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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, November 23, 2022

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

THE LATE LEON FONTAINE

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, it is with great sadness that I learned of the sudden passing of Pastor Leon Fontaine this past weekend.

Leon was well-known as the pastor of Springs Church, one of the largest and fastest-growing churches in Canada with two locations — one in Winnipeg, and one in Calgary. He also served as the CEO of Miracle Channel, Canada's original Christian television station, since 2010.

Leon's faith was the foundation of his life. His love for God and his compassion for others moved him to put that faith into action — which was evident in the strength of his vision and the warmth of his heart.

He described his vision using the word “laugh,” which he spelled L-A-F: L for love, A for acceptance and F for forgiveness. His goal was to teach others to love one another unconditionally the way God loves us, to accept one another where we are because everyone is at a different place and to forgive because everyone makes mistakes. So we should learn to forgive as Christ forgave us.

I had the privilege of visiting Leon's church in Winnipeg a few times, and I was recently interviewed for one of his shows on Miracle Channel. It was clear to me that this was a man who not only loved God, but also deeply loved his country.

During the pandemic, Leon did everything he could to make sure that people continued to receive the care they needed. When indoor services were no longer possible due to public health orders, Springs Church launched drive-in services where people could assemble in the safety of their vehicles, and listen to inspirational music and encouraging messages streaming on a large outdoor screen.

When he felt things went too far with the federal government's vaccine mandates, he wasn't afraid to speak up and say so. Leon's stance was sometimes controversial, but he was not one to stand idly by when he saw someone in need. His faith was not just a Sunday faith. It translated into everything he did. He was compelled to do what he could to make the world a better place by impacting one person's life at a time.

The world lost a treasure last week, but heaven gained a saint. To Leon's wife, Sally; his children Eden, Danielle, Tamara, Michala and Zack; their spouses Jayden, David, Jeremy, Austin and Jessica; and to his five grandchildren, you have our deepest condolences in your time of loss. Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with you, and may you experience the nearness of the God of all comfort during this challenging time.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Miranda Rosin, Richard Ireland, Bill Given, Leslie Bruce and Ken Cretney. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Sorensen.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

RICHARD IRELAND

Hon. Karen Sorensen: Honourable senators, I rise today to honour and welcome a dear friend and long-time colleague to the chamber, Mayor Richard Ireland of Jasper.

Richard is the first and only mayor of Jasper. He was first elected as chair of the Jasper Town Committee in 1989 before Jasper was even considered a municipality. He served in that capacity until 2001 — Jasper's first year as a municipality. Richard won that first mayoral election, and has either been acclaimed or re-elected every election since.

Acclamation tends to be the best way to get there.

Few can say they've done as much as Richard has to lift up his community over the last 30-plus years. As the only two municipalities in North America located within a national park, Jasper and my hometown of Banff have walked a unique path together. Banff became a municipality in 1990, and has seen six mayors in her 32-year history. Mayor Ireland has made it very clear, publicly, that his favourite Banff mayor was the fifth.

As internationally renowned tourist destinations, Jasper and Banff have much in common and share many of the same challenges: In particular, both balance the desires of valued visitors with the needs of the permanent residents and temporary workers who call our communities home.

Having worked with Richard for over 17 years, I've seen first-hand how Jasper has flourished during his tenure — to name a few, building infrastructure with modern amenities and recreation facilities for residents and tourists, as well as investment in below-market value housing opportunities; passing municipal legislation to help protect the natural environment that

makes Jasper so special; welcoming and, more importantly, providing programs to integrate many new immigrants, including providing free support for refugees, permanent residents and other newcomers through Jasper Settlement Services; and taking an active role in advancing truth and reconciliation with Indigenous people.

In the words of my colleague Senator Paula Simons:

Municipal governments are on the front lines of so many of the major issues, problems and crises facing our country.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Jasper faced the same dilemmas as destination towns across the country: how to support local businesses who are reliant on tourists, while safeguarding the health of community members. Fortunately, Richard was at the helm to walk that balance.

Just this past summer, he once again made the difficult decision to ask visitors to stay away as fire threatened the town. While the town suffered another huge economic hit, Mayor Ireland led with grace, assuring that the community was not at risk and that the limited power that was available was used to keep residents safe.

