what we talked about on the bus that day. We talked about charities and the need for a special committee on charities to examine how they work, their particular needs, some of the tax complications and inequities, their governance issues and more. We both had spent much of our careers in the charitable sector, you in the East and me in the West. Despite the geographical distance, it was funny how our perceptions and insights were so well aligned.

The Senate approved that committee, and I applaud the work you and its members did. The charities report the committee produced is truly substantive. It has already made a positive difference and more will come, I know. My disappointment was that I could not be a member as that committee met at exactly the same time as the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic, of which I was a member. However, to see the work progress simultaneously on these two critical needs was wonderful. I congratulate you and thank you for your tenacity in getting that study done.

On a personal note, your Canada Day celebrations sound amazing. Your stories of that annual Mercer celebration almost make me want to be a Nova Scotian. As you herald Canada's history and present in the years going forward, please know I will be with you in spirit, despite my not being a Nova Scotian.

Senator, all the very best. Stay healthy and safe and enjoy that treat of being with your family again for more than the past several decades have allowed you to be. Thank you so much, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, I rise today to honour our colleague, Senator Mercer. Senator Mercer's distinguished career in the Senate, and his contribution to the Senate and to Canada have been noted. I would like to speak from a very personal perspective.

• (1440)

The Honourable Senator Terry Mercer welcomed Senators Anderson, Kutcher, Moodie and myself to this place on February 19, 2019. He acknowledged that we had been appointed to the Senate in a new way and noted it to be a more transparent method, to be sure. Senator Mercer, at the time the Acting Leader of the Senate Liberals, said that, as senators, we alone would decide whom we would sit with — and he did welcome me to the former Liberal group — and how we would do our jobs.

Among my first experiences in doing my job at committee, I replaced another senator on the Charitable Sector Committee. That meeting happened to include testimony from several witnesses, including the former governor general, David Johnston.

Yukoners who ask me about my work at the Senate always ask, "How is the travel? How often do you get home?" And I always reply that I love the work. The travel, not so much. My response about how much I love the work is because of the experiences like attendance at the Charitable Sector Committee; the Banking, Trade and Commerce Committee; and others, and with working with all of you. The witnesses, the information and ultimately the committee reports are so valuable and so important. They are essential to our growth, our future and to the Canada we aspire to be. When we as senators are able to act, following the leadership of Senators Mercer and Omidvar upon the recommendations in the Charitable Sector report and in other reports, I believe Canadians are truly able to appreciate the work on behalf of Canadians accomplished by Senator Mercer and the Senate of Canada.

Senator Mercer also said in his welcoming remarks that the Senate is always in a constant state of change and that, going forward, we are all going to be finding our way around together. It is that "together" that I would like to conclude my remarks with. Senator Mercer, you welcomed me to the Senate family warmly and have never hesitated to share your knowledge about making a life here in the capital city, how best to work with administration and, most recently, in response to my endless lobbying about the lovely Honeycrisp apples from Nova Scotia, to share your secret to the apple pie recipe.

Senator Mercer, personally and professionally, you have given the Senate and Canadians much, representing your beloved Nova Scotia with distinction and honour. On behalf of all my ISG colleagues, may I offer our heartfelt thanks to the staff who have supported you over the years, to your loved ones who have loaned you to us and to you. Please accept all of our very best wishes for a very happy birthday tomorrow and all the best in your retirement. Thank you. *Māhsi'cho. Gūnāłchīsh.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Brian Francis: Honourable senators, I would like to take a few minutes today to pay tribute to the Honourable Senator Terry Mercer, who I am happy to have called both a close colleague and a dear friend. Terry is rarely soft-spoken — and we've heard that mentioned earlier today by some — but his voice carries with it an enormous depth of wisdom, and his contributions have never failed to bring valuable insight into any discussion. I have always enjoyed listening to him speak, as Terry always brought humour and wit to our work. He has never been too shy to shout out a funny comment or observation and draw out laughter and joy. His easygoing manner made me feel right at home with the Progressive Senate Group.

With honesty, I can say that Terry is an extremely generous person. Of course, he has had a long and distinguished career, most notably in politics, but he has also worked extensively in the charitable sector. As a senator, Terry brought his experience to bear in advocating for and then chairing the Special Senate

Committee on the Charitable Sector. But for me on a personal level, Terry has also been incredibly generous with his time and wisdom.

I want to express my deepest and most sincere gratitude to Senator Mercer for taking me under his wing, sharing his wealth of institutional knowledge and helping me find my role as caucus chair. Terry left big shoes to fill, but his generous nature made the transition smooth, straightforward and almost effortless. Terry's door was always open, and he made himself eternally available to me. At that time, I was a relative newcomer to the PSG, but Terry made me feel like I had been a member of caucus for a much longer time, and he made sure I always felt welcome. I will always admire his role as caucus chair of the PSG: how he helped keep the good ship and crew safe through the uncertain waters of those early days of the PSG.

Terry, *wela'lin* and thank you for your guidance, your wisdom, your wit and your friendship.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, gruff, tough and plain-spoken were the characteristics of Senator Terry Mercer perceived in my early days in this place — soon expanded by demonstrations of kindness, generosity and integrity. Please accept my warm birthday wishes for tomorrow. It marks a new chapter in how you are writing your book of life. It is following many chapters of your distinguished years as a senator that we've heard from our colleagues today, and I won't repeat.

Earlier chapters included service in so many forms, including as an Air Cadet, with alumni like Chris Hadfield, Marc Garneau and Lieutenant-Colonel Maryse Carmichael, the first woman pilot of the Snowbirds.

On the recommendation of a young leader from Nova Scotia, Senator Mercer was the first I called for advice on trying to pilot my #Vote16 bill the first time I introduced it. Senator Mercer, you were encouraging, wise and generous, and I thank you. I continue to follow your advice.

You show us how life is a craft that needs to be learned with patience, care and integrity. Longfellow wrote how we are all architects, how all of our days are building blocks of our existence, and how all of our actions, even those that no one else sees, determine the strength of the life we choose to build. We will all miss you. Thank you and *meegwetch* to your family for sharing you. Senator Mercer, you are a *mensch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Honourable senators, many people ask me, when they come to this place, "How do you know that you've been here long enough?" I have a standard answer to that, "When you know where all the washrooms are, you've been here too long."

I said that to someone in the East Block one day. And they said, "Well, you must know where all the washrooms are." I said, "Well, I thought I did, but I found a new one." I told them where it was, and they said there is no washroom there, and I said, "Well, there is now."

Anyway, honourable senators, I am actually overwhelmed with gratitude today for all those kind words from you, colleagues. Thank you so much, honourable colleagues. It is very humbling. This is one of the only times in my life that I find myself almost speechless. But don't worry, Senator Plett, I will get over that.

I've lived a wonderful life throughout my many career paths. They all brought me here, to this chamber, where I will walk away knowing that I tried to do some good. I wasn't always successful, but it was the trying that matters. We are all so privileged to work here in the Senate of Canada.

I cannot help but think of what my parents, Bob and Bessie, would think of me today after serving almost 19 years here. I was fortunate enough that when I was appointed both my dad and my mom were both alive. My dad died before I was sworn in, but my mom was here for that. It is a very important memory to have. As a boy growing up in North End, Halifax, to be standing here is quite a thing. It was a tough part of town. It has become a bit gentrified now, but it's still a little rough.

• (1450)

I cannot thank everyone in my family enough for their support and their wisdom. To my siblings Colleen, Bob and Paulette — and my brother Gerald, who is now gone — and to their spouses Bob, Robert and Bonnie, and my brother's late wife Dot, I say thank you as well. I thank you not only for your sound advice but for your constructive criticism — sometimes too much of it — for that is how we learn to be better. Politics around the kitchen table was always interesting in my house and in my family, to say the least. It was almost a contact sport.

My path to the Senate was an interesting one, as many of you know. I would like to mention the late Walter R. Fitzgerald, who was the Minister of Labour and Minister of Housing in Nova Scotia and several times the Mayor of the City of Halifax. He gave me my first real political job as his executive assistant, and this is where I started to hone some of my political skills. But the voters of Nova Scotia would decide the next path in my career, as our government lost the next election in 1978 and I ended up unemployed.

I turned to the charitable and non-profit sector. The Kidney Foundation at the time was looking for their first executive director in Nova Scotia. I took the job and operated the office out of the basement of my house. I had an assistant who lived in another city and did the paperwork. It was a great learning experience, and it welcomed me to the charitable sector. I had been a volunteer in politics for most of my life up until that point, but it was here that I learned just how much more volunteers do and how they and the donors are the backbone of the sector.

After that, and a brief stint as executive director of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party, I would go on to work with the Lung Association of Nova Scotia; the St. John Ambulance, Nova Scotia Council; the Metro Toronto Branch of Diabetes Canada; and the YMCA of Greater Toronto, which, by the way, is the third-largest Y in the world. That was where my career took a major professional turn. The Y demanded professionalism and made sure that you had it. They also helped introduce me to the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

For 60 years now, the AFP has been the standard-bearer for professionalism in fundraising, and I was honoured to be endorsed as a Certified Fundraising Executive. The AFP has been paramount to my professional development, and I thank all the people I have worked with over the years for their support.

It was also during this time that I continued my involvement in the Liberal Party of Canada. Indeed, while I was vice-president of the YMCA of Greater Toronto, I joined a leadership campaign. I became part of the Chrétien leadership team. Believe it or not, as a guy from North End Halifax, I was responsible for all of West End Toronto and part of the suburbs. We did quite well there, and I won't tell Dennis my secrets of that time, but I know he has heard about them. Eventually I was asked to head the fundraising for the party, and within a year I became the national director.

