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Tuesday, March 21, 2023

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,  
Speaker

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## THE SENATE

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

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

Prayers.

### VICTIMS OF TRAGEDY

AMQUI, QUEBEC—SILENT TRIBUTE

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, we were all shocked and saddened to learn of the tragedy in Amqui, Quebec, on March 13, which left three people dead and eight others injured.

Our thoughts are with their friends and families as we express our condolences for those lost and our hopes for a full recovery by the injured.

Honourable senators, please join me in rising for a minute of silence in memory of those who did not survive this tragic incident.

*(Honourable senators then stood in silent tribute.)*

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[Translation]

### SENATORS' STATEMENTS

#### THE HONOURABLE LARRY W. SMITH

CONGRATULATIONS ON INDUCTION TO CANADIAN  
FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

**Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais:** Honourable senators, I rise today to mark, in my own way, the fact that our colleague, the Honourable Senator Larry Smith, will be inducted into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame.

It is a rare honour to become a Canadian football legend. I say "rare" even though Senator Smith is the second member of this chamber to be awarded this honour. The other is the late Senator David Braley, who was also from Montreal and who owned the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, the Toronto Argonauts, and the BC Lions.

Senator Smith is being inducted into the Hall of Fame in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Canadian professional football 50 years after he first donned the Montreal Alouettes uniform in 1972. Larry Smith played for nine consecutive seasons during which the team won the Grey Cup twice, once in 1974 and again in 1977. I must say here that, at the time, our colleague was playing for one of the greatest coaches in Canadian and American football in the 1980s and 1990s, Marv Levy.

After serving as the commissioner of the CFL for five years, from 1992 to 1997, Senator Smith went on to serve as president of the Montreal Alouettes, not once but twice. The first time was from 1997 to 2001, when he basically had to save the CFL. After a brief stint as the president and publisher of the *Montreal Gazette*, he returned and served as team president a second time from 2004 to 2010 and won the Grey Cup in 2009 and 2010.

If there is still a professional football team in Montreal, it is no doubt thanks to Senator Smith's reputation and talent as a manager and communicator. Under his watch, the Alouettes played sold-out games for 10 years. That was such an accomplishment that, even today, when the Alouettes aren't doing well, Larry Smith's name often comes up in the news as the one who could potentially save the franchise, which was just purchased by businessman Pierre-Karl Péladeau.

In all honesty, both the Alouettes and *The Gazette* could use a man of Larry Smith's calibre to help them survive today.

It is fair to say that this is a very well-deserved honour for Senator Smith. He has dedicated more than 30 years to bringing professional football to life and promoting it in Montreal, Quebec and Canada.

• (1410)

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate our friend, Senator Larry Smith.

Hip hip hooray!

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

#### MARIE-ÈVE DICAIRE

CONGRATULATIONS ON RETIREMENT

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** Honourable senators, today I want to pay tribute to another athlete from Saint-Eustache in my region, Marie-Ève Dicaire, who announced on March 8 that she is retiring from competitive boxing, a sport she has been mastering at the professional level for more than eight years.

Marie-Ève chose to announce her retirement on March 8, on International Women's Day. I've known her for nearly 20 years and I know that choice was not a coincidence.

In fact, at her announcement, she said:

I always boxed to show that women are capable, that female professional boxing was possible. Today, there are many women who are ready to take up the torch, to shine a light on professional boxing. I'm at peace with that because I know that it is not going to die with my retirement.

She was always aware that she was a role model for many young female athletes and her announcement on March 8 marks the advancement of women in our society in general and in combat sports in particular.

After a long career in karate, during which she won five world titles, a stint in kick-boxing and another in Olympic boxing, she experienced glory and success in professional boxing, winning 18 of her 20 matches as well as the world championship belt from the International Boxing Federation on two occasions.

On December 8, 2018, she became Quebec's first world champion with a unanimous-decision victory over Uruguay's Chris Namus at the Centre Vidéotron in Quebec City.

Now 36 years old, she has a very long and impressive track record that reminds us that with determination, discipline and perseverance, nothing is impossible.

A recipient of funding from the Fondation Élite de Saint-Eustache, she was only 12 years old when she participated in her first international karate competition and took home the gold medal. She is a five-time world champion in the sport.

The pandemic put her professional boxing career on hold and she began working in communications and media, a career she will continue to pursue now that she has hung up her gloves.

Her cheerfulness, communication skills and friendly personality will make her a champion yet again, but in the media world this time.

Congratulations on your outstanding career, and good luck in your new challenges, Marie-Ève.

Thank you.

[*English*]

#### VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Elder Barbara Cameron. She is accompanied by a group of Indigenous executives working with and on behalf of Indigenous communities impacted by the residential school system. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Francis.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

#### RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

**Hon. Brian Francis:** Honourable senators, despite overwhelming research and evidence showing that for over a century, Indigenous children were forcibly taken to residential schools and other institutions where they were subjected to rampant neglect, abuse and even death, many people in Canada continue to not just outright deny the hard facts but invalidate and undermine them.

