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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

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

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

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 5-5(j), I move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practice, for today's sitting, tributes to the late Honourable Senator Viola Léger be continued into Senators' Statements, if required, and the total period for Tributes and Senators' Statements be extended by a maximum of five minutes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE LATE HONOURABLE VIOLA LÉGER, O.C., O.N.B.

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, at the end of January, former senator Viola Léger passed away peacefully at the age of 92 in Dieppe, New Brunswick.

She is survived by her three sisters, Doris, Sister Agnes and Lilianne, as well as many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. Viola Léger really loved her family, and I want to offer them my deepest condolences.

Viola Léger was mainly known for her work with author Antonine Maillet and for playing the role of La Sagouine on stage over 3,000 times in French and English, both in Canada and abroad.

Viola Léger was an excellent actress, an ambassador of Acadia and an important symbol of pride for all Acadians. Her art paid tribute to the Acadian culture, including its language. Of course, Viola Léger spoke French, but she did more than just speak it. She gave meaning to the everyday language of Acadians and its charming and unique turns of phrase.

Few things are more precious than one's mother tongue. Language helps to carry on a culture's origins and traditions. It reflects the culture's heart and soul. On stage, Viola Léger was able to embody the Acadian language and culture and breathe new life into them.

Ms. Léger was an Acadian icon known in French Canada as La Sagouine. However, to members of the Senate, she was above all an esteemed colleague. She was appointed to the Senate of Canada by former prime minister Jean Chrétien and served from 2001 to 2005. It was only natural for her, as part of her work in the Senate, to represent the arts community and draw attention to the important contributions that artists make to Canadian society. She also embodied an important part of the Senate's mission by defending the interests of marginalized and minority communities.

During her maiden speech in the Senate, in November 2001, Senator Léger said the following about her beloved Acadia:

Whether in Newfoundland, Louisiana, Caraquet, Montreal or Belle-Île-en-Mer, the Acadian soul is constantly reborn. We are intrigued, seduced and moved by it. It also makes us laugh, and sometimes cry.

Although we mourn her passing, it also gives us the opportunity to remember the joy and laughter that Viola Léger brought to our hearts. May her soul rest in peace.

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: Honourable senators, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to pay tribute to Viola Léger, who passed away on January 28 at the age of 92.

This great woman from Acadia brought Acadian culture to the rest of the country and the world by bringing to life the character of La Sagouine created by Antonine Maillet.

Viola Léger is beyond a shadow of a doubt one of the greatest Acadian actors. From 1971 to 2016, she performed the role of La Sagouine more than 3,000 times, in French and in English, in Acadia, Quebec, Canada and around the world. A true symbol of Acadian resilience, she embodied Acadian values, both on and off the stage: She was warm with people, generous with her time, staunchly proud of her Acadia, not to mention determined.

Viola Léger's legacy goes beyond the stage. She opened doors for several future actors from Acadia by demonstrating that it was possible to make a living from their art. She always gave back to the community in many ways: She founded her own theatre company in 1985 and, in 1999, she created the Fondation Viola Léger, which has been awarding the Viola Léger award to support young artists with their projects since 2011.

On June 13, 2001, Viola Léger was appointed to the Senate, where she would serve until June 29, 2005. During this period, she seized every opportunity afforded by this forum to promote Acadia. In her maiden speech on November 20, 2001, Viola Léger spoke on a motion calling on the federal government to recognize August 15 as National Acadian Day. I would like to quote her speech, as my colleague did earlier:

Whether in Newfoundland, Louisiana, Caraquet, Montreal or Belle-Île-en-Mer, the Acadian soul is constantly reborn. We are intrigued, seduced and moved by it. It also makes us laugh, and sometimes cry. It makes us travel through time and space. The arts are a people's soul. Without arts, there can be no identity. And without identity, a people cannot exist. The Acadian culture has been one of the most effective tools to ensure the future of the Acadian people.

Honourable senators, on behalf of the Conservative caucus, I offer our most sincere condolences to Viola Léger's loved ones and to everyone in Acadia mourning the loss of its greatest ambassador, our Sagouine, who now shines in the sky like our most beautiful star. Thank you.

• (1410)

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable senators, since the passing of the Honourable Viola Léger on January 28, numerous tributes from Acadia, Quebec, the Canadian francophonie, France and other parts of the world have shown us how very much she meant to the Acadian people, francophones and all Canadians.

Our former Senate colleague was also a teacher, an actor and a friend. Her presence was unique and incomparable. In life and on stage, she had a remarkable talent for being in the here and now, as though nothing mattered more than the exact moment of her interaction with you as she looked you right in the eye with that bright, piercing gaze as deep as the Atlantic Ocean and as vast as the skies of Bouctouche or Abram-Village, Chéticamp or Cape St. George.

As my colleagues said, Viola Léger performed *La Sagouine* over 3,000 times. In a way, the character, created by the extraordinary Antonine Maillet, enabled her to tell her own story and express her feelings and reflections on life.

Society's most vulnerable were always top of mind for Viola Léger, and she put her own stamp on the character, a daughter of cod fishers who became a cleaning woman aware of the many ways in which her kind were exploited and whose insights about life were at once clear-eyed, compassionate and poetic.

Demanding of herself and those around her, Viola played multiple roles in both of our official languages throughout her career. During her four years in the Senate, Senator Viola Léger worked tirelessly to raise awareness about Acadia and to promote the arts and culture.

She had a remarkable sense of public service. She was aware that words can bring hope and, whether on stage or in the Senate, words have a power that must be put to good use. She bit into every word as if she was taking hold of the strength and

resonance of the French language, an Acadian language like a treasure to be cherished, tinged with the fear that it might disappear.

Colleagues, one of the outstanding voices of the Acadian people, of the francophone community and of the entire country has passed away. Viola Léger, a great Canadian, a wonderful Acadian, gave of herself and her life in the service of the theatre, the Acadian people and our country.

Some have said that when she passed, her voice took with it a piece of the Acadian soul. That said, I truly believe that her voice will continue to resonate for generations to come, nurturing the identity and pride of the first francophone people to set foot on this continent.

I will conclude not by quoting the same text as my colleagues, but by saying that if it is true that "the Acadian soul is constantly reborn," that is what Viola Léger has been for us and will continue to be for the people of Acadia.

Thank you, dear Viola. Rest in peace.

[*English*]

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Honourable senators, on behalf of Senator Richards who could not be here today, these are his words of tribute to Viola Léger:

I saw her perform only one time — a number of years ago now — when I was artist-in-residence at St. Thomas University, and she came to the small, intimate stage, sitting on a chair under one light, dressed as La Sagouine, speaking — this time — in English. We surrounded her on three sides, mostly students but professors as well, and she spoke Antonine Maillet's great monologues in a voice that was not only hers, not only Antonine's and not just Acadian — though, of course, it was Acadian — but a voice that became, over the hour, ours as well. That is, I knew her as I knew my grandmother from Matapédia or my Acadian great-grandmother. Slowly, it became our voice too and, as the hour progressed, mesmerizing.

She was an old lady, a fisherwoman born of the bay, a scrubwoman far away in New Brunswick, a part of some rustic backwoods region — what could she ever have to offer sophisticated people? Well, you see, everything, everything in the world — whatever God intended us to know, understand or cherish.

She slowly filled that small stage — and that group that surrounded her on three sides — with charm, wit, laughter and, in the end, a deep understanding of both the great joy and great sorrow of our world. The audience of young boys and girls — boys and girls from another age — listened with reverence. She had the spirit of a woman who celebrated the spirit of all mankind — a joyful celebration that we, in fact, share far more in our common humanity than we could ever imagine.

Monologues were delivered with such impeccable understanding of "how" — that is how stories are related, and why they must be told the way they are; that is how

human beings relate to one another and the world around them. Yes, this was the great Antonine Maillet's writing, of course, but it was Ms. Léger's delivery that brought it to life. In that moment, I suppose the two women were as one — the wonderful friendship between them that had started half of a century before were transformed by those words on that bare stage.

Though I had known Antonine Maillet for some time, and though Peg and I were invited to l'Université de Moncton for a celebration on the fortieth anniversary of *La Sagouine*, I never got to speak to or meet Ms. Léger. I wish I had. I always thought I would have a chance. Of course, as life would have it, I never did. Still, I will never forget that little washerwoman on stage for that one hour, surrounded by us all — with one light shining on a hunched and noble soul as she confided in us a gracious and eloquent wisdom. It was the wisdom that Tolstoy himself understood: There is no greatness without goodness, kindness and simplicity.

What might I have said if I had met her? I would have told her that her little washerwoman is universal, and like “The Song of Joy,” “Amazing Grace” or “Oh Danny Boy,” her monologues can be understood by anyone from any language — flying any flag over any country — and all one needs in order to understand such a grand old woman is love.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, it is fitting that, on February 14, a day for showing our loved ones that we love them and appreciate them, we should pay our deepest respects to a wonderful woman, the late senator Viola Léger, who recently passed away at the age of 92.

Viola was a senator for New Brunswick from 2001 to 2006, during which time she served on both the Committee on Official Languages and the Committee on Aboriginal Peoples. That is no coincidence since she was a staunch advocate for minorities throughout her life.

During her years in the Senate, she regularly charmed us with her insightful poems that showed us the fundamental role of culture as a reflection of Canadian diversity, united by our common values. I don't have time, in these three short minutes, to list all of the titles and honours that she was awarded, but they were all very well deserved.

For francophones from New Brunswick, she was our ambassador, both nationally and internationally, bringing our history to life on stage in her role as *La Sagouine*. Off stage, it was her smile, her intelligence and life experience that shone through.

Like the star on the Acadian flag, she was for many of us a guiding star whose wisdom and dignity served to light the way for future generations of Acadian artists, like our own Senator René Cormier and many others. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senator Cormier, who gave an eloquent eulogy at Viola's funeral last week. Thank you, René.

It goes without saying that, of all the roles Viola undertook during her lifetime, her performance on stage in the role of *La Sagouine*, from the novel of the same name written by her friend Antonine Maillet, was particularly exceptional. Every time I attended a performance, I was moved by her monologue, and the fact that she could enthrall the audience for hours, all on her own. That was just one of her many feats.

• (1420)

In the Senate on May 19, 2005, during her statement on the influence of culture, she said the following:

The arts play an indispensable role in our mutual understanding.

Artistic creation awakens our consciousness. It is a source of meditation, inspiration, reflection and comfort. The arts help balance us, elevate our souls, and allow us to breathe, to live. . . .

The arts define us and, above all, help us understand who we are as Canadians and what our society is all about.

Honourable senators, Viola's statement was one of love — appropriate for us on Valentine's Day. It shows her love for Acadia, for culture, for the arts, for Canada and for all of us who have been blessed to have known her at some point in her life.

Dear Viola, thank you so much for dedicating your life to the love of culture, and love for one another. Know that your memory will live on in our hearts.

You accomplished your life and your mission brilliantly. Rest in peace.

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: I rise today to pay tribute to Senator Viola Léger.

In September 2001, four people were appointed senators — Laurier LaPierre, Viola Léger, Jean Lapointe and I — one week after the September 11 tragedy.

As I was the first Muslim senator, I was worried about the situation because I was hearing negative comments about Muslims in the house.

Viola comforted me and told me that it was not true that all Muslims were like that. She said, “Don't worry, be patient, take your time and tell your story slowly.” She promised me that one day things would change in the Senate.

Viola was very generous with me.

Senator Léger was first and foremost an accomplished artist. We remember her mainly for her role as *La Sagouine*, the character created by Antonine Maillet. *La Sagouine*, a humble cleaning woman and daughter of a fisherman, tells her story and that of Acadia and its people. This role showcases the Acadian culture and language and presents the reality of this group of francophones from the Maritimes to Canadians in the rest of the country.

Between 1971 and 2016, Viola Léger performed this role more than 3,000 times in French and English, and brought her to life right across Canada, the United States and Europe.

[*English*]

Viola, I want to send you an update on your advice to me. For being patient, I get a C on my report card; taking my time does not come naturally to me; in telling my history about being Muslim, with the help of many other senators — we are now five in the Senate — we have made great progress.

Viola, you were an amazing friend and colleague and I will always remember you fondly. Rest in peace, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, the impact of the arts on our lives should never be understated. People feel seen and understood when they see their lived experience reflected back to them. It can also foster understanding from those who are coming from a different perspective.

On behalf of the Progressive Senate Group, I rise today to recognize a former colleague and a friend who did just that. Former senator Viola Léger passed away on January 28 of this year at the age of 92. Before her appointment to the Senate by the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien in 2001, Viola dedicated her life to the arts as an actress and as a teacher, particularly known for her portrayal of La Sagouine, a role created in 1971 by her friend and author Antonine Maillet. It was a role she would play more than 3,000 times over her lifetime. Her humble, straight-talking washerwoman inspired pride among the Acadian people, but also reached far beyond the people who recognized themselves in her.

She has been described as an icon, and indeed, as the author responsible for her signature role said, if Viola Léger:

... hadn't played Sagouine, Sagouine wouldn't have had the success that it had, and therefore (I would not have) received the recognition I received as a writer.

Many Acadian artists regard Viola Léger as an inspiration and have endeavoured to pursue a life in the arts because of the path she carved. Without her influence, we cannot know the stories or the beauty we may have missed. What a marvellous legacy.

When she eventually came to this place in 2001, she was certainly someone who did not shy away from hard work. While she herself was tiny and quiet, her dedication was not. I recall that she was driven to get things done in the chamber and was not very fond of the partisan debate to which we are often prone.

She spent time as a member of the Aboriginal Peoples Committee, the Official Languages Committee and the Social Affairs Committee, and she certainly championed the arts throughout her time as a senator.

Senator Léger was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1989. She was the recipient of the 1995 New Brunswick government's Arts Excellence Award, the Order of New Brunswick in 2007 and four honorary degrees. She was named

[Senator Jaffer]

Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters of France in 1991, member of the Ordre des francophones d'Amérique in 1998 and Knight of the Ordre de la Pléiade in 2004.

Honourable senators, while Canadians, and particularly the people of New Brunswick, have lost a cherished icon, La Sagouine will sit forever in our hearts. I send my deepest condolences to her friends and to her family. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I would ask you to rise and join me in observing one minute of silence in memory of our deceased colleague.

(Honourable senators then stood in silent tribute.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you very much, honourable senators.

• (1430)

[*English*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Leila Sarangi, Athavarn Srikantharajah, Hannah Barrie, Mithilen Mathipalan and Terence Hamilton. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Moodie.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CAMPAIGN 2000

RELEASE OF ANNUAL REPORT

Hon. Rosemary Moodie: Honourable senators, I rise to mark the release of the annual report by Campaign 2000 on the state of child poverty here in Canada. I want to thank and congratulate Leila Sarangi and her team, along with their many partners and stakeholders across this country, for this important work.

This year's report focused on the impacts of income supports that were made available during the pandemic. Based on 2020 data, Campaign 2000 found that while more than 300,000 children were lifted out of poverty, one in eight still experience the short- and long-term impacts of poverty on every facet of their lives.

This means, colleagues, that at least one million children live in poverty.

Campaign 2000's data indicates that without pandemic benefits, another half a million children would be in poverty.

Another key finding is that the Canada Child Benefit is losing its impact, and its effect on poverty reduction is increasingly minimal. Simply tying it to inflation is not enough.

I want to highlight for you, colleagues, that these findings should be contextualized in today's setting. Rising inflation means that low-income families are struggling even more. It means that families living in poverty, many of them Black and Indigenous, need more support from government, not less. It means there is still a lot of work to be done.

Why does this matter? A democracy is only as strong as the belief citizens have in its ability to meet their needs. Having children and families struggle to make ends meet is not only a failure to meet our human rights obligations; it speaks to a need for deep change in our systems to ensure its survival. In an era where democracies are threatened, this issue cannot be ignored.

So what should we be doing, colleagues? I will highlight what Campaign 2000 proposes, namely, the advancement of a national strategy for children and youth, so that we can have a vision of the country we want for our children. They also support a deep poverty supplement to the Canada Child Benefit, which I support wholeheartedly.

Ultimately, we must recognize that child poverty is a policy choice. It is not inevitable. And we can make a choice to end it, once and for all. Thank you.

OCEAN RANGER DISASTER

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, the night of February 14, and into the early morning of February 15, 1982 — 41 years ago — the semi-submersible drilling rig named the Ocean Ranger capsized and sank 175 nautical miles east of St. John's. Before going down, a mayday was sent out, and the rig was abandoned. Back then, it was almost impossible to safely launch life boats and get people into them in a raging North Atlantic storm. That night 84 men, mostly Newfoundlanders, died in the dark, stormy, frigid waters. The cause of deaths for most of them was found to be drowning while in a hypothermic state.

The Ocean Ranger was the world's largest semi-submersible drill rig and it was only six years old. The joint Federal-Provincial Royal Commission on the Ocean Ranger Marine Disaster found that the crew lacked proper safety training, had inadequate safety equipment, and there were no safety protocols for the supply ship. The inspections of the rig by the U.S. and Canadian regulators and agencies were also inadequate, and the rig itself had a number of design and construction flaws.

Colleagues, accidents usually occur because of failure of more than one system. In the case of this disaster 41 years ago, all things conspired against it. It was literally and figuratively the perfect storm.

In this case, the Royal Commission determined that the specific reason was that a rogue wave smashed through the ballast control room porthole, and the sea water rendered the ballast control panel inoperable, leading to the listing of the rig, where the wave action took over and delivered the final blow.

The ballast control porthole that had been smashed was 8.5 m from the waterline, and the waves were approaching 20 m. The wind was 190 km/h.

There have been significant improvements in the safety culture in the Newfoundland offshore since then. Those who were here in this chamber in 2014 may recall that I introduced the Offshore Health and Safety Act in our chamber, which updated requirements for safety in the offshore. It passed unanimously in both chambers and is now the law in Canada's offshore. Training is better; equipment is better; processes are better, as is forecasting, but dangers always remain.