Words can't express how much I respect Jean Chrétien. As a matter of fact, I had a phone call from him last night. He was unable to be with me last night because he was away, but he did express his good wishes. I was so proud to have him do that.

There are far too many people to thank at the party office from when I became national director. They were some of the best staff that I have had the pleasure to work with.

I always made a point to support the Young Liberals of Canada and the Nova Scotia Young Liberals, as our youth are the future of our country, not only in the Liberal Party but in all political parties and movements. Young people have a dogged determination and drive to make a difference, and we would all do well to continue to support their efforts regardless of our politics.

Honourable senators, I recall vividly the fateful day in November 2003 when the then-prime minister called me in my Liberal Party office — it was about seven in the evening — to ask me if I wanted to sit in the Senate of Canada. I don't think I have ever said "yes" to a question so quickly. I remain deeply honoured to have been asked to sit and to have sat here in the Senate for almost 19 years.

Throughout my Senate career I have sat on many committees, and I learned much about various aspects of governing in this country.

I initially sat on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, which was supposed to be temporary. Well, when I leave this place, I will have served there for the entire time, including as deputy chair for a time. For a city boy like me, it was an eye-opener. I have a great deal of respect for all the people who are in the industry. Canadian farmers and all the people who support

them are bringing Canadian products to the world. I hope we continue to sell ourselves to the world with the amazing products we produce.

I also enjoyed my time on the Transport Committee with Senator Dawson, the Special Senate Committee on Aging and the Library of Parliament Committee.

Don't ever forget about the Library of Parliament Committee. During one term, a certain government didn't want the Parliamentary Budget Officer to report, and he reported through the Library of Parliament Committee. They've changed that legislation now, and he reports. I kept trying to get him to come as a witness, and I would go to the meetings all set to move the motion and, as soon as the chair was elected, someone would move the adjournment of the meeting and I'd never get it done.

Then I went on to become chair of the Selection Committee at one time. While I was a bit reluctant to take on that role, senators like Senator Plett put their faith in me, and I thank them for that now. I wasn't very thankful at the time.

It is in the work of our committees where we senators shine, but we only can do that with the help and support of staff who make our work possible. I've had the pleasure of working with many clerks over the years, and I thank them all. I did work with some for a long time, and I would like to thank specifically Jessica Richardson, Adam Thompson, Keli Hogan, Kevin Pittman and Shaila Anwar for your support of our work and the work of the Senate over my tenure.

Committee travel is so essential to get out and meet Canadians. Take the Senate on the road again as soon as you possibly can. The people and staff are always on hand to make sure those trips are successful.

One of the greatest achievements I have ever accomplished will forever be the Senate Special Committee on the Charitable Sector. It took several years and lots of convincing, but we made it happen. The result was a report that I believe will help the sector continue to grow and flourish, because we need it. I would like to thank Senator Omidvar and Senator Martin for their support and diligence in making the report a reality, and our researchers Havi Echenberg and Nicole Sweeney, and Annie Trudel and our staff.

Every day, the lives of Canadians from coast to coast to coast are touched by the sector and its volunteers. I would like you to join me in thanking the millions of volunteers who make a difference in their communities. Thank you.

I was also especially proud to be able to have legislation passed to officially recognize National Philanthropy Day — the first of its kind in the world, by the way. We were the first country ever to do that.

According to Imagine Canada, the charitable and non-profit sectors contribute \$192 billion in economic activity to Canada annually, which accounts for about 8% of our country's GDP. The sector employs 2.4 million people, which is more than the mining, oil and gas sector, or agriculture, transportation and

retail. Think about that. That's why philanthropy is important, and that's why we should recognize it and the volunteers who serve it.

Another way to provide service to our country is through blood donation. National Blood Donor Week is legislation that I sponsored and, with the help of all parties, we passed it to recognize and celebrate volunteer blood donations across Canada. It happens every June.

These donors give the gift of life — the ultimate gift of all — and I thank all of the donors who have and will continue to give that precious gift. My father was a blood donor all his life.

• (1500)

Honourable senators, throughout my years here, I have had the opportunity to celebrate many occasions. Famously, former Senator Munson and I were asked by former senator Landon Pearson to take over National Child Day, which she had started. By the way, I can hear and see all the women in the room saying, "Yes, that's right, they had to get two men to do the job of one woman." We got the message right from the start, Senator Munson and I. We had a good time.

Every November, we would have National Child Day. We would invite hundreds of young people into the chamber, and we would have performances on the floor of the chamber. Sometimes we didn't necessarily tell the Speaker all of what was going to happen. To give you an idea, the famous Canadian group Barenaked Ladies performed in the Senate of Canada in front of the Speaker's chair and did a couple of numbers. The kids went wild, of course. I'm not sure the Speaker of the day was as happy to hear them. But anyway, it was a lot of fun.

I thank Senator Landon Pearson for encouraging Senator Munson and me to do that. And it wasn't just Senator Munson and I that did it. We had help from former Senator Cochrane and current Senators Martin and Gagné to make it happen. I thank them for their support.

Former Senator Rompkey also started me on a push to host Navy Day on the Hill. From its humble beginnings — I'll tell you how humble it was. We said we were going to have this day to celebrate the Canadian Navy and the Coast Guard. We had no budget, but we knew we wanted to have a party. So a bunch of volunteers and staff went out to the local brewery and made beer. They also went to a local winery, and they made wine. So we have a party on the Hill to celebrate the Royal Canadian Navy and the Coast Guard with wine and beer made by volunteers, which we found some money to pay for.

The party was a huge success. It is now considered one of the premier social functions on Parliament Hill — when we can get back to having those types of functions on the Hill. I would encourage that when we can, we get back to doing it. You will be amazed at the turnout that will show up for Navy Day on the Hill. It is really absolutely terrific, and as the son of Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class Bob Mercer and the father of Lieutenant Michael Mercer, who is up in the gallery, I would hope that you would support the reinstatement of Navy Day on the Hill. One of

my many volunteers from my office and friend Jerrod Riley was instrumental in planning the further development of this event. I thank him and the many other volunteers who made it all happen.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the work I also did with CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, supporting university students in their endeavours, and with SOCAN, supporting Canadian artists who provide so much to the culture and diversity of our country. Thank you to them.

Honourable senators, we would not be able to do our jobs if it were not for our staff and volunteers. I have had the pleasure of working with many summer students, and when we get back to normal — whatever normal is anymore — I encourage you to hire some summer students. I have had Katherine Donovan from New Brunswick, Michael Power from Ottawa, Julianna Kelly from Manotick, Nat Atherton from Ottawa, Jennifer Johns from Ottawa, Jessica Burkhardt from Ottawa and Michel Naubert from Gatineau.

I know the experience they gained working in the Senate has been invaluable to them. It certainly was to me, and I would like to thank them on the record today.

The many other staff that we have had in our Senate office over the years have been the best I have ever worked with, including some who have been with me my entire tenure. I would like to thank Lisa Thibedeau, Melanie Nicholson, Heather Forsyth and Caitlin Gropp for your support, especially as we navigated our way through the creation of the Progressive Senate Group.

I would also like to thank Archie Campbell and Dave Murphy who were also on hand to help with the annual Senator Mercer tree-trimming party. When I came back a couple of weeks ago and was looking towards the end, I said I wanted to do something special to be remembered by. I almost did it, but I pulled back because I knew I would get in a lot of trouble. I was going to have my tree-trimming party last week. Well, my tree-trimming party usually involved the traipsing of 100 or so people through the third floor of the East Block in front of my office, and we had live music, which we didn't pay for — it was volunteers. We had volunteer bartenders. Then we had all kinds of great food, mainly supplied by my staff. I'll talk about them in a minute.

To all the staff at the Progressive Senate Group, thank you for all you do for your senators. Keep up the good work and make sure they have a little fun, too.

The Parliamentary Protective Service, maintenance services, client services, ISD, property service, committee attendants, multimedia services — including Pedro Peres — the interpreters and all the support staff throughout the entire Senate: Thank you for your service. You were the ones who helped keep this train on the tracks. Thank you also to the Parliamentary Associations and groups and all the staff we have to help promote Canada to the world.

There are two people who were indeed with me for my entire Senate journey and whom I cannot thank enough: Sherry Petten and David Sheppard. Sherry had terrific experience and had worked in the deputy prime minister's office when Herb Gray was deputy prime minister. She then worked for the Leader of the

Government in the Senate, Sharon Carstairs. She was in Sharon's office when I was appointed. I was lucky enough to get her out of Sharon's office and get her to come work for me. We had a deal, though. Sherry is almost exactly 10 years younger than I am. That was the deal. She would turn 65, and I would turn 75. This was great; we would leave together.

But Sherry decided that she would leave a few years ago and is having a great retirement. I continue to think that Sherry's job was to keep me out of jail and out of trouble. Well, I have never been in jail, so that part worked, and the trouble that I've gotten into has been stuff that I have done on my own. Sherry would try to talk me out of it sometimes.

David Sheppard, on the other hand, I have known for a long time. He was a Young Liberal in Nova Scotia. When I was appointed, David was working for the party in Nova Scotia. I enticed him to move from Nova Scotia to Ottawa. It has been a wonderful partnership between David, Sherry and me. I would suggest that I have been blessed with the best staff in the Senate office for years, and I have been successful because of their support.

Now, I did want to stop and tell you a story. Senator Plett was very kind in his remarks and talked about how friendly we have become. I consider Senator Plett one of my closest friends in the Senate.

The Agriculture and Forestry Committee was on a tour. We ended up in northern New Brunswick with Senator Mockler. By the way, Senator Mockler doesn't know that he doesn't have to get elected because anywhere you went in northern New Brunswick with Senator Mockler, he was shaking hands. I've been on a lot of campaigns, and Percy kept shaking hands with everybody that was there.