The use of such rhetoric and tactics in politics, media and all other forums must be strongly confronted and condemned. Our silence is complicity and violence.

We must use our positions of power and privilege to amplify the voices and experiences of survivors who have fought relentlessly to ensure that the shameful truth of Canada's treatment of Indigenous people is known and addressed.

They are owed our utmost respect, gratitude and support for their strength, courage and resolve, sometimes at great personal cost, to demand better from all of us — and all levels of government and society.

We also have to honour the innocent children who died at residential schools and associated institutions, like hospitals.

Many were buried at unmarked locations that were never disclosed to their loved ones and which continue to be disrespected. Let's ensure their spirits and bodies finally receive the honour, respect and dignity they deserve.

Colleagues, Indigenous people must lead the important and sacred work of uncovering, documenting and sharing the truth of the genocide inflicted on us, as well as the search, recovery, identification, protection and commemoration of our missing children. Parliamentarians and others must empower them in doing so.

This work conducted by, with and on behalf of survivors, in the pursuit of truth, justice, healing and reconciliation — often without the necessary funding, resources or even authority — is critical to addressing the wrongs of the past and present and moving Canada towards a better future for all.

Today, following a moving and compelling appearance at the Committee on Indigenous Peoples, we are joined by Kimberly Murray, the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, her colleagues Executive Director Wendelyn Johnson and Senior Partner Donald Worme, as well as Stephanie Scott, Executive Director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, her Executive Assistant Carmen Roy and survivor and Elder Barbara Cameron.

I am endlessly grateful and inspired by them and all those who engage in this difficult, challenging and often painful journey to assist survivors and their families, communities and governments, and Canada as a whole. I pray the Creator continues to guide and protect them, and urge leaders inside and outside this chamber to listen, believe and support them today and every day.

*Wela'lin*, thank you.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

#### VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Fire Chief Ken McMullen of Red Deer, Alberta. He 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!

**THE LATE CONSTABLE TRAVIS JORDAN  
THE LATE CONSTABLE BRETT RYAN**

**Hon. Paula Simons:** Honourable senators, last Thursday, just before 1 a.m., two young Edmonton police constables, Brett Ryan and Travis Jordan, responded to a call about a domestic dispute at an apartment complex in west central Edmonton.

When the constables arrived at the building, they were met by a 55-year-old woman, who told them that she was having problems with her 16-year-old son. The boy had no criminal record and no outstanding warrants. But police had been called to the home before to deal with the boy on a mental health call.

While all domestic disturbance calls can be volatile, there was no indication that this call was particularly high risk.

No one was prepared for what came next. According to the Edmonton Police Service, Brett Ryan and Travis Jordan were shot by the teen multiple times before they reached the apartment door. Neither constable had a chance to pull a weapon. The mother then attempted to disarm her son. He shot and wounded her grievously, before turning the gun on himself and taking his own life.

It is a horror that has rocked my city and my own neighbourhood. I walked my dog right past this building just a few hours before the shooting.

As a journalist, I covered the murders of the four RCMP officers who were ambushed by James Roszko at Rochfort Bridge in 2005. I also covered the 2015 death of Constable David Wynn, the St. Albert RCMP officer who was shot and killed by Shawn Rehn. But Roszko and Rehn were dangerous men, hard men, with serious criminal records. There is something so much more disturbing, more poignant, more painful, more pointless about the deaths of two brave young officers at the hands of a mentally ill child, who is now dead himself.

There are so many questions. How did this troubled 16-year-old get access to a gun in the first place? Did his family receive the support they needed from the child welfare system and the mental health care system? Did Constables Ryan and Jordan have all the information they needed about the boy's mental health history before they arrived? And do police officers in general have the training and support they need to deal with mental health calls?

For now, we have no answers, only our shared anguish. At this very moment, thousands of Edmontonians are lining the streets of south Edmonton as the bodies of these two brave constables are moved from the medical examiner's office to the funeral home.

On Monday, Edmontonians and police officers from across Canada will come together to mourn and to honour the lives of Brett Ryan and Travis Jordan in a public ceremony at Rogers

Place. It will be an opportunity for community catharsis. But the private pain for all three of these grieving families will endure for many years to come.

• (1420)

**Hon. Gwen Boniface:** Honourable senators, I rise today in great sadness to honour the lives of two young police officers who were taken too soon. Constable Travis Jordan and Constable Brett Ryan were ambushed and fatally shot while responding to a family dispute call last Thursday. Despite the heroic efforts that were made to save them, the officers succumbed to their injuries.

Constables Jordan and Ryan served with the Edmonton Police Service West Division.

Brett Ryan was 30 years old and had worked with the Edmonton Police Service for more than five years. He had previously served the city as a paramedic. Constable Ryan is remembered as being passionate about his work and his community service. He enjoyed working as a minor hockey referee and playing slow-pitch baseball. A friend remarked that his face lit up whenever he spoke about his job.