I had the honour of attending a play in St. John's on Saturday evening called *RIG: An Oral History of the Ocean Ranger Disaster*, written by Mike Heffernan and adapted for the stage by Joan Sullivan. I spoke to them both over the weekend and met the cast. Of the dozen or so people portrayed in the play who were intimately involved in the aftermath of the disaster, I personally knew four of them.

Our province becomes a smaller place when tragedy strikes, and there isn't one community that wasn't touched by this one. There are books, songs, plays and monuments, and there are those who still grieve. This evening and tomorrow, our province will commemorate the loss. I invite all colleagues to do so as well. Thank you.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dawn Edlund, Diane Burrows and Michael Molloy. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Jaffer.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. F. Gigi Osler: Honourable senators, I rise today to share with you that this is Sexual Health and Reproductive Health Week, an annual campaign designed to raise awareness of sexual and reproductive health and to promote resources to improve community health in Canada.

Everyone has the fundamental right to control their own bodies, to security and to health. Reproductive rights are fundamental rights, and abortion care is health care.

Lack of access to safe, timely, inclusive and respectful information on sexual and reproductive health is a risk to one's physical health, mental health and social well-being.

Despite this January marking 35 years since the landmark *Morgentaler* decision, which secured the right to legal abortion in Canada, access to abortion care remains inequitable. Legal does not mean accessible.

Significant barriers to accessible sexual and reproductive health care still exist, including the exclusion of abortion care services outside of hospitals in some provinces; limited access to timely health services in Northern remote, rural and Indigenous communities; a lack of universal contraceptive coverage; and the rise of mis- and disinformation on various health topics including gender-affirming care.

Health care providers should have more teaching on comprehensive sexual education, reproductive health, contraception and abortion care integrated into their training curriculum. Increased and permanent funding for Canada's Sexual and Reproductive Health Fund would support community health organizations such as Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights and the National Abortion Federation. Both organizations run toll-free hotlines and online directories to provide accurate and reliable information on pregnancy options, reproductive health services and stigma-free care.

We need to celebrate these successes and double down on our commitment in Canada to ensure that governments facilitate timely, safe and equitable access to health care for all its citizens.

As a physician and member of the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, I stand committed to advance work that would close gaps in access to inclusive and respectful sexual and reproductive health care in Canada and around the world.

I welcome others in joining our collective work on this front. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

[*Translation*]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

JEAN-FRANÇOIS KACOU

Hon. Amina Gerba: Honourable senators, I'd like to continue with the series I announced as part of this year's Black History Month by introducing you to another African Canadian, a young leader with an unconventional journey who chose to settle in a part of the country that many of us in this room are probably not familiar with. His name is Jean-François Kacou, and I affectionately refer to him as JFK. He served as the town manager of Percé, Quebec, until February 10.

• (1440)

The first time he visited Quebec as a tourist, JFK was charmed by Quebecers' warm welcome, Montreal's vibrancy and the many opportunities Canada had to offer.

JFK was a graduate of the Université de Bordeaux and a young entrepreneur. After returning to France, he decided to come back to Quebec to work. He started out as a consultant before joining my team at Afrique Expansion Inc. as a strategic advisor in 2015.

[Senator Osler]

That was when I got to know this young man, who is as passionate about Quebec's economic potential as he is about the need to forge ties between our country and Africa. He is a hard worker, a meticulous project developer and a very ambitious intrapreneur.

In 2019, a recruitment process highlighted his diverse skill set, and the mayor of the City of Percé, Quebec, hired him for the position of general manager. Percé's charms include its landscape and tourist attractions, such as the iconic Percé Rock.

Jean-François Kacou left his mark on Percé. The city diversified its economic development thanks to a new tourism levy and green tax, the creation of the Val-d'Espoir permaculture school, and the city's new culture and convention space.

Esteemed colleagues, the purpose of my series of speeches this month was to draw these young African-Canadian builders to your attention. There are a lot of them, and they have been contributing to our country's economic development for over 400 years.

Please join me in recognizing Jean-François Kacou's contribution to economic and tourism development in Percé, Quebec. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

AFRICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable colleagues:

Stolen from the plots of quixote Pierrot and the troubled Muddy Waters, these elegiac flowers of Whydah Falls, the Black Mississippi village banished to Jarvis County, Nova Scotia, in 1783, droop with the heaviness of history. Irrigated by liquor and tears and dessicated by blistery blues, they bloom in direct moonlight. Though intended originally for the garden of *Whydah Falls*, these loose flowers are freely planted here.

The "here" of this poem is Africadia, Acadia, Nova Scotia, the birthplace of former parliamentary poet laureate George Elliott Clarke, the place where Africans first came to Canada. Clarke's "elegiac flowers" represent the over 3,000 people of African descent who came to Birchtown, Nova Scotia in 1783, like the fictional Aminata Diallo of Lawrence Hill's *Book of Negroes*.

I quoted this poem when I spoke in support of Senator Bernard's Emancipation Day bill. Today I rise to celebrate African Heritage Month, as we call it in Nova Scotia. I want to highlight our province as the birthplace of African culture and heritage in Canada.

African people and people of African descent came to Nova Scotia in a number of ways, including the earlier mentioned Black Loyalists at the time of the U.S. War of Independence. Some ended up leaving to help establish Freetown, Sierra Leone.

In 1604, Mathieu Da Costa, said to be the first Black person in Nova Scotia, is recorded among the founders of Port-Royal, established by Samuel de Champlain on traditional Mi'kmaw territory, close to the town of Annapolis Royal.

The Fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island was home to 200 Black slaves during the French regime of 1713 to 1758, most coming from the French West Indies.

In 1796, 600 Trelawny Maroons were exiled from Jamaica to Nova Scotia, and many moved on to Sierra Leone.

After the War of 1812, roughly 2,000 Black refugees came, and from the 1920s on, hundreds of Caribbean immigrants came to work in the coal and steel industries in Cape Breton, and today people of African descent continue to enrich our province in so many ways.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to congratulate three important beacons of education in our province: the Black Cultural Centre with its African Nova Scotian Museum in Cherry Brook, the Africentric Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute in Halifax and the unique Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in Birchtown. Thank you for shining your bright lights on African Nova Scotian history, heritage, culture, people, communities and accomplishments. Your work is important. Thank you, *wela'liog*.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Councillor Tanya Foubert, Town of Canmore. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Sorensen.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

JOHN PARIS JR.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, as we continue to recognize the stories and accomplishments of so many incredible Black Canadians as part of Black History Month in Canada, I'd like to take a moment to pay tribute to someone very special to me and to many people who love the game of hockey: John Paris Jr.

He was a talented hockey player from Windsor, Nova Scotia, who was scouted by none other than Scotty Bowman to play junior hockey in Quebec in the 1960s. In a cruel turn of events, John's playing career was ultimately cut short by his battles with Hodgkin's lymphoma and other health challenges. However, he went on to an amazing coaching career, blazing a trail every step of the way.

He was the first Black coach in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League; the first Black scout in the NHL; the first Black general manager in a professional hockey league; and the first Black coach in pro hockey, leading the Atlanta Knights of the IHL to a league championship in 1994. But perhaps John's proudest hockey moment was in 1987 when he guided the Richelieu Riverains to an Air Canada Cup championship. He broke ceilings and overcame barriers with class and excellence.

Let me tell you a little something about the character of the man. When I was playing minor league hockey in and around Montreal, I never had the privilege of being coached by John, but I certainly knew the legend of John Paris Jr. in Midget AAA and the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. My own playing career never panned out either — for much different reasons, of course — but I did do a little coaching. That's how I met John Paris Jr. in 2004 during a lockout-shortened season in the NHL. Like everyone else in the league, John was trying to keep himself busy, so he coached a North American Hockey League team in Laval. I introduced myself to him at the rink in Laval and asked if he would be willing to come out on a weekend to run a couple of practices with my spring AAA hockey team, a group of eight-year-old hockey players, including my son. Of course, when I approached Mr. Paris, very humbly I asked him what remuneration would be required for someone of such experience and professional background, and he said, “Leo, I would be happy to come out. You can pay me whatever you want or nothing at all.” He came out that weekend, and he didn't leave for six months.

Colleagues, let me tell you, I have never seen someone with the ability to captivate, motivate, communicate and teach children like John did. Their eyes would light up at the mere mention of his name and his coaching ways. Even as they went on to play, many of them in junior, college and a couple in the NHL, they still remember their time as eight-year-olds with “Coach John.” He wasn't just the best Black hockey coach, he was the best coach, period, and more importantly, an incredible, decent human being.

Colleagues, I hope you'll join me in recognizing John's contributions on and off the ice by supporting an online movement to have John Paris Jr. inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame as a builder and a coach. Colleagues, I encourage you to learn more about this Canadian hockey legend and to sign the petition and get him where he belongs: the NHL's Hockey Hall of Fame. Thank you.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

CRIMINAL CODE JUDGES ACT

BILL TO AMEND—ELEVENTH REPORT OF LEGAL AND
CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Brent Cotter, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, presented the following report:

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs has the honour to present its

ELEVENTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill C-233, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Judges Act (violence against an intimate partner), has, in obedience to the order of reference of Wednesday, December 14, 2022, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment but with certain observations, which are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

BRENT COTTER

Chair

(For text of observations, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 1247.)

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

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

• (1450)

[English]

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO DEPOSIT
REPORT ON STUDY OF ISSUES RELATING TO SOCIAL
AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GENERALLY WITH CLERK
DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit with the Clerk of the Senate, no later than March 31, 2023, an interim report on issues relating to social affairs, science and technology generally, if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the report be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate.

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO CALL UPON THE GOVERNMENT TO
IMMEDIATELY DESIGNATE THE ISLAMIC
REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS AS A TERRORIST ENTITY

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, given reports of human rights abuses, repression and executions of its citizens, particularly women, in Iran by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Senate call upon the government to immediately designate the IRGC as a terrorist entity.

QUESTION PERIOD

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): As per usual, my question is for the government leader.

Leader, today on the Senate Order Paper, there are currently 63 written questions that remain unanswered after six months, including 51 that were filed over a year ago. In fact, at least eight

of my questions were tabled in the previous Parliament, with one question stretching all the way back to October 27, 2020.

Under the *Standing Orders of the House of Commons*, the government has 45 days to answer questions. This proves that providing responses to parliamentarians can be done in a timely manner.

Senator Gold, these delays in answering questions from honourable senators are unacceptable. What are you doing to correct it?

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

I have endeavoured, and will continue to endeavour, to get answers as quickly as possible. I believe we have made some progress in that, as my statements and responses in the chamber will indicate.

I'll certainly make inquiries about the questions that are outstanding and, in particular, regarding the status of questions that were asked in previous parliaments.

Senator Plett: I don't doubt that you're doing your part; it's the Trudeau government that has a long history of denying Canadians, including parliamentarians, access to information about what their government is doing and how taxpayers' money is spent. For example, I find it hard to believe that the CBC still doesn't know how much it spent on its failed lawsuit against the Conservative Party of Canada. My question asking for that information has been on the Order Paper since May 25, 2021.

I also find it hard to believe that no one in this government has any idea on how many middle-class jobs were created in Canada by sending tens of millions of taxpayer dollars to China through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. That question has been on the Senate Order Paper since March 30, 2021.

Leader, if this situation isn't a perfect example of the absolute contempt shown by this Trudeau government toward the Senate, Canadians and accountability, then what is it, leader?

Senator Gold: It is not contempt. As I said in my previous answer, honourable colleague, I will continue to make every effort to get answers in a timely fashion.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

APPROPRIATE SENTENCING

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, the *Journal de Montréal* reported that Quebec's justice minister sent a letter to Minister Lametti denouncing the measures in Bill C-5 that allow for house arrest instead of prison

sentences for sexual offenders. I would like to quote from the *Journal de Montréal*, which reports that Minister Jolin-Barrette said the following:

... the return of conditional sentences for certain crimes is "a major step backwards in the fight against sexual violence." He adds that this law "goes against the efforts of all justice system stakeholders to prevent victims from being reluctant to speak up or file a complaint."

Wondering what kind of message this legislation sends, Mr. Jolin-Barrette is asking Minister Lametti to "remedy the situation immediately."

When will the minister remedy this situation?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question and your dedicated commitment to victims of violence and crime. It is the position of the Government of Canada, as expressed many times by Minister Lametti and as set out in the bill that we passed, that repealing the sentences in the bill that you mentioned was the right thing to do under the circumstances and that this bill strikes a proper balance to ensure that our system is fair, tough when appropriate, but always appropriate in every situation.

Senator Boisvenu: Senator Gold, the floodgates have been opened. In Quebec, nearly a dozen sex offenders, arms traffickers and drug traffickers have been sentenced to house arrest. Yesterday, someone who tried to kill his friend with a screwdriver was sent home to serve 20 months in his living room.

Minister Lametti said that he is trying to ease congestion in the court system, but instead this is emptying out our prisons.

This morning, the federal Minister for Sport once again encouraged athletes who have been the victim of abuse to report their attacker. Senator Gold, my question is fairly simple. Do you agree that, in 2023, we should be allowing rapists, men who assault women, to serve their sentence from the comfort of their own home rather than in prison?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. I agree with the legislation as it was adopted because it strikes a balance in the penal system. I have full confidence in our justice system, including the judges who are seized with pertinent facts in every case. I will continue to have confidence in this system.

• (1500)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Hon. Paula Simons: My question is for the Government Representative.

Yesterday, internationally acclaimed Edmonton photojournalist Amber Bracken and *The Narwhal* magazine launched a lawsuit against the RCMP seeking damages and

clarification of journalist protections against law enforcement. This comes in the wake of Ms. Bracken's 2021 arrest while on assignment for *The Narwhal* as she covered the conflict between protesters and the RCMP in the Wet'suwet'en territory of British Columbia. Ms. Bracken has said that she informed arresting officers of jurisprudence protecting journalists in injunction zones, but officers said they were unfamiliar with any such law.

How will the government ensure our national police force respects journalists' presence and the rights of those documenting conflict in light of these reported serious infringements?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. I am aware of the circumstances to which you refer and the lawsuit that was launched. I cannot make any comments on a matter that is before the courts, of course. With regard to your question, I will have to make some inquiries and be glad to report back.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

GRANTING OF TEMPORARY VISAS

Hon. Amina Gerba: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, we all work to promote our country in the world, and Montreal has become an international showcase that welcomes a multitude of international conferences and investors.

However, delegates who want to participate in this type of conference are being denied visas to enter Canada because Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada believes that they will simply stay in Canada and not return home.

This terrible situation is damaging the reputation of our immigration system and undermining many opportunities.

Senator Gold, when will the government find a way to make it easier to obtain temporary visas, especially for potential investors, professionals and parents of students who are living in our country?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, honourable colleague, for raising this important question. I completely understand your concerns.

The government has brought in a number of resources to help us improve our immigration system.

Regarding your question in particular, I will follow up with the government and come back to you as soon as I have a response.

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Hon. Robert Black: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, I am sure you're well aware that tomorrow is Canada's Agriculture Day. Tomorrow — and I hope every day — farmers, producers and all members of the agriculture and processing sectors are being celebrated for their immeasurable contributions to this country. They remain an essential part of every Canadian's life, and continued support for their tireless efforts remains paramount to the success of the nation.

However, while the agricultural industry has had many successes, they continue to face obstacles, barriers and difficulties. Whether it's climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, labour shortages or regulatory issues, all members of this sector repeatedly rise to the challenge in the face of many issues. Their determination, skill and dedication continue to be appreciated by Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Senator Gold, can you please tell us what the Canadian government is currently doing to help solve these ongoing challenges to the sector, namely, processing capacity, food security, soil health and climate change, just to name a few?

Ahead of your response, I want to wish you and my colleagues here in the chamber and all Canadians a very happy Agriculture Day tomorrow.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, colleague, for highlighting the fifth Canada's Agriculture Day. It's a day to thank our farmers and our producers for what they do, to celebrate their accomplishments and to reflect as well on where we're going next.

You quite correctly, senator, made reference to the many challenges that the agricultural sector faces today. The government is committed to helping farmers face and meet those challenges. On soil health, for example, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and its laboratories have a long history of developing foundational science as well as innovative practices and technologies. They're committed to transferring this knowledge to producers.

On climate change, the government has invested over \$1.5 billion in the last two years to support producers in adopting good practices, in acquiring clean technologies and in research and development to adapt to climate change while continuing to grow the sector.

Finally, the government has successfully negotiated the sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership with our provincial and territorial partners. As of April 2023, this agreement will bring \$3.5 billion in funding over five years for Canadian agriculture to help build a prosperous and sustainable sector.

Thank you, Senator Black, for your tireless effort on this file. May I join you in wishing us all a happy Agriculture Day.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

SERVICE CONTRACTS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the government leader in the Senate.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has given McKinsey & Company consultants contracts worth \$24.5 million for so-called management advice. A public servant with this department told Radio-Canada last month:

We had a few presentations on very generic, completely vapid stuff. They arrived with nice colours, nice presentations and said they would revolutionize everything . . . In the end, we don't have any idea what they did . . .

Leader, the wait times and backlog in this department in recent years are arguably the worst ever. Why did the Trudeau government give McKinsey millions of taxpayer dollars when whatever advice it was providing to the immigration department was obviously not working?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, and there are a couple of different aspects. We have discussed on several occasions the challenges facing the immigration system in Canada, and I have provided, to the best of my ability, details of what the government has done in an attempt and in its effort to remediate the situation that we're experiencing.

As I've also said on other occasions, the government has enormous faith in its institutions and in its professional public service, but this government, as other governments have, will turn to outside expertise to help where there is expertise needed to resolve issues. Again, in this particular case, the vexing problem plaguing immigration. The government has confidence in the public service and also has confidence that it is using public funds responsibly when seeking outside help to address the problems facing Canadians.