Richard's decades of experience and his commitment to collaboration, listening and leadership are the attributes that I observed while working with him — and the attributes that I admire. I am delighted that he continues in this role, helping the municipality of Jasper meet challenges and opportunities in the coming years. It's a pleasure to welcome him to the gallery today.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Sandra Manning, Mark Manning, Ian Martin, Orinda Careen, Jerry Careen, Father Wayne Dohey, Marie Mackenzie, Pat Dohey and Sara Mang. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Manning.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1410)

THE SS FLORIZEL

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, today I am pleased to present chapter 67 of "Telling Our Story."

Newfoundland and Labrador is no stranger to maritime disaster with pervasive threats of ocean ice, raging storms and jagged reefs jeopardizing sailors who brave the seas when conditions are poor. From these come some stories of fantastic heroism and others of terrible tragedy.

One such tragedy occurred on a windy February night in 1918 on a luxury steamer bound for Halifax and New York. The SS *Florizel*, under Captain William Martin, was a vessel of some history. Commissioned in 1909, the *Florizel* was among the first ships specifically designed to navigate the icy waters around Newfoundland and Labrador. She had participated in the rescue of sealers stranded on the ice during the great Sealing Disaster of 1914 and was the vessel to carry to Europe the first 500 volunteers of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment in World War I — the Blue Puttees. But on that fateful winter's night, she would not be celebrated.

The *Florizel* left port at St. John's around 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 23, with orders from Captain Martin to proceed at full speed. Unbeknownst to Martin, however, the ship's chief engineer, J.V. Reader, had only put her at partial speed in order to delay her arrival in Halifax and force an overnight stay at the port so that Reader could visit his family. This action, however intended, had fatal consequences, as Captain Martin judged the ship as having travelled much farther than she actually had, turning her westward long before she'd passed the Avalon Peninsula.

Just after 4:30 a.m., the *Florizel* crashed head-on into a reef off Cappahayden, going full speed. Dozens of crew and passengers died in the initial impact, with many more drowning or freezing as the ship was torn to pieces by the perilous waves. An SOS signal was sent out, but due to the previous navigation error, the rescuers were directed to the wrong area. Thankfully, the people of Cappahayden could see the wreck from the beach and corrected this error. They attempted to launch a small boat to rescue survivors, but it was immediately overturned by the storm.

Meanwhile, on the *Florizel*, power had been lost, and most remaining survivors were weathering the storm in the small radio room. As it was wartime in the dead of winter, it was particularly difficult to mount a rescue. The day after the crash, a handful of rescue vessels incorrectly reported that there were no survivors on the wreck, halting rescue progress until the reports were rectified. To make matters worse, the large rescue ships couldn't go near the wreck due to the reef, and the small rescue ships couldn't launch due to the storm.

Twenty-seven hours after the crash, a rescue successfully took place, saving 44 passengers and crew. However, an even greater number were lost — 93 people lost their lives, including three-year-old Betty Munn, who was sailing with her father. She was torn from his arms in the disaster. In memory of her death, there is a statue of Peter Pan, the fairy tale she loved, in Bowring Park in St. John's.

The task of preaching and bringing comfort to the families of those who had suffered the loss of loved ones fell to Archbishop Edward Patrick Roche of St. John's, who in a sermon at the memorial for the victims said:

With the exception perhaps of the great Sealing Disaster of a few years ago [the SS Newfoundland, 1914] never has there been in our history — strewn as that history is with marine tragedies great and small — an ocean horror that has come home to us with such appalling force as the great disaster of the 'Florizel' which now throws its shadow over our city and our Island.

Thank you.

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, I rise today with my head spinning, my spirits elevated and with a strengthened resolve to encourage everyone to urgently come to the climate action table. I was honoured to join fellow Senators Bovey and Galvez as part of the Canadian delegation at the COP27 climate conference in Egypt, which attracted 30,000 registrants from 197 countries, including the largest Indigenous contingent ever. This was touted as the "COP of implementation."