Anyway, so we're in Saint-Léonard, I believe, and we stopped. Senator Plett and I were on the committee. We were relatively new. I was a little more experienced on the committee than Senator Plett, because he had just recently been appointed. So we went out to dinner as committees do. At the end of the night, we had sat down to have a glass of wine, and everybody else went to bed. There we were: Senator Plett and I sat there stuck with only each other to talk to.

• (1510)

So we had another glass of wine, maybe two glasses of wine, and we discovered something. When we weren't being partisan about the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party, we actually liked each other, and we built on that relationship. It has helped sometimes in this chamber — not all the time — but Don and I have a relationship where I know I can always go talk to him and he knows he can always come and talk to me. Sometimes it has been helpful; not all the time because sometimes things get in the way. He is a stubborn guy.

However, our small but mighty caucus is making the Senate a better place, I think. The Progressive Senate Group is made up of senators with different backgrounds, shared values and at times differing opinions. We all bring something to the table, and I look forward to watching the group grow and continue to improve.

I just realized that I forgot to finish my Don Plett story.

The Transport Committee was on another trip. Don was on that, along with Dennis. We went to Estonia for part of our study, and then we went to Brussels for the second part. It happened to be in November, and Wednesday of that week was November 11, so I went to the clerk of the committee and said, "Well, we're not working on Wednesday." He said, "Well, why?" I said, "It's Remembrance Day. You have to find a place for us to commemorate Remembrance Day."

They organized it with the embassy in Brussels, and we went to Ypres where the Menin Gate is. It's only a few miles from Passchendaele. The part about Plett was later on when we went back to Brussels. We're out at night and suddenly these guys — Dawson and Plett — decided that they wanted to go shopping. Not far from the hotel was a shop that only sold ties. There were long ties and there were bow ties.

Senator Dawson: He still has it.

Senator Mercer: At the end of the evening when we left the tie shop, Don had 15, 20 ties — I can't recall, but there were a lot of ties — and Dennis bought a few bow ties. I was just so amazed; I didn't buy anything. Number one, these guys were buying high-end ties, not like me. Although this tie today, for those of you who are tartan lovers, is a Cooper tartan. My mother's maiden name was Cooper, and on any special occasion in this place I wear it in honour of my mother.

Anyway, that was Plett and Dawson shopping for ties. A couple of weeks later I asked Don, "What did your wife think of all the ties?" He said, "She didn't say anything about the ties, but she did ask about the big charge on the Visa card."

Anyway, thank you all again. I would like to thank my caucus colleagues, Margaret Dawn, Diane, Wanda, Pat, Jane, Dennis, Pierre, Brian, Amina, Clément, Peter, Marty and Sandra. I will miss our weekly chats and sometimes weekly debates.

Finally, some parting advice for all of you. Please remember that you are all politicians. That's it. So many of you came here saying you never wanted to be one, but you're all politicians. It could be a big "P" or could be a small "P," but you're all politicians and don't forget it. That's not a bad thing. The work of a senator is demanding and extremely satisfying, especially when we work together with like-minded colleagues in caucuses or groups, but especially with each other. I mentioned before the work of the committees when we travelled, and I already told you the story about Mockler campaigning in northern New Brunswick and Don Plett and me meeting in the bar.

In any event, build friendships. Go meet with people. This is the problem with the pandemic. We don't have any social events these days when we get together. When they come back, go to these things. Meet your colleagues; make sure you meet someone on the other side or in a group you have no affiliation with. Guess what? You will build those relationships, and those relationships will make committees work better, make this place work better and will make the legislation better. That will serve Canadians better, and it will only happen if you do it together.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Mercer: Get to know your colleagues on both sides. You will all be better off.

In this chamber we can debate and argue, disagree and agree. But out there, outside, remember that we are all people who can celebrate friendships, regardless of where we are on the political spectrum. The grand experiment of the Prime Minister is still just that: an experiment.

What will happen in the future? It's up to us — really to you now — how to navigate it and what changes to keep. What the Senate will look like in the future is up to you. Please do not forget the past, and please do not think that the past was so horrible, because you may end up going back to it.

My prediction has always been that eventually this place will evolve back to where it was. There will be a group sitting over there as the opposition and there will be a group sitting over here as the government, and I would suggest there will be several other groups like we have now. But I think that's how the place will evolve. You'll all figure that out on your own. I won't be here to guide you, although I would be happy to give you advice.

Honourable senators, I would like to thank all of my family and friends, too many to mention, who have been extremely supportive through the good times and the bad.

My cousin John is in the gallery with his wife, Neena. Without them, Ellen and I would not have been able to transition to Ottawa when we first moved here, and we thank them for that. It made our lives so much easier.

To my wife Ellen, whom I recently celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary with, words are not enough. I wouldn't be here today without you. You are my rock.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Mercer: To my son, Michael, and my daughter-in-law, Lisa, who is at home with the grandchildren, I look forward to spending more time with you and our two wonderful grandchildren, Ellie and Oliver. Thank you for enriching our lives.

Honourable senators, that finishes the first half of my speech. I actually thought, before I came in to give this speech today, that I would come in with a much thicker pile of paper just to show Senator Plett that I could speak for an hour and a half too.

Honourable senators, thank you for your kind words. Thank you for your support, and please continue your good work. Canada needs you. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Tye Vernon Marks. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Deacon (*Ontario*).

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1520)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

CANADA-EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN MEETING OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY, OCTOBER 3-6, 2018—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly's Autumn Meeting, held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from October 3 to 6, 2018.

REMOTE SESSION OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY, JUNE 28-JULY 6, 2021—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly's 2021 Remote Session, held by videoconference, from June 28 to July 6, 2021.

WINTER MEETING OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY, FEBRUARY 24-25, 2022—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly's Twenty-First Winter Meeting, held by videoconference, from February 24 to 25, 2022.

AUTUMN MEETING OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY,
NOVEMBER 3-4, 2021—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly's Nineteenth Autumn Meeting, held by videoconference, from November 3 to 4, 2021.

QUESTION PERIOD

PUBLIC SAFETY

EMERGENCIES ACT

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, I'll turn back to you again today. I have a question for you.

Senator Gold, even before the NDP-Liberal government began congratulating itself for calling a public inquiry into the use of the Emergencies Act, a public inquiry it was bound by law to establish, there were signs this government had no intention of providing transparency regarding its decision to invoke this act.

Last month, the NDP-Liberal government refused to provide all relevant information surrounding the use of the Emergencies Act in relation to a case launched in the Federal Court by several groups, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

Leader, how does hiding cabinet documents from both the court and the public inquiry demonstrate openness and transparency on the part of your NDP-Liberal government?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. As anyone in this chamber with legal background knows — and certainly experienced parliamentarians who have worked in committees would know — the law of Canada and the Canada Evidence Act explicitly recognize, as all democratic countries do, the balance that needs to be struck between the disclosure of documents relevant to litigation and those rules protected by privilege that protect the disclosure of documents that would be injurious, in this case to national security or potentially other interests, such as privacy concerns, confidential information and the like.

Honourable senators, it is the role of the courts to determine whether or not those rules are properly invoked. The Government of Canada has every confidence in the courts to do their job appropriately to make sure that all relevant information is disclosed, but that information that is otherwise properly protected by privilege remains so.

Senator Plett: Thank you for that lesson in law. I also know that the government sues the Speaker when he rules against them.

In August 2019, after the Ethics Commissioner, Mario Dion, reported that the Prime Minister broke the law — how about that — in relation to the SNC Lavalin scandal, the Prime Minister told Canadians, “We fully cooperated with the Commissioner on this matter.” In fact, Ethics Commissioner Mario Dion said in his report that nine witnesses informed his office that they had information they believed to be relevant but could not be disclosed because it would reveal cabinet confidence. The Ethics Commissioner raised this directly with the Prime Minister. He still refused access to all cabinet confidence.

Leader, isn't this a case of history repeating itself? Next year, when Justice Rouleau's commission reports on the use of the Emergencies Act, won't we hear the exact same thing about lack of access to witnesses and cabinet confidences, and won't we hear the Prime Minister, once again, claiming he is being fully cooperative when he has done no such thing?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. You know, sometimes one lives in the past. Sometimes one lives in the future. Sometimes one must deal with the present.

I cannot predict the future, honourable senators. My constitutional law professor Laurence Tribe once quipped that if you lived by the crystal ball, you would be condemned to eat glass. My stomach is not strong enough to do that.

The Government of Canada has confidence in the justice who will be administering the public inquiry and confidence in the joint parliamentary committee looking into this. Most importantly, it has confidence in the laws of Canada that recognize the necessity for certain kinds of interactions within cabinet to remain confidential. This Government of Canada, previous governments of Canada — and here I will predict — future governments of Canada will insist on the maintenance and integrity of this principle, and will stand in defence of this principle, regardless of, in this case, a dredging up of matters from the past.

[*Translation*]

PORTAPIQUE SHOOTING—SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS' FAMILIES

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate, and it is once again about the Portapique tragedy, specifically the interim report that lays out the progress of the public inquiry and outlines next steps.

The interim report states that the victims' families and the broader Portapique community have not received the support they needed. Over the past two years, the federal government has done nothing to provide victims' families and the community with mental health, trauma and bereavement supports. It's unacceptable that the federal government has let two years go by

without developing a strategy to provide mental health support resources. I would like to quote from a statement Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made on April 19, 2020, about this tragedy:

The people of Nova Scotia are strong and resilient, and we will be here to support them as they heal from this tragedy.

Why didn't the Prime Minister keep that promise? Why wasn't he there for these families?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question and for drawing attention to this tragedy and the suffering of the victims' families and the community.

The Government of Canada is working, and will continue to work, with the Government of Nova Scotia to collaborate and provide support to those who have suffered and continue to suffer as a result of this tragedy.