Senator Martin: Leader, there are well over 2 million applications caught in the backlog at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Today, according to the government's own website, the application processing time for a skilled tradesperson seeking entry to Canada is 70 months.

Despite the massive backlog and little evidence Canadians are getting good value for money spent on the McKinsey contracts, the Trudeau government revised an immigration department contract during the pandemic to give McKinsey even more money.

Leader, could you tell us why your government believed McKinsey deserved extra money from Canadian taxpayers for a job done so poorly?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question, colleague, but I don't subscribe to the premise, assumption or statement in your question.

As I've reported in this chamber, the government is looking into — two ministers have been tasked with looking into — the circumstances under which contracts are awarded, not only to McKinsey but to others. I've read, and as we all know, it is also the subject of inquiry in a House committee. The government looks forward to the results of both of those processes to make sure that public funds are used appropriately and in the best interests of Canadians.

BORDER CROSSINGS AT ROXHAM ROAD

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, I want to return to the topic of illegal crossings into Canada at Roxham Road.

Last week, I raised the report of free bus tickets being distributed by U.S. National Guard members to asylum seekers in Manhattan to bring them closer to our border. On Friday, leader, it was reported that off-duty U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers in upstate New York are not only providing bus tickets, but are also driving asylum seekers to the border in exchange for money. Canada Border Services Agency confirmed to the media that they are aware of this situation, leader.

• (1510)

Last week, I asked you how long the Trudeau government has been aware of the free bus tickets. Today, I would also like to know how long your government has been aware that some U.S. border patrol officers have been doing this. What is your government doing about this, leader? I hope I can have the answer before 2024.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The government is very much aware of the recent reports regarding bus companies — in the United States — taking migrants to irregular points of entry. I do not know when they first learned of this, and I will make inquiries.

The government is firmly committed to safeguarding the integrity of our border and the security of our country at the same time, as I have mentioned on a number of occasions, by upholding and maintaining a fair and compassionate refugee protection system.

What is our government doing? They continue to work with the United States, and their international partners, to tackle the root causes of irregular migration, as well as continue to promote regular pathways to come to Canada in an orderly and appropriate manner.

There is much more to be done — the government knows that. They continue to work with their counterparts in the United States — with the United States government — to modernize the Safe Third Country Agreement.

Senator Plett: It seems like they are certainly working with the United States on this matter. They are allowing U.S. customs officers to drive illegal immigrants to the border, and they can walk across. So, yes, this government is very complicit and very helpful to their U.S. counterparts in doing this.

Leader, many Canadians, especially in your province of Quebec, have zero confidence that the Trudeau government can close the loophole in the Safe Third Country Agreement, or address the massive backlogs in the immigration department for people waiting to illegally come to Canada.

The RCMP intercepted over 39,000 people at Roxham Road last year, and there is nothing to indicate that this number will decrease in 2023.

Leader, last week, you said the Prime Minister was being transparent, open and honest with Canadians by admitting there won't be a resolution to Roxham Road when he meets with President Biden.

Instead of admitting failure a month before the meeting takes place, why doesn't the Prime Minister work to fix this mess?

Senator Gold: First of all, I will answer your question, senator, but to call the Canadian government "complicit" with initiatives taken in Manhattan, or elsewhere — by individuals on American territory and subject to American law — is extreme, even by the standards of Question Period.

The government is working with the United States to modernize the Safe Third Country Agreement. I have said on many occasions that closing Roxham Road is not the solution — and this is the view not only of this government, but also of many commentators and observers. It is a problem that the government is working on, not only with the United States, but with the Province of Quebec, and will continue to do so.

PUBLIC SAFETY

DRUG-IMPAIRED DRIVING

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Leader, Public Safety Canada recently released its annual report on trends and patterns in drug-impaired driving. It shows that police reported 7,454 drug-impaired driving incidents in 2021 — an almost 60% increase in such incidents since 2018 when cannabis was legalized.

The report shows that daily cannabis users are more likely to think cannabis use does not impair driving. Only 25% of Canadians believe it is very likely they will get caught if they drive under the influence of cannabis.

The report points to a B.C. study published last year in the *New England Journal of Medicine* which showed that people injured while driving under the influence of drugs had higher THC levels in their blood since legalization.

Leader, many concerns that honourable senators have raised during our study of Bill C-45 and Bill C-46 have come to pass. How does your government respond to the report's findings?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I do not know what the government's response to the report is.

I can say the following: First of all, drug-impaired driving was a problem that pre-existed the legalization of cannabis. No one assumed for a moment, in this chamber or elsewhere, that legalization would eliminate that problem.

A number of things have changed: increased attention to the detection of impaired driving, specifically drug-impaired driving; one hopes there's stringent prosecution where such has been found and established by the evidence to be the case; and, of course, at least in some jurisdictions, increased sophisticated tests to determine and detect when somebody may be driving while impaired by drugs.

It is a serious problem. That's why the government introduced changes to the Criminal Code, which helped assist law enforcement in detecting those who may have been driving after having consumed cannabis and its related substances.

The government, working with the provinces and territories, will continue to do what it can to keep Canadians safe on the road.

Honourable senator, it is not the position of the government that the legalization of cannabis is the driving force behind this, admittedly, serious problem affecting the safety and security of Canadians.

Senator Martin: This report also shows that, while the number of drug-impaired driving incidents increased, the number of active officers trained as drug recognition experts — speaking of testing — has decreased. There were 68 fewer of these officers across Canada in 2021 compared to the previous year.

Leader, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, capacity limits were placed on the number of officers that could be trained at certification events.

Could you make inquiries and let us know if the capacity limits have been lifted? What will your government do to ensure more officers receive this training, and are active in communities across our country?

Senator Gold: I will certainly make inquiries. Thank you for the question.

NATIONAL REVENUE

CANADA EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): About three weeks ago, leader, the Commissioner of the Canada Revenue Agency told a committee of the other place that to further investigate the \$15.5 billion paid out to recipients for the wage subsidy "... wouldn't be worth the effort."

To provide some context, \$15.5 billion would pay for more than three years of new spending — announced last week — for provincial health care services.

I think the middle-class Canadians that the Prime Minister likes to talk about would be mystified that billions of their tax dollars are considered inconsequential by this government.

Last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer told our National Finance Committee that this is disconcerting, and I quite agree with him.

Why doesn't the Trudeau government believe this work is worth the effort?

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

If I understood the factual underpinnings of the question, it was not the government who made that statement, but the official from the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA.

Be that as it may, the government does not consider this money insignificant — it is real and important money. The government — in introducing the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, or CERB, and in pursuing those who may have wrongly claimed CERB — has to make a cost-benefit analysis as to the likelihood of success, and the effort to be taken. I have every confidence those decisions will be made in a responsible manner.

Senator Plett: Leader, in May 2020 I asked you why the Trudeau government instructed public servants to ignore potential cases of fraud, and pay out emergency benefits, even when abuse was suspected. At that time, 200,000 applications were reportedly red-flagged for possible fraud.

• (1520)

You said:

There will be time — and the government is committed to ensuring this — when the tax season and taxes are filed in the coming year that all cases where there have been instances where monies were given incorrectly, either mistakenly in good faith or by fraud, will be pursued. Money will be reimbursed. In cases of fraud, appropriate sanctions will be applied.

Those were your words.

Leader, the Trudeau government said back then, “We’ll deal with it later.” Now your government is saying, “We won’t deal with it at all.”

Millions of Canadians will be doing their taxes soon, leader. Will you be so lax in going after them if they owe money or make mistakes?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. The government is not doing nothing. The government has pursued — and is continuing to investigate — these matters, and it will continue to do so in an appropriate way.

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 Joyce Murray, P.C., M.P., Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, will take place on March 7, 2023, at 2:30 p.m.

[Translation]

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Cotter, seconded by the Honourable Senator Woo, for the second reading of Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act.

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-22 because I care about the living conditions of persons with disabilities and because I have noticed a number of problems with government intervention in this area. I will be brief, so as not to unduly delay the study of this bill, which enjoys broad support both in the House of Commons and in civil society.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the government's efforts to create a legislative framework for the Canada Disability Benefit, or CDB, a necessary support measure for Canadians who are of working age but require additional assistance to overcome the challenges of poverty. Despite the many support programs offered by various levels of government, people with disabilities, particularly those of working age, remain vulnerable to poverty.

Twice as many of Canada's 4.1 million working-age people with disabilities, 22.5%, as without, 11.6%, live below the poverty line. This is more likely to be the case for people with severe disabilities because they are less likely to work and more likely to depend on social assistance. These data are from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and the poverty line as measured by the 2018 market basket.

The skyrocketing cost of housing and food, along with the rising general cost of living, have a greater impact on the most vulnerable. People with disabilities are of course hardest hit

because of extra costs related to their condition. Sadly, it is well known that the Canadian social safety net is poorly equipped to help people with disabilities.

In 2018, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology produced a very critical report about the Disability Tax Credit and the Registered Disability Savings Plan. Like Disability Without Poverty, I'm cautiously optimistic about this framework legislation because the terms and conditions of the benefit will be set by order-in-council, which leaves a lot of room for speculation.

I'd like to address three issues that I think are important. The first is eligibility. The definition of disability has changed, as has the way the severity of the disability is measured. Unfortunately, administrative limitations can have a major impact on recipients.

In order to be eligible for the Disability Tax Credit, for example, a person's disability must last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. Those suffering from multiple sclerosis know that the symptoms of this chronic degenerative disease vary from month to month. I give this example to show how complicated it is to define an individual's disability. To determine which disabilities and barriers make it possible for a person to access the Canada disability benefit, Bill C-22 simply refers to the definitions set out in section 2 of the Accessible Canada Act, which, as we know, are very problematic in some regards.

I don't have a practical solution to propose at this time. However, I'd like to point out that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources adopted a report in April 2022 that recommended that the government:

. . . consider the possibility of codifying all people who receive provincial support for their disability as people with disabilities in order to facilitate the ease of payment of a future benefit for a disabled person . . .

I'm not sure that I fully understand the implications of this recommendation. However, I believe that it is worth exploring this proposal to simplify access to the Canada disability benefit. This is, in my view, a major issue.

What is an acceptable minimum income? That is another issue, and it is the elephant in the room that we're being asked to ignore. What income supplement should the new benefit provide? We know that, on the one hand, the Guaranteed Income Supplement provides an income of \$1,500 per month. On the other hand, in Ontario, a pilot project allows people with disabilities to receive \$1,915 per month. Employment insurance provides up to \$2,600 per month. We also know that during the pandemic, the government recognized that the minimum benefit should be \$2,000 per month.

Inclusion Canada, which is the national umbrella organization for more than 300 local associations, recommends that the new benefit should provide a minimum income of \$2,200 a month, which is the minimum income threshold established by the federal government during the pandemic, plus 10% to cover additional expenses related to the functional limitations of people living with disabilities. When we consider that the low income threshold in Canada is approximately \$2,100, I find this proposal

to be more than reasonable. Naturally, we must ensure that this new program is harmonized with other federal and provincial income programs to avoid this benefit from ending up in the coffers of different levels of government.

The third important issue is the problem of non-filers. I mentioned this last week. As you know, poverty reduction is closely aligned with the filing of income tax returns because many credits and benefits require the annual filing of a tax return. Unfortunately, we see that the poorer the family, the more marginalized it is and the greater the tendency to not file a tax return.

According to a 2020 study by two Carleton University professors, between 10% and 12% of Canadians do not file a tax return. The professors estimated that the lost benefits for working-age non-filers amounted to roughly \$1.7 billion in 2015. In 2001, it was reported that at least 270,000 of the poorest seniors weren't receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement, even though they were entitled to it. A parliamentary committee revealed that the Department of Human Resources had been aware of the problem since 1993, but had done little or nothing to reach out to those eligible, allowing the federal government to save more than \$3 billion on the backs of the most vulnerable Canadians.

In order to ensure that low-income Canadians aren't denied government benefits, including the new Canada disability benefit, I believe it is essential to pressure the government to do everything in its power to encourage people to file their tax returns, especially those who are financially vulnerable.

Let me provide a few examples. For more than 45 years, the federal government has supported the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program in order to assist community-based organizations that help Canadians file their taxes. However, there have been problems with this program.

• (1530)

The Taxpayers' Ombudsman has produced a series of recommendations to improve volunteer training, encourage e-filing, and improve awareness of help desks.

There is one more area of work. In the Speech from the Throne on September 23, 2020, the government committed to implementing the following:

. . . free, automatic tax filing for simple returns to ensure citizens receive the benefits they need . . .

— and to which they are entitled.

A pilot project for low-income individuals whose financial status doesn't change from year to year was implemented prior to the pandemic. The service consists of filling out a form in advance and then asking taxpayers to confirm its contents over the phone. It is time to shift into second gear and expand this universally.

Finally, I think the Canada Revenue Agency should be asked annually to estimate the number of Canadians 18 years and older who don't file a tax return, much like Senator Downe's proposal on tax avoidance. This can be done by cross-referencing the

number of tax returns received with data from selected Statistics Canada studies, as scholars at Carleton University have done. This data would allow for more targeted ways of reaching non-filers and would also allow for an assessment of government efforts to reach those who are entitled to benefits.

To sum up, I want to congratulate the government on creating this new benefit, which has the potential to lift thousands of people with disabilities out of poverty. However, it is important to note that merely establishing this benefit is just the first step. Further collaboration is essential to significantly improving the lives of people with disabilities by ensuring that people get the benefits they're entitled to.

I know this benefit can help bring about a more inclusive, equitable and compassionate society. If the government calibrates the program properly, it can make a big difference in the lives of some of this country's most marginalized people.

Thank you.

[*English*]

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, happy Valentine's Day.

I rise today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people to speak at second reading to Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing what is promised to be a generational game changer, the Canada disability benefit.

Honourable colleagues, I would like to start my remarks today with the story of kin — a story about my kin.

When I was 10, my mother, Betty, was pregnant. There were six of us, and were we ever excited. We three girls all wanted a little sister, and my three brothers were rooting for a little brother. On Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day in 1965, our little brother John Patterson was born, and in the end what mattered was that our family had an adorable new baby. I felt like mom had the baby just for me. I was over the moon. Johnny was so sweet and so much fun. I played with him and "took care" of him all the time. I just loved him to bits, and I still do.

My brother Johnny was a very likeable and active child. He was smart, funny, athletic and outgoing. Johnny completed high school and went on to study in a number of fields — broadcasting, recreation and later computers. He worked in the hospitality industry, including stints in Banff; worked in child care; got involved in radio, theatre and improv.

Along the way, when I had already moved out of the house and started my own family, my dear youngest brother developed chronic and serious health difficulties, mental health conditions, commencing at the age of 14. These took years to diagnose and treat, and of course, those were very turbulent and often painful times for Johnny as he tried to finish school, work, pay the bills,

have good relationships and make a life in the ways that we all want to do. It was all just so much harder and at times impossible for Johnny because of his health.

Like many Canadians, Johnny has bipolar disorder and severe anxiety. In his case, these conditions are very debilitating. Today, Johnny's full-time job, quite frankly, is being healthy, and I can tell you he works very diligently at that. He volunteers in the community, visits our almost 96-year-old mom, swims to stay physically well and works to keep up relationships with a close circle of friends and family. Johnny is a kind and good person who was dealt a hand that included a really tough disability.

Increasingly unable to work at paid employment — it sure is hard to keep a job when you can't sleep at night and are experiencing other severe symptoms of anxiety and depression — Johnny was initially refused eligibility for the Ontario Disability Support Program, or ODSP, but was eventually approved after being hospitalized in 2001. ODSP pays \$1,230 per month for a single person like Johnny. In my province of Nova Scotia, he would be expected to live on \$950. While it is good that he receives some modest income support, Johnny says that the financial stress of being on disability is hard on his mental health.

Colleagues, it's stressful not having enough money for even the basic necessities of life. Ending the financial insecurity of people like my brother Johnny — my kin and yours — and reducing poverty, which is disproportionately high among disabled Canadians, is what Bill C-22 and the Canada disability benefit are all about.

It is also about restoring people's dignity. My brother would tell you that the stigma around mental health is hard to shake. Johnny still feels shame and guilt thinking that somehow his situation is his fault.

Honourable senators, the Canada disability benefit will provide much-needed material support to people like Johnny, and it could also send an important signal to them that our society understands, respects and values people living with disabilities.

Senator Cotter, the sponsor of Bill C-22, eloquently and comprehensively introduced us to the essential content of this important bill in his speech at second reading last Thursday.

Bill C-22 is a framework legislation that establishes the Canada disability benefit. It's aimed at low-income, working-age persons with all types of disabilities. It's the cornerstone of Canada's Disability Inclusion Action Plan and its highest priority.

According to the legislation, most of the benefit's design elements will be established through regulations, and those will be developed in collaboration with people living with disabilities. As the slogan rightly states, "*nihil de nobis, sine nobis*" — nothing about us without us. Nothing about disabled Canadians without disabled Canadians at the table.

Colleagues, when studying this legislation, I was interested in how this new benefit was connected to related policies and initiatives such as guaranteed livable basic income, medical assistance in dying and the new national health care deal. During my first year in this chamber, I joined the All-Party Anti-Poverty Caucus led by our former colleague senator Art Eggleton. We studied a number of poverty-reduction measures, including the now-cancelled Ontario Basic Income Pilot.

Asked at one of our meetings whether the government would consider playing a role in establishing a guaranteed livable basic income for Canadians, Minister Duclos, then Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, was very clear that the government intended to focus its poverty-reduction efforts on targeted groups of the population — children, through the Canada Child Benefit, and vulnerable seniors through the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

We know that the Canada disability benefit is modelled on the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors. The maximum GIS payment for single pensioners at the moment is \$1,026. We don't yet know what the CDB amount will be.

Honourable senators, when I spoke on Bill C-7, the medical assistance in dying legislation, I cited a letter from disability advocates that stated:

. . . there is a real risk that those without adequate support networks of friends and family, in older age, living in poverty or who might be further marginalized by their racialized, indigenous, gender identity or other status, will be more vulnerable to being induced to access MAiD.

