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Wednesday, March 22, 2023

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,  
Speaker

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## THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

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

Prayers.

### SENATORS' STATEMENTS

#### SOCIAL