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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

THE LATE J. CHRISTOPHER PRATT, C.C.

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, Newfoundland and Canada sadly lost a major arts voice this past weekend. Artist Christopher Pratt died Sunday at the age of 86.

Internationally known, Pratt's paintings and prints are cherished in public and private collections across Canada. About, of and from his beloved province, where he was born before Newfoundland joined Confederation, they are painted with his unique precision. Declaring, "I love what I do," his subjects — Newfoundland's buildings, interiors, people, highway, his sailboat and waters — earned him the mantra as a leading magic realist.

Tom Smart, Beaverbrook Art Gallery's director and the artist's biographer, said Sunday:

There is magic in his paintings. . . . You look at his paintings and it's almost as if they're looking back at you.

Seen by some as cold, haunting or having an unsettling gaze, Pratt's controlled, sparse, precise works reveal details, realities and depths achieved by few. A student of Alex Colville, he studied at Mount Allison University and the Glasgow School of Art. My time in his immaculate studio was memorable, as were the ketchup and mustard containers filled with his printer inks.

Christopher, who designed the Newfoundland flag, was a storyteller in art and conversation. I went sailing with him in 1990. It was magical. Christopher's unexpected invitation awaited me on landing in St. John's. I ran to the store before it closed, bought appropriate shoes, accepted the invitation for the next morning and then phoned my husband in Victoria. "I thought you were working," he said. I was. I couldn't miss the opportunity to see if the many works I had catalogued over the years were true to the detail of the boat itself. They were. Anyway, my meetings were only to begin the next evening.

Christopher's wife, Mary Pratt, who predeceased him, was also a pre-eminent artist. Even after their divorce, they spoke almost every day, sometimes from our home on the island at the far end of the country. The two were fast friends. I extend my condolences to the Pratt family and friends.

Colleagues, artists are leaders, portraying who we are, where and how we live, illuminating issues we face. Christopher Pratt did that with steadfastness, insight, care and compassion. He inspired many through his curating, teaching and the directness and integrity of his thought and art.

In paying tribute to Christopher Pratt's exemplary career, I also want to congratulate *Inuit Art Quarterly*, the publication which presents leading Inuit artists and writers, some from Labrador. Last Friday, they received two much coveted National Magazine Awards, one for best arts and literature magazine and the Magazine Grand Prix, the first arts magazine ever to receive it.

As we say goodbye to Christopher Pratt, a veritable Canadian icon, may we also support and honour other artists — emerging and established — for their work and insights. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL ELECTION

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: Honourable senators, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere congratulations to Premier Doug Ford and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario on their re-election and major victory.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Atallahjan: I would also like to congratulate all those who campaigned and worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of Ontarians were heard when it comes to the future of our province.

Over the course of their last mandate, the Ontario PC Party demonstrated leadership and diligence, working collaboratively with other provinces and with the federal government to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and to successfully deliver key investments and aid to the people of Ontario.

The resounding approval from the Ontario electorate this time around constitutes a strong endorsement for a renewed mandate and the policies and promises put forward by Premier Ford's government.

With the COVID crisis almost behind us, it is a critical time for Ontario's leadership to get the economy back on track and to continue their efforts to bring long-awaited relief to the people of Ontario.

I am encouraged by the proposed initiatives and outlined priorities of the Ford government, which include a plan for strong economic recovery, innovation, development in the areas of housing, transit and health care and critical investments toward mental health and long-term care.

I wish Premier Ford and his Progressive Conservative government the best of luck on their new mandate, and I look forward to their continued achievements for a more prosperous and thriving future for all the citizens of Ontario. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

SILVER ALERT SYSTEM

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Honourable senators, many of us here have lived with the fear of losing a much-loved mother or father or mentor.

I remember many years ago my grandmother would leave our home, suitcase in hand, on a biting cold Saskatchewan winter day in search of a memory and a life long past. Her behaviour, known as “wandering,” is common amongst those suffering from dementia. Our family was in a constant state of panic — mom and dad frantically leaving work or counting on the kindness of strangers and friends to bring her back home safely.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case for other families. There are too many stories of folks with dementia wandering and never coming home. If a person is not found within the first 12 hours, they face a 50% chance of injury or death. About six in ten people with dementia will become wanderers.