Those fears were widely held.

Colleagues, a number of disability advocates have indicated that the Canada disability benefit, if well designed and appropriately resourced, could be an important response to those fears about MAiD.

• (1540)

The third related matter is the new health care deal currently being negotiated between the federal government and the territories and provinces. Sister Elizabeth Davis, co-chair of the Newfoundland team that produced that province's Health Accord plan, told the CBC that new funding proposed by the federal government would allow the implementation of half of that province's Health Accord plan. But without finding ways to address the other half, the plan won't succeed.

The other half, which addresses the social determinants of health, is perhaps more important and needs even more attention. One of the findings of the Newfoundland Health Accord is that social, economic and environmental factors play a role in 60% of health outcomes, while the actual health care system accounts for

25%, and a person's genetic makeup, the final 15%. Sister Davis says poverty reduction is crucial — again, an obvious link to the Canada disability benefit.

Colleagues, the case for a disability benefit for Canadians in need is both clear and compelling. We know that 22% of our population consists of persons with disabilities; in my province of Nova Scotia, it's 30%. Forty percent of us have family members with disabilities. You've heard about my brother Johnny. We know that 41% of people living in poverty in Canada are disabled, with 10% of seniors with disabilities living in poverty, and that disabled people make up over 50% of people facing food insecurity in Canada.

Vancouver's *The Province* headline on February 9 last week declared that a disability diagnosis is "a prescription for poverty." Colleagues, that is a shared national shame.

The Disability Without Poverty organization's submission on Bill C-22 provides even more detail on poverty experienced by persons living with disabilities. They point out how poverty among their members has deepened during the COVID pandemic and how the impacts of inflation and the housing crisis have disproportionately impacted disabled Canadians.

Colleagues, the preamble of the Poverty Reduction Act states that "Canada aspires to be a world leader in the eradication of poverty," and the act establishes the ambitious poverty reduction target of 50% below the level of poverty in 2015 by 2030.

Colleagues, with this national aspiration clearly spelled out and the obvious case for creating a much-needed financial benefit for disabled Canadians, we have been asked by people in the disabilities community to now do our part to ensure that Bill C-22 moves to Royal Assent with haste. People living with disabilities need financial relief, and they need it now.

Bill C-22 was passed unanimously in the House after a detailed study and with amendments. Our job is not to unduly hold up the bill, while at the same time, we need to work efficiently to fulfill our responsibility to ensure that we have legislation that enables the creation of a robust Canada disability benefit which will have the intended outcomes of significantly reducing poverty and supporting the financial security of persons with disabilities — one which clearly responds to what people living with disabilities are asking for.

They're asking the federal government to prevent clawbacks of benefits by provinces and territories, prevent clawbacks by private disability insurance companies and ensure that the coming into force and the money actually flowing to beneficiaries happen within the year — we need strict deadlines for every step of the development and implementation process.

They are also asking the federal government to ensure benefit amounts are adequate to actually take people above the official poverty line; have eligibility criteria which are clear, fair and developed in consultation with persons with disabilities; develop

a two-track process for determining eligibility so that people eligible for provincial and territorial benefits do not have to prove again that they have a disability and live in poverty; ensure the working-age target group doesn't leave out disabled seniors — I'm a senior, and I'm still working — ensure there is proactive outreach to all persons who could be eligible. The most vulnerable don't always file taxes, as we heard Senator Forest mention, and some may not even have social insurance numbers; they need to be reached out to.

Further, the government is asked to ensure the right to appeal refusal exists — and that there's a tribunal for that — and that mechanisms for complaints are in place; and to include the most critical details in the bill itself, rather than leaving so many details to the regulations.

This is what many are asking us. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance calls Bill C-22 a well-intentioned but weak bill. They say we still don't know how much the benefit will be, who will be eligible for it or when the government will start paying it. Some others are expressing greater trust in the government and the promised co-development process.

Honourable senators, my brother Johnny was 55 when the promise to create the Canada disability benefit was made in the September 2020 Speech from the Throne. In four months, he will turn 58, already almost three years since that promise. Honourable senators, let's move this transformational bill to committee so our colleagues can investigate whether and how it can best deliver in a timely manner on its important promises of financial security, poverty reduction and dignity — promises to my brother Johnny and to other Canadians living with disabilities. Honourable senators, let's ensure this promised generational change starts now.

Thank you, *wela'liog*.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marty Deacon: Will you take a question, honourable senator?

Senator Coyle: I'd be delighted to.

Senator M. Deacon: Thank you. I heard you touch on the importance of and how we access those folks who may be marginalized and really hard to access. I just want to say that's a priority. When we look at the review, so when this bill is passed, and we have two or three years down the road, what would you be looking for in terms of how well this is working? What might you be thinking about in the review part of the process?

Senator Coyle: I think this could have been also asked of my colleague Senator Forest, who spoke about the access issue to the benefit, that there are Canadians who we know are not filing taxes. If we solely rely on that system to be able to provide this benefit to those who need it, we will be missing a lot of vulnerable people and, as I mentioned, also those who may not even have a social insurance number, who need this benefit more than anyone.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Time has expired.

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, I rise today as opposition critic to speak to Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act.

I recognize and thank my colleague Senator Cotter, the sponsor of this bill, for his important work. I look forward to our ongoing collaboration to ensure this is an efficient and effective process.

The disability community is mostly united on the importance of this legislation, and I fully understand the urgency with which we must proceed.

The history of supports for people with disabilities in Canada, especially at the federal level, is relatively short. In an essay entitled "Disability in Canada: An Historical Perspective," Dr. Aldred Neufeldt, Emeritus Professor of Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies at the University of Calgary, notes that in the first decades of the 1900s, Quebec, and then Ontario, established workmen's compensation laws, but it was war, he writes, that prompted government to develop rehabilitation services. After the Second World War, returning war veterans insisted "... on their rights to be treated as citizens with continuing contributions to make" Thus, workers' compensation and veterans' allowances emerged as two of the earliest forms of compensation for Canadians with certain kinds of disablement.

• (1550)

In his book, *Struggling for Social Citizenship: Disabled Canadians, Income Security, and Prime Ministerial Eras*, Dr. Michael Prince, the Lansdowne Professor of Social Policy at the University of Victoria, observes that, although workers' compensation and veterans' allowances were established as distinct programs, most subsequent disability programs, including original benefits for blind persons, the Canada Pension Plan disability benefit, social assistance and employment insurance, are parts of broader policy frameworks. As Dr. Prince argues, "These diverse access points and separate program designs result in a mottled social citizenship for disabled people."

Indeed, our Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, in its 2018 study of the Disability Tax Credit and the Registered Disability Savings Plan, heard from many witnesses regarding the complexity of applying for disability support programs. Witnesses urged us to simplify and clarify processes for federal supports. In our report, we recommended:

That the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development work closely with other orders of government to harmonize the application processes for disability supports programs.

Our report also recommended that both ministers “. . . develop a basic income or guaranteed income for people with severe disabilities. . . .”

An earlier report entitled *In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*, released in 2009, again by the Social Affairs Committee and their Subcommittee on Cities, describes how the source or level of income of someone with a disability depends on when and how one becomes disabled and whether private or public insurance payments were available to an individual upon disablement.

The report warns:

The complexity of current programs and their interactions can leave too many people . . . without adequate incomes, and even without any income, as they are bounced from one “system” to another.

This lack of continuity in eligibility for disability income supports only piles on even more uncertainty in the lives of Canadians.

The 2009 report also recommends the development and implementation of a basic income for people with severe disabilities, though the basic income considered at the Subcommittee on Cities was meant to replace provincial social assistance income, which would have resulted in substantial savings to the provinces. In his testimony to that committee, Dr. Prince noted that this model would have taken half a million Canadians off provincial social assistance, which would have then allowed the provinces to reallocate funds into personal supports, education, inclusive schools, inclusive parks and recreation, family supports and public transit.

That is not what is being proposed in Bill C-22. As Minister Qualtrough noted in her second reading speech in the other place, this new benefit will be an income supplement, not an income replacement, and it is not intended to replace existing provincial or territorial supports. When it becomes available, the Canada disability benefit should provide additional monthly income for people with disabilities. It is worth noting, however, that this type of program will not lessen the financial demands on the provinces. A different approach could have otherwise allowed for more investment in services for people with disabilities.

Historically, Canada’s supports for people with disabilities have differed from those in the United States and most European countries because, in our federation, the provinces bear the prime responsibility for health, education and social services. According to the OECD, Canada lags behind on public spending on incapacity — that is, spending due to sickness, disability and occupational injury.

Of the G7 countries, we come in seventh on public spending on incapacity as a percentage of total gross domestic product. We spend, in Canada, just three quarters of 1% of our GDP. The U.S. spends 1%, and Japan about the same. Our European peers spend much more. France spends 1.7% of GDP; Italy, 1.8%; the United Kingdom, 1.9%; and Germany, 2.25%.

We have a moral obligation to do more. The preamble of the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that:

. . . the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people

For too long, people with disabilities in this country have not enjoyed freedom from want, and the effects have been devastating.

According to the Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017, which is the most recent survey data we have, one in five Canadians over the age of 15 had one or more disability. The likelihood of having a disability increases with age: 13% of those aged 15 to 24 years had a disability compared to 47% of those 75 years and older. Disability’s correlation with poverty is strong, as we’ve heard from all our speakers: Of Canadians aged 25 to 64 years, 28% of those with more severe disabilities live in poverty compared to 10% of their counterparts without disabilities.

Dr. Deborah Stienstra, the Jarislowky Chair in Families and Work at the University of Guelph, notes that people with disabilities face barriers to education; barriers to employment; high costs, including those associated with necessary disability-related supports and barriers to systems of transportation, telecommunication and health care. She says:

Each of these sets of barriers, in addition to stigmatizing attitudes about disability, limit the opportunities for full citizenship and participation for people with disabilities, and can result in a life with poverty and exclusion.

Bill C-22 comes to us as amended by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities — HUMA — in the other place. Bill C-22 is meagre on details — what is often referred to as “framework” legislation. It sets out general provisions for the administration of the benefit and authorizes the Governor-in-Council to implement most of the benefit’s design elements through regulations. As MPs noted at second reading, Bill C-22, as it was first introduced, was more of a promise to act than a real proposal. Thanks to the nine amendments made at HUMA, the bill is somewhat improved.

The first amendment adds a definition of “disability” to the bill, the same as found in the Accessible Canada Act.

The second amendment requires the federal government to make public all federal and provincial-territorial agreements with respect to the Canada disability benefit.

The third amendment requires that the benefit be indexed to inflation.

The fourth amendment requires that the application for the benefit be barrier-free.

The fifth amendment requires that the Governor-in-Council, when setting the amount of the benefit, take into consideration the official poverty line.

The sixth amendment requires the minister to table a report in the House of Commons on the engagement and collaboration with the disability community in the development of regulations within six months of coming into force, and to table another report on the progress made in the regulatory process within one year.

The seventh amendment requires the minister to provide persons with disabilities the opportunity to collaborate on the development and design of the regulations.

The eighth amendment tightens the timelines for parliamentary reviews of the legislation from three years after coming into force and every five years thereafter to one and three years after coming into force and then every five years after. The ninth amendment set the coming-into-force date to no later than one year after Royal Assent.

• (1600)

The House of Commons human resources, skills and social development and the status of persons with disabilities committee has done excellent work. As our Senate committee studies the bill, it will be our job to review that work and to hear testimony from experts and stakeholders to ensure that no flaws have been inadvertently introduced and that there are no important omissions in the bill.

This might be just the right time to remind my honourable colleagues of a similar situation we found ourselves in just three-and-a-half years ago with another piece of legislation vitally important to the disability community — Bill C-81, the Accessible Canada Act. Everyone was fully united behind that legislation, and there was similar pressure for us to get that bill passed without amendments.

While virtually all of the testimony we heard at the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology called on us to pass the bill with a degree of urgency, there was concern expressed from some members of the disability community about certain omissions. Our committee believed that we could focus on a few clear amendments that would add value to C-81 without endangering its passage. While the reflected desire for this legislation was strong, the desire to improve it was even stronger. The Senate — all of you, senators — agreed, and we passed the amended bill at third reading, and the House concurred with all our amendments. It is important to remember the essence of these amendments because it highlights the value of true sober second thought.

One, timelines. Bill C-81 had no definitive timeline for Canada to become a fully accessible country. Without timelines, there would be no accountability, progress could not be measured and standards might never be developed and enacted by law. Therefore, we added the recommended deadline of 2040 to be the definable date in place for full implementation of accessibility

requirements. Related to this, we made an amendment to ensure that accessibility measures would not be delayed or postponed as an unintended consequence, but enacted as soon as possible.

Two, the next amendment we made was recognition of particular sign languages to be named in the bill as the languages of people who are deaf. This would ensure that deaf persons would not be forgotten and have equal access to information, communication, employment, government services, transportation and other federally regulated sectors. Honourable senators, these are not insignificant additions to a good bill.

Returning to the here and now — Bill C-22 — there are several issues that will be helpful to review at committee. First, the ninth amendment to the bill, which changed the coming-into-force date, merits sober second thought. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance published a response to the amendments on their website in which they argue:

As amended by HUMA, Section 14 specifies no specific date for the bill to come into effect. Section 5(2) of the federal Interpretation Act fills the void by making the bill come into force immediately upon Royal Assent.

I am not a legislative legal expert, but I did consult with one who agreed that this change may indeed be problematic. We should give due attention to this clause and amend it if it is in the interest of Canadians to do so.

Second, the committee should examine the existing disability support programs in this country and how they might interact with this new benefit. Jennifer Robson, associate professor and director of the political management program at Carleton University, told *The Hill Times* in September 2022 that existing support programs at the provincial and federal level each have a different definition of disability, different benefit levels and different rules regarding other income. She described the existing programs as “a Swiss cheese space” for the new benefit to fit into.

We must ensure that application for provincial and federal benefits isn't prohibitively bureaucratic so that people with disabilities will not fall through the cracks. There should be a well-defined monitoring and complaint process for appeals of refusals, reductions in benefits and clawbacks, perhaps a tribunal or an advocate. One of the complaints we heard at the Senate social affairs committee about the disability tax credit process was that the Canada Revenue Agency was tasked with the complaint and investigation process, and it was unsatisfactory and exceedingly slow.

Third, the committee should consider the value that the benefit be determined on the basis of the net income of the applicant, not the income of the person's household. Louise Bourgeois, president of the Mouvement personne d'abord de Sainte-Thérèse, told the House committee:

People living with intellectual disabilities are among the poorest in our society. They are also at greater risk of experiencing economic violence. It will be important that the amount given to individuals does not depend on their

spouse's income. It should be calculated and given to the person individually. After all, the bill is about strengthening people's financial security.

StatCan data also show that people with disabilities are more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence than people without disabilities. In an analysis of 2018 data, Laura Savage from the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics at Statistics Canada noted:

Having a disability may increase some women's vulnerability to intimate partner violence. For example, women with disabilities may experience an increased risk of isolation or an increased reliance on an intimate partner.

This reliance is often economic.

When Green Party MP Mike Morrice moved an amendment at the House committee to address this concern, a department official pointed out that most federal benefits are built on family income. Can the Canadian disability benefit, in particular, enhance the financial security of the individual in order to make financial independence more possible? An amendment could help address that vulnerability.

Related to this is another important issue around the adequacy of the disability benefit and whether there should be clear definition that the benefit itself must be above the poverty level. The amount of the benefit is not specified in the bill as it stands and is left to Governor-in-Council and the regulations. The challenge was addressed in Senator Pate's question to Senator Cotter last week. Discussed in the other place, it was ruled out of order. Our committee hearings should explore the adequacy issue. There are many detailed international comparisons available. Most European countries have a disability benefit. Switzerland, Norway and Denmark provide the most substantial monthly disability allowances, and Norway offers disability allowances as a universal right in contrast to many other countries that only offer benefits to those in the labour market.

Although the House of Commons committee passed many helpful amendments and really put some meat on the bones of this framework legislation, this bill, nonetheless, leaves so much to the regulations. The Governor-in-Council — that is, the Governor General acting on the advice of cabinet — is tasked to create the regulations for the very essence of the substance: eligibility criteria; the amount of the benefit; the payment periods; the application process; reviews or reconsiderations of decisions; appeals; retroactive payments; applications made on behalf of persons incapable of managing their own affairs; the application of the act when an applicant or beneficiary dies; and the identification of debts.

• (1610)

Colleagues, we must all reflect on the deference shown to cabinet that is so profuse in this bill. It restricts our debate in Parliament, and also opens the door to future changes — not by legislation, but by orders of the Governor-in-Council. And, while it is critically important that the government intends to fully consult the disability community with regard to the substance and

implementation of this legislation, it remains a concern how few of the specifics of this process, along with the timelines, are actually delineated in this piece of legislation.

In closing, I support the principles of Bill C-22, but I lament that what we have is only a very bare framework. The government could have — and should have — done better. Now, honourable senators, let's do our work and get this bill to committee. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Renée Dupuis: Would Senator Seidman agree to take a question?

Senator Seidman: Yes, of course.

Senator Dupuis: As part of its study of the bill, as you suggested, don't you think the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs should also consider the aspect of human rights in relation to persons with disabilities?

In other words, people say they think it's too bad and that we have a moral obligation to lift people out of poverty; however, there is also a body of legislation that says that we don't have the right to discriminate on the grounds of a disability.

In that sense, don't you think that the committee should also look at the issue from the point of view of the discrimination persons with disabilities suffer in the workforce, in order to see how this new benefit might help address this discrimination? It isn't just a moral obligation. There is a clear legal obligation in our system that seeks to ensure that people who want to have a job can do so, including if they have a disability.

[*English*]

Senator Seidman: Thank you, senator, for your question. It is a complex question; it is not subtle, and it demands a lot of thought.