Canada had an impressive delegation, representing all sectors and regions, and our pavilion hosted a high-quality series of substantive events. We discussed mitigation, reducing and eliminating emissions, adaptation to climate impacts, stepping up and greatly expanding climate finance from billions to trillions, reforming the Bretton Woods Institutions and creating a "loss and damage" fund for the countries hardest hit by climate impacts.

We discussed Indigenous-led climate action and rights, the disproportionate impacts on women, women as leaders on solutions and not just victims, energy transitions and energy security, whole-of-economy transitions, just transitions, culture, oceans, more focus on methane, the cryosphere, cities, nature, biodiversity, agriculture and forests. We discussed drought in Africa and that continent's vast potential for solar energy, protecting the Congo basin, glaciers melting in Nepal, small island states at risk, Ukraine and the absolute imperative of upping ambition internationally and in Canada to ensure we keep the shared goal of 1.5 °C alive.

At COP27, Sara Olsvig, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, said:

The Inuit reality has become the global reality. It is important to recognize the interconnectedness of our human rights and climate.

Dr. Courtney Howard of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment described the need for an adaptation sprint given the realities of the irreversible extreme heat, heat domes, wildfires and summers of smoke and floods.

[Senator Manning]

John Kerry, U.S. climate envoy, said:

Adaptation is critical even though there is a point where, if we do not reduce emissions sufficiently, we're not capable of adapting our way out of the climate catastrophe.

Brazil's president-elect, the inspiring Lula da Silva, said:

Today I am here to say that Brazil is back and ready to build a healthier planet — with the survival of the Amazon rainforest we can help ensure the survival of the world. We need each other to survive, we need more confidence and determination, we need more leadership.

Honourable colleagues, Lula is right. We need leadership more than ever. Honourable colleagues, let's step up. Thank you.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Shannon Cornelsen. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Simons.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

HERD OF COWS IN SAINT-SÉVÈRE

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: Honourable senators, usually, when we do tributes here, it is to recognize the achievements of our fellow citizens. However, today, I want to express my amused admiration for a remarkably determined herd of cows.

This is a story about some 20 cows in the region of Saint-Sévère, Quebec. They escaped their enclosure last summer and, to quote a great article written by journalist Sébastien Houle, they have been "getting back in touch with their wild side" ever since. Witnesses say that they can jump fences like deer. Since their escape four months ago, the herd has even grown because some cows calved.

The Village of Saint-Sévère's general manager, Marie-Andrée Cadorette, took the situation in hand. She contacted MAPAQ, Quebec's Department of agriculture, fisheries and food, but it said that there was nothing it could do and suggested that she call the provincial Department of environment, climate change, wildlife and parks. That department said that it could not do anything because cows are not wild animals and suggested that she call the humane society.

The humane society said that it could not do anything because cows are not pets and suggested that she contact MAPAQ, so Ms. Cadorette called MAPAQ again. This time, the department suggested that the municipality destroy the runaways.

Ms. Cadorette responded, “The Municipality is me in a dress and high heels . . . I’m not going to go running after cows!” Fair enough.

Ms. Cadorette then contacted the Sûreté du Québec, the police, to ask them to kill the cows, but they refused because, in their view, this was not an emergency situation.

Finally, Ms. Cadorette got in touch with some cowboys through the Saint-Tite western festival, which is a wonderful local tradition. For the first time, someone agreed to help.

On October 30, the night before Halloween, nine cowboys arrived in Saint-Sévère: eight on horseback and one armed with a drone. The cowboys located the cows and almost managed to round them up, but the cows escaped through a corn field at the last minute. They are still on the run, hiding in the woods by day and grazing by night.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dogged determination of Marie-Andrée Cadorette and wish her the best of luck. Don’t give up. I would also like to commend the cowboys who stepped up when every government department and police force in Quebec said there was nothing they could do. There is a political lesson in there somewhere.

Finally, I would like to confess my unbridled admiration for these cows that have found freedom and are still out there, frolicking about. While we overcomplicate things, these cows are learning to jump fences.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at 2 p.m.

• (1420)

PARLAMERICAS

GATHERING OF PARLAMERICAS OPEN PARLIAMENT NETWORK,
MARCH 9, 15, AND 22, 2022—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the ParlAmericas concerning the Sixth Gathering of ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, held as virtual sessions on March 9, 15 and 22, 2022.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

CANADA’S EMISSIONS TARGETS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, yesterday the National Cattle Feeders’ Association was in Ottawa to speak with parliamentarians. One of their priority issues is the fact that, while this government is demanding that the industry make changes to help meet carbon emissions targets, they are doing little to help facilitate these changes.