His wife, Ashley, who serves the city as a paramedic, is expecting their first child this summer.

Travis Jordan was originally from Nova Scotia. He moved to Alberta to pursue a career in policing. He served with the Edmonton Police Service for eight and a half years. His sister, Sheena, said that he had dreamed of becoming a police officer since he was a small child. He had a reputation for being compassionate and had received accolades for helping someone who was driving a snow-covered car. Instead of handing them a ticket, he gave them a snow brush and a smile. Travis Jordan was 35.

These tragic losses have taken place amid a concerning rise in the number of police officers killed in the last six months in Canada. The other victims include Toronto Police Service Constable Andrew Hong, South Simcoe Police Service Constables Morgan Russell and Devon Northrup, RCMP Constable Shaelyn Yang and Ontario Provincial Police Constable Grzegorz Pierzchala. All but one of the officers were shot.

Funerals for Constable Jordan and Constable Ryan will be held in the coming days. Senator Busson and I, not just as former police officers but as mothers of police officers, ask you to join us in sending our deepest condolences to their families and to the women and men of the Edmonton Police Service. May they all find the support they need during this difficult time.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

## ALBERTA—FALLEN EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE OFFICERS

### SILENT TRIBUTE

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, we were all deeply saddened and shocked by the recent news of two police officers being killed on duty. Constable Travis Jordan and Constable Brett Ryan of the Edmonton Police Service were both killed early last Thursday, March 16. We offer our condolences to their families, friends and fellow officers. I would ask you to rise for a minute of silence in their memory.

*(Honourable senators then stood in silent tribute.)*

[Translation]

### VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Ronide Casséus and Roberson Berlus. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Boisvenu.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

### THE LATE JAYSON COLIN

**Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu:** Honourable senators, we are commemorating very sad events today. It is my turn to speak about another.

On August 10, 2022, around 10 p.m., Jayson Colin was brutally shot while talking to some friends outside. This young 26-year-old man lived with his parents and led a normal life. He was the assistant manager of a pharmacy and was very engaged in his community with the youth of Montreal North.

In 2019, Jayson completed 45 weeks of training with the Corporation de développement économique communautaire as he wanted to share his passion for hockey more readily with the youth in his community. All his friends talked about the fact that he was always willing to help others.

Jayson's senseless murder is just one in a list that is far too long of murders of youth who have lost their lives in our country's major cities.

Jayson's parents, Ronide and Roberson, who are here with us today and who I welcomed at my office recently, shared with me the pain of losing their only child. For parents like us who have lost a child in such a brutal manner, something in our DNA changes forever and unites us in the suffering, the pain, but above all, the enormous challenge of building a world without any type of violence.

Violence impacts certain cultural communities more than others, including the Black community. Sadly, Jayson's parents were not treated with compassion, respect and empathy as a result of the discrimination they experienced at the start of the legal proceedings. We all agree that that is unacceptable in 2023.

Despite this difficult experience, Ronide and Roberson, who are both community advocates in Montreal North, have maintained their courage and, above all, their dignity in the face of this injustice. Anger and rage are not part of their discourse. Ronide was honoured in 2021 by the National Assembly of Quebec in recognition of the importance of her work in the community.

I commend Ronide and Roberson's courage in speaking out to mainstream media in the Montreal area to raise awareness among Quebecers about their often misunderstood reality.

Last week, I had the pleasure of accompanying them to a meeting that I organized with the new Montreal police chief, Fady Dagher. We had a very open and frank discussion. The Montreal police force is facing a tough job in terms of education and awareness. The challenges are daunting, but they say that faith can move mountains, and the faith of Ronide, Roberson and Mr. Dagher gives me hope. I'm sure that Montreal's new police chief shares the same values as Ronide and Roberson.

I want to thank Ronide and Roberson for their trust in sharing their personal tragedies with me. I'm using the plural "tragedies" because both of them have been victims twice over, once when their only child was taken from them and again when they were denied their human dignity following Jayson's murder.

Ronide and Roberson, I promise to stand with you to continue the battle you've been waging for the past 18 years, a battle that Jayson would certainly want you to continue. Wherever he is right now, he is proud of you and helping you every step of the way.

Once again, dear friends, welcome to the Senate of Canada. I am sure my fellow senators will join me in extending their condolences to you. I urge you to stay strong. May Jayson stay in your hearts during your upcoming mission.

• (1430)

[English]

## QUESTION PERIOD

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

#### FOREIGN INFLUENCE IN CANADIAN ELECTIONS

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the government leader around the foreign interference in our elections.

I'm going to do something that I don't usually do, leader. I am going to quote a Liberal, someone who recently posed a very good question about the Prime Minister's feeble response to reports about Beijing's interference in our elections. These are the words of Warren Kinsella, a senior staffer in the Chrétien government, leader, from a recent column:

Namely, how can he decide who will investigate China's malfeasance — and what their terms of reference are, and when they will report — when he, him, is the prime beneficiary of the interference?