The bill itself, as I said, is extremely meagre. It is a framework piece of legislation. It purports to do a lot, and promises to do a lot, but it doesn't offer much substance, and leaves most of the details, as I said, to the Governor-in-Council — to regulations.

I think it's up to the committee to have the kind of witness testimony that would address the issue you're putting forward — how that is connected to a piece of legislation that wants to provide a monthly disability benefit so that people can receive the financial support they need in order to proceed with their daily living. I think that's what the bill is trying to do. Exactly how that would speak to the point you're making is, I think, something for the committee to explore.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Bellemare: Would Senator Seidman take another question?

Senator Seidman: Yes.

Senator Bellemare: I listened to you carefully, and I read the bill and the amendments that were made.

Upon reading the bill, it seems possible that a benefit for persons with disabilities that seeks to reduce poverty could be subject to an agreement with the provinces. Would you approve of the possibility of providing a type of assistance that is different from one province to the next, and do you believe that it could be a possibility under this bill?

[English]

Senator Seidman: Thank you, senator. This reminds me of the conversation we had about dental benefits — where we talked about the fact that it is a complex picture because every province has different benefits and qualifications in order to receive those benefits.

The federal government has promised that they will engage with the provinces on an individual level. We don't know yet what exactly that engagement will consist of.

When Senator Cotter spoke last week — as the sponsor — he spoke about this very clearly. He, with his experience, has offered to help the federal government in their engagement with the provinces. One has some hope that this is going to happen.

Hon. Chantal Petitclerc: Thank you very much for your well-thought-out speech, as per usual.

I want your impression on something that I hope we will study in committee: This bill calls for a benefit that will be for working-age persons with disabilities. I have read that about 30% of persons with disabilities are over that working-age group.

Do you think this is something we should spend some time on in order to ensure that they, too, are lifted out of poverty?

Senator Seidman: Thank you, Senator Petitclerc. Indeed, we have some experience studying this issue at the Social Affairs Committee.

I am well aware that, in fact, there are voices within the disability community who would like us to say that working age might go to age 70, as opposed to age 65. There is discussion about this. As I said, this is something the committee should look at.

There are examples. As I mentioned in my speech, Norway does have a universal benefit, unlike most countries. Most countries have a benefit for working-age people. Again, this is something for the committee to look at.

Hon. Hassan Yussuff: Would Senator Seidman take a question?

Senator Seidman: Yes.

Senator Yussuff: One of my biggest worries about the bill is that the provinces will claw back certain aspects of this benefit.

As you know, provinces run their own programs. I would argue that, throughout history, there has been a sense of meanness in their applications, especially to people with disabilities because they are the most vulnerable. Now layering a federal benefit on top of that, without any certainty that the province will not claw it back, is a real worry. Is this something the committee should examine? Many of the activists who have been lobbying spoke about this.

We need to assure ourselves that one hand will not take from the other hand just because they can do so under their own jurisdiction. I think this would be a terrible tragedy, and it is not what the bill is intended to do.

More importantly, trying to lift people out of poverty — people who have disabilities — in this country should be a laudable expectation for everyone. The provinces and the federal government should work this out in a way that will give us assurances that whatever money is allocated will not be clawed back by provincial governments across the country.

Senator Seidman: Thank you, senator. Indeed, this issue has come up very often. We heard clearly that the federal government intends to negotiate with the provinces.

• (1620)

There are many different types of insurance plans, and, as I mentioned in my speech, there is a real concern that it's a kind of a mosaic, and how we're going to be sure that people don't have clawbacks is going to be a challenge. Again, that's why I did mention in my speech that we might consider some kind of a tribunal or advocate where people can bring their complaints, their appeals, whatever it may be, that it isn't just a government bureaucrat who is receiving these complaints, that there is some way that people will be heard and heard quickly, so that it's not one, two or three years, as we heard with the Disability Tax Credit. There was a huge problem for people to be heard and receive what they were entitled to.

(On motion of Senator Bernard, debate adjourned.)

HEALTH-CENTRED APPROACH TO SUBSTANCE USE BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Boniface, seconded by the Honourable Senator Hartling, for the second reading of Bill S-232, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the decriminalization of illegal substances, to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I rise to speak in support of Bill S-232. I would like to start by commending the sponsor, Senator Boniface, for the hard work that went into crafting the bill, and I would like to note it was first read in this chamber on December 7, 2021.

It's time to reframe the problem. For decades, there has been a futile debate about whether self-destructive drug use is a criminal problem or a medical problem. I hope that it can now be clear that it is neither — it's a political problem. This is from *Drugs and Drug Policy in Canada: A Brief Review and Commentary* by Diane Riley, PhD, that was prepared for our late and great friend the Honourable Pierre Claude Nolin.

I believe it is important for us to understand the life of an addict. First of all, you have to raise the cash. You're a sex trade worker. You're breaking into cars. You're breaking into houses. You're strong-arming other people, including addicts, but you put the cash together. Then you have to score. You have to go out and find your seller. You have to scramble through the streets and through the alleys to try and find that one person who will sell the drugs to you. This is not the movies. This is not where everybody is shiny and clean. They're dirty. They're smelly. The seller you're buying from is an addict. That person has no idea what's in the drugs that he or she is selling to you. And, finally, you get to shoot. You go to an alley, a single room, a washroom. Sometimes you suck up water from puddles into your syringe because that's the fastest way to get that into your arm.

There's no messing around here. Once you have the drug, you want to use it immediately. If not, you may get stopped by the police or robbed by other addicts for your fix.

To be clear, in my experience, it is rare for a street police officer to arrest a user. But they're obligated by law to seize the drugs that that user has, and for the addict, this just restarts the process.

This is not recreational drug use. This is not smoking a joint on Saturday night at the nightclub. This is not having a drink with your friends. It's an addiction.

Addicts are People of Sand. They have no connections with their roots and no connections with the past or future . . . they live in the moment, in the now . . . they need structure and comprehensive total assistance . . . until we deal with the emotions, everything else is short-term.

This is the opening statement from John Vincent Cain, my predecessor as Chief Coroner for the Province of British Columbia. He was tasked to report on illicit narcotic overdose deaths in British Columbia, and the report was released in September of 1994.

It is quite literally a road map on how to deal with overdose deaths. I quote specifically recommendation 61:

I therefore RECOMMEND THAT the Ministry of Attorney General:

61. Enter into discussions with the federal Ministers of Justice and Health on the propriety and feasibility of decriminalizing the possession and use of specified substances by people shown to be addicted to those specifying substances;

Thirty years/Where'd they go?/Thirty years/I don't know — to paraphrase a song by Bob Seger.

Decriminalization is not some recent concept. Thirty years ago, when B.C. went from 39 deaths in 1983 to 331 deaths in 1993, the task force was set up.

I was the Vancouver coroner during those years. In 1993, I thought nothing worse could possibly happen, but it did.

In 2001, decriminalization was implemented in Portugal. All reports demonstrate positive results. I recognize that Portugal and their health care system and justice system are way different from ours, but all reports from Portugal are positive. All reports show deaths dropping, the number of people going before the courts decreasing rapidly and the number of people in prison going down.

Finally, British Columbia decriminalized drugs via a health care exemption starting January 31. We don't know how that will go, but we at least are out there trying.

In all the other provinces and territories, existing laws about illegal drugs apply. Is it a great stretch that this law should apply across the nation? I suggest not, but we all know we're in the unique position of having 13 separate, independent, individual health care authorities in Canada, each responsible independently, again, of how health care is applied.

While addiction is a national emergency, many provinces have neither the ability nor the will to step into this political morass. It is incumbent upon the federal, provincial and territorial governments to overcome this constitutional issue in favour of life.

The benefits of decriminalization: For this, I give my thanks to the Canadian Healthcare Network and, in particular, Alissa Greer and Caitlin Shane for their report on decriminalizing drug use. It changes the way we think about drugs. It moves from a legal framework to a recognition that addiction is a health and social issue.

This idea, in some people's minds — somebody wakes up some morning and says, "You know what? I think I'll shoot up some heroin. That seems like a good idea. And you know what? I think that I'll quit school, and I'll leave my house, and I'll go into the depths of our cities and towns and lead a life of abject poverty, disease and, in many cases, mental illness."

• (1630)

I know thousands of people who are addicted. Not a single one has ever said, “Damn, that was a decision that I made, and I wouldn’t change it.” Not one.

How will this decriminalization affect us? For starters, it will save us a ton of money because we spend so much money on police, courts, prisons, our social workers and our clinics, and everyone is overworked.

I had supper a couple months ago at Firehall #3. Their T-shirt says, “This isn’t hell, but we can see it from here.” It’s right in the Downtown Eastside. I had supper with these men and women, and we never finished supper because the bells kept going off and they kept calling out. One of them said to me, “I saved the same person five times, and you know what? I’m losing my humanity.”

Decriminalization in Portugal has reduced the demands on and the costs to the system — health care, emergency rooms. When we opened the one supervised injection site in Vancouver, I was stupid: I should have opened 20 of them when I had the chance. When we opened it, visits to St. Paul’s Hospital emergency ward dropped dramatically because we were dealing with them on the site — bruises, infections, you name it. But we had nurses there, and they could deal with them, and they weren’t having to go to the emergency room. That money can be spent in so many other ways — health care clinics, more doctors, more treatment, more care.

Decriminalization positively impacts people’s lives. The vast majority of the addicted are mentally ill, poor, homeless, racialized, abused — you name it, and it’s happened to these people, over and over again.

Fewer criminal records means that at some point the addict will not be stigmatized with a criminal record for what is a health issue and may be able to get a job. Decriminalization, with an understanding of the good Samaritan law that we passed here, will reduce the fears that many still have about calling emergency services in an overdose situation. Decriminalization is harm reduction.

There’s a fear that drug use will increase if decriminalization comes into effect. I go back to what I said earlier: “This seems like a good idea, why don’t I just go down and crank a little bit of heroin.” This is not supported by evidence, and in fact, in most instances, the drug use has decreased. Decriminalization is not a silver bullet, and in fact, as I learned from the supervised injection site, there is no silver bullet when it comes to addiction.

If we choose not to move in this direction, what is the result? Think of these cities: Whitehorse, Yukon Territory; Orangeville, Ontario; Port Moody, British Columbia; Saint-Constant, Quebec; Cochrane, Alberta; Corner Brook, Newfoundland; New Glasgow, Nova Scotia; Yellowknife; two thirds of the population of Nunavut; Dieppe, New Brunswick; Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; Brandon, Manitoba; and Summerside and Stratford, in Prince Edward Island. You may ask: What do these Canadian cities have in common? Nothing, except their population.

Imagine, if you will, that any one of these cities disappears — gone, no more. Each city relates approximately to the number of people who have died between January 2016 and June 2022 from opioid toxicity.

People respond to numbers, so here are a few more: In 2016 there were eight deaths per day in Canada. In 2018, there were 12 deaths per day in Canada. From January to June 2022, there were 20 deaths per day — virtually one every hour, every day, every week, every month — 32,632 people gone. Mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunties, uncles, friends — gone right here in this country that we love and we’re so proud of.

Passing this bill won’t stop addiction. Passing this bill will stop the criminal effects of addiction. Passing this bill will send a message to the other place that we will not let this issue die. I urge you to find it in your hearts to move this bill forward with the urgency it demands.

Finally, honourable senators, this will be my last speech in this most amazing of places. I requested no tributes, and I will not speak other than now. I will miss this place, the friends I’ve made, the experiences I’ve had and the feeling this place makes a difference. I leave the Senate knowing that more than ever it has a role in the governing of Canada, that this place constructs bills, examines and amends bills that make Canada a better place. This is and will be the chamber of sober second thought. God speed to all of you. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Kim Pate: Senator Campbell, would you take a question?

Senator Campbell: Absolutely.

Senator Pate: I wish I had more time, because I know you don’t want tributes, but Senator Campbell, you just established exactly why your presence here has been so vitally important.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Pate: Thank you for the years and years of work that you put into this. Thank you for inspiring *Da Vinci’s Inquest*, which brought it home to many people in ways they might not otherwise have known about. And thank you for all the work I know you’ll continue to do. I suspect my time is up, so I want to ask: Why is this your last speech?

Senator Campbell: It’s a classic example of ageism.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Brazeau, seconded by the Honourable Senator Housakos, for the second reading of Bill S-254, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (warning label on alcoholic beverages).

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I rise today at second reading in support of Bill S-254, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (warning label on alcoholic beverages). It would make mandatory health warning labels on alcoholic beverages which are sold in Canada.

I'm speaking to you today from the unceded land of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg peoples.

I want to first begin by thanking Senator Brazeau for introducing this very important bill to this chamber.

• (1640)

Honourable senators, it has been scientifically proven that a link exists between consuming alcoholic beverages and certain types of cancers. As Senator Brazeau has stated in his speech, these include cancer of the mouth and throat, vocal cords, esophagus, breast, liver and colon.

As Senator Brazeau also highlighted, only one in four Canadians are even aware that there is a connection between consuming alcoholic beverages and the risk of cancer. The majority of Canadians are also unaware that the World Health Organization classifies alcohol as a Group 1 carcinogen.

In letters of support for this bill from organizations such as the Cobequid Community Health Board, the Yarmouth Community Health Board, the Lunenburg County Community Health Board and the Digby and Area Community Health Board, all from my province of Nova Scotia, they make it clear that the measures in this bill are in line with current health recommendations grounded in scientific, evidence-based findings:

Bill S-254 aligns with the recent call for warning labels that formed part of the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction's proposed new Canadian Guidance on Alcohol and Health that Health Canada: "require, through regulation, the mandatory labelling of all alcoholic beverages to list the number of standard drinks in a container, the Guidance on Alcohol and Health, health warnings and nutrition information." This recommendation comes from leading scientific experts in the field and is supported by an Evidence-based Recommendations for Labelling Alcohol

Products in Canada written by Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE) Project researchers, who have been leaders in the alcohol policy field for over 10 years.

The Eastern Shore Community Health Board members in Nova Scotia echo these concerns in their support for this legislation stating that they feel:

... it is imperative for people to know and understand the risks they are taking when choosing to consume alcohol. Not only is alcohol a health risk for cancer but we see the outcomes of alcohol addiction in our communities in the form of family violence, mental health issues and other chronic diseases. Warning labels are just the start of a series of public policies required to reduce the amount of alcohol consumed in our communities and create healthier environments for families.

Honourable senators, the goal of this bill is not to take away Canadians' right to purchase these products, or restrict access to these products, as I feel opponents of this bill may claim. The intent is to provide the consumer with clear and accurate and, quite frankly, important information to make an informed choice when deciding to consume these types of products.

When we hear that only one in four Canadians even know that there is a risk of cancer from consuming alcoholic beverages over time, I think the proof is there that these types of labels are necessary and well overdue.

Honourable senators, some may ask if warning labels are even effective; will they make enough of a difference, or will they just be an unnecessary disruption to Canada's alcoholic beverage industry?

We can look at tobacco as an example. I will quote from a relevant study. In 2006, International Tobacco Control conducted a four-country survey to assess the effectiveness of cigarette warning labels in informing smokers about the risks of smoking:

The aim of the current study was to use nationally representative samples of adult smokers from the United States (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Canada (CAN), and Australia . . . to examine variations in smokers' knowledge about tobacco risks and the impact of package warnings.

At the time:

Smokers in the four countries exhibited significant gaps in their knowledge of the risks of smoking. Smokers who noticed the warnings were significantly more likely to endorse health risks, including lung cancer and heart disease. In each instance where labelling policies differed between countries, smokers living in countries with government mandated warnings reported greater health knowledge.

For example, in Canada, where package warnings include information about a specific health risk, “smokers were 2.68 . . . times more likely to agree” that smoking causes that health risk compared to smokers from the other three countries.

The survey concluded that health warnings that are “graphic, larger and more comprehensive in content are more effective in communicating the health risks of smoking.”

We see that health warning labels are effective in educating the consumer of the risks. But the question now is, does that knowledge lead to change in behaviour, in this case, a decrease in consumption?

If we look at Canada in 2000, the smoking rate was roughly 28% of Canadians above the age of 15 who smoked on a regular basis. The latest statistic on the prevalence of smoking in Canada put that number under 12% today.

Of course, the decline in smoking prevalence in Canada cannot be attributed solely to mandated graphic health warning labels on tobacco packages. There were, as you know, many forms of advertising that spoke of the harms of smoking. Health warning labels are just one of the many tools to help curb consumer behaviour. It has been shown that, when used together with other policies and measures, it is a very effective strategy.

In the case of alcohol consumption, the evidence shows that the more alcohol consumed, the greater risk of certain cancers. Canadians need to be aware of that; however, we know that it is not in the financial interest of alcohol beverage producers to voluntarily add warning labels to their products.

The aim of warning labels is to reduce consumption, which would decrease demand for their products; this is why, as Senator Brazeau has said in his speech, “it becomes the basic responsibility of Parliament to step in.”

Honourable senators, again, I wish to thank Senator Brazeau for introducing this bill here in the Senate. I fully support the intent of this legislation. It has been shown that health warning labels on other products have had a positive impact on consumer behaviours. Why should alcoholic beverages be exempt from this same scrutiny? It is time they are brought in line with other products that can be harmful.

Honourable senators, I am hopeful that we can send Bill S-254 to committee in a timely manner for further study and for consideration. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

SEVENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, entitled *Senate Budget 2023-24*, presented in the Senate on February 7, 2023.

Hon. Lucie Moncion moved the adoption of the report.

She said: Honourable senators, it is my pleasure to speak on this report, which deals with the Senate’s budget for the financial year 2023-24.

In summary, the anticipated budget is estimated at \$126.7 million, which is \$4.9 million or 4% over the 2022-23 budget.

• (1650)

The process of arriving at the budget is based on the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets. The subcommittee is comprised of myself as chair; Senator Marshall as deputy chair; and Senators Bovey, Moodie and Tannas. I thank them for the substantial time and effort they spent on reviewing the estimates.