One example of this is the feed additive referred to as 3-NOP. This additive is already approved for use in several countries, including the EU, Australia, Chile and Brazil, and has proven to consistently reduce emissions of methane from cattle by up to 90%, Senator Gold. This is very significant, yet the product has not been approved in Canada because of lengthy and burdensome approval processes.

Senator Gold, can you tell me if your government will commit to prioritizing the approval process of this product as requested by the National Cattle Feeders’ Association?

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

Any product or technology that will assist producers to do their part to reduce emissions is welcome. Thank you for bringing that to my attention. I will make inquiries and report back as quickly as I can.

Senator Plett: Senator Gold, your government is very good at demanding things from our agricultural industry and then standing in the way of getting those things done. A perfect example is the imposition of the carbon tax on the industry when alternative energy sources are not yet available to them.

There is no such thing, Senator Gold, as a solar-powered tractor or a solar-powered grain dryer. The fact is that Canada produces the most environmentally friendly beef in the world, using less land, water and emitting less greenhouse gas emissions.

Will your government, Senator Gold, acknowledge that the industry is already working hard to reduce carbon emissions and remove the federal carbon tax from agricultural production?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. I think the government is grateful and acknowledges the work that the agricultural sector — beef producers and others — are doing to do their part.

The answer to your question is no. The government remains committed to the equitable application of the price on pollution in those jurisdictions that have chosen not to have a comparable program, and it will continue to do so in the best interests of this and future generations.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE INDEX

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My question is also for the Leader of the Government.

According to this year's Climate Change Performance Index published during COP 27, Canada ranks 58 out of 63 countries when it comes to protecting the climate, even trailing behind China and the United States. After seven years of Liberal rule and seven years of carbon taxes, Canada is number 58.

Senator Gold, when will the Liberal-NDP government finally admit that their climate change plan is not working and that taxing Canadians more and more will not do anything positive for the planet?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. Respectfully, it's the position of the government that the assertion and assumption is incorrect.

Canada and this government has put into place a serious, responsible climate action plan that includes many features, one of which is their price on pollution. It is a market-driven mechanism that works to create incentives and disincentives for companies to do their part. It takes time for these things to take effect.

The government remains convinced that the measures that it has put in place — of which this is one of a large suite of measures — is the right thing to do for Canada, for our economy and, indeed, for the planet.

Senator Martin: Last week at COP 27, Minister Guilbeault issued a challenge to other countries: they should copy Canada and impose a carbon tax.

Senator Gold, how many countries have decided to imitate Canada in imposing more taxes on their citizens in order to fight climate change?

Senator Gold: I don't have the number of other countries that are using this particular method and approach.

I will underline — as I have done on many other occasions, and as all senators know — that, of all the different measures to address climate change, carbon tax is the one most supported by most economists around the world because it uses market forces and is, in that regard, the most likely to succeed and the least disruptive, as compared to others.

JUSTICE

CRIMINAL CONVICTION REVIEW

Hon. Kim Pate: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate as well.

In June, a Justice lawyer wrote, on behalf of Justice Minister Lametti, to the lawyers for Odelia and Nerissa Quewezance — 2 of the 12 Indigenous women whose cases who were included in our report, *Injustices and Miscarriages of Justice Experienced by 12 Indigenous Women: A Case for Group Conviction Review and Exoneration by the Department of Justice via the Law Commission of Canada and/or the Miscarriages of Justice Commission* — advising that since there, “. . . may be a reasonable basis to conclude that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred in this matter,” their cases will be reviewed.

The cases of these and the additional 10 Indigenous women demonstrate the urgent need for protection to ensure that injustices like those experienced by the Quewezance sisters do not continue unabated.

Canadians have been promised two ways in which this can happen: the yet-to-be-implemented body to examine possible wrongful convictions, and the much anticipated revival of the former law commission of Canada. What will the mandates of each be, and when can we expect to see these review bodies up and running?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The short answer is “as soon as possible” on both counts.