The prime beneficiary, Warren Kinsella says that Justin Trudeau is the prime beneficiary.

Leader, you don't need a Harvard law degree to know that the Prime Minister has a blatant conflict of interest here. The Communist regime in Beijing interfered in our democracy. There's no question about that, and he benefited from it. Why should the Prime Minister have any say in how this is being investigated?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. All of the investigations into the elections concluded that the elections were not affected by China's and others' attempts to interfere — attempts certainly they were — and, indeed, this is even the position of the Leader of the Opposition.

The Prime Minister has taken steps to address the issue and get to the bottom of it. The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, known as NSICOP, was asked to complete a review to assess the state of interference in federal electoral processes, as you know. The National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA, has said it will set its own mandate and the scope of its study of the 43rd and 44th elections in the coming days. These findings will be reported to Parliament.

As we all know by now, the Prime Minister appointed the Right Honourable David Johnston as Independent Special Rapporteur to look into foreign interference. Honourable senators, it's important to underline the specifics of this. Specifically, he will examine the information related to the 2019 and 2021 federal elections to determine what the government did to defend itself against electoral interference. He will build upon the work of NSICOP and NSIRA. He will identify any outstanding issues requiring attention so that Canadians can continue to have confidence in our electoral systems and our democratic institutions. He is to recommend any additional mechanisms or transparent processes, such as a formal public inquiry, that he deems necessary to reinforce our confidence, and will do this by May 23, 2023. He will submit regular reports to the Prime Minister, which will also be shared with the leaders of the opposition. These reports will be made available to all Canadians. He is expected to complete his review by October 31 of this year.

**Senator Plett:** As I said, he's the beneficiary. Why did the Trudeau Foundation return hundreds of thousands of dollars that they clearly thought the foundation should not have received?

Now, we find out that the Prime Minister himself has received thousands of dollars in donations from very questionable sources in his own riding.

For the past three weeks, we've seen Liberal MPs filibuster at committee to block the Prime Minister's chief of staff from saying what she knows about the Beijing interference. Then they say it's political when the opposition asks questions.

Yesterday, the Trudeau government threatened that a motion before the other place to compel Ms. Telford to testify could well be a matter of confidence — obviously, to get Jagmeet Singh on side.

This morning, the Prime Minister's Office said Ms. Telford will appear before committee but also seemed to warn that she wouldn't have much to say.

This is a farce, leader. The Prime Minister doesn't need the former governor general or any made-up special rapporteur to tell Canadians the truth about what he knew. He can tell Canadians the truth.

Instead, we've seen the Prime Minister completely unable or unwilling to answer straightforward questions, leader. If the Prime Minister had and has nothing to hide, he'd be able to answer questions, wouldn't he? If he had nothing to hide, he wouldn't keep bending over backwards to keep the truth from coming out. Don't you agree, leader?

**Senator Gold:** Unsurprisingly, colleagues, I don't agree. I think the Prime Minister has put into place the measures appropriate for the nature of the information that would have been shared by security organizations and others. He has put into place mechanisms that this government introduced, like NSICOP, and has appointed someone with impeccable integrity to advise him and Canadians on what additionally needs to be done to protect our democratic institutions.

Again, all the evidence accepted by all opposition parties shows that, in fact, the elections were not compromised despite efforts that were being made. Therefore, in that regard, Canadians should have confidence in the results of the last elections and confidence in the steps that the government and our institutions have taken and will continue to take to protect the integrity of our institutions.

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

### DEFENCE POLICY REVIEW

**Hon. Elizabeth Marshall:** My question is also for Senator Gold, and it's on the Department of National Defence.

Senator Gold, last year's budget announced the defence policy review to allow Canada to update its existing 2017 defence policy, entitled *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, with the stated goal of supporting its broader international priorities in a changing global environment. That was a full year ago.



We've just finished our study in the National Finance Committee of Supplementary Estimates (C), and we began our study of the Main Estimates this morning. It would be very helpful if we had that updated policy. Can you tell us what has happened to this update and when we can expect it?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you, senator, for your question. I don't know. I'll have to inquire. I'll try to get an answer as quickly as I can in the hope that it will be useful to your study.

#### MILITARY PROCUREMENT

**Hon. Elizabeth Marshall:** I have a follow-up question. Perhaps you can also check on this.

While announcing policy commitments is helpful, actually executing the policy is the real challenge. I'm thinking specifically of all the problems the department encountered in the area of military procurement over the last several years. Given the challenges encountered in implementing the existing policy, what changes have the government undertaken to successfully implement the new policy, which they should release very shortly?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Again, thank you for alluding to the significant increases in investments in our military and in procurement — an ongoing issue of importance for Canada generally and for our North in particular. I'll add that to my questions and report back when I can.

#### INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

##### COMPETITION POLICY

**Hon. Colin Deacon:** Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative.

Senator Gold, there's been good news that hopefully signals the prioritization of competition policy in Canada. This includes Budget 2022's down payment of amendments to the Competition Act and an increase in the Competition Bureau's budget, as well as Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's ongoing consultation on the future of competition policy and the recent appointments of two competition law experts to top positions at the CRTC — the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

• (1440)

This last point is the focus of my question. Anti-competitive regulations programs and policies exist across all departments and agencies from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to Transport Canada, from the CRTC to the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, or OSFI. As we all know, intention is important, but capacity to implement is paramount. Therefore, outside of the Competition Bureau itself, what is the federal government's competition policy expertise?

How many of the 336,000 federal public servants have had competition policy training and are responsible for the development of pro-competitive policies in their departments?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** I would have had to have been in this position a lot longer to have the answer to your question at my fingertips. I certainly don't have the answer. I will endeavour to find out who might have the answer and report back when I do get an answer.

**Senator C. Deacon:** Thank you very much, Senator Gold. Perhaps you could also add on to that the number of deputy ministers that have decided within their departments to prioritize the use of the Competition Bureau's Competition Assessment Toolkit that has been made specifically for policy-makers and have reached out to the Competition Bureau's competition promotion unit. Thank you.

#### NATIONAL REVENUE

##### COVID-19 SUPPORT PAYMENTS

**Hon. Tony Loffreda:** My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, many are calling on the government to further investigate emergency COVID benefits and subsidy amounts paid to Canadians who may have inadvertently received money they were ineligible for. In her fall report, the Auditor General refers to some \$32 billion in total payments, including \$15.5 billion for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy.

I appreciate that the CRA — the Canada Revenue Agency — does not agree with some of the Auditor General's findings, but the point remains that the agency needs a plan of action to verify the millions of benefit applications it received. As the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, told our National Finance Committee:

. . . the CRA doesn't deem it worthy, appropriate or worth the effort to go after an alleged \$15 billion in potential overpayments . . . .

Can you assure us that the government is committed to recovering what could be millions or even billions of dollars that may have gone to ineligible candidates?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. During the pandemic, as you all know, the government took very decisive and unprecedented action to help Canadians get through this crisis, to save lives and help our economy, and it worked. But it was clear from the beginning, as I have said on many occasions, that the CRA would begin verifications once the time was right and once it had the required data to do so. Indeed, as you alluded to, verifications have begun and assessments are being made and continue to be made as to where the efforts of the CRA should be focused.

It will take some time to complete this work. The government does not accept the numbers that the Auditor General put forward in terms of the magnitude of the problem, but there was a

problem, of course. In that regard, fraud will not be tolerated. The CRA will continue to use all of its tools to identify and recover the amounts that were disbursed to ineligible recipients.

**Senator Loffreda:** As you know, when Parliament adopted the bills that allowed for the creation, administration and distribution of various emergency COVID benefits, we also legislated timelines for the verification of eligibility. In some cases, it was only 36 months, and that deadline is fast approaching. Will the government consider extending this deadline in order to give the CRA the necessary time to adequately verify the distribution of its payment support to Canadians? I think it's important to send the right message to Canadians that we value their hard-earned money and that the agency is serious and rigorous about this undertaking.

**Senator Gold:** I agree with you entirely. The government is serious, and the CRA will be rigorous. But if I understand your question correctly, senator, you're asking whether the deadline into the investigation will be extended in matters of ineligibility and potential fraud. In that regard, the deadline in the bills to which you referred doesn't apply to cases of fraud or suspected fraud; therefore, there's no need for an extension and the work will continue.

## PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

### CANADA POST

**Hon. Pamela Wallin:** Senator Gold, Canada Post is apparently again polling on closing rural post offices to deal with revenue shortfalls. They're even polling on how to redefine "rural" to get around their existing moratorium on closures. Post offices are vital in rural Canada, where internet is already iffy and everything from flyers to Amazon orders go to the post office. I drive 22 kilometres to get my mail. Hours are restricted, the cost of mailing is higher than the birthday gift I'm sending and the post office is competing with struggling local newspapers — and actually killing some — by putting advertising directly in our mailboxes. Can you please assure us that we will stop compensating bad business practices at Canada Post on the backs of rural Canadians?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Senator, thank you for raising this. It's an important issue, and an issue that some of us appreciate less because of living in urban environments. I now live in a rural environment, but it is not as difficult as the situation you described for too many Canadians. I will have to look into what Canada Post is continuing to do and what the government's responsibility or role in that is. I don't have an answer to your question, but I'll certainly look into it.

[ Senator Gold ]

## IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

### CITIZENSHIP CEREMONIES

**Hon. Patricia Bovey:** Senator Gold, lately we've heard the idea from government that people could take the Canadian Oath of Citizenship by signing a document online without attending either an in-person or virtual citizenship ceremony. The negative concerns I have heard about this idea are legion, so much so that I attended a live citizenship ceremony again last Thursday. It was truly moving to hear all in the room take the oath, to witness the individual certificate presentations and see the photos — all very important aspects of the event that would be missed by merely signing an online form at home. Can you assure this chamber, all Canadians and those applying for citizenship that this idea of cutting out citizenship ceremonies in favour of a self-administered online oath will be quashed?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for the question, and I couldn't agree with you more in terms of the importance of these ceremonies to the participants, the observers and their families.