The members of the subcommittee met with the Senate Administration Executive Committee and most of the directors on many occasions. Detailed presentations were made by the directorates to the subcommittee. The members had the opportunity to discuss and question funding, staffing and expense requirements during this process.

Throughout its consideration of the 2023-24 Main Estimates, the committee took into consideration not only the changes in the Senate, but also the effects of the new economic and operational realities resulting from two years of the pandemic that has had a significant impact on the Senate’s operation. The committee was also very mindful of the Canadian economic environment and the importance of balancing operational needs with proper stewardship of public funds.

Moving to the detail of the expenditures, I would remind senators that there are two parts to the budget: statutory funding and voted funding. The statutory portion deals with money allocated by legislation. This includes senators’ basic and additional allowances, pensions, senators’ travel and living expenses, telecommunications and employee benefit plans. Any shortfalls in these categories at the end of the year are covered by the Treasury Board. Conversely, surpluses are automatically returned to the Treasury Board as they cannot be reallocated. The second part of the budget is the voted budget, which is for the workings of the Senate. They cover senators’ office budgets and Senate Administration.

Moving to the numbers, the total amount of the statutory budget is \$38.1 million, an increase of \$800,000, or 2.2%, from last year. The main reason for the increase is the senators' travel budget, which is increasing by \$418,000 to reflect the recent increase in travel costs. The other increase is the contribution to the employee benefit plan, which rose by \$391,000 due to the increase of 0.2% of the Treasury Board rate from 15% to 15.2%.

Moving to the second part of the voted budget, this portion is \$88.6 million, an increase of \$4.1 million or 4.8%. The major components of the voted budget growth are the International and Interparliamentary Affairs Directorate, which increased by \$201,000 to cover the cost of the 47th annual session of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie and the 31st annual session of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly. There was an increase of \$100,000 for the diversity, equity and inclusion program and additional funding of \$2.5 million to maintain and renew the IT infrastructure and technologies, for new resources to support human resources activities and for services and funding for the East Block and the Senate of Canada building's cafeteria.

[Translation]

The new requests for funding approved by the Internal Economy Committee over the course of the year represent \$1.1 million, mainly because of economic increases for the Senate Executive Group and the Middle Management Group for two additional resources for the new enhanced security measure for senators and staff, which the Parliamentary Security Department will be responsible for, and for two additional resources for the Committees Directorate.

An amount of \$146,000 was included mainly to cover position reclassifications. The following two budget transfers were approved. The first is a reallocation of \$179,000 from the Senate committees budget to the Senate Administration to cover the salaries of two resources to support witnesses who appear virtually. The second is a reallocation of \$178,000 from the Audit and Oversight Committee's budget to the Senate Administration to cover the salary of a new chief audit executive.

Initiatives requiring one-time funding will be self-funded up to \$924,000, particularly for strategic planning of human resources for the employment participation study and the review of compensation, maintenance and the ongoing renewal of the Senate network, and the renewal of two resources to support the renewal of the network and the redesign of many processes.

As a result of the decision made by the members of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration on December 15, there is a temporary hiring freeze, which means that the employee threshold is 441.2 full-time equivalents. A review of operational efficiency is currently being conducted by the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets. This committee is responsible for evaluating the expenditures and performance of the Senate Administration in key areas in order to identify opportunities for savings and for the streamlining of services. It should be noted

that any proposed amendment will be presented and have to be approved by the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration.

Before concluding, I want to once again thank the members of the subcommittee, staff of the Senate Administration and members of the Executive Committee. They all considered the budget in a thoughtful and prudent manner.

At this point, I'd also like to provide some clarification respecting certain recent newspaper articles on the financial situation of the Senate. This information was confusing and painted an inaccurate picture of the Senate's real expenditures.

[English]

Actual expenses and budgets are often used to explain the cost of operating the Senate. Colleagues, there is a difference between "budget" and "actual expenses." The budget is the overall amount allocated for the functioning of the Senate during a year, whereas the expenses are the amount that is actually spent. Here are the figures for both budget and expenses.

If you remember, in the newspapers, we had comparison from 2015-16. The budget at that time was \$88.8 million. The 2023-24 budget is \$126.7 million. The increase in the budget between 2023-24 and 2015-16 is \$37.9 million, or 42.6%, representing an annual budget increase of 5.3%. If you compare the actual expenses — so I'm talking about expenses now, not about the budget — they were \$74.6 million in 2015-16 and \$96.4 million for the year 2021-22. That represents an increase of \$21.8 million, or 4.9% a year over six years.

The budget for the upcoming fiscal year of 2023-24 totals \$126.7 million. This represents an increase of \$4.9 million, or 4%, over the fiscal year from 2022-23. So we're back to talking about budgets.

The annual average budget increase for the past three years is approximately \$3.7 million per year, or 3.1%. The 2023-24 budget is based on the principles of maintaining high quality services to senators and some management of public funds in the context of the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery. It includes inflation, economic salary increases, increase in costs, investments in technology and new initiatives.

Some of the new initiatives are actually required by law. The Canada Labour Code, the Pay Equity Act and the Accessible Canada Act require the Senate to implement new programs with deadlines predefined by the regulation, including pay equity, accessibility and harassment prevention.

In addition to these regulatory requirements, the Senate is working to implement initiatives on diversity and inclusion, recruitment and audit and oversight. As a reminder, the Senate has actual expenses. In the last six years, all surplus amounts were returned to the government's central funds.

• (1700)

My last remark will be on the amount of work done by staff just to keep this institution running. We have 18 permanent committees, 7 subcommittees and 4 joint committees. We have three Senate sittings a week and we have four groups and caucuses that meet on a weekly basis. Every time there is a committee meeting, there are at least 20 to 25 people who are involved. If you were to add up all of these committee meetings and the work done during the week, there is a lot of staff who are at our service in the Senate. I will say that the service we receive from our staff is excellent, and I have no complaints whatsoever. On this note, colleagues, I rest my case.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

ROLE OF LEADERS' DEBATES IN ENHANCING DEMOCRACY BY ENGAGING AND INFORMING VOTERS

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Dasko, calling the attention of the Senate to the role of leaders' debates in enhancing democracy by engaging and informing voters.

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to the inquiry instigated by our colleague Senator Donna Dasko, calling the attention of the Senate to the role of leaders' debates in enhancing democracy by engaging and informing voters.

My friends, I am passionate on the subject of debates because I am a debater, and I mean that most literally. It would probably not shock most of you here to learn that I was an eager member of my high school debate club. Indeed, back in my Grade 11 glory days at Ross Sheppard Composite High School, my partner Esther Winestock and I won the Alberta provincial debate championships and thus the chance to attend the high school national debate championship in Montreal.

I have the fondest memories of that Montreal tournament, not just because I was ranked fifth in the country but because it was at this glorious festival of nerds that I was finally asked to dance my first-ever slow dance — not because I was the belle of the ball, but because an older boy, a member of the Ontario team, took pity on my wallflower status and kindly asked me to dance to “Stairway to Heaven,” the slow dance of our era. That boy's name was David Lametti. He is now the Minister of Justice; I'm now a senator, and I suspect it's fair to say that our high school debating experiences have stood us in good stead, even if our dancing abilities have not.

Debating sharpens the wits. It teaches you to think on your feet, to engage in the respectful clash of ideas, to listen, analyze and rebut in real time. In high school competition, you have to research and argue both sides of every issue. You thus cultivate the capacity to appreciate that no one side has a monopoly on good ideas. You develop respect, even for those with whom you may have an intellectual disagreement, because you've learned — indeed, you've trained — to view things from the opposite point of view.

Debate also did wonders for my social life, and not just in high school. I went on to be a member of the University of Alberta Debate Society, where my partner Jason Lucien and I won the McGoun Cup, the western Canadian university debate championship. Jason remains one of my dearest friends.

But it was also at the University of Alberta debate club that I met my Valentine, my husband, 40 years ago this coming fall. You might say he and I have been debating together ever since. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we raised a debater. Our daughter — poor child — could hardly escape her fate. Call it nature, call it nurture, she was genetically engineered and raised for debate competition. And oh, she was very good. She attended the junior high national debate championships twice and ended up ranked the third-best debater of her age in the country, surpassing my own standing.

When she started high school, however, she rebelled. And oh, how she rebelled. I don't want to shock you, but I must tell you: She traded in her debate podium for the stage and became captain of her high school improv team instead. She insisted that somehow improv was more fun. Goodness knows why. Still, now that she's an articling student defending her legal clients, she's finding her debate chops are coming in very handy.

I wasn't just a debater or a proud debate mom, which is like being a hockey mom with less skate lacing and more rebuttal prep. I also spent decades volunteering my time as a debate judge and coach, writing how-to guides for the Alberta Debate and Speech Association, teaching and coaching junior high, high school and university debaters on the basic skills and the finer points of cross-examination and parliamentary-style debate.

So when I tell you that our current format for federal leaders' debates doesn't work, I'm not just speaking as a current senator, nor as a long-time political journalist. I'm speaking as a debate aficionado. I know good debate when I see and hear it, and the way we structure our federal election events simply isn't conducive to good debate, no matter who's on the stage. There is no clear, clean clash of ideas. There are few opportunities for direct engagement at all. There's an overreliance on pre-memorized talking points and canned answers, so we don't always have much chance to see candidates thinking on their feet and grappling with opposing points of view.

Part of the problem, of course, is our increasingly multi-party system. A conventional debate works best when you have two opponents at a time, and those days are long gone. When you

have four or five or six rival leaders onstage shouting each other down, squeezing each other out, it's hard to come up with a format that allows for one-on-one argument and refutation.

But then — and I say this with all due respect to the various journalists involved — we don't really have a debate at all. We have questions posed by journalists — sometimes good questions, and sometimes not. Then things degenerate into a sort of competitive press conference to the death, where the rival leaders fight to give the best sound-bite answer, even if that response has precious little to do with the question they were asked.

Then, as soon as the debate is over, each leader's partisans take to social media to trumpet the victory of their candidate, and the pundits immediately begin their instant analysis. By the next morning, millions of Canadians who never watched the debate in the first place are convinced that they know who won.

Why do we attach so much importance to leaders' debates in the first place? After all, I think we in this chamber know that oratorical skills, while very handy, aren't actually the litmus test for a great leader or a great prime minister. You can be a fine, witty, charismatic public speaker and be a disaster at public policy creation or caucus management. Rhetorical flourish doesn't make you a good economist nor a sound military strategist nor an expert in jurisprudence. Yet we demand that our leaders engage in these ritualistic public speaking duels. Why?

Perhaps we can blame, or credit, the Greeks and the Romans, on whom we base so much of our modern democracy. In the Athenian Agora or the Roman Senate, rhetorical skills were deemed a mark of intellect, of leadership ability, and seen as a path to political power, whether they were deployed to convince an elite audience or to inspire a mob.

Long after the Acropolis had crumbled and Rome had fallen, the myth and romance of the ancient world informed and inspired the English aristocracy, who, over centuries, modelled their parliamentary notions on classical ideals. Which is why, even today, in the multicultural, pragmatic Canada of the 21st century, we expect our leaders, our prime ministers, to follow in the models of Aristotle and Pericles, Cicero and Caesar, to show off their prowess as orators and win verbal sparring matches. We ask them simultaneously to entertain us and to prove their worth, yet it is undeniable that in our age of television, live streaming and social media, a good debate performance matters, politically speaking, when it comes to shaping public opinion.

Back in 2011, Alison Redford was vying for the leadership of Alberta's Progressive Conservative Party. Redford's mother died the night before the televised debate amongst the leadership contenders. Some expected her to pull out. Instead, she showed up at the studio and so impressed the TV audience that she ended up overtaking the three male frontrunners and becoming Alberta's first female premier.

It must be said, a lot of Albertans waited a long time to see the same qualities that Premier Redford displayed that night play out in real life, but there is no doubt that the grit, the composure and compassion voters saw helped propel Redford to victory.

In Alberta's 2015 election, it was Rachel Notley's fierce and funny performance in the leaders' debate that fuelled her landslide victory. Although you could also say that the debating failures of Conservative leader Jim Prentice and Wildrose leader Brian Jean did a lot to make Notley Alberta's first NDP premier.

• (1710)

I remember my father — a blessed memory — a good Red Tory, calling me up, disgruntled, the morning after the debate. "It wasn't fair," he grumbled. "Why not?" I asked. "She was just so charming," fumed my father. "She was impossible to beat." My dad wasn't the only one to think that. The night of that debate, Alberta's current premier, Danielle Smith, was working as a TV pundit, providing live debate analysis. "I'm in a room full of business conservatives," she said that night. "Feedback so far is the men look grim and Rachel looks great."

When I think back on that historic 2015 Alberta leaders' debate, I remember it not just for its outcome, but for its structure. The debate had four participants, but the format allowed them to face off one-on-one, which allowed for some genuine clashes of ideas and personalities. It was a debate that changed people's minds, not just because of Jim Prentice's infamous "math is difficult" gaffe, but because people had the chance to scrutinize Prentice, Jean and Notley side by side — to compare and contrast — and to see who seemed the smartest, the most intellectually agile and the most sincere. Despite all the superficialities and frustrations of our TV debate culture, I still believe that political debates can have a real place in showing us a candidate's grace under pressure, their quick-wittedness and their ability to connect with people.

However, if we want these TV debates to continue, and to provide meaningful context, we need to have a long, hard discussion about their format, their structure and their ultimate purpose. We need a debate model that really allows for a clash of ideas — one that forces leaders to defend their platforms and their principles. And we need to make sure the leaders do that work, not the journalists.

We need to hear the candidates in candid, unrehearsed conversation with each other — thrusting and parrying. We also need tough, strong moderators who will keep people to time, crack down on bullying and generally enforce the rules of fair debate. We don't want to sit through long, boring prepared sermons — nor do we want a shouting-match free-for-all. No; what we want is debate that is, at least, as good as it was at my daughter's junior high school. That shouldn't be too much to ask, nor too much to expect.

My thanks to my friend Senator Dasko for launching this inquiry, and for allowing me this little chance to reminisce.

Be it resolved, then, that this house believes in the power of political debate, and in the necessity of finding a way to make it work for the 21st century.

Thank you. *Hiy hiy*.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Senator Simons, would you agree to take a question?

Senator Simons: By all means.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Like you, I'm keenly interested in electoral debates. However, I must say that I have been quite concerned ever since an independent commission has been handling these debates that seem increasingly formatted and artificial, where we are unable to hear the voice of the candidates. Everything is scientifically measured, but, honestly, not very moving. What's more, the last time, during the English debate, the size of the event was a terrible mistake and there weren't enough journalists in charge. What do you think about the current format, which I dislike immensely?

[*English*]

Senator Simons: That is a very good question. In my speech, I didn't really delve into — I was having too much fun, perhaps — whether having a commission is the best strategy, as opposed to letting individual broadcasters, or journalistic organizations, organize the debates. I know that someone close to your family was involved in the recent provincial debate in Quebec as a journalist crafting very careful questions. What is that expression? “A camel is a horse designed by a committee.” It may be that there are too many cooks.

The challenge is that when you have this many leaders, getting them all on stage at one time — when it is not necessarily in everyone's strategic interest — is very difficult. The fact that we had only one English-language debate was very frustrating to me since I, apparently, have an unslakable thirst to quench. I always find that watching the French-language debate is often much more interesting.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

NET-ZERO EMISSIONS FUTURE

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Coyle, calling the attention of the Senate to the importance of finding solutions to transition Canada's society, economy and resource use in pursuit of a fair, prosperous, sustainable and peaceful net-zero emissions future for our country and the planet.

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Coyle's inquiry on climate. I will focus on the impact of climate change on human health, and how health care systems could respond.

To begin, let us acknowledge the leadership and hard work that Senator Coyle has demonstrated in creating and advancing Senators for Climate Solutions.

Climate change is not only a threat to our global environment and economy, but it is also an existential threat to human health and our health care systems. In 2009, the medical journal *The Lancet* identified climate change as the most significant global health threat of the 21st century. These impacts are both direct and indirect. In terms of direct impacts, frequent extreme weather events, such as floods, hurricanes, heat waves and wildfires, impact both health and our ability to provide health care. Various water-borne diseases occur in flooded areas, and access to timely, critical care becomes extremely difficult due to damages to infrastructure, such as roads and bridges. Wildfires disrupt access to acute care sites, while concurrently increasing demand for care due to their impact on respiratory conditions. We are all aware of the impact of hurricanes on health care infrastructure, and how heat waves lead to increased deaths.

Perhaps less appreciated, however, is the indirect impact of climate change on the geographical spread of disease, or the emergence of new diseases — especially infectious diseases. For example, in my home province, there has been an increase in tick-borne infections that can lead to Lyme disease. This is due to an increase in the numbers and longevity of blacklegged ticks as a result of warmer winters. Their biting spreads the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the cause of Lyme disease, resulting in increased numbers of people who have contracted the disease. According to the Canadian Public Health Association, this outcome — of indirect climate change impacts on human health — is driven by numerous complex changes in the pathways of disease transmission that are sensitive to climate changes. For example, the West Nile virus arrived in Ontario in 2013, and has since spread across that province.

I want us to be aware — now — of some of the nasty tick-borne and mosquito-borne illnesses that seem to be spreading into Canada due to our changing climate. They have impressive names, such as human granulocytic anaplasmosis, babesiosis and La Crosse encephalitis. Trust me; none of us wants to have a severe case of any of these diseases, even if we could pronounce their names. Their impacts are most severely felt in populations that are already at risk of poor health, and face barriers to appropriate affordable housing, food security and quality health care. The impact of climate change will make those inequalities worse. Addressing this issue requires dealing with the social determinants of health, as well as undertaking actions needed to protect health care settings from severe weather events, such as moving them away from flood plains.

We need to be ready. There are two key areas where preparation within our health systems is needed now: These are treatment readiness and risks to health infrastructure.