Both of these commissions are part of the government's ongoing effort to modernize and improve Canada's laws and legal institutions, and that includes Bill C-5 — an important step that we in the Senate took last week.

As we know, before it was abolished in 2006, the law commission helped advance critically important policy ideas, including in the areas of family law, the legalization of same-sex marriage, to name but two. We're hopeful that it will help address some of today's most pressing needs, such as systemic discrimination in the justice system.

The government has already allocated funds for the law commission's re-establishment through Budget 2021, with \$18 million over five years and \$4 million ongoing. The process of finding commission members is under way.

The new criminal case review commission will strengthen our justice system by providing for the expeditious review of potential wrongful convictions by an independent body. The structure of the new review commission will be informed by the consultations led by former judges Harry LaForme and Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré, who published their final report earlier this year.

Senator Pate: Thank you for that, Senator Gold.

Given the shortcomings of Bill C-5 and the reality that the 20 individuals granted conviction reviews over the past decades were all men — only one of whom was Black and one of whom was Indigenous — what measures in particular will be implemented from the recommendations that you mentioned in the report commissioned by the Minister of Justice and completed by the Honourable Harry LaForme and the Honourable Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your questions. The government deliberately selected these two individuals, both for their legal expertise and for their familiarity with the issues and realities that are facing marginalized people in our justice system.

As we know, Justice LaForme was the first Indigenous appellate court judge in Canada, and Justice Westmoreland-Traoré was the first Black judge in Quebec and the first Black dean of a Canadian law school.

• (1430)

During their consultations, they met with and received written briefs from hundreds of people, including victims of miscarriages of justice, victims of crime, criminal justice professionals and representatives of commissions that do similar work in other countries. Their final report makes numerous recommendations about the commission's mandate and design, and the government is relying upon its report as it works to establish the criminal cases review commission as soon as possible.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Hon. Patricia Bovey: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

As you know, I, along with Senators Coyle and Galvez, attended COP 27 over the last two weeks. For my part, I spent a great deal of time in the discussions around oceans protection, which is coming to the forefront again with COP 15 being held in Montreal in a few weeks.

Canada has accomplished much in this sphere, including the creation of 14 Marine Protected Areas along our coasts. Has the Government of Canada begun consultations regarding the

expansion of these protected areas, and is there a proposed timeline as to the introduction of the legislation that has been promised?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. I don't have the answer. I'll certainly make inquiries and will be happy to report back as soon as I can.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

Hon. Scott Tannas: My question is for Senator Housakos in his capacity as the Chair of the Transport and Communications Committee.

We all know the internet is critical for building businesses and engaging in the digital economy. In this age, the internet is vital to our everyday lives in key areas like health, education and justice. That has actually led to the UN recognizing internet connectivity as a fundamental human right.

I met yesterday with the Rural Municipalities of Alberta. Everybody knows that rural Canadians receive slower internet speeds at much higher prices than folks in urban areas. This year, they ran some tests in their member municipalities and found median speeds were about one third of what would be considered acceptable in an urban environment — less than one third of what would be a minimum standard.

It's a complex issue. We know that. Wireless access and spectrum access are critical. There are a number of companies that have purchased wireless spectrum in rural markets and have not used it; they are hanging onto it, with no intention in the short or even medium term of putting it to use.

Bill S-242, the "Use It or Lose It" bill, is part of the equation for a solution. It is before your committee now. Can you advise the Senate when the committee will begin its review of that bill?

Hon. Leo Housakos: Thank you, Senator Tannas, for your important and timely question.

As you know, our committee is currently seized with government legislation — we have before us Bill C-11 — and, as always, government legislation is our priority.

I say your question is timely because one of the biggest criticisms we have been hearing on Bill C-11 is the inclusion of user-generated content. The government keeps claiming that this legislation is one of the driving forces to give more voices to under-represented people in this country.

However, the opposite seems to be being achieved, particularly when it comes to digital creators. We've heard from many of them, including those typically under-represented voices who are doing a number of interesting things right now using the internet. They've been telling the Senate committee that Indigenous creators and cultural communities are getting opportunities they have never had before thanks to digital platforms. But numerous digital creators we heard from also told us that the government

should really just stay out of the way of marginalized and Indigenous Canadians' and allow them to continue to use those media to prosper and grow.