A brutal, indiscriminate medical condition that knows no boundaries, dementia — or Alzheimer’s — affects more than 700,000 Canadians and their families, and those numbers are expected to double in the next 15 years. And it knows no boundaries — everyone from Ronald Reagan to Robin Williams to Rosa Parks — it robs them of a future.

• (1410)

Coping with this means often frustrating situations, and it touches us all in some way or another. But on May 31, 2018 — and believe me, it was late at night — we unanimously passed a motion here in the Senate asking the government to work with the provinces and territories to institute a national framework on silver alert, and I thank Senator Plett for being the co-sponsor.

A silver alert, much like the successful Amber Alert system that is used to locate abducted children, helps find people with major neurocognitive disorders who have gone missing or who are in imminent danger. Given the similarity of the systems, they could be easily integrated, making silver alert a cost-effective strategy to find our loved ones. Statistics from cities and states from our southern neighbour show that silver alert has been a very effective strategy.

So I was happy to see yesterday that the Quebec government has announced that it is launching three silver alert pilot projects in the municipalities of Joliette, Val-d’Or and Drummond. A

silver alert strategy in these towns is a great start, and we’ve seen Alberta and Manitoba adopt legislation to implement the system. But a federal network would help each of the provincial and territorial systems communicate and work together. My hope is that the government sees the success of these projects and takes the lead, as we ask them to do.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, yesterday on the eve of World Oceans Day, I jumped out of bed at 4 a.m. so I could be out at the Arisaig Wharf to go lobster fishing with my good friends Megan and Shaun MacInnis and Shaun’s Uncle Bernard on the *Carrie Anne*.

Nova Scotia is known as “Canada’s Ocean Playground,” and the moniker is an appropriate one. Have you driven or cycled Cape Breton Island’s — Unama’ki’s — scenic Cabot Trail, gone swimming in the balmy St. George’s Bay waters at Pomquet Beach, enjoyed the Stan Rogers Folk Festival enveloped in mist rolling in off the Canso coast, visited the lighthouse at Peggy’s Cove, explored the Joggins fossil cliffs, surfed the waves at Lawrencetown, toured the *Bluenose II* in Lunenburg, gone whale watching from Brier Island or hiked Cape Split to see the highest tides in the world roiling below in the Bay of Fundy? Nova Scotia is the perfect place to celebrate World Oceans Day.

Honourable senators, the North Atlantic is rich in so many ways. It is the most intense carbon sink on the planet, and for many Nova Scotians, it is their workplace.

Colleagues, lobster is Canada’s most valuable fishery. Last year, the value of Canada’s lobster exports exceeded \$3.2 billion — the best year ever. In Nova Scotia, there are thousands employed in the industry and many more dependent on the income.

Yesterday morning, I had the honour of experiencing firsthand the daily rhythm of the lobster fishery. As I turned off Highway 245 at St. Margaret of Scotland Church and headed down to join the MacInnises on the *Carrie Anne*, the sun was rising behind the Arisaig lighthouse in the direction of Malignant Cove. The wharf was bustling with action as people prepared their boats with bins to store fresh lobster and fish bait to replenish the traps.

Like a well-conducted orchestra, the fleet motored out to harvest the lobsters from their traps and bait and drop them again for the next day. Our crew worked steadily and with great attention to safety and conservation. When we returned to shore, Bo and Indy, two of Megan and Shaun’s four little boys, were there to greet the boat just as Shaun had done at that age with his late father Stevie MacInnis, a well-respected local lobster and tuna fisherman.

Honourable senators, on this World Oceans Day 2022, let's celebrate these fishers — the MacInnis family and others — and let's recognize the ocean as a generous provider of life, food and livelihood and as an important sustainer of families, traditions, communities, our economy and our planet.

Happy World Oceans Day, colleagues. Thank you. *Welalioq.*

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Elaine Gibson, professor of Law at Dalhousie University and the partner of the Honourable Senator Cotter.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

PARTNERSHIP MODELS

Hon. Brent Cotter: Honourable senators, yesterday, Senators Arnot, Massicotte, Wells and I had the pleasure of hosting meetings with senior representatives of Cameco Corporation and the chiefs of three northern Saskatchewan First Nations. They were in Ottawa to discuss matters of importance with government representatives and shared some of their thoughts with us.