The government wants to be very clear: All applicants will continue to have the choice and the option to swear or affirm their Oath of Citizenship before a citizenship judge or an authorized person at an in-person or virtual ceremony as the case may be. That remains the case. The government strongly wants Canadians to know that citizenship ceremonies are here to stay. IRCC — Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada — has resumed in-person citizenship ceremonies that were suspended due to the impact of COVID-19 to its operations and now actually offers virtual citizenship ceremonies to those for whom it's appropriate.

The Oath of Citizenship is the final step to becoming a Canadian citizen. It's a solemn promise to follow the laws of Canada and perform our duties as Canadians. The government is seeking input on proposed changes to the Citizenship Act to improve their experience and expand accessibility, and that is an ongoing process. Rest assured, citizenship ceremonies are here to stay.

**Senator Bovey:** As a quick follow-up, you used the word "optional." I'm delighted to hear that citizenship ceremonies will continue. Yes, I appreciate there are online virtual ceremonies for when people couldn't attend because of COVID, but are you saying that there might be another option whereby they don't have to do either, but that the citizenship ceremony will stay?

• (1450)

**Senator Gold:** Currently, applicants have the option to attend in person or virtually, as I said. There is consultation going on now with regard to other proposed changes to the Citizenship Act that may be appropriate — in terms of other processes — but that is an ongoing process, as I described.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

### TRAGEDY IN JAMES SMITH CREE NATION

**Hon. Denise Batters:** Senator Gold, last September, I asked you about the horrific stabbing mass murders at James Smith Cree Nation in my province of Saskatchewan. Your answer then — as you say almost daily during Senate Question Period — was that you would make inquiries with the minister and the department, and report back with answers when you received them.

The delayed answer came back five months later, solely with information that was already relayed in a televised RCMP press conference four months ago. This response completely ignored my question regarding what steps the government and RCMP would take to ensure this immense tragedy never repeats itself.

Senator Gold, these killings have scarred Saskatchewan. This region is still reeling from the magnitude of this catastrophe. For the Government of Canada to only offer this pathetic, much-too-delayed response to Canadians' serious concerns is a dereliction of duty.

Why are you helping this government dodge accountability?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** I'm sorry that the answer you received, senator, was unsatisfactory to you. I'm not responsible for the answer when I'm not able to give one; I request it. If you would be kind enough to share the answer with my office, I'd be happy to inquire as to what additional information may be available, and I'd be happy to provide it.

**Senator Batters:** Yes, Senator Gold, the Government of Canada is the one who is responsible for providing those answers. You are the Senate government leader — and you have a \$1.4-million office budget and the large team of staff that entails. You also have the huge resources of the Government of Canada at your disposal. Yet, you still have to run down the halls of the Prime Minister's Office looking for an answer when you're asked basic questions on topical issues in this chamber.

Since those at the Trudeau government's highest levels are currently embroiled in a massive scandal, they're clearly too distracted with this cover-up to do their jobs. The Prime Minister takes no responsibility or accountability for his actions; his cabinet ministers are the same. In September, I asked a question about one of the worst mass murders in Canadian history, and I got a written response from the government five months later — signed by an MP who isn't even in cabinet — with information that was public four months ago, while entirely failing to answer what they could do better.

Senator Gold, Canadians expect and deserve answers that are prompt and complete. As the Leader of the Government in the Senate, when will you demand better of your own government?

**Senator Gold:** Well, there was a question at the end, was there not? I am proud to work as the Government Representative, and to serve the Senate in that capacity, and I will continue to do my best.

[*Translation*]

### CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** My question is for the proud Government Representative in the Senate.

Leader, *The Globe and Mail* recently published an open letter from an employee of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, who identified himself as the newspaper's source, justifying why he had shared the information with *The Globe and Mail*, after the Canadian authorities failed to take the necessary measures to counter Chinese interference, even though he implored them to do so. Apparently, the government knew about this interference, but did nothing.

Leader, can you confirm when the Prime Minister was briefed by CSIS agents?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** I can't answer your question. I can't answer for an anonymous source, despite the fact that it was published in *The Globe and Mail*. The processes the government has put in place to address the situation you described are appropriate to answer these questions.

**Senator Carignan:** Leader, an old sage in provincial politics in Quebec once said that in politics, if you can't be trusted, you're toast. With that in mind, before the Prime Minister becomes burnt toast, don't you think it's time he created a public commission of inquiry?

**Senator Gold:** The Prime Minister has put in place processes that he has deemed appropriate. He has appointed the Right Honourable David Johnston to examine the matter and provide advice. The government believes this is the appropriate process under the circumstances.