But your point is very well taken. They brought up on a number of occasions that the biggest problem that Indigenous communities in the North and Canadians in rural Canada are facing is the lack of connectivity. Of course, the cost of connectivity is significantly higher as compared to the rest of the world.

So your question is relevant. The bill is in the queue. Unfortunately — or fortunately — we have a number of pieces of government legislation that we're dealing with. But I hope to get to this bill, because I agree with you and the stakeholders in question with whom you've met that instead of our government in Canada putting so much time and energy in living in the past — because Canada, once upon a time, was a world leader in communication; that was a time when I was a young boy. Today in 2022, we have fallen behind the digital curve. I think the government should refocus its efforts toward increasing connectivity in rural and Northern Canada and allow the under-represented voices to continue to use the internet and the digital market to grow.

I wish I could give you a better answer in terms of the timeline, but I will take it to our steering committee and I will write back to you on this issue.

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

TRANSPARENCY OF TRIALS

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: My question is for Senator Gold. In March, the media reported that the Quebec Court of Appeal had overturned the conviction of someone who had been tried in a secret trial. The Court of Appeal denounced this practice, which, in its words, was contrary to the fundamental principles of justice and “incompatible with the values of a liberal democracy.”

This secret trial was also a serious breach of one of the pillars of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, namely the right to information. We also learned from the same media outlet that Minister Lametti was in close communication with the Public Prosecution Service of Canada about this case, after stating a few months earlier that he was steering clear of this case in order to defend the transparency and independence of justice.

Senator Gold, is the Minister of Justice's intrusion into a court proceeding as reprehensible as the Prime Minister's interference in the SNC-Lavalin case?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. The open court principle is a cornerstone of our justice system. The government is quite concerned about media reports on the court proceeding in Quebec and is keeping a close eye on developments. As you know, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada is an independent entity. As this case is still before the courts and was

in fact the subject of an application for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, it would be inappropriate for the government to comment further.

Senator Boisvenu: Senator Gold, I was not talking about the justice system. I was talking about the Minister of Justice's interference in the justice system.

In the SNC-Lavalin affair, former minister Jody Wilson-Raybould lost her job because she refused to cave to pressure from the Prime Minister to spare SNC-Lavalin a criminal trial. What will become of Minister Lametti? Will he stay or will he go?

Senator Gold: The government has full confidence in Minister Lametti, who is a lawyer, a dedicated minister and a man of integrity. As Attorney General of Canada, it is essential that Minister Lametti be informed of the media coverage of a case like this. Given their interdependent responsibilities, it is crucial that the Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecutions maintain an effective relationship.

It is perfectly normal, senator, and indeed essential that they communicate and work together, so that they can both make fully informed decisions.

Although this relationship is part of their public duties, it does not change the fact that the public organization is independent, apolitical and responsible for its own affairs.

Of course, their communications are covered by protection similar to attorney-client confidentiality.

[*English*]

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, in a recent email from CMHC, they noted that “CMHC exists for a single reason: to make housing affordable for everyone in Canada.”

Yet under your government's watch, housing prices in Canada have more than doubled over the last six years. Would you not agree, then, Senator Gold, that means your government has been a spectacular failure on this file?

• (1440)

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): No, I do not agree, Senator Plett. I guess it remains my duty to remind the Senate yet again of the shared jurisdiction on housing between provinces and municipalities, to say nothing of the role of the private sector. I may also remind this chamber of the many measures that the government is doing through its spending power and in collaboration with the provinces and territories to support the creation of new housing and to support those who are seeking to enter the housing market or to pay their rent.

Senator Plett: Somehow, housing prices doubling in six years is an indication that your government has been successful. It is mind-boggling how anyone could even try to draw that out of what the government has done.

Your government has promised action on this over the course of multiple elections and has had numerous opportunities to put forward concrete solutions to fix this housing crisis. It is abundantly clear that the Band-Aid solutions and one-time top-up benefits proposed by your government will do nothing to make housing more affordable for Canadians in the long term. Are you and your government comfortable with this simply being yet another broken election promise?