Senator Boisvenu: Senator Gold, as you know, the report suggests otherwise. The federal government has not been there for the victims.

Our national Victims and Survivors of Crime Week is two weeks away. This event has often been overlooked by the federal government for the past six years, and any commitments it does make are nothing more than empty rhetoric and slogans. Will you undertake to speak with the Prime Minister of Canada to ensure that these families are treated humanely, properly and appropriately?

Senator Gold: Thank you, senator, for your question. I certainly undertake to convey your request to the Prime Minister's Office.

[English]

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

• (1530)

Senator Gold, earlier this week I met with representatives from Quebec of the Multiple Sclerosis Society. As you know, MS is an autoimmune disease of the central nervous system. It is a complex, debilitating and unpredictable disease with mild to severe symptoms. We do not know the cause, nor do we have a cure for MS. What we do know is that Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world. Some 90,000 Canadians live with this disease.

My question is about the proposed "Canada Disability Benefit Act" that the government introduced through Bill C-35 in June 2021, near the tail end of the last Parliament. MS advocates are calling for this bill to be reintroduced. The Liberal Party also

promised to reintroduce this bill in its election platform last fall. The minister responsible recently confirmed that it was one of her priorities, as is also stated in her mandate letter.

Senator Gold, can you tell this chamber — most importantly, Canadians living with a disability, including MS patients — when the government will reintroduce this bill?

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

Indeed, the minister is engaged in this regard. It is a priority for this minister and for the government.

As honourable senators may know, Minister Qualtrough has engaged her provincial and territorial counterparts through the forum Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services about the design and implementation of the anticipated Canada disability benefit. These engagements with the provinces and territories will continue over the coming months.

This builds upon previous engagement, consultation and, indeed, considerable funding for stakeholders to participate in this. With all these initiatives, the government wants to ensure — and is confident that it will ensure — to maximize the impact that new legislation might have. When the legislation is ready to be introduced, it will be so announced.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer.

When I met with the MS Society this week, we talked about the list of criteria for Canadians with disabilities to be eligible for the disability benefit. They stressed the need for individuals with disabilities, including those who have episodic disabilities — like some MS patients — to also be eligible to receive benefit payments.

The language in Bill C-35 proposed that a person be eligible for a Canada disability benefit if they meet the eligibility criteria set out in the regulations. Can you assure us that the government is also considering allowing Canadians with episodic disabilities an opportunity to apply for this benefit, should the bill be reintroduced, and that the definition of "disability" that will be used to establish eligibility will be the one that appears in the Accessible Canada Act?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question.

As I mentioned just a moment ago, the government has launched an engagement process — that was last summer — to seek input on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and the Canada disability benefit from disability communities, researchers, Indigenous organizations and other stakeholders.

As I also mentioned, work is still under way in the design and implementation of the Canada disability benefit and, therefore, I cannot speak to its contents. I will say that the government is committed to continuing to work with its counterparts in the provinces and territories and with the disabled communities to ensure that the benefit is designed with their needs in mind.

[Senator Boisvenu]

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

INDEPENDENT ADVISORY BOARD FOR SENATE APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Today's events have me feeling nostalgic. Our colleague Richard Neufeld retired from the Senate in November 2019. British Columbia has been short one senator ever since, leaving the province of 5.25 million people with only five senators in the chamber for two and a half years now.

Alberta, my province, currently has only four senators to represent 4.75 million people. Indeed, we haven't had a full complement of six senators from my province since April 2020, which was two years ago.

In all, we have 15 Senate vacancies right across the country. With the retirement this week of Senator Mercer, that's about to be 16.

But because Alberta and British Columbia have such large populations relative to their allotted Senate seats, vacancies there hit that much harder, leaving our two most western provinces uniquely and peculiarly disadvantaged by long-standing Senate vacancies.

I ask a question that I am sure many of us have: Can you give us any sense of when we might welcome new colleagues, particularly new western colleagues, to our chamber and can you tell us what we are waiting for?

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

The government is following through with its commitment to build a more effective, less partisan and independent Senate.

My understanding, colleagues, is that the work of the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments continues. I note, in particular, that the application review for British Columbia has been under way since April 20. Colleagues, the independent appointments process is working well.

May I also point out that there are four senators from Alberta and five from British Columbia across four Senate affiliations? We have just welcomed a new senator from the province of Alberta last June who recently gave her maiden speech in the chamber. These provincial voices in our chamber are engaged with, and contribute in a significant manner, both individually and through committee work, on government legislation.

I am also happy to work with the honourable senator and, indeed, any colleagues to ensure that their views and perspectives are properly heard by the executive.

I am sure that you join me in looking forward to welcoming new senators who will enrich the work that we already do.

Senator Simons: When will that be?

Senator Gold: The government is working steadfastly to fill the vacancies as quickly as possible.

Colleagues, this is a serious place and it is a serious question. I am trying to give you a serious answer. You all know that the process that was put in place is more time consuming than the old one. There is an application process but, more importantly, there is a vetting process.

Each province where there are vacancies has to have a committee constituted to receive and vet applications. The federal members of the committee work alongside provincial members of the committee who are appointed and named by their respective provinces. Some provinces are keener to participate than others. Some committees get up and running faster than others. Some applications come in faster than others.

The process is a detailed one, and it is designed to ensure that the diversity of this country and within provinces is properly reflected in the competencies and names of the people who are brought forward for consideration for appointment.

We all wish appointments were faster. I am confident in the work of these advisory committees. I have been advised that it is working well and apace. We all look forward to the announcement of new senators when the announcements are made.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

INDIGENOUS FISHERY

Hon. Brian Francis: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, the current government refuses to fully implement the Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Mi'kmaq in relation to fisheries. As a result, some have begun to develop and launch their own self-regulated fisheries.

Most recently, following unsuccessful discussions with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans over several months, Lennox Island First Nation announced it would start its own treaty fishery in Malpeque Bay on Saturday. The community agreed in good faith to follow rules applied to the commercial fisheries and put a maximum of 1,000 traps, which amounts to 0.53% of the 190,000 traps in this fishing area.

Last week when I spoke with Minister Murray and Parliamentary Secretary Kelloway on this matter, I urged them to work with rather than against Lennox Island and other First Nations. I emphasized that the current regime has systematically excluded us from the fishery and contributed to high rates of poverty and other disparities. I am deeply troubled by the lack of respect and understanding shown to date.

• (1540)

Senator Gold, since Fisheries and Oceans Canada is in agreement that the treaty lobster fishery that will be launched by Lennox Island generates no conservation measures, is withholding fewer than 1,000 traps worth undermining the bonds of peace and friendship in Prince Edward Island?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and for underlining an important issue, both for Indigenous communities and for other communities that are reliant on the fishery. The Government of Canada is apprised of this and hopes that a solution can be found to the mutual benefit of all.

Senator Francis: Senator Gold, I do not have to tell you that this matter is of the utmost importance to the Mi'kmaq and all Islanders. I hope you will convey this message as soon as possible. As Chief Bernard of Lennox Island said earlier, if there is any conflict, the federal government will bear full responsibility.

Let me ask you to raise this question: If no relationship is more important than the one with Indigenous peoples and there is a true commitment to working on a nation-to-nation basis, why is the federal government continuing to prevent the Mi'kmaq from exercising their constitutionally protected rights? How many more decades will it take for Canada to uphold the rule of law, including the Constitution and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and at what cost to reconciliation?

Senator Gold: Thank you again for your question. I certainly will communicate to the government not simply your question but the importance of your question, and the passion with which you address it.

The government is committed to the relationship with Indigenous people on a nation-to-nation basis. It has taken important steps, but they are only initial steps. There is a long history to deal with and unravel. Senator Francis, rest assured that I will communicate this to the government with the deepest conviction that I can.

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

Hon. Vernon White: Honourable senators, I would like to ask a question of the Joint Chair of the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency.

Senator Boniface, could you briefly walk the chamber through what stage the committee finds itself at this time, and what path the committee will take in comparison to the recently announced inquiry?

Hon. Gwen Boniface: Thank you very much for the question. As I have said before in the chamber, it is my privilege to sit on that committee with you and my colleagues Senator Harder and Senator Carignan.

Many questions arose as a result of the inquiry in terms of how the inquiry and the parliamentary committee would sit together. Let me speak to how the legislation works, which I think makes it clear for us.

The inquiry was anticipated in the legislation, it was announced and it deals with the circumstances leading up to the declaration of the emergency, generally.

With respect to the parliamentary committee, it deals with the declaration of emergency from the point of invocation to the point of revocation. Mr. Beatty appeared as a witness. I cannot quote him, but let me paraphrase him. He indicated that, at times, one will bleed into the other because you need certain information in order to satisfy questions that may arise pertaining to both.

The committee has heard from two ministers so far. We will have further witnesses, and we anticipate that the RCMP and CSIS will appear next week. Last week, we heard from Department of Finance representatives.

We will proceed with our work plan. I must say that the committee has shown an air of cooperation in order to advance the work plan. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses, and I am sure there will be many more to come who will help to satisfy the questions that we, as a committee, need to answer.

FINANCE

EXPENDITURE AND SPENDING REVIEW

Hon. Elizabeth Marshall: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate and concerns the budget.

Senator Gold, last month the budget announced two spending reviews, which the government says will lead to \$9 billion in savings over five years. In Budget 2017, the Trudeau government began what it called the comprehensive review of federal departments, "with the aim to eliminate poorly targeted and inefficient programs, wasteful spending, and ineffective and obsolete government initiatives."

However, in 2018, instead of finding any savings, the review was used to justify new spending at Canada Border Services Agency and Health Canada — two of the three departments that had been subjected to the review. Government seems to have been very successful at spending money but not so successful at saving money.