As many of you will know, Cameco Corporation, based in Saskatoon, is the largest uranium mining company in the world. Cameco's leadership team, headed by CEO Tim Gitzel, is among one of the most progressive and capable in the mining industry and is committed to the communities with which it works. The First Nations leaders in attendance were Chief Coreen Sayazie of the Black Lake First Nation, Chief Bart Tsannie of the Hatchet Lake First Nation and Chief Kevin Mercredi of the Fond Du Lac First Nation, all Dene First Nations at the far northern reaches of Saskatchewan, virtually bordering on the Northwest Territories.

What we heard about and what I want to speak to briefly today are the incredibly wide-ranging partnerships that exist and have existed for decades between Cameco and northern Saskatchewan First Nations and their various business enterprises. These partnerships enable Cameco and the First Nations to jointly benefit from the mining of a critical natural resource, uranium, in northern Saskatchewan. Since 2004, these partnerships have generated over \$4 billion flowing to First Nations businesses and communities in the North, as well as employment for thousands of northerners and education and training for countless Indigenous young people.

It is an example of the incredible potential for economic partnerships — in this case, in one of the many critical minerals abundant in northern Saskatchewan — to breathe life into the concepts of truth and reconciliation and to make concrete Canada's commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples — what Senator Arnot yesterday rightly described as an example of reconciliation before that word was fashionable.

[Senator Coyle]

Some of our visitors are residential school survivors. One chief told us that the past cannot be undone, but through initiatives like their partnerships with Cameco and others, they and their communities can move forward with dignity and autonomy to pursue their destinies and achieve the kind of prosperity that so many of us in this country take for granted. This is courageous and honourable. The initiatives they champion to build the economic and social fabrics of their lives and communities deserve our support as senators and Canadians. Cameco and the great Canadian companies that have shown the willingness and commitment — and sometimes courage — to work with our First Nations in pursuit of shared success deserve our admiration, appreciation and support. Thank you. *Marsee.*

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, Hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of interns in the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Kutcher.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CANADA-UKRAINE PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAM THE HONOURABLE MARY COYLE

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Honourable senators, we are joined today by an outstanding group of young people. Twenty of our visitors in our gallery are interns in the offices of members of Parliament. They are from Ukraine and are participating in the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program. Many are beginning their careers in international relations, law, medicine and other areas. They have lived through the onset of the genocidal invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Many have families and friends whose lives and liberty are in jeopardy.

Many have loved ones who are fighting for the survival of their country and a world order governed by the rule of law and not the whims of tyrannical autocrats. We know that when Ukraine wins this war, there will be no more war. If Russia wins this war, there will be no more Ukraine.

We in this chamber stand with Ukraine and welcome these future leaders who represent the tenacity, honour and resilience of the Ukrainian people. Young people who aspire to do great things, as our visitors do, benefit from exposure to other ways of understanding our common world. They also benefit from being exposed to role models who demonstrate that hard work, struggle and dedication to the values that underlie our democratic institutions can achieve a better world for all.

• (1420)

Speaking of role models, I can think of none better for these young women to emulate than one of our own colleagues, a person I am proud to call a friend, a fellow Nova Scotian who has demonstrated exemplary leadership in her fight for global equality, environmental protection and the rights of Indigenous peoples: our own Senator Mary Coyle. As some of you know, Senator Coyle recently received an honorary degree of Doctor of Business Management from Meru University of Science and Technology in Meru, Kenya. This degree is a fitting recognition of her decades of work, building stronger and more gender-equitable communities around the world.

I know you all will join with me in recognizing Senator Coyle's achievements. Congratulations, Mary. You have set a high bar for us all.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Kutcher: Honourable senators, it is fitting that our guests in the gallery today can see that there are people in Canada who have worked hard and successfully to help create a more just and equal world. These people give us strength and fill our future with hope.

Guests, you will soon be returning to your country and engaging in the very difficult task of winning the war and directing the reconstruction of Ukraine. I hope you will seek out mentors who will work with you, help guide you and who can provide you with the support, advice and realistic encouragement you will need to help you as you build a better Ukraine and a more just and tolerant world.

The road ahead will be a difficult one, but no trip worth the journey is smooth. Good luck and Godspeed. Thank you, *wela'liog, d'akuju*.

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 Anil Kaul. 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!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

CERTIFICATE OF NOMINATION TABLED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the certificate of nomination and biographical notes for the proposed appointment of Philippe Dufresne to the position of Privacy Commissioner for a term of seven years.