[*English*]

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Leader, I'm going to turn away from Beijing now, and proceed to some other countries.

Last week, leader, in a joint press conference with President Biden and Australian Prime Minister Albanese, the British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, stated, “. . . the defence of our values depends, as it always has, on the quality of our relationships with others.”

When the AUKUS security partnership was first announced in September 2021, Prime Minister Trudeau dismissed it as just “a deal for nuclear submarines.” Instead, our allies see it as a way to counter Beijing’s ambitions into the Indo-Pacific.

Over the past 18 months, Prime Minister Trudeau has never said that he wants Canada to join this pact. What is worse is that we’ve seen no indication that three of our closest allies even want to invite us.

Why do you think that is, leader? Is Canada excluded because our allies don’t take your government seriously?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** No, we have strong working relationships in all areas — intelligence sharing and others — not only with our Five Eyes, some of whom you’ve mentioned, but also with many other democratic countries and others around the world. Canada punches above its weight in so many areas, and its contribution is well appreciated. In that regard, it is misleading and false to insinuate as you did.

**Senator Plett:** *The Globe and Mail* reported that the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service, or CSIS, documents on Beijing’s interference in our democracy were shared with many of Canada’s intelligence allies, including the U.S., the U.K. and Australia. Even without viewing these documents, our allies could see how the Trudeau government has failed to recognize the threats posed by this Communist regime: the admiration for Beijing’s basic dictatorship, the reluctance to ban Huawei from our 5G network, not showing up for a vote to recognize the Uighur genocide and claiming the two Michaels are out on bail. I could go on, leader, but I think I’ve made my point.

There are reports now that Japan is set to join this new alliance. Leader, has your government asked to join — yes or no? Or is the Trudeau government afraid of what the answer might be — yes or no?

**Senator Gold:** I don’t know the answer to the first question. The government is not afraid of the answers that its allies will give us because, as I said, our role is respected. It would take me too long, senator, to comment on all of the assumptions you made about what is going on in the minds of others. Suffice it to say that these are serious matters, and the government is taking them seriously.

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### PENSION PROTECTION BILL

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

**Hon. Lucie Moncion** moved, for Senator Wells, third reading of Bill C-228, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Companies’ Creditors Arrangement Act and the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985.

She said: Honourable senators, I apologize for taking the floor without giving notice. I couldn’t do it on Thursday so I chose to do it today.

I rise to speak at third reading of Bill C-228, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Companies’ Creditors Arrangement Act and the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985.

The purpose of Bill C-228 is to offer better protections for pensioners. For that, it addresses the issue of pension plan solvency in three ways. First, before each chamber of Parliament, it would require the Superintendent of Financial Institutions to table an annual report on the solvency of federal pension plans.

Second, it would provide a mechanism allowing money to be transferred into the fund without tax implications to ensure the insolvent portion until the funds could be restored. These two components will help monitor solvency and allow corrective measures to be taken as needed.

Third, in the case of bankruptcy, the bill improves the protection provided to those who have defined benefit pension plans that are underfunded. In that case, the pensions would be paid in priority to the pensioners ahead of secured, preferred and unsecured creditors.

I want to begin by expressing my support for this bill and thanking its sponsor, Senator Wells, and the critic, Senator Yussuff. I’m pleased to see that this bill has already made it to third reading stage of the legislative process. That is rather unexpected. Unlike its predecessors, it has made it through most of the steps in the legislative process, where many others before it have failed.

The existing legal framework perpetuates not only an unfair system for the sharing of bankruptcy costs but also an unwise laissez-faire approach to underfunded pension plans, and that is the crux of the problem. The fact that many bills similar to Bill C-228 have been introduced over the past 20 years is significant. The urgent need to find solutions to this problem has been brought to light many times. Many Canadians continue to suffer the loss of their retirement income because the defined benefit plans they paid into were underfunded when their employer filed for insolvency or bankruptcy.

By way of example, I'm thinking of Nortel Networks' insolvency in January 2009, where company heads gave themselves bonuses and spent large sums on performance pay for executives. I'm also thinking of Sears Canada's bankruptcy in 2018 and the millions of dollars in dividends paid to shareholders a few years prior.

More recently, in February 2021, a new precedent was set when the first publicly funded post-secondary institution sought protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. In the case of Laurentian University, the pension plan had been cut considerably through the elimination of guaranteed benefits indexed post-retirement. Bill C-228 would ensure a more equitable sharing of the costs of bankruptcy and restructuring.

As they currently have no protection when a company files for bankruptcy, pensioners are forced to accept significant reductions in their benefits from the start of restructuring to avoid even more devastating cuts in the event of bankruptcy. When a company goes bankrupt, having a priority claim is certainly more advantageous than being in the lowest class of creditors. Funds must remain to be distributed, but often there are none when a company goes bankrupt. In this process, the likelihood of a pensioner receiving their share will depend on the position of their pension fund at that point. Despite the improvement that the bill makes to the financial security of pensioners, its scope remains narrow. The intent of my intervention today is to shed light on the broader context of this bill so we can continue searching for solutions closer to the source of the problem. More specifically, I'd like to address the problematic issue of underfunded pension plans and the rights regimes that tolerate that the financial security of pensioners is put at risk.