Leader, can we expect that this upcoming expenditure review will be as ineffective as the past review?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. At the risk of sounding trite — and it is a serious question — I cannot predict the future. I have confidence, however, that the reviews that were done in the past and those that will be done in the future will be conducted diligently and with the best interests of Canadians at

heart. If those reviews show that money or programs have outlived their usefulness or otherwise missed their mark, then I fully expect that those recommendations will be brought forward.

On the other hand, if those reviews show — perhaps surprisingly to some — that, in fact, there are areas where support needs to be increased such that departments — whether it is Canada Border Services Agency, Health Canada or whoever — need more resources to properly serve Canadians and deliver on what Canadians have a right to expect from their governments, then I fully expect governments will have the courage, decency and commitment to do so.

Senator Marshall: I will mention another review. In *Economic and Fiscal Update 2019*, the government, once again, promised to launch a comprehensive review of government spending, this time saying it would result in \$1.5 billion in annual savings. There is nothing to indicate that the review ever began. During a February 2020 Question Period, I asked for some basic information. I remember asking you the questions: Which programs will be reviewed? Were any outside consultants hired as part of the review? If so, how much did they cost? My questions were never answered.

The issue I have is that, in reviewing the budget, the estimated savings are used to reduce the government's budgetary requirements and the projected deficit, so the deficit that's projected is lower. If the savings don't materialize, the actual deficit increases. That is what I'm interested in.

We've seen so many of these commitments in the budget. Why is the government continuing to make commitments in the budget to save money when they never seem to deliver on the commitment?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. The government's budget is both a plan and a projection as to how it wants to provide for its operations going forward. It is responsible for governments to identify areas where savings are reasonably expected, and it is almost inevitable that life gets in the way sometimes — as the pandemic most certainly did in the period immediately preceding the questions in February 2020 to which you referred.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

FERTILIZER TARIFF

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, last week I raised with you concerns surrounding your government's plans to put restrictions on fertilizer use on farms. Today I come to you with a related concern.

Canadian farmers who ordered fertilizer from Russia and Belarus months before sanctions were imposed on March 2 have been hit with a 35% import tariff. I want to be clear, leader: The war in Ukraine is illegal and I support tough sanctions against Russia and its officials. What I don't support is making Canadian farmers suffer unfairly. Vladimir Putin is not harmed in any way by imposing this 35% tariff on our farmers, as the fertilizer had already been purchased last fall, long before Russia invaded Ukraine.

Leader, will your government exempt Canadian farmers from this 35% import tariff on fertilizer, yes or no?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable colleague, thank you for your question. I don't know the answer to your question, but I will certainly make inquiries.

Senator Plett: Honourable senators, last week, in the other place, the Minister of Agriculture said she takes this situation seriously and was looking at various options. Leader, the minister has known about this problem for about a month. I would like to know what options are being considered and how much longer it will take to come to a decision. I thank you for saying you will get back to us. I hope you will do that very quickly.

• (1550)

As well, what impact does the minister think the 35% tariff imposed on Canadian farmers will have on food security and the cost of food, or is that of no concern to your government?

Senator Gold: I can't resist stating, honourable senator, that the government is concerned about the cost of food and the cost of living for Canadians. I wish that I did not have to say that, because all governments care about the well-being of Canadians.

The minister can speak for herself better than I can. I'm sure that when the decisions are made, she will communicate them.

Let me take the opportunity, though, to encourage leaders and members of all the different groups to continue to provide us with information as to which ministers you would like to see appear during ministers' Question Period. If that's a minister you would like to see, we will use our best efforts so that you can ask her questions directly in this chamber. We're making our best efforts.

JUSTICE

DISPROPORTIONALITY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN INCARCERATION

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, my question is to the Government Representative.

Senator Gold, this is an issue that has come up many times in many ways, but today, May 5, 2022, is Red Dress Day in Canada and the United States. The top-of-the-fold headline in Canada's major newspapers today was that the female population in our prisons is now 298 Indigenous women and 298 non-Indigenous women. In this country, roughly speaking, there is 1 Indigenous woman for 20 others.

So many efforts have been made. So many governments have made so many promises. This statistic on this day poses a devastating reality for all of us to grapple with. If you could, please, share with the chamber what more is being done by the government.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you. It is shocking and scandalous. To those of us who have had some exposure to or experience with the criminal justice system, it is, alas, not surprising.

The legacy of colonialism and systemic racism that have infected too many of our institutions and criminal justice is too well-known — perhaps it should be better known to all Canadians, but it is certainly well-known to this government. The government has taken a number of steps to do its part to see if this trend can not only be reversed but properly and fully addressed.

Some aspects of it are in criminal law reforms that will make their way here, such as reducing the mandatory minimum provisions in the Criminal Code, which have had and will continue to have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous offenders, and women in particular. Other aspects are more designed to strengthen the resilience of communities so that the lack of options doesn't lead some to take risks and end up within the criminal justice system.

Other measures include supporting the work of law enforcement, whether it is the RCMP or others, to address the lack of diversity or shortcomings in their policing in Indigenous communities.

It is such a complex, deeply rooted and tragic situation that there is no magic bullet, and there is no one answer. This government is committed to doing what it can, as effectively as it can, to address this.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Naomi Woo, the daughter of the Honourable Senator Woo.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-13(3), I would like to inform the Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate will address the items in the following order: consideration of Motion No. 35, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

[*English*]

THE SENATE

MOTION, AS AMENDED, TO EXTEND HYBRID SITTINGS TO JUNE 30, 2022, ADOPTED

On the Order:

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

That, notwithstanding any provisions of the Rules, previous order or usual practice, the provisions of the order of November 25, 2021, concerning hybrid sittings of the Senate and committees, and other matters, extended on March 31, 2022, have effect until the end of the day on June 30, 2022, subject to the following adjustments:

1. subparagraph 7(a) to (e) of the order of November 25, 2021, be replaced by the following:

“(a) when the Senate sits on a Monday, the sitting:

(i) start at 2 p.m.; and

(ii) adjourn at the earlier of the end of Government Business or midnight;

(b) when the Senate sits on a Tuesday, the sitting:

(i) start at 2 p.m.; and

(ii) adjourn at the later of the end of Government Business or 6 p.m., but, unless otherwise provided for in this order, at the latest by midnight;

(c) when the Senate sits on a Wednesday, the sitting:

(i) start at 2 p.m.; and

(ii) adjourn at the earlier of the end of Government Business or 4 p.m.;

(d) when the Senate sits on a Thursday, the sitting:

(i) start at 2 p.m.; and

(ii) adjourn at the later of the end of Government Business or 6 p.m., but, unless otherwise provided for in this order, at the latest by midnight; and

(e) when the Senate sits on a Friday, the sitting:

(i) start at 9 a.m.; and

(ii) adjourn at the earlier of the end of Government Business or 4 p.m.,” and

2. the provisions of paragraphs 12 and 13 of the order of November 25, 2021, cease to have effect, so that the evening suspension be as provided for in rule 3-3(1), including on Mondays, and, consequently, if the Rules require that something take place at 8 p.m., it take place at the time provided for in the Rules; and

That the Senate recognize the need to work towards a return to a schedule of committee meetings reflecting Ottawa-based operations, and call upon the Committee of Selection to continue to work with the leaders and facilitators of all recognized parties and recognized parliamentary groups to advance this objective.

Hon. Scott Tannas: Honourable senators, I want to put a few words on the record. I do support the motion in amendment. I supported the motion without the amendment, but I want to thank Senator Saint-Germain for the improvement.

I support the motion, and it was highlighted to me last week why we need it. COVID visited my house. My son had it, and so I decided, as a precaution, to stay at home and participate via the hybrid format. I was able to participate rather than having to stay home, out of an abundance of caution.

I think it is clear to everybody that the hybrid regime has been invaluable in allowing the Senate to function during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, it was vital in many, many instances as infections rose and fell and so on. I think we have to acknowledge that our role, the Senate's valuable role in Canada's democracy was significantly diminished by the way in which we were forced to operate. It was enhanced over what it could have been, but the Senate was not delivering full value to Canada over the course of the last two years. Our committee work was severely hampered over the last many months by, simply put, resource bottlenecks that limited time and continue to limit time for committee meetings.

While I am happy to support this motion with an extension to the end of June, I believe we have to get back without any straitjackets on our committees to fully doing our work. I think hybrid sittings and the technology and the system that we have need to be an important component of our disaster recovery plans in the future, but this system is not any kind of a viable option to be made permanent, unless we want to permanently dilute the value of the Senate.

Senator Marwah, in this chamber and with a statement that was published, detailed the challenges that we have in fully and completely running committees and the chamber as we have done for 150 years prior to COVID-19. He made it clear that it is not possible for us to conduct Senate business the way in which we did it pre-pandemic and have hybrid sittings. I think we all know that.

So, I can't support further extending this, and I can't support what I know to be the wishes of some senators — in fact, some members of Parliament — that hybrid sittings be made permanent under the current system. If there is any risk that we want to consider making this permanent, somebody has to do some work around what it would take. Is it absolutely possible for us to run the way that we ran before the pandemic and have hybrid services delivered, and not the other way around? Not that

we would torque ourselves into whatever schedule to accommodate the technology. The technology would need to accommodate our schedule, which includes people coming to Ottawa, flying from across the country. I travel on average 18 hours a week to get here.

• (1600)

If there is any appetite in the chamber to consider making this permanent, there is work to be done on the feasibility of it and what it would cost in order for us to fully deliver on our services.