[*Translation*]

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE IMPLEMENTATION BILL, 2021

FOURTH REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Percy Mockler, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, presented the following report:

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

The Standing Senate Committee on National Finance has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill C-8, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update tabled in Parliament on December 14, 2021 and other measures, has, in obedience to the order of reference of May 10, 2022, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

PERCY MOCKLER

Chair

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

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

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

NOTICE OF MOTION TO APPROVE APPOINTMENT

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, in accordance with subsection 53(1) of the *Privacy Act*, Chapter P-21, R.S.C., 1985, the Senate approve the appointment of Mr. Philippe Dufresne as Privacy Commissioner, for a term of seven years.

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 2, 2022-23

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-24, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 3, 2022-23

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-25, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

[*English*]

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE PREVENTION OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE BILL

FIRST READING

Hon. Fabian Manning introduced Bill S-249, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the prevention of intimate partner violence.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

[*Translation*]

CANADA-EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, MARCH 14-15, 2022— REPORT TABLED

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the 2022 Extraordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, held by video conference from March 14 to 15, 2022.

SECOND PART OF THE 2022 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, APRIL 25-28, 2022—REPORT TABLED

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the Second Part of the 2022 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, held by video conference from April 25 to 28, 2022.

• (1430)

[*English*]

LIFE OF LARRY DOHEY

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the life of Larry Dohey.

QUESTION PERIOD

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

DEBATE ON BILL C-13

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is again for the leader, Senator Gold.

Senator Gold, during the debate just a few days ago and the motions to pre-study Bill C-11 and Bill C-13, you and Senator Gagné assured the Senate that we would have all the necessary time to study these bills, that there was no rush for the government to adopt these two bills.

On Monday, the Standing Committee on Official Languages of the House of Commons held its first meeting on Bill C-13. The very first MP who had the floor, Liberal Francis Drouin, tabled a time allocation motion to limit debate on the bill. Debate had not even started. No witnesses had been heard, and the government moved closure before any debate started. Thankfully, the left arm of the government didn't agree with the right arm of the government, so the NDP voted against this time allocation. Two left arms, two left feet.

Senator Gold, if Bill C-13 does not have to be rushed, why did your government try to close the debate in the House committee before the debate even started?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. First of all, what I've said in this chamber on many occasions — and I'll say it again — is not that these bills are not important, but that the Senate will and that the government respects that the Senate will take the time that it chooses to properly study bills.

Why the government may have moved time allocation in the other place might have something to do with the degree of obstruction that has characterized this Parliament for some time, and I think the best answer is the short one in this regard.

Senator Plett: Of course, no obstruction had started. We're going to get to that obstruction, but the government moved their motion.

Senator Gold, as I said yesterday, you are the Leader of the Government in the Senate, and, as such, you are privy to the government's parliamentary strategy. You even have a parliamentary secretary. You knew very well that the government's plan was to make sure that the Senate would receive Bill C-13 before the House rises on June 23. You made no secret that this bill is a government priority.

It is time for the government to be up front and clear. Senator Gold, do you expect Bill C-13 to clear the Senate before we rise for the summer, yes or no?

Senator Gold: The leadership in this place and the Senate has made it clear that they demand — and properly so — proper time to study bills. I have no control over the will of the Senate, but I respect that.

I wish the same respect would be shown to the words that I have pronounced publicly and in private on an ongoing basis. What knowledge I may or may not have of parliamentary strategy or government's intentions are things that no responsible parliamentarian would inquire of as those with experience — and indeed those who have more recently arrived — would understand it would be an inappropriate breach of confidence.

Senator Plett: Not likely.

COST IMPLICATIONS OF BILL C-13

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate also regards Bill C-13. Last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, released a report which looks into the financial cost of Bill C-13. This analysis was conducted at the request of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages. The PBO report states that three departments — Canadian Heritage, Treasury Board and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada — all wrongfully refused to disclose how they will allocate \$16 million set aside in the Economic and Fiscal Update 2021 for the initial implementation costs of Bill C-13.

Leader, as Senator Plett just pointed out, the NDP-Liberal government is limiting debate on this bill in the House committee and you're also refusing to disclose information on Bill C-13 to the PBO. Could you tell us why?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I'm not aware of the issues surrounding the request for information. I'll certainly make inquiries and respond back.