Senator Gold: The government is not comfortable at all knowing that Canadians are facing challenges with the rising cost of living, including access to affordable housing.

The government is confident that the measures it put in place are not Band-Aid solutions. They are targeted, focused and serious. They work in partnership with the provinces and territories, Indigenous communities and municipalities. They provide real, tangible assistance to Canadians in a time of need, and the government will never apologize for continuing to act responsibly in the best interest of Canadians.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

CANADA'S EMISSIONS TARGETS

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: My question is to Senator Gold, and it is about climate change and the impact of extreme weather conditions across this country, as we have seen most recently with the Hurricane Fiona disaster on our eastern neighbours.

The government created its 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan to meet its international commitments to cut carbon emissions by 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030, and it's adopted an all-of-the-above approach to meet these goals. However, we need to acknowledge that the federal government does not have plenary power over greenhouse gas emissions, as the Supreme Court of Canada held in the 2021 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act reference. This constitutional constraint could prove to be fatal to this action plan.

What is the government doing to work alongside provinces to implement this plan? Can you inform us as to the status of formal negotiations and discussions between the federal and provincial governments?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, and thank you for underlining the important relationship between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments in the shared challenge of both addressing climate change and also maintaining and securing a prosperous economic future for all Canadians.

I don't know the specific answer to your question, and I will make efforts to find out. I do know that the Government of Canada is in regular discussions on a variety of issues surrounding climate change initiatives, resource development,

environmental assessments and the like. Some provinces are more keen to engage than others, but it's an ongoing process. I'll certainly make inquiries with regard to more formal consultations that may be taking place.

FINANCE

CANADA'S INFLATION RATE

Hon. Leo Housakos: Government leader, I have a simple question and it is, of course, a follow-up question about what we have been talking about the last couple of weeks: the challenge that Canadians are having with the cost of living. Young families, poor families and middle-class families are struggling, and the only people getting richer under this inflationary tidal wave under your government are wealthy people.

The question I have for you, government leader, is a simple one: Can you tell us what the inflation rate is today in 2022 in Canada, and what the inflation rate was in 2015 in Canada?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Well, the inflation rates then and now are matters of public record. There is no doubt, Senator Housakos, as we know and experience, that the inflation rate has risen significantly over the last number of years and, of course, although it is the talking point of the opposition of which you are a member to blame all aspects of inflation and all ills, whether it's drug policy or gun violence, on the federal government, those who reflect seriously on these matters know very well the multifaceted explanations for these. The government's *Fall Economic Statement* is a targeted and appropriate one to address the rising cost of living and inflation, and the government has confidence that it will bear fruit.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, I'm not using any talking points. This is a place of Parliament, and there is an existential crisis facing Canadians. We're trying to engage in a debate to come to some conclusion about what the government needs to do. Before we figure out what government needs to do, we need to figure out if what the government has been doing is successful.

The inflation rate in 2015 was 1.13%. I will invite you to go back and visit the inflation rate throughout the period of 2006 to 2015. That's not a talking point. These are statistical facts. I invite you to see the incremental growth and explosion in inflation over the last seven years.

Will you answer a very simple question? Given the facts that the inflation rate has gone up seven times — multiple times — by several hundred per cent compared to 7 or 10 years ago, would you say that it is a reflection of a failure over the last seven years of this government in dealing with keeping inflation at a reasonable rate? It's a simple question.

Senator Gold: And the simple answer is no.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

CARBON TAX

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, I think there is one thing that you and I can both agree on, and that is that our seniors are valuable citizens and deserve to be looked after. But yesterday, the environment minister announced that the Trudeau government will also be applying its carbon tax in Newfoundland and Labrador, which means the price of home heating oil, gasoline and other fuels will be going up, and this impact will likely be felt much more among seniors.

In a recent CBC article, the Executive Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Sector Pensioners' Association, Sharron Callahan, said that she has heard from seniors that are being forced to make choices between food, medication and heat, and even some who may be forced to leave their homes if they can't afford to keep them warm.

Senator Gold, at a time when the cost of living is already making it difficult for Canadians, and especially our most vulnerable citizens, why is your government punishing them with this tax hike?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): We do agree, of course, that seniors are an important and valuable part of our community. We owe them the respect that they deserve and that they have afforded us who have come after them.