I won't be supporting it, but I worry that there are some scenarios, potentially, where we could come under a lot of pressure to do something. We should have the answers. I want to put that on the record, colleagues. I know many of you agree with me, but I know that there are others who are desirous of making this permanent. If we are even going to discuss it or consider it, I think there is significant work to be done. I would hope that the administration, potentially the Internal Economy Committee, would give this their consideration. With that, I'll thank you.

Hon. Pierre J. Dalfond: Honourable senators, I will be brief. I want to say that being together is important, and we have seen it this week. This chamber was busy, was full of people, and we have had the pleasure to be together. I know that the debates are much better when we are together in this room. I'm convinced that all my colleagues, from whatever side they are, in this room are looking forward to being back in this chamber to do the work together, including those that have to travel one full day to come here and one full day to go back home, while I have the privilege of not having that burden because I can drive back and forth in two hours.

That being said, I am also mindful that as we speak today, there are still thousands of people in hospitals in Quebec who are suffering from a new wave of COVID. We have some colleagues who are immunosuppressed or who have spouses or children who are also immunosuppressed. I think, at the end of the day, that this motion is a reasonable accommodation for the time being, until the end of June.

But I certainly agree with Senator Tannas and with Senator Plett that we should be together here and that the future is that we should all be back here to work together, because I believe in collegiality. I have seen it in committees. It's not as it used to be and I look forward to having everybody back and enjoying being together and working together to improve bills, to do reports and to debate. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion as amended agreed to, on division.)

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(j), I move:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 10, 2022, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

**FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON AUTISM SPECTRUM
DISORDER BILL**

SIXTH REPORT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (*Bill S-203, An Act respecting a federal framework on autism spectrum disorder, with amendments and observations*), presented in the Senate on May 3, 2022.

Hon. Ratna Omidvar moved the adoption of the report.

She said: Honourable senators, Bill S-203, An Act respecting a federal framework on autism spectrum disorder, provides the legislative foundation for the development of a federal framework on autism spectrum disorder.

This bill was referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology for second reading on December 8, 2021. Over the course of two meetings, the committee heard from the sponsor of Bill S-203, the Honourable Senator Leo Housakos; and our former colleague the Honourable Jim Munson; as well as 12 individuals and five organizations. On behalf of the committee, I would like to take a moment to thank all those witnesses who shared their knowledge and their lived experience with us, acknowledging in particular the voices and perspectives of autistic self-advocates.

The committee is recommending several amendments to Bill S-203 that reflect the testimony and discussions we heard.

Witnesses all agreed on the important role of autistic self-advocates, their families and caregivers, both in the consideration of Bill S-203 and the proposed federal framework to follow.

Two amendments emphasizing the central role are therefore suggested by the committee. In the preamble, an additional paragraph is recommended stating that “. . . the development of that federal framework would benefit from the involvement of autistic Canadians, their families and their caregivers . . .”

The second proposed amendment makes changes to the list of relevant stakeholders with which the Minister of Health must consult in advance of developing the framework. Clause 2(3)(c) now specifies the consultation of self-advocates, caregivers and support persons, in addition to adding service providers and representatives from Indigenous communities.

At committee, autistic self-advocates discussed the importance of the choice of language and vocabulary, and also emphasized the diversity of their lived experiences. The committee is therefore recommending an amendment to the second clause identifying the measures to be included in the framework. The proposed amendment strengthens clause 2(2)(d), emphasizing acceptance of autism spectrum disorder as well as intersectionality and inclusivity.

Once again, the committee would like to thank Senator Housakos for his long-time advocacy and work on supporting the community of autistic people in Canada. In his testimony, he stressed the important work to come in the consultation phase and eventual drafting of the framework, and thus stated that the bill is only a starting point and he had intentionally made it open-ended. Witnesses shared that they appreciated that Bill S-203 was not overly prescriptive or limiting in their future work.

• (1610)

However, the committee is recommending two amendments that ensure that the Minister of Health will have all available opportunities for a fulsome consultation and implementation of measures in the framework, adding language that the minister may also include anyone and anything else that he or she considers appropriate at those stages.

Finally, based on testimony we heard about current challenges in research, diagnosis, information and treatment of autism, two amendments were recommended for the proposed measures to be included in the federal framework. An additional measure has been added to address the current challenges in timely and equitable access to screening and diagnosis, and the existing measure (e) is further refined to specify providing sustained, accessible and culturally relevant resources, both online and offline, that focus on evidence-based information.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

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

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

[Translation]

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 Miville-Dechéne, for the second reading of Bill S-212, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation.

(On motion of Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

[English]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE 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 Griffin, for the second reading of Bill S-230, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

(On motion of Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

JANE GOODALL BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Klyne, seconded by the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C., for the second reading of Bill S-241, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (great apes, elephants and certain other animals).

Hon. Peter Harder: Honourable senators, it wasn't that long ago when taking a drive down Highway 7 west of here, just past Perth, would lead you to a little rest stop where you could feed Coca-Cola and ice cream to a pair of black bears confined in a roadside cage. The stop was one of many such enclosures during the 1970s meant to lure you off the road to grab a bite, either on the way to Ottawa for a vacation or heading home in the opposite direction. Snapshots of smiling young kids standing in front of the cages or feeding the bears dot the history blogs and the local museums in the villages where those pens once stood.

Societal mores and values change. In a lot of cases, visitors didn't know or appreciate the neglect or deprivation those poor animals suffered.

But today, we do know. That is why this important bill, Bill S-241, is before us. It is a very wide-ranging bill, which, among other protections, limits captivity and provides additional protections to many species. It needs to be supported in this chamber.

Thankfully, the vast majority of those roadside attractions I just mentioned no longer exist, but several other types of animal confinement do, including roadside zoos, which house big cats, wolves and dangerous reptiles like crocodiles and pythons.

They also have bears. Bears have a special place in my heart, as anyone who has seen some of the artwork in my office will know. They also occupy a special place in the identity of our nation and within the cultures of many Indigenous peoples. The polar bear, for example, is respected by Inuit hunters as the most intelligent animal in Canada's Arctic and as a symbol of the resilience, patience and determination needed to survive in that harsh climate. That is according to *Inuvialuit and Nanuq: A Polar Bear Traditional Knowledge Study*, authored in 2015.

The West Coast spirit bear, or Kermode bear, became an important point of debate in this chamber just three years ago during the discussion of Bill C-48, which banned tanker traffic from the northwest coast of B.C. Depending on estimates, there are only between 400 and 1,200 of those light-coloured bears left, all living in that part of our country. They are deeply important to the Indigenous nations living there. Like polar bears, spirit bears are especially adapted to their habitat. Their white fur makes them particularly suited to hunting salmon, because their white fur prevents them from standing out against the sky.

Then, of course, there are grizzly bears, who protect their cubs with an intensity that stands out among other species. The grizzly bear's Latin name is *Ursus arctos horribilis*, which means "terrifying bear" — an appropriate moniker for an animal that is more likely to attack than flee when feeling threatened.

Of the many species this bill covers, bears need particularly large habitats to thrive. Captive polar bears, along with orcas and other cetaceans, suffer from more sickness and psychologically related illnesses than other animals kept in captivity, according to literature prepared by the Britain-based Bear Conservation. Bears are highly intelligent animals that can suffer mentally and physically while in captivity.

This bill solves a real and pressing problem surrounding their welfare.

In Ontario in past years, there have been media reports of attacks from other bears on cubs born in captivity. One Ontario zoo recently kept a black bear in a 25-foot by 25-foot enclosure for over 25 years. A representative of Zoocheck commented that it was probably the worst bear enclosure in North America. Before its death prior to the onset of the pandemic, that particular bear exhibited abnormal stereotypic behaviour like pacing and lying unnaturally still.

Bears have also been used on television and in film in Canada in recent years, and this bill would require a provincial licence for that activity.

In total, there are more than 25 zoos in our nation that continue to keep bears. Bill S-241 aims to protect them and others by limiting new captivity to justified situations with licensing requirements that protect their well-being.

• (1620)

The bill also prohibits the use of bears in performance for entertainment and grants them limited legal standing, allowing for court orders in their best interests, such as relocation with costs, if illegal breeding or performance were to occur.

As with Canada's 2019 whales and dolphins law, the penalty for these summary offences would be a fine of up to \$200,000.

Specifically, this bill attempts to protect these species by prohibiting the acquisition of new bears, including through capture or breeding, as well as through transfer, including imports and exports, unless licensed in one of three ways.

First, similar to the Ending the Captivity of Whales and Dolphins Act, an organization could apply for a licence allowing captivity of its bears if it is in the bears' best interests, regarding individual welfare and conservation.

For example, qualified persons could take in orphaned cubs or problem bears that have come in contact with people and pose a safety risk. Licences could also provide better homes for captive bears currently living in inadequate conditions.

Bear sanctuaries can still thrive under this bill. Opportunities exist to save bears and to provide further public education, and for some existing locations holding bears to evolve. The bill also provides that it is not an offence for anyone to help an animal in distress, to ensure no interference with rescues.

Second, an organization could become licensed to acquire bears for non-harmful scientific research. This would justify new forms of captivity that allow us to learn vital scientific information about bears. In this way, the law would not prohibit the collection of hypothetical data in captive conditions that could help wild polar bears survive, such as with the disappearance of sea ice. In all such licensing decisions, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and, in some contexts, the province, should consider the individual welfare and prospective importance and credibility of any research.

Third, an organization can acquire new bears if they are designated as a Jane Goodall act "animal care organization." Such organizations must serve purposes aligned with animal welfare, conservation, science and public education objectives.

This designation can allow credible organizations, such as Canada's leading zoos, aquariums and sanctuaries, to conduct their operations without an undue administrative burden. This bill proposes seven zoos and aquariums as initial organizations.

Such organizations must continue to meet five transparent and accessible criteria to protect animals, including the highest standards of care, whistle-blower protection, responsible acquisition of animals and no circus-style shows or use of animals for performance in TV or film.