The first area is treatment readiness. As we all remember, when COVID-19 arrived, we were not prepared. We had insufficient stockpiles of personal protective equipment; we had insufficient surge capacity in our emergency rooms and intensive care units; our surveillance, reporting and tracking systems were inadequate; we lacked national coordination in our response; and much more. This must not happen again. We need a coordinated national disease surveillance capacity with single-point national accountability. This includes a national health database that can provide real-time information to guide policy decisions, and help direct resources and interventions where and when they are needed.

• (1720)

We also need to be able to rapidly provide treatments that we expect may be required. For example, to treat many various tick-vector bacterium diseases, effective antibiotic treatments are available; there are medications such as doxycycline, clindamycin and azithromycin. They are not exotic drugs; they are commonly used medications.

But as we have learned, we can't expect that just because they are commonly used that they will be there when they are needed. We are now experiencing challenges obtaining other types of common medications, such as paediatric fever and pain medication. I recently went to Shoppers Drug Mart stores all over Ottawa to try to find specific medications for sinus congestion and found only empty shelves. We can't let ourselves get into the same situation again.

In conjunction with this is the preparation of our health care providers. I know there are a number of excellent physicians in this chamber. I do wonder, however, how many of us, if faced with a person who presented with persistent and severe malaise, sweats, headaches, nausea and fatigue, would consider a diagnosis of babesiosis? If our basic workup identified the presence of a hemolytic anemia, which is a condition where red blood cells are being destroyed, we would certainly look at all possible causes, but we might not think of asking for a microscopic parasite analysis or ordering a babesia IFA antibody test.

To be clear, this is not pandemic preparation I am talking about. We might indeed experience pandemic disease outbreaks due to climate change, but we might more likely see a gradual increase in various types of infectious diseases. They will slowly sneak up on us unless we are keeping a close eye out.

In September 2020, *The Lancet* published "A pledge for planetary health to unite health professionals in the Anthropocene," which proposed an interprofessional planetary health pledge. The pledge adds protecting planetary health to the fundamental commitments health practitioners make when they enter their profession.

Recognizing that, the Canadian Medical Association's 2020 strategic plan mentions environmental well-being. The Canadian Federation of Medical Students, through its Health and Environment Adaptive Response Task Force, has been working on developing educational materials that could be embedded in medical curricula.

While much more needs to be done, initiatives across all of Canada's medical schools are under way, and I am pleased to say that the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University is one of the early leaders in this work.

I have great faith in our infectious disease colleagues. I know they are up to this challenge. I would also like to acknowledge and thank our colleague Senator Osler for her exemplary national work on this file.

I am hopeful that this necessary work will be done well and expeditiously.

The second is the risks to health infrastructure. Health infrastructure is something that many of us, especially in large urban areas, take for granted. The hospital? Yes, just down the road. Ambulance station? There is one about 15 minutes away. Drug store? There is one in the Rideau Centre.

Health care settings are subject to extreme weather events that can damage or destroy anything from roads, making it difficult to access a hospital in an emergency, to damage to ports and, thus, to the smooth functioning of the medical products supply chains. This reality raises the uncomfortable possibility that when this critical infrastructure is most needed, it can be unavailable.

Let's take the issue of floods, for example. In a study of the impacts of floods on health infrastructure, it was noted that health care facilities faced both diminished capacity and increased demands. Regarding the recent floods in Bangladesh, UNICEF noted that:

The flooding damaged water points and sanitation facilities increasing risk of waterborne diseases Access to healthcare and nutrition services was reduced due to the damage of 90 per cent of health care facilities.

Closer to home, during the recent British Columbia floods, numerous patients had to be evacuated from hospitals and long-term care facilities, and access to acute-care settings in flood-ravaged areas became problematic.

A recent flood mapping exercise of Canadian health care centres at risk of flooding concluded:

There are a surprising number of facilities at risk of flooding in most provinces and territories. Manitoba and Yukon have the largest percentage at risk of flooding, . . . Yukon's high percentage of facilities in the floodplain and small total

number of facilities illustrate how weather-related disasters driven by climate change could disrupt and damage important health infrastructure when it is most needed.

So, in the face of our climate change reality, what is to be done? Thankfully, many things. We can consider opportunities for action in two complementary categories: developing environmentally sustainable health care facilities and creating climate-resilient health care facilities.

Health care systems account for about 4% of total global carbon emissions, and health care facilities can act to substantially reduce their carbon footprint. At COP 27, the World Economic Forum produced an article entitled “Here’s how healthcare can reduce its carbon footprint,” which addresses this important issue. For example, hospitals have the highest energy intensity of all publicly funded buildings and emit 2.5 times more greenhouse gases than commercial buildings. Therefore, switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy can have a major impact.

Other innovative solutions can also help.

Another direction is shifting outpatient care away from hospitals into more energy-efficient community settings and by increasing the use of high-quality virtual care with less environmental impact, such as home-based health monitoring systems and telehealth care. A secondary gain will be the avoidance of travel from home to hospital, thus decreasing the carbon footprint of transportation.

Health care facilities also need to become more climate resilient. In this domain, some good initiatives are under way. I will briefly touch upon a few of them here.

The World Health Organization has created the *WHO Guidance for Climate Resilient and Environmentally Sustainable Health Care Facilities*. More recently, the WHO report, *Measuring the Climate Resilience of Health Systems*, has provided substantial guidance on how to mitigate climate-change impacts on human health and health care.

Our federal government has created the *Climate change and health vulnerability and adaptation assessments: Workbook for the Canadian health sector*. This is designed to help health care facilities evaluate and then address their climate-change preparedness.

The Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care, in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia, has created The Health Care Facility Climate Change Resiliency Toolkit that can be used by health care settings to assist them in their climate preparedness work.

As we can see, honourable senators, much work is being done, but much more is needed.

Canada’s health systems, collectively, have the third-largest per capita carbon footprint in the world. Our health care systems were responsible for about 5% of Canada’s annual greenhouse gas emissions prior to the pandemic. Per-capita GHG emissions in our health sector actually increased from 2018 to 2019.

In 2021, Canada committed to the WHO COP 26 Health Program initiative directions, which include building climate-resilient health systems, developing low-carbon sustainable health systems, adaptation research for health, the inclusion of health priorities in nationally determined contributions and raising the voices of health professionals as advocates for stronger ambition on climate change. To those, I would add this: ensuring that our Indigenous, Inuit and Métis communities are fully integrated into the creation, development, deployment and evaluation of all the work that needs to be done.

We need a cohesive national initiative to set directions, coordinate efforts across jurisdictions and support legislation and implementation of sustainable changes to health systems. That will require collaboration amongst federal-provincial-territorial partners; input from Canadian expertise, such as Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, l’Institut national de santé publique du Québec, our universities and granting agencies; and international expertise, such as the WHO and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The National Adaptation Strategy currently under way is an ideal place to address this need. We must not let this adaptation strategy get stranded on the rocks of inactivity.

• (1730)

This is a tall order — an existential challenge — but it is our challenge. As we Canadians have shown time and time again in our history, we are up to any challenge. *Wela 'lioiq*, thank you.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support of the collaborative efforts in raising our awareness of the challenges facing our global environment. My remarks today will briefly focus on the marine sector and share some of the progressive efforts of that sector to improve its environmental performance generally and specifically here in Canada.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the leadership of our colleagues Senators Coyle and Kutcher, who have provided such by bringing together Senators for Climate Solutions. They have organized discussions and presentations by international and national experts working to inform the public and governments of the serious climate change challenges facing our planet, and as one of our presenters so poignantly noted, “it is not just about saving our planet; it is in fact about saving humanity.”

I thank Senators Coyle and Kutcher for their leadership in that area that is so important for all of us as global efforts need to contribute to work that will build on and find solutions to slow down, and hopefully some day reverse, climate change and its devastating effects.

Marine transportation has always been a backbone for moving people and cargo locally, nationally and indeed globally. There is no denying its impact on our global economy. Over the past couple of years, we've seen serious disruptions in global supply chains resulting in shortages of essential goods and rapidly increasing prices. Indeed, this situation was and is driven largely by high consumer demand, and this in turn has resulted in historic cost for marine shipping. After all, globally, approximately 90% of everyday goods from food products, electronics, automobiles, clothing, energy products, furniture — you name it — is mainly moved by vessels.

In the Canadian context, over 80% of our everyday goods pass through our ports. Our 17 Canadian port authorities handle 340 million tons of cargo every year, maintain over 200,000 jobs and contribute a direct economic impact of \$36 billion.

With the huge volume of vessels moving around the globe and the continuous operation of ports — all essential activities supplying goods to our world community — there's no doubt that we need to advance ways of reducing their environmental impact. So, too, is taking a global approach in finding solutions to reduce the environmental impacts of this shipping activity.

The United Nations' International Maritime Organization, more commonly referred to as the IMO, is the focal point for working with its 175 member states in dealing with all matters tied to shipping. It has four pillars of focus, one of which deals with the prevention and, indeed, the reduction of pollution from ships.

Over the decades, numerous standards and regulations have been collaboratively developed by this organization, dealing with numerous topics such as increasing strict regulations concerning ships' discharge, rules governing the handling of ships' water ballast to reduce the risk of invasive species being introduced to domestic waters, requirements for the types of paint ships may use — that may sound strange, but ships use a lot of paint — eliminating things like lead and so many other initiatives that are aimed at reducing ships' environmental impacts.

But perhaps one of the more important initiatives has been the establishment of Emission Control Areas, which are areas that have been designated in different regions of the world where ships must burn fuels that are required to dramatically reduce emissions such as sulphur, nitrous oxide and others.

In our case, together with the United States, our Emission Control Area creates a 200-mile-wide boundary that requires vessels to burn much cleaner fuels while operating offshore and coming into our waters. This ensures that vessels operating in our coastal waters and ports have significantly reduced emissions, delivering important benefits to large segments of our population as well as to our marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Canada itself has also provided leadership in this important area of reducing pollution and greening of operations at sea and in ports.

In 2007, various players in the marine industry in Canada formed Green Marine, the leading environmental certification program for North America's maritime industry. It's a voluntary initiative that helps its participants to improve their environmental performance beyond regulations. Green Marine targets key environmental issues related to air, water, soil quality and community relations. It's an inclusive, rigorous and transparent initiative that brings together several types of participants: ship owners, ports, terminal operators, shipyards and the seaway corporations based in Canada and the United States.

To obtain Green Marine certification, participants must complete a progressively rigorous process that has clear, measurable results that are audited by industry experts every two years to ensure results are maintained while encouraging continuous improvement. The membership also encompasses associations, supporters and partners that each, in their own way, support participants in their efforts to reduce their environmental footprint.

From its humble beginnings that focused on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway, Green Marine now brings together hundreds of members from across North America with different backgrounds that all share the same objective: to improve the maritime industry's environmental performance through concrete and measurable actions.

Its influence has reached across the Atlantic Ocean to France, where Green Marine Europe was formed in 2020. It operates on the same proven model created right here in Canada. Most recently, a large ferry operator in Australia has become a member of Green Marine, clearly demonstrating its value, its work and its leadership in addressing marine-related activities at sea and in port, and how steps can be taken to reduce environmental impacts. I applaud the great work of Green Marine and the leadership it provides on that global stage.

As a long-serving CEO of one of Canada's busiest ports, Port Saint John, New Brunswick, I would be remiss if I did not speak briefly of our Canadian port authorities and how climate change can affect them and our economy. I would also like to mention some of the initiatives they have introduced and continue to implement.

Ports are part of Canada's critical infrastructure, connecting land to water and subsequently connecting interior roads and rail links that are particularly vulnerable to climate change-related weather, erosion, fire, flooding, rising water levels and other events.

A couple of examples demonstrate the reality and the risk potential of these climate change-related factors. All of us can recall the fires and floods that affected our West Coast ports, notably Vancouver. Those events cost our economy billions of dollars and significantly disrupted our supply chains. Our West Coast ports are not alone, as our central and eastern ports have also experienced various weather events that have disrupted operations and compromised supply chain efficiencies.

Our ports also face other significant climate change risks, such as in the Tantramar marsh area that connects New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. That area is protected from flooding by a series of

very old dikes that will fail as weather events continuously promote erosion and rising sea waters, which will, in the short-to-medium term, exceed the limits of protection offered by the dikes.

Failure of these dikes is not an option as the Port of Halifax, Canadian National Railway and the Trans-Canada Highway — all critical components of Canada's supply chain — cross the marsh and would be inoperable. Certainly, such a failure would have disastrous effects on local communities such as Sackville, New Brunswick, and Amherst, Nova Scotia, as well as many others. That flooding would have a devastating impact on local, provincial as well as our national economies.

Our ports have also been taking action to reduce and mitigate their own impact on climate change, while taking action to protect the environment and port ecosystems. All Canadian port authorities are members and active participants in Green Marine, and I'm pleased to say that they have been very successful in advancing through the various levels of the program.

• (1740)

Ports are committed to improving their performance and hold themselves to account, not only for the ongoing greening of their operations, but also to being responsible partners with their local communities. The development of port environmental policies is another aspect of this, as well as environmental audits and reports that make themselves accountable to the public. The creation of green programs — such as reduced rates for shipping companies that operate vessels accredited with their own green programs that guide reduced emissions from their operations — is another way of promoting ports' activities in this area.

Ports are creating port-public and Indigenous partnerships to ensure concerns and inputs help guide port projects in an environmentally sustainable manner. Ports are also providing vessels that are capable of "plugging into" shore power facilities, thereby allowing the vessel to shut down fuel-burning generators and engines while in port. Ports are also providing the protection and creation of fish habitat. They are working with local experts, universities, colleges, Indigenous groups and environmental groups in creating monitoring and protection programs from marine mammals and other species, and there are so many other initiatives.

Finally, I want to mention initiatives that Port Saint John has undertaken. It will see them source 100% of power for all cruise terminals, corporate offices and port-owned terminals from the soon-to-be-commissioned nearby Burchill Wind Project, drastically reducing the port's carbon footprint. This fits into the new Port Saint John decarbonization and sustainability plan, which is being developed in partnership with stakeholders, including a post-secondary pitch competition all about decarbonizing the port ecosystem with New Brunswick students.

In closing, I hope my presentation underscores that today there is a renewed interest and a sense of urgency to push further and faster to build a green economy that includes an environmentally

sustainable marine sector. I hope that I painted a picture that clearly shows that Canada is indeed a world leader in the marine sector, as it is in other sectors in advancing climate change solutions.

Thank you for listening, and again, I want to thank Senators Coyle and Kutcher for their leadership. *Meegwetch*. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Woo, calling the attention of the Senate to the one hundredth anniversary of the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, the contributions that Chinese Canadians have made to our country, and the need to combat contemporary forms of exclusion and discrimination faced by Canadians of Asian descent.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, 100 years ago, in this chamber, senators voted to adopt the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923. This piece of legislation is better known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, because it effectively prohibited the entry of ethnic Chinese to Canada for 24 years. I am launching an inquiry to call attention to this stain on our institution and to the profound hurt that it caused the Chinese Canadian community. I invite all senators to contribute to the inquiry, which has two other parts to it — the celebration of contributions that Chinese Canadians have made to the country, and a reflection on contemporary forms of prejudice and exclusion faced by Canadians of Asian descent.

On June 23, Senator Oh and I will be hosting an event in the Senate of Canada with Action Chinese Canadians Together to remember the Chinese Exclusion Act and to pledge an end to all forms of exclusion of Chinese and other Asian Canadians. We have invited the Government of Canada to announce on that day the commissioning of a centenary plaque that we hope will find a permanent home in the Parliament of Canada. The ignominy of Chinese exclusion began here in Parliament, and it is here in Parliament that the ignominy should be undone.

I feel a special responsibility for remembering the hundredth anniversary, because I'm a senator from the province that was most ardently in favour of Chinese exclusion. Odious speeches in favour of the act were made in this chamber, and they were made by my predecessors — senators representing British Columbia.

As the first Chinese Canadian senator from B.C., I have a special duty to disavow their legacy and to remind my fellow British Columbians of a dark past. Here is a sample of the

ignorance and prejudice that was uttered in our chamber. On the question of whether wives of Chinese already in Canada should be exempted from the act, one B.C. senator said:

If you are going to open the door and allow wives to come in, you might as well give British Columbia to the Chinese. We have enough Orientals in our Province now. When I say that there are 2,000 business licenses taken out in the city of Vancouver alone by Orientals, you will realize that. The Chinese have gone into every business that you can name, and I think there are even one or two lawyers.

And this is from another of my B.C. predecessors:

. . . out of a population of less than half a million we have 30,000 Chinese. . . . They are of no use to us; we will never assimilate them, we will never make Canadians out of them. You might far better introduce men more nearly akin to the race to which we belong. The mind of the Chinaman is absolutely different from the mind of the ordinary white mind. You cannot in any possible way find out just how the Chinese mind works. It is very true that in a way the Chinese are good citizens. They make good domestic servants and faithful workers, but they will never help us to build up a Canada of which we will be proud.

Some of you may be thinking that the Canadian government has already come to terms with the Chinese Exclusion Act with the issuance of an apology by former prime minister Stephen Harper in 2006. In fact, that apology was for the head tax, and it glossed over the Chinese Exclusion Act, which the former Prime Minister simply expressed sorrow over. The lesser emphasis placed on the Exclusion Act is, I think, due to a misunderstanding about the significance of that legislation.

The Exclusion Act is often thought of as a kind of victimless crime in the sense that we will never know the names of the Chinese excluded from Canada because they did not even have the chance to try to enter the country. It is unlike the head tax, which affected real people who had certificates to prove they had paid this unjust levy, and for which a small number received compensation following the 2006 apology.

The idea of a victimless crime, however, is a misreading of history, because there were, in fact, many victims. They were the Chinese Canadians already in the country who were subjected to humiliation because of a law that essentially said that people of their sort were not welcome in a place that they had already inhabited for decades. The fact that the act came into effect on Dominion Day added insult to injury. For that reason, many Chinese Canadians at the time took to calling July 1 “Humiliation Day.”