This is not a punitive measure. The carbon tax that is coming into effect in the provinces that you mentioned, first of all, is a function of the fact that those provinces have chosen in the exercise of their own jurisdiction to not put into place an adequate carbon pricing or equivalent regime.

Second, as I've mentioned on many occasions, the measures that will be put in place in those provinces are also accompanied by rebates to individuals and families of a significant amount of money. At the end of the day, the carbon pricing that is put into place in those provinces that do not have their own plan is one that is necessary to address climate change, and it is one that protects Canadians from the full impacts of that on their daily lives.

• (1450)

Senator Plett: Leader, whenever your government is pressed on this or other issues, we always hear your talking points. They're always about your compassion for those who are experiencing hardship and the ways in which you claim to be supporting them. But raising taxes on a vulnerable population at a time when they are having trouble putting food on the table — in other words, pouring salt on an open wound — is not compassion, Senator Gold.

I know that while we may disagree on how to get there, we both are ultimately after the same outcome, which is to serve Canadians in the best way possible. Would you not agree, Senator Gold, that this tax hike is making the situation even worse? Will your government at least commit to reconsidering this tax hike?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. We do want the same things, and this government disagrees with the opposition on the best way to get there. The government believes that the price on pollution — the carbon tax — is, in fact, the best way to go forward, and the government is also of the view that the subsidies that are going directly to families in those jurisdictions in which the tax is imposed is also a fair way to mitigate the impact of it.

The government is always considering and reconsidering the policy instruments that it uses. That's what a responsible government does.

DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table the answers to the following oral questions:

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on December 16, 2021, by the Honourable Senator Patterson, concerning consultation with interested organizations.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on June 21, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Plett, concerning passport services.

CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

CONSULTATION WITH INTERESTED ORGANIZATIONS

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Dennis Glen Patterson on December 16, 2021)

Department of Justice

Justice Canada is consulting and cooperating with Indigenous peoples on the implementation of the UN Declaration Act (UNDA). The process focuses primarily on First Nations, Inuit and Métis rights holders, including modern treaty signatories, self-governing nations and historic treaty partners, and national/regional Indigenous representative organizations. It also includes engagement with Indigenous women, youth, elders, persons with disabilities, Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Plus (2SLGBTQI+) as well as urban Indigenous and other organizations.

There was also a call for proposals to support Indigenous participation in the engagement process, including support for Indigenous-led consultations. An online form is also available to help ensure that the voices of individuals and community-based organizations are heard.

The next phase of engagement will follow the release of a draft action plan in February 2023. This phase will focus on validating the priorities identified by First Nations, Inuit and Metis and on addressing any gaps, leading to the completion of the action plan by June 2023.

In June 2022, the Government tabled its inaugural annual progress report as required by Section 7 of the Act, outlining work undertaken in 2021-22 to implement the UNDA. Planning is already under way to consult and cooperate with Indigenous partners on the 2023 progress report.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

PASSPORT SERVICES

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Donald Neil Plett on June 21, 2022)

Service Canada (SC) has streamlined the in-person application process by implementing triage measures to provide a more client-specific approach. Before offices open at busier locations, managers and executives are speaking with clients to assess urgency/situation. Triage measures have been implemented in Richmond, Quebec City, Gatineau, Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Montreal, Laval, Vancouver, Surrey, and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

Triage methods vary by location and are based on local circumstances. As a result, in-person services are more reflective of a pre-COVID experience where lineups are manageable and passports are delivered within our service standards.

SC took a number of additional actions to help stabilize the passport program. In July, we saw significant gains, but intake still outstripped production. Throughout August and September application intake levelled off. As of mid-August, we are consistently entitling more passports on a weekly basis than we are receiving.

The Policy on COVID-19 Vaccination for the Core Public Administration was suspended as of June 20, 2022. Passport employees on administrative leave due to non-compliance with the Policy were contacted by managers to arrange their return to work as early as June 20. As of October 17, there are more than 2,200 employees processing and supporting the program.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-13(2), I move :

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(At 2:53 p.m., the Senate was continued until Thursday, November 24, 2022, at 2 p.m.)

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