Of great importance, such organizations must also meet any conditions established by the minister on the basis of the best scientific and expert information after, of course, consultations. Such conditions could be specific to the species or a particular facility and could restrict breeding.

Senators, we need the Jane Goodall act to protect bears in the same way we need it to protect other animals on the list, including big cats, the subject of such controversy in the very recent past. It's estimated that close to 40 zoos in our country keep big cats, while estimates for private ownership range between an astonishing 3,600 to 7,000 animals.

Bill S-241 is wide-ranging and groundbreaking in many other ways, and it would be a disservice to the bill to try to discuss its many facets in the short time allotted to me. Perhaps, though, it's worth touching on a significant portion of the bill which grants limited legal standing to animals in criminal sentencing for captive offences, notably illegal breeding or use in performance.

While this standing is restricted because it applies only within limited proceedings — criminal as opposed to civil, which is in the provincial domain — it is still a significant precedent given that virtually no jurisdictions grant animals any standing whatsoever.

The practical effect of the bill could, for example, see the forced relocation — with costs — of all of a roadside zoo's big cats if it were found that any of the zoo cats were to have been illegally bred. Similarly, if a proprietor were to stage an illegal whale show, the same could apply for the relocation of whales.

This new version of the Jane Goodall act also encourages the Government of Ontario to grant civil standing to Kiska, the lone orca at Marineland, and basically advocates for recognition of her rights as an individual.

I have been a strong advocate for a Senate whose role is generally circumscribed by sober second thought, amendment and representation of regional and minority views. There are times, however, when I believe it can lead, and this is one of those occasions, in part because this bill is also included in the ministerial mandate letter.

Moreover, Dr. Jane Goodall, former Senator Sinclair and now my colleague Senator Klyne have highlighted the urgent plight of our wildlife and how it squares with our goals for reconciliation. The bill is also widely supported by organizations and individuals from across the country, including the Coastal First Nations of British Columbia, where the spirit bear's habitat is located. This is consistent with the history of these nations in protecting the great bears of the rainforest, the cetaceans of the

sea and all other creatures in the temperate bioregion. They are also leaders, working with Canada and British Columbia, in advancing the largest network of marine protection areas in Canada's Pacific Coast.

Let me close by saying there is also a spiritual element of respect inherent in this bill for the kindred spirit of all living things. Mahatma Gandhi once said the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. I think there is some truth in this. Protecting and respecting animals elevates our humanity. Neglecting them degrades it.

Discussing his own esteem for animals, the great humourist Will Rogers summed it up better than I could ever do. He said, "If there are no dogs in Heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went." Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Housakos, debate adjourned.)

ENACTING CLIMATE COMMITMENTS BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Galvez, seconded by the Honourable Senator Gignac, for the second reading of Bill S-243, An Act to enact the Climate-Aligned Finance Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support of Bill S-243, as introduced by my colleague Senator Rosa Galvez. The climate-aligned finance act is a courageous and coherent bill.

I spent most of my career working as a reporter. I was a Washington correspondent. One of the most famous mantras in journalism is "follow the money." What this means, of course, is that by following financial transactions, one can get to the source of the problem.

The phrase was coined at the time of the Watergate scandal. Of course, the bill before us seeks to address very different problems. In some ways, they are less spectacular. They get less media attention, but the problem of climate change is much more serious, and it threatens the entire planet.

Bill S-243 aims to connect our financial system and our climate commitments to get to the source of the problem and start fixing it. It will not be easy. Nobody said it would be. We should not expect to change the rules of our financial systems, as we must, while preserving the status quo of business as usual. We have to choose.

[*Translation*]

I am not a scientist so I will not spend a lot of time presenting climate scenarios and energy trajectories. In any event, that is not our role as legislators. Our job is to consider the science and pass laws accordingly — in this case, for the good of the planet and future generations of Canadians.

What are the scientists saying?

The latest IPCC report, published just a few weeks ago, concluded that:

The cumulative scientific evidence is unequivocal: Climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health. Any further delay in concerted anticipatory global action on adaptation and mitigation will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.

• (1630)

What are we to do? The IPCC report does not offer detailed solutions, but it clearly identifies "insufficient and misaligned finance" as a problem and highlights the need to adopt a model where "investment [is] aligned with climate resilient development."

[*English*]

Others are also pointing the way. In February of last year, the U.K. government published a major study called *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review*, led by Professor Dasgupta, of Cambridge University, and it does not mince words:

Collectively, however, we have failed to manage our global portfolio of assets sustainably. Estimates show that between 1992 and 2014, produced capital per person doubled, and human capital per person increased by about 13% globally; but the stock of natural capital per person declined by nearly 40%. . . . In other words, while humanity has prospered immensely in recent decades, the ways in which we have achieved such prosperity means that it has come at a devastating cost to Nature.

But this is not simply a market failure: it is a broader institutional failure too. . . . Governments almost everywhere exacerbate the problem by paying people more to exploit Nature than to protect it, and to prioritise unsustainable economic activities.

We need a financial system that channels financial investments — public and private — towards economic activities that enhance our stock of natural assets and encourage sustainable consumption and production activities. . . .

In May of last year, the International Energy Agency published a pathway to net-zero emissions by 2050 — a goal that Canada has publicly committed to achieve. The report was very direct and precise in saying that no new oil and gas fields should be approved for development beyond those already approved in

2021, and that, going forward, the only focus of oil and gas producers should be to manage and reduce emissions from existing assets.

There are many more reports and studies, of course, but at this point the message is clear: If we are to reach net zero by 2050, we need transformational change at a systemic level, quickly. But that is not what we have done in Canada. So far, we have supported a few climate policies and initiatives, as long as they do not affect our economy in any meaningful way. We vow to protect the climate in the long term, but short-term considerations of competitiveness take precedence. We advocate for bold change, but the status quo prevails most of the time.

As we pledge to reduce our national emissions, we are planning to increase our oil and gas exports. We celebrate our carbon tax, but our biggest polluters only pay a fraction of it. And the most significant measure we are contemplating for the financial industry is a disclosure scheme.

I strongly believe in transparency, of course. It is often an essential first step. In fact, we just passed Bill S-211, which is a transparency bill focused on forced labour and child labour in supply chains. But there are situations where transparency alone is not sufficient, especially when economic incentives are not aligned. In the case of the financial sector, climate disclosure schemes have not had much impact.

A recent report by NGOs shows that in 2021, the world's top banks provided \$752 billion in financing to the fossil fuel industry. One quarter of that amount went to companies that are expanding production. In Canada, financing for oil sands operations increased by 51%. Of course, this is not because we didn't know about climate change last year or because we had insufficient disclosures to know that increasing oil and gas production contradicts our climate commitments. It's because disclosures are basically worthless if they are not associated with cost.

In fact, a 2020 survey by HSBC found that just 10% of investors viewed the climate disclosures as a relevant source of information. When discussing that survey, the *Financial Times* quoted a former Bank of England economist as saying that:

Just discussing risks, and assessing risks, does not mean we are actually transitioning to net zero. Many firms may discuss risks — and do exactly nothing to advance the transition.

And why is that? Because climate disclosures provide information, but they do not align financial incentives. And that's what matters: alignment.

[*Translation*]

Today, we are studying Bill S-243.

[Senator Miville-Dechéne]

For the first time, we have a bill that is proposing to do what the IPCC and others are calling for: align finance with our climate commitments. The act would require public and private financial institutions to explain how they align their loans and investments with our climate commitments. It would require Crown corporations to integrate climate expertise at the highest level. It would support financial transactions that accelerate the transition and discourage those that slow it down. The act also addresses the conflicts of interest that have held us back for so many years.

It is a bold and necessary bill that challenges the paradigm under which we have operated until now, which holds that the financial system is untouchable.

This initiative will no doubt spark opposition, but I believe that the criticism should be met with a simple question: If you do not agree with this bill, how do you propose that Canada align its financial system with our climate commitments? If the reply is merely that we need more disclosure and carbon capture, or that we must wait for other countries to act, or that the market itself will ensure that there is a transition, we will know that there is no real will to change anything.

[*English*]

As I mentioned at the outset, Bill S-243 proposes to follow the money. That is certainly the right approach. But there is another thing that Bill S-243 would allow us to do, and that is putting our money where our mouth is. Senator Galvez is giving us an opportunity not only to align our financial system with our climate commitments, but to align our deeds with our words. We want to be climate leaders, but we are the only G7 country where emissions increased between 2015 and 2019. We point to other countries with bigger carbon footprints, but Canada is the worst country in the world for cumulative emissions per population. We can and should be doing much better. As senators, we often say that one of our duties is to provide representation to under-represented groups. Today, I suggest to you that one such group is made up of future generations. This bill is for them.

As appointed legislators, we are protected from electoral pressures. In politics, this is a rare and invaluable privilege. It should give us the courage and the independence to make hard decisions that are in the public interest. Today I suggest that we should take the time to understand and reflect on this bill. To quote *The Dasgupta Review* one more time:

... the same ingenuity that has led us to make demands on Nature that are so large, so damaging and over such a short period, can be redeployed to bring about transformative change, perhaps even in just as short a time. We and our descendants deserve nothing less.

In 15 or 20 years, most of us won't be here anymore. Today, I suggest that this bill gives us a chance to do something that will matter when we are gone. So I urge you, colleagues, to send this bill to committee for an in-depth study without delay. We owe this to our children and grandchildren. Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Would Senator Miville-Dechêne take a question?

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Certainly.

[English]

Senator Galvez: You say you are not a scientist, but I congratulate you for the resume you have and the IPCC reports that are huge like that. Thank you very much for the support for this bill. I know you are very much interested in transparency.