I'm pleased to see that Bill C-228 includes a provision to address the problem when it comes to federally regulated plans. The Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions already has a mandate to ensure that federally regulated plans are financially sound and in compliance with the regulations governing them and the requirements of the oversight regime. Clause 6 of the bill gives the Office of the Superintendent new responsibilities, requiring it to table an annual report in Parliament explaining the extent to which pension plans are meeting funding requirements and the corrective measures taken or ordered to remedy the problems of pension plans that aren't meeting requirements.

I'm delighted that the bill includes provisions to rectify the situation of underfunded plans. However, I'm not convinced that this provision will have a real impact on the funding of plans that are in arrears, especially given its scope, which is limited to federally regulated plans.

I understand the jurisdictional hurdles involved in regulating provincially regulated pension plans. However, I believe that issues related to the funding of a pension plan of an entity that is at risk of insolvency are within the federal government's jurisdiction and that the federal government has a responsibility to pensioners and pension plan members.

[English]

I would like to read a passage from the appearance of Canadian Labour Congress President Bea Bruske that illustrates this issue:

The federal government legislated changes in response to the Sears Canada debacle but they were woefully inadequate. This is especially frustrating, since the evidence shows that many companies with underfunded pension plans could eliminate the solvency deficiency in their plans by allocating just a portion of their shareholder payouts to the pension plan. Many firms consciously choose to reward shareholders and senior executives, boosting the stock price, rather than fully fund their pension obligations. That leaves pensioners and plan members at risk if the company becomes insolvent.

We need to bring forward a comprehensive model to prevent the insolvency deficiency of pension funds. The issue of underfunded pension plans is critical, in my view, and deserves further attention.

The narrow scope of the bill is also felt in other respects. While some witnesses at the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy raised the possibility that the creditor order provisions could also apply to pension plans where registered deficits are charged to participating employers, the bill is really aimed at defined benefit plans, since only these plans are able to develop underfunded liabilities.

I would therefore like to draw honourable senators' attention to the many Canadians whose pension plans are not covered by the legislation given that fewer than 10% of private sector workers belong to a defined benefit plan. In addition, we have seen a significant decline in these pension plans over the past 10 years, as they are often too costly and unsustainable for private sector employers.

For these reasons, it would be appropriate to continue our reflection in order to study other options that would have a broader scope and that would allow for greater protection of pensioners and pension plan members.

• (1510)

[Translation]

Although well beyond the scope of the bill, we must also address the financial security of seniors. There are significant disparities and inequities between Canadians who have access to a defined benefit pension plan, those who have access to a defined contribution pension plan and those who don't have a registered pension plan. There are significant differences between public and private sector employers in terms of the availability of defined benefit pension plans compared to defined contribution plans. The labour shortage could change some of these trends by rebalancing the power relationships between workers and employers. It's worth keeping an eye on the situation.

Despite the narrow scope of the bill, it is an improvement in the protections that are afforded to beneficiaries of certain pension plans. This bill has managed to make it through almost every step of the legislative process.

Colleagues, I therefore encourage you to vote in favour of this bill, which represents an important first step toward a fairer pension system in Canada.

Thank you for listening.

(On motion of Senator Martin, for Senator Wells, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

#### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Your Honour, I am not quite sure how to approach this.

We have a very difficult odour in this chamber, as we have had in the entire building most of the morning. As an old plumber, I used to work with this odour quite a bit; as a senator, I haven't quite as often.

I'm not sure, Your Honour, what the proper thing to do is. It is really starting to affect some of us. Throughout the course of the day, I think it will affect a lot more of us. I know we are past Government Business. I'm certainly not, at this point, moving the adjournment of the Senate. I would, at least, ask you for your opinion and the opinion of other colleagues.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, Senator Plett.

I understand that a number of senators have been complaining of headaches and other discomfiture with this odour that we can all smell while we are here in the chamber. I understand it is not just in the chamber, but it is in other parts of the building as well.

The Black Rod has just left to check with our security people to see if there are complaints coming in from other areas.

I understand there is little or nothing we can do about the actual odour right now. In fairness to our colleagues, especially those who are not here because of this particular problem, we should suspend to a five-minute bell and ask the leadership if they can get together and discuss this to see if they can come to any kind of an agreement with respect to what we do for the rest of the day, whether we continue, suspend or adjourn until tomorrow.

We will suspend. There will be a five-minute bell to reconvene. I would ask the leadership of the various groups and caucuses if they would convene and discuss the matter.

Thank you very much, colleagues.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (1520)

[*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 5-13(2), I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(*At 3:25 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.*)

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