The humiliation went beyond the fact that their kith and kin were not allowed in the country. The act also required that every Chinese person already in Canada had to register within 12 months of its coming into force. Failure to do so could result in a fine, jail, or both. Even after registration, Chinese Canadians faced ongoing harassment from enforcement officers who questioned the veracity of the information provided by registrants.

The practical effect of the Exclusion Act in Canada, therefore, is that it was a “registry of unwanted foreigners.” Do you wonder why so many Chinese Canadians today are wary of efforts to again register those who are already in the country but who are deemed to have the wrong connections or backgrounds? Look no further than the dark history of the Chinese Exclusion Act. In fact, the Chinese community at the time had a different name for this bill. It was called the “Cruelty Act.”

On July 1, 2023, the Chinese Canadian Museum in Vancouver will officially open its doors with an exhibition entitled, “The Paper Trail,” which will be about the impact of the “Cruelty Act” on Chinese Canadians. One of the exhibits will be the lyrics of a song written 100 years ago lamenting the “Cruelty Act.” It was, in fact, the winning entry in a contest organized by the community to raise awareness and mobilize action. Here are the opening lines, loosely translated from the original Taishan dialect.

The First of July is just ahead,
Our hearts are filled with mortal dread.
Because of a law that ignites a fire,
That will sever compatriots caught in its ire.

• (1750)

I would sing this song for you, but the music is lost — and you don’t want to hear me sing anyway. We have therefore commissioned a young Chinese Canadian composer to write a fresh score for the lyrics, and our goal is for the song to be sung in this chamber on June 23.

Apart from the fact that this institution made the act possible, I hardly need remind honourable senators that our building is a former railway station and part of the railway line that Chinese labourers were brought into this country to build, under the most difficult of circumstances. A solemn ceremony here in this very building would provide a measure of, well, cleansing.

There’s much more to be said about the “Cruelty Act” and its long-term impact on Chinese Canadians and Canadian society, but I must move on to the rest of my inquiry, the second part of which is to celebrate the accomplishments of Chinese Canadians since the repeal of the act in 1947. That was also the year when Chinese and South Asians were given the right to vote in a federal election, made possible in part by the hundreds of Chinese who volunteered to fight for Canada in the Second World War, even though they were not recognized as citizens.

This aspect of the inquiry is, in some ways, the easy part because it’s so obvious that Chinese and other Asian Canadians have achieved great success in many fields and have contributed richly to Canada. But it is also the most difficult part because I cannot possibly do justice to the multitudes of Chinese Canadians who deserve to be recognized. Perhaps I can leave the job of naming some of these individuals to those of you who will speak to this inquiry and who might want to single out some members of your community for recognition.

What I will do instead is to point out that, in spite of all their accomplishments, Chinese Canadians are severely under-represented in positions of leadership across Canada’s mainstream institutions, including the federal civil service, the

courts, public and corporate boards, arts, university and hospital administration and, not least, Parliament and the ranks of cabinet ministers.

For example, a 2019 study of the largest organizations in eight major sectors in the GTA — the Greater Toronto Area — found that Chinese Canadians who represent 11% of the population in the region account for only 2% of leadership positions. The representation of Chinese Canadian women in these positions is even lower — at just 1%.

This is a bit of a puzzle because Chinese Canadians are not generally lumped in with other equity-seeking groups, and there's a general assumption that the community is doing just fine on most economic and social indicators. I think the answer to this puzzle lies in the community itself, as well as outside of it.

Many Chinese immigrant families prioritize diligence and keeping their heads down, rather than seeking to challenge the establishment and assuming leadership roles. A common saying among Chinese immigrant families is, "We are guests in this country," which is, in a sense, a sentiment of humility and respect but also one that was cultivated by a history of discrimination and exclusion.

Chinese Canadians are no longer guests in this country, regardless of when they arrived. They should neither think of themselves as guests nor be treated as such. No one has the right to tell us to go back to the country we came from — not even the former chief of staff to the Prime Minister who said that to me because he did not like my views.

That brings me to the third part of the inquiry: Seventy-five years after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, there are still forms of exclusion in Canadian society. We know that to be true for Indigenous people and racialized groups across the country. In matters of systemic discrimination, allyship among Indigenous and visible minority groups is vital, even if the histories and needs of different communities are not the same.

Chinese Canadians face at least three kinds of modern exclusion. The first is old-fashioned racism, not unlike the sort that led to the Chinese Exclusion Act 100 years ago. This is the impulse behind many of the unprovoked attacks on Asian Canadians in recent years. The number of unreconstructed racists is probably small, but they are aided and abetted by seemingly respectable folks who nevertheless feed racial animus by insinuating generalizations about Chinese people in Canada and the ills that they are alleged to have brought to society — for example, money laundering, unaffordable housing and the epidemic of opioid deaths.

The second form of exclusion is a function of long-held stereotypes about Chinese Canadians and what they are good for or good at. Yes, the Chinese are super at math and engineering. They make great doctors and lawyers. They are amazing musicians and generally good citizens. But are they suitable for leadership positions? I have already said that this is a problem that Chinese Canadians must confront in terms of their self-perception and personal aspirations, but it is also an issue for our establishment institutions to reflect on.

The third exclusion is the most insidious because it is an exclusion that seeks to divide the Chinese community into those who are acceptable and those who are not. An acceptable Chinese Canadian is one who conforms to a certain view of the world, disavows affiliations with individuals and groups that are blackballed for political reasons, and publicly voices opposition to what has been deemed as the all-encompassing menace that is the People's Republic of China. Not conforming to these canons is seen as suspicious at best or, more ominously, as a litmus test of disloyalty and malfeasance against Canada.

This is the kind of exclusion that celebrates Chinese Canadians if they vote the right way in an election but who are deemed to have been swayed by sinister forces if they didn't.

It is the kind of exclusion that questions the motives of Chinese community groups who bought PPE — personal protective equipment — in large quantities to send to China during the early days of COVID, and then questions them again when they brought large quantities of PPE from China to distribute in Canada when we were experiencing a spike in infections.

It is the kind of exclusion that assumes every workplace infraction in the technology sector is an instance of espionage, that frames collaborations between Canadian and Chinese scientists as intrinsically suspect and that calls on Chinese Canadian researchers to turn their backs on long-standing partnerships in the mainland.

Each of these exclusions has a justification that one can be sympathetic to, but the sum of these attitudes and actions is stigmatization, demoralization and alienation — just like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 100 years ago.

I know the Chinese community is not homogeneous and that Chinese Canadians occupy views on all parts of the political spectrum, as well as on a variety of geopolitical issues. That is a strength of the community that should be celebrated. We must not, however — and here I am speaking to Chinese Canadians — allow this diversity to be used as a form of internal segregation, not least by members of the community itself. I hope the one hundredth anniversary is an opportunity for Chinese Canadians of all stripes to reflect on the collective experience of their forebears during the period of the Chinese Exclusion Act and to work together to prevent modern forms of exclusion from dividing the community.

As for this chamber, I hope the inquiry is a reminder of how wrong the Parliament of Canada was 100 years ago and how easy it was to get it so wrong. There were no recorded votes against the bill and, by all accounts, public opinion was massively in favour of it. Once it became accepted wisdom that Chinese people were a threat to Canada, passing this and other laws to counter the threat became only too easy. Let's make sure history does not repeat itself.

Honourable colleagues, I hope you will consider speaking to this inquiry, and I look forward to your interventions. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Omidvar, debate adjourned.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 3-3(1), I must leave the chair now until eight o'clock unless it's agreed that we not see the clock. Before asking honourable senators, I will let you know that there are only two items remaining on the Order Paper. Is it agreed that we not see the clock?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

• (1800)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE EFFECTS OF IDENTITY FRAUD ON FURTHER MARGINALIZING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum, pursuant to notice of December 13, 2022, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the misrepresentation of Indigenous ancestry, inadequate self-identification standards and the profound effects that such identity fraud has on further marginalizing Indigenous people, in particular Indigenous women; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than December 31, 2023.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Motion No. 96, which states:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the misrepresentation of Indigenous ancestry, inadequate self-identification standards and the profound effects that such identity fraud has on further marginalizing Indigenous people, in particular Indigenous women

I want to acknowledge Senator Brazeau, who introduced Motion No. 371 on September 20, 2018, regarding the issue of selling fraudulent membership cards.

Colleagues, it is important to acknowledge that all the work I do in the Senate is not mine alone but is always a collective effort that arises from the context of struggle, whether the struggle is righting historical wrongs or addressing current gaps in policy and legislation. It is important to bring to light that the fight surrounding these injustices is a burden carried most heavily by Indigenous women, as it harms humans and all our relations. Our work, as Indigenous women, has and will always remain a collective effort because that's who *esquiwak* are.

I wish to thank the Indigenous Women's Collective and acknowledge the work they have done on the issue of Indigenous identity theft and fraud. It is on their behalf that I bring this matter to the Senate floor.

Honourable senators, I wish to speak to the word "identity" at the outset. Kim TallBear, a Native/Indigenous studies and technology scholar, has analyzed race shifting cases in both the U.S. and Canada since the early 2000s, particularly as they relate to genetic research and testing. In the article "Native 'Identity' Fraud is not Distraction, but the Final Indian Bounty," Kim TallBear states that:

Playing Indian is the increasingly common practice of non-Indigenous (most often, not always white) people making especially public claims to Indigenous identity, sometimes for great financial gain and career advancement.

She cautions us about the use of the term "identity." She states that "it is usually an individualistic word that pertains to our individual bodies and things we consider bodies' property . . ." Maybe the correct terms might be "relatives, relations, citizenship, kinship, and who we are or become together as collectives?"

Kim TallBear continues:

We do not want to reinforce the individualism that roots often false claims and help further erase the fact that we are making collective claims and asserting collectively-forged ideas and cultural and political authorities.

In the book *Claiming Anishinaabe: Decolonizing the Human Spirit*, author Lynn Gehl quotes Robert Bocock who states that:

. . . culture is best understood as a set of practices by which meanings are produced, shared, and exchanged within a group. . . . while cultural entities and meanings predate who we are, it is the collective assigning of meanings to them that allows us to appreciate what they are and the purpose they serve.

She goes on to state:

Richard Castillo agrees with this idea of one's culture as a source of direction and agency when he argues that cultural meaning systems provide humans with representative, constructive, directive, and evocative functions.

Honourable senators, for my generation, it took living within a community to arrive at these meanings, teachings and life skills, which are taught through land-based living. Today, we have to figure out how we pass on the knowledge to future generations — many who are land-, identity- and kinship-dispossessed through no fault of their own.

As stated by the Indigenous Women's Collective, the most insidious harm caused by "pretendianism" is how it most hurts Indigenous people who are reconnecting to their culture and identity. Displaced Indigenous peoples need to be supported and acknowledged. "Pretendians" perversely claim the vulnerability and violence experienced by Indigenous peoples as their own and then use it to their own callous and self-centred purposes.

In the book entitled *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, author Andrea Smith states:

Rather than adopt the strategy of fighting for sovereignty first and improving Native women's status second, as many activists argue, we must understand that attacks on Native women's status are themselves attacks on Native sovereignty.

Colleagues, how can it be that the policy of self-identification continues to be adopted, giving free rein to pretendians, who unjustly continue to hold and wield great power and authority over issues that are intended to be Indigenous-led? Disappointingly, this practice is supported by the very government that claims that there is no more important relationship than that with Indigenous peoples. Such self-identification represents one part of the intellectual violence inherent to Indigenous identity fraud.

Our story as First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-status *esquiwak* is about creation and ceremony of life and love; respect; courage; and understanding and celebrating our resilience through complex lessons learned from life, nature, environment and astronomy. Our story should be the one thing in life that is truly ours. It's what has connected us to our ancestors for centuries, what has been passed down, what has kept us safe, what has motivated us to keep raising our voices for those yet to come and those who have been kept marginalized and voiceless. It is what has kept us moving toward transformational change to regain our power and spirit taken by the Church, government, the patriarchy and even those other women who purposefully give themselves power over the sovereignty of our story, and hence our legacy, and distort it.

Colleagues, I stand with the Indigenous Women's Collective in denouncing the deceit of Indigenous identity theft. Its tentacles reach every level of academic, political, judicial and policy branches of power. Historically, colonial institutions must cease their silence now and denounce this for what it is: legitimate theft. If such institutions are committed to reconciliation, they will help to end the silence surrounding this matter, renounce its conduct and acknowledge the harm it causes to Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women and children.

Honourable senators, as is the custom in Cree culture, I would like to introduce my kinship and my history. When Cree people meet, they ask who your parents are — *a winak ke mama equa ke papa?* — and where you come from — *tant ke tha ochi?* — as it gives them a frame of reference of who you are and what you represent.

My spirit name is Wa Ba Ne Quie: Woman of the Dawn or Woman of the East. I am from the Hawk Clan. I received my spirit name through a shaking tent ceremony when I was taking traditional medicine. My mother, Marie Adele Thomas, was Métis. Her mother's family fled from the Selkirk area outside Winnipeg to Brochet in the early 1900s because they were afraid for their lives. My great-grandparents' ancestors came from France and Scotland, and they married *ethenewak* — human beings — from Canada. *Ethenewak* is the word we had for ourselves before the Indian Act.

• (1810)

My mother's father came from Cumberland House, Saskatchewan. My mother passed on in 1957 from thyroid cancer. My remembrance of her comes from stories of family and elders, and she was remembered for being a caring and hardworking mother who had many skills.

I was sent to residential school three weeks after she passed on, and I have not dealt with that trauma to this day, as I have repressed my memories of this time in my life. When my mother married my father, she became treaty and was defined as such by outsiders, the church and the Indian agent, a fantastic woman afforded little to no significance by settlers.

My father, Horace McCallum, was a treaty Indian and arrived in Brochet when he was 16. His mother was from Shoal Lake and his father from Peter Ballantyne, both in Saskatchewan. My father was a hunter, trapper, educator and a single parent. He was determined, innovative, fearless and observant.

In the first years when he started trapping at the age of 16, he walked to his trap line in minus-40-degree weather because he didn't have a dog team and he pulled the sled behind him. He remains, to this day, my greatest teacher, mentor and role model. He never allowed the colonial system to define him and his life, and I hope I'm staying true to him and following in his footsteps.

Honourable senators, what would you think if I told you that today I have decided that I am going to be a White woman? This country has expended massive amounts of money, time and effort to remove the Indian from me, attempting to remove language, culture, environment and spirituality. They have taught me sin; about the negative aspects of childhood, girlhood and womanhood; derogatory words from your language, such as savage; and the subordinate role that women play. They have developed policies and strategies to keep Indigenous people oppressed while at the same time benefiting because systematically oppressing us provides others with jobs. What do you think? Would you accept me if I were to become White? Would I be treated differently? Isn't it a ridiculous concept and proposition?

Colleagues, I would like to close with a joint message from the Indigenous Women's Collective and me.

In Cree, *iskotew* means fire in a woman's heart. We have witnessed courage in and with so many Indigenous women standing up publicly to denounce the revelations of Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's deceit and identity fraud. Turpel-Lafond and others like her, in their very actions, have the capability to stop and silence the advances of colonial violence on Indigenous women, advances championed by women like the Indigenous Women's Collective. The power and prestige that these individuals who commit Indigenous identity fraud wanted, garnered and displayed publicly silenced many. It subsequently and unfairly left Indigenous women to do the work required to counteract the consequences of the theft, grief and powerlessness that they helped to create. The Indigenous women are left the challenge of holding colonial institutions accountable for enabling and protecting those who knowingly and premeditatedly practice identity fraud.

Each time an Indigenous woman stands up, she lights a fire and uplifts the forgotten, the abused and the silenced. Eden Fineday, Cindy Blackstock, Vice Chief Aly Bear, Audra Simpson and many others are examples of *iskotew*. What is often not shared is the pressure placed on Indigenous women privately to be quiet: *Ka we the aya me* — don't speak. Even the act of preventing speech is a threat — an act of violence. Whether they are in a violent relationship or combatting systemic violence, Indigenous women have always faced the pressure to be quiet. *Ka ke to* — do not utter a sound. Yet we persist. This is how healing and transformative change happens in real time. So we humbly ask that you share love and support for Indigenous women who speak out because they have fought silent battles we do not see and mounting pressure kept out of the public eye. When we see courage, we need to honour it. This is consistent with the traditions of many Indigenous nations across Turtle Island, to honour the warrior and to dance the victory dance when courage defeats fear. Because that is what you are witnessing today and in the days yet to come: That courage will defeat fear. *Kinanāskomitin*. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: I have a question for Senator McCallum.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator McCallum is out of time. She will have to ask for more time if you wish to ask a question.

Senator McCallum, are you asking for five more minutes to answer a question?

Senator McCallum: Yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator McPhedran: Senator McCallum, towards the end of your speech, you addressed the conundrum of leadership within colonial institutions. I'm mindful, as are many here, that you're the chancellor of a university in Manitoba, and I wonder how you reconcile those two roles, whether it is a constant conflict, because, of course, universities are one of the locations where we're seeing many of the cases that you have spoken to tonight.

Senator McCallum: Thank you for the question. I had to decide how I was going to be involved in this issue of identity theft and fraud, and I decided I would take it as a senator, which meant that I told the university, the board of governors and the Senate to which I belong that I would not be involved in how they were going to deal with the policy of identity theft and fraud.

They are developing it on their own. They don't discuss it in front of me. They will deal with it and with other universities. They're working with the University of Manitoba.

(On motion of Senator Dalphond, debate adjourned.)

BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO DEPOSIT REPORT ON STUDY OF MATTERS RELATING TO BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY GENERALLY WITH CLERK DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Pamela Wallin, pursuant to notice of February 9, 2023, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit with the Clerk of the Senate a report relating to its study on the state of the Canadian economy and inflation, if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the report be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(At 6:19 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

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