• (1640)

[Translation]

I learned a lot today from a report that focused on conflicts of interest regarding decisions made by fossil fuel company directors who also serve on the boards of banks or financial institutions. Have you thought about the impact that apparent or actual conflicts of interest could have on the media, our lives and so on?

Senator Miville-Dechêne: As a former ombudsman of Radio-Canada, I've thought a lot about conflicts of interest. There are very specific codes. We could not be on a board of directors, and our activities outside of our work had to be very limited to avoid any apparent or actual conflict of interest, since that would destroy all of our credibility. A journalist colleague of mine who was assigned to cover police operations was secretly being paid to provide information to police officers. We obviously need to prevent such obvious conflicts of interest.

I am less familiar with the banking and financial sector, but certainly, if directors of banks or financial institutions hold shares in fossil fuel companies or are otherwise involved in an economy that does not respect our financial commitments, that is a problem since we don't actually know what happens on these boards. We don't know whether that will influence the individual's vote.

There needs to be a lot more transparency and information on board activities if we want to change things. Your bill is rather innovative in that sense. It prohibits directors from being shareholders or having ties to companies that do not comply with our climate commitments, and it states that lobbyists who have worked for companies that do not comply with our climate commitments cannot serve as directors for a period of five years. It is a rather unique way of looking at things, but it is essential.

(On motion of Senator Moncion, debate adjourned.)

[English]

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Simons, calling the attention of the Senate to the challenges and opportunities that Canadian municipalities face, and to the importance of understanding and redefining the relationships between Canada's municipalities and the federal government.

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Honourable senators, as an inveterate city girl, I take to this inquiry on cities like a duck to water and am delighted to swim into Senator Simon's inquiry which calls:

. . . the attention of the Senate to the challenges and opportunities that Canadian municipalities face, and to the importance of understanding and redefining the relationships between Canada's municipalities and the federal government.

For reasons we all understand, we rarely speak about cities in this chamber, and I would like to thank Senator Simons for opening up the space for us to do so.

Cities create a hum in the air. It is this hum of endless activity that has always attracted me to them. Big city, bright lights, anonymity, everything that is on offer has drawn me to live in New Delhi, Munich, Tehran, Toronto and now occasionally Ottawa. My colleagues who live in, let's say, more bucolic parts of Canada — Senator Duncan and Senator Black, I'm looking at you — will certainly have a different point of view, and I respect that. But for me, cities are where the action is.

And no wonder. I come from one of the most diverse and vibrant cities in Canada and the world. The energy, the pace, the food, the culture and the sports help leapfrog Toronto high on every ranking of cities, not just in Canada but globally. I confess I am a bit biased, but I am not so biased that I don't appreciate the glorious waterfront in Halifax, the music and laughs in Montreal, the Calgary Stampede — although I have never been to it; it's on my bucket list — Stanley Park in Vancouver and, of course, the political chatter on the streets in Ottawa.

My time on this matter is brief, so I will take the opportunity of showcasing the unique capacity of cities to create innovative, place-based solutions to seemingly intractable national and global problems. Solutions which can be more easily adapted city to city with far less angst, process, debate and conflict than it takes national governments to adopt good ideas from elsewhere.

In order to make my case for a greater role for cities in our arrangements, I am going to pick a case study — that of climate change, and for good reason.

We all know the threat that climate change presents to us, not just in cities but across our nation and the world. But the sheer density of life in cities means that they will be at the forefront of rising global mean temperatures. It is predicted by Natural Resources Canada that:

As the global mean temperature continues to increase, cities and towns across Canada will experience warmer temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns . . . increased frequency and intensity of some extreme weather events, and—for most coastal cities—sea-level rise.

This is neither hyperbolic nor futuristic. We all know that. We have already witnessed chaos because of extreme weather last year in British Columbia, and we are going to see more — not less — of acute and chronic biophysical impacts, including more frequent intense heat events, increased incidences of poor air quality, high-intensity rainfall events, windstorms, wildlife-urban interface fires, increased coastal erosion, storm surge flooding and decreased water quality. It sounds almost apocalyptic, but this is a fact.

Let's all remember the fires in Fort McMurray: 2,400 homes and buildings were destroyed, and thousands of residents were forcibly displaced. The estimated damage of this tragic event was over \$9 billion, which is the costliest disaster in Canadian history.

From fire, let's turn to water, namely sea water. One of the most commonly known impacts of climate change is the rising of sea levels. This will impact our coastline and therefore our coastal cities. Vancouver and Victoria could see significant landmarks and areas under water. Beloved civic spaces like the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Fisherman's Wharf and BC Place could be under water.

• (1650)

This is not limited just to our coastal cities. Non-coastal cities could be impacted by rising sea levels as well. Quebec City, which is close to the St. Lawrence River, could see parts of the city under water from increased flooding in the summer. Toronto, too, would be impacted with warmer and wetter winters and summers. This could lead to flooding, which in turn will damage our physical infrastructure, because city infrastructure was not designed for climate change. It is no longer fit for purpose.

But cities are not ignoring the reality that stares them in the face. In fact, cities are leading the charge for solutions with innovation and ingenuity as David Miller, former mayor of Toronto and now cities climate activist, has noted. *Time* magazine observed, "Countries brought big promises to COP26. Cities brought actions." The actions of cities matter a great deal, because 70% of greenhouse emissions are created by urban areas.

The most encouraging sign is that most forward-looking cities have embedded climate change into urban planning processes, and the results are impressive. To whet your appetite a bit, I will take you for a quick tasting tour of the "who," "where" and "what."

Vancouver is now dedicated to turning itself into a city for walking and cycling, much like Amsterdam. This includes a complete rethink of transportation, land use and urban planning so that cars are less and less a feature of city life. By 2030, 90% of the people living within the city will be an easy walk or roll to their daily needs.

The "rolling" grabs my imagination. I have to go back to Vancouver sometime.

Montreal has adopted strong climate-change plans that are backed heavily by city council and civil society. One key plank is to have strict energy efficiency standards for new construction in the city. It is already planning the establishment of a zero-carbon neighbourhood near the old Hippodrome horse racing track.

Toronto has recently adopted TransformTO, an ambitious climate change strategy. They have begun enforcing a new set of green standards for the buildings, which will tighten the rules around greenhouse emissions for new and existing buildings.

I could give you examples from Bridgewater and Halifax, and suburban cities like Brampton and Ajax in Ontario if I had time. But I do want to go beyond Canadian cities, because we do not live in Canada alone — we live as part of the globe. Let me give you a very quick tour of the exciting things other cities in the world are doing.

Oslo has adopted a green budget. Instead of only looking at financial analysis, it requires a carbon impact analysis and a budget to meet those challenges. Bogotá has gone on a bike lane building spree. Barcelona has banned cars from their Superblocks. Milan is being transformed into an urban forest. In Chicago, rooftop gardens and greenery have become the norm, reducing rooftop temperatures by 3 to 4 degrees Celsius. London is issuing green bonds for rewilding.

But, colleagues, I must tell you that the coolest ideas come from Canada. Vancouver is making buildings — really big buildings — entirely out of wood. Toronto is cooling its downtown office buildings not with expensive energy-intensive chillers but by piping Lake Ontario water and cooling it through an efficient system.

I believe that these are signals of focus, innovation and ingenuity. I have always believed that good ideas have long legs, and many of these ideas are being replicated across cities. But no matter how creative these solutions are, they cannot solve or resolve the challenge without the participation of other orders of government, and in particular the federal government.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has a sensible three-point plan. They call on the government to bring its whole self to the table through three actions. The first is rapid scaling of support for disaster mitigation and climate resilience, including wildfire mitigation, drought reduction and flood prevention. The second is strengthening natural infrastructure so that municipalities can purchase forests, wetlands and green spaces — how brilliant is that? And the third is supporting cities by updating natural hazard maps, updating regional climate mapping and undertaking risk assessments to integrate social and equity considerations.

Colleagues, I think these are all reasonable asks and, of course, they are accompanied by money — lots of money. But success will evade us if we continue to follow the narrow dictates of “business as usual” and stay in our lanes and corridors. The federal government must be able to talk to municipalities, and municipalities must be able to talk to the federal government and build relationships.

As Jane Jacobs has said, the level of government closest to the people has the capacity to respond fastest to its needs, but it is the level of government furthest from the people — in this case the federal government — that has the capacity and indeed the responsibility to provide protection to the people, whether this protection comes in the form of human rights laws, security protection or, as in this case, protection from the looming threat of climate change.

Cities and the federal government must be in the same room together more often. They must create space for each other at each other’s tables. There are already points of light.

I am an eternal optimist, so I will share with you some points of light that I have picked up. The federal government recently — “recently” is always a relative term in Parliament; so about two years ago — launched a Municipal Nominee Program to enable municipalities to choose their own immigrants according to their needs. The gas tax, when it was introduced, had municipalities in mind. Three years ago, the federal government reached out to the City of Toronto for special funding to house refugees. The taxes collected through the price on carbon are directly refunded by the federal government to schools, hospitals, colleges, municipalities and universities.

I will conclude by saying that we need many more of these good ideas and many more conversations and actions between levels of government to deal with this ever-present and growing crisis.

All this can happen, colleagues, without straying too far into the constitutional arrangements of our nation, but it will take public and political will to do so. I am pleased that Senator Simons has created the space in the Senate to start this conversation.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Housakos, debate adjourned.)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE SITUATION
IN LEBANON—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition), pursuant to notice of November 24, 2021, moved:

That the Standing Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade be authorized to examine and report on the situation in Lebanon and determine whether Canada should appoint a special envoy, when and if the committee is formed; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than February 28, 2022.

(On motion of Senator Housakos, debate adjourned.)

(At 5 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, May 10, 2022, at 2 p.m.)

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