Senator Martin: Thank you for that. Leader, in addition to refusing to provide information on how the initial \$16 million will be allocated, the three departments I just mentioned also refused to provide the PBO with information on the ongoing tasks, staffing and costs associated with the implementation of Bill C-13.

The NDP-Liberal government clearly believes that it can limit debate, and it can brush off an officer of Parliament's request for information, but this is ultimately taxpayers' money.

Leader, why is your government being so secretive with this information? Will the NDP-Liberal government instruct these three departments to provide the PBO's Office with the information needed to do their job?

Senator Gold: The government has respect for the PBO Office. As I said, I'm not aware of the situation which you brought to my attention and I'll certainly look into it.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

Hon. Chantal Petitclerc: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, gender-based analysis plus, or GBA+, is an essential tool that the government introduced in 1995 in the development of its policies, programs and legislation. That said, as far back as 2009 and again in 2015, the then auditors general identified barriers to its implementation.

Just last week, the Auditor General noted that the previously identified and still unresolved problem of collecting and using disaggregated data explains why so little progress has been made in fully integrating GBA+.

Senator Gold, can you explain why these gaps in disaggregated data collection persist? As you can appreciate, without that data, it is difficult to effectively address systemic inequalities.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank the honourable senator for her question. While progress has been made, there is still much to be done to identify gaps and continue removing barriers. The Government of Canada remains committed to this issue. One step has been to address the gaps in disaggregated data, as traditional institutions have historically limited access to vulnerable populations.

As a reminder, the government applies GBA+ throughout the life cycle of an initiative, from policy development to implementation.

I note that the 2021 budget provides \$11 million over five years for gender-based violence research and knowledge mobilization. This funding is intended to support the important data collection and research work being done by organizations on the ground to better serve under-represented groups. This research is the foundation of GBA+.

Senator Petitclerc: Senator Gold, in our role as legislators, it is important for us to have access to all the tools we need to do our work in a thorough and professional manner.

Would it be possible to provide us, on a regular basis, automatically or systematically, even a summary of the comparative analyses conducted as part of the development of government bills every time they are brought to our attention?

Senator Gold: I will follow up with the government and try to provide a response shortly.

• (1440)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

ACCESS TO PROGRAMS

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, last week the Auditor General released four performance audit reports, one of which focused on access to benefits for hard-to-reach populations. Ms. Hogan found that the Canada Revenue Agency and Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC, had an incomplete picture of potentially eligible people who were not receiving benefits, and the departments did not know whether most of their targeted outreach activities had helped to increase benefit take-up rates for hard-to-reach populations.

Can you share with Canadians what the government is doing to increase the number of hard-to-reach individuals who are eligible for government-funded benefits? Although it's only two years old, can you tell us if Service Canada's Reaching All Canadians initiative is reaping any benefits and showing early signs of success?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, thank you for the question. The government welcomes the recommendations of the Auditor General and acknowledges, frankly, that there is more work to be done.

Barriers keeping at-risk Canadians from accessing benefits include lack of awareness, lack of cultural awareness, service design, accessibility and others. To address these barriers, ESDC developed a strategy structured around four key components: simplification, direct reach, inclusion, and promotion and awareness. This strategy includes client-centric solutions to connect with at-risk Canadians where they live, similar to the successful Indigenous Outreach initiative that obtained funding in 2018 to reach remote and northern Indigenous communities that have been historically underserved. I'm also advised that the CRA continues to support and build trust with hard-to-reach and vulnerable communities across the country. For example, free tax clinics and outreach programs serve approximately 600,000 people a year.

With respect to your question regarding the Reaching All Canadians initiative, I'm advised that the government is presently seeking to strengthen this initiative to respond to the findings in the audit. I have been assured that the government will continue to develop programs and processes to ensure that all Canadians — especially marginalized and underserved people — are able to access services, benefits and support.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for the answer, Senator Gold. It's reassuring.

As Ms. Hogan said, the government needs to find out what the barriers that prevent hard-to-reach populations from accessing these programs are and then tailor its outreach programs instead of repeating the same recipe over and over again in the hopes that it will generate more buy-in.

I know the government acknowledged the responsibility to help Canadians receive their benefits, and to that effect it allocated \$18 million in 2021 to ESDC and CRA for targeted outreach activities. Is the government able to provide us with an update on how this money was spent, and how many Canadians it helped obtain benefits they otherwise would have likely not received or applied for?

Senator Gold: Thank you, senator, for the question. With regard to the specifics of the question, I will have to make inquiries with the government and hope to report back in a timely fashion.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

Hon. Scott Tannas: Honourable senators, I'd like to ask the Chair of the Aboriginal Peoples Committee, Senator Francis, for a potential follow-up to Bill C-15, which follows a trend that the committee has employed in the past to ensure progress on the implementation of important bills where there was a promise to do things after the bill was passed.

Senator, next week marks the one-year anniversary of the passing of the UNDRIP bill, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and its two-year action plan development timetable. There has not been a lot of public information as to progress achieved.

Is the committee considering convening a public meeting to get an on-the-record update from Minister Lametti, now that 50% of the statutory time has passed and the deadline is steadily approaching?

Hon. Brian Francis: Thank you for the important question, Senator Tannas. The short answer is yes. The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples is committed to increasing transparency and accountability surrounding the federal implementation of past legislation, including An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which, as you noted, requires that an action plan be developed by June 2023. However, due to a limited number of meetings, this and other work has been deferred to the fall.

Please allow me to give you an overview of what we have done to date and what we hope to do next. This year, the Aboriginal Peoples Committee drew attention to the priorities and needs of Indigenous women and girls. We did so by reviewing the federal implementation of the *Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, which was released three years ago last Friday, as well as An Act to amend the Indian Act in response to the Superior Court of Quebec decision in *Descheneaux c. Canada*, which

claimed to remove all gender-based discrimination in the Indian Act relating to registration. We hope to table reports on these two important topics this month.

In the fall, the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples intends to review the federal implementation of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls with a targeted study. In addition, we will focus on An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, An Act respecting Indigenous languages and An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.

In the fall, we will invite Minister Lametti, and others, to appear during public meetings to provide updates on each of these laws.

Honourable senators, allow me to thank the members of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, including Senators Christmas and Patterson, who are in steering, for their hard work over the past months.

I hope in September we will be able to meet twice a week to make serious progress towards our ambitious and urgent agenda. Thank you, Senator Tannas, again for the question.

FINANCE

CANADA'S INFLATION RATE

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate. Yesterday, the NDP-Liberal government had an opportunity to make life more affordable for Canadians by supporting a motion from the official opposition in the other place. The motion put forward concrete actions that would help Canadians dealing with record food, fuel and housing inflation immediately — not next year, but right now.

Of course, your government voted against it. Government leader, I've raised the cost of living crisis with you many times and I haven't gotten the sense that your government understands the desperation that many families feel right across Canada.

Leader, does your government still believe that inflation is transitory? Is that why you won't cut taxes on gas or/and the mandates? Was your refusal to support yesterday's motion strictly a partisan decision, or was it ideological? What is it with your government?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I know it's not a tradition in this place, as it is in my community, to answer a question with a question, but I might leave unstated the questions I might have posed to you about the motivations behind the motion to which you refer.

The government is aware and cares about the cost of living for Canadians and continues to focus on making life better and more affordable for Canadians. That there are differences in policy approaches between the party of which you're a part and the current government is part of democratic politics. This

government will continue to work in the best interests of Canadians as they face the real challenge of increases in the cost of living that we're all experiencing.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, do you recognize that the average Canadian family in Canada will be spending \$1,000 more this year than they did last year for food, for milk, for eggs, for bread — essential elements needed for parents to feed their children? I appreciate that for the Prime Minister and his cabinet and maybe parliamentarians \$1,000 isn't that much, but for your average Canadian family that is a substantial burden to carry.

In this country, we have been facing 30-year high inflation rates. We are currently in a situation where fruits and meats are 10% more costly than they were exactly a year ago. That's the reality, government leader, and your government has taken actions that are making food more expensive for farmers to produce, including the carbon tax and the tariff on fertilizer imports. At a time of record inflation, when many Canadians are forced to choose between buying food and paying their bills, why are your policies that are making food even more expensive for Canadians something your government is still embracing and holding dear to?

• (1450)

Senator Gold: The government's economic policies are designed to help not only consumers but also producers and all Canadians to weather difficult economic times. The government is aware, as I am personally, of the increases in the cost of living. You're quite right that we as parliamentarians, as well as many Canadians, are fortunate that we are able to bear these increases far more easily than most, and it is the situation of most Canadians who are struggling that is the focus of this government.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate. Leader, a poll conducted for Food Banks Canada has found that almost a quarter of Canadians are eating less than they should be, because they don't have enough money for food. For Indigenous households, this number rises to 45%, leader. A month ago, the Ottawa Food Bank said the number of people needing their assistance was at its highest in their entire 38-year history. Harvest Manitoba in Winnipeg says they've seen a 40% increase year over year in the number of people they're supporting across every part of my province.

Leader, this NDP-Liberal government's spending is fuelling the inflation behind record food bank usage across Canada. Even your own former finance minister Bill Morneau criticizes your economic mismanagement. Where is your plan, leader, to stop hunger and food insecurity in our country?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. Again, it's an important and serious one that affects millions of Canadians and their families. This government has been there for Canadians

through difficult economic times and continues to be there through difficult economic times. It continues to be there for those who grow, produce and distribute food to Canadians and will continue to be there for them.

IMPACT OF INFLATION ON OIL PRICES

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, some day, maybe this government will show us that they care instead of just telling us that they do. My question, once again, is for the government leader in the Senate.

Too many Canadians are having to choose between buying groceries and filling up their gas tank to go to work. Every time your NDP-Liberal government says record gas prices are a global phenomenon and washes their hands of doing anything to help Canadians, they make life more and more unaffordable for families. Our out-of-touch Prime Minister has no idea how much Canadians are struggling right now. He probably hasn't filled his tank, maybe, ever.

Other countries have taken action to help reduce energy costs for their citizens. For example, last week, the German government implemented a fuel tax cut for consumers.

Leader, gas prices in your city of Montreal hit a record of \$2.23 per litre this week. How do you justify your government's inaction? I know they care. You've told us they care, so they must care. How do you justify your government's inaction for Canadians trying to get to work every day?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, and thank you for reminding us of the challenges that Canadians continue to face. There are a variety of measures that this government is taking, and whether they differ from some of the policy preferences of your current leader or some of the leadership contenders, this government stands by its approach to managing the Canadian economy and society through this difficult time.

HEALTH

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my next question is for the government leader in the Senate and concerns a topic I've raised twice previously, but it hasn't yet been answered: the serious matter of a national 9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline.

In December 2020, a motion from B.C. member of Parliament Todd Doherty to create this hotline unanimously passed in the other place. When I originally asked you about this, leader, I noted that given your government's inaction on the motion to list Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IIRGC, as a terrorist entity, we would need to keep pressing the government to make the 9-8-8 hotline a reality. Little did I know then that I would be asking you the very same question, today, a year and a half later.

Leader, you've taken this question on notice twice before, in December 2020 and a year ago, in June 2021, and failed to provide an answer. What is your government's plan and timetable to implement a national suicide prevention hotline?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question and for reminding the chamber of this issue. If I am correct, and I will stand corrected if I'm wrong, I believe that although I made inquiries and did not get an answer back, the dissolution of Parliament wipes those questions off the table.

Please, with your indulgence, I'll make further inquiries and hope to get an answer to you quickly.

Senator Martin: According to the B.C. Coroners Service, 582 people in my province died by suicide last year. How many of those lives could have been saved if Canada had one easy-to-remember, three-digit hotline number that they could have called?

Leader, for well over a year now, there has been a question on the Senate Order Paper asking for basic information about the work your government is undertaking on the 9-8-8 hotline. Have you collaborated with provinces and territories? How many public servants are working on this, and is a different number, rather than 9-8-8, being considered?

These questions and more have never been answered. Why is that, leader? Is it because you have no progress to report, or is it because the suicide prevention hotline is just not a priority for your government?

Senator Gold: Addressing the scourge of suicides in this country is a priority for this government, as it would be for any government. It should be a preoccupation of everybody who has been touched by this, as so many of us have. I don't know the answer to your question. As I said, I will renew my inquiries and be happy to report back.

[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 the order adopted on December 7, 2021, I would like to inform the Senate that Question Period with the Honourable Sean Fraser, P.C., M.P., Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, will take place on June 14, 2022, at 3:30 p.m.

(At 2:58 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on May 5, 2022, the Senate adjourned until 2 p.m., tomorrow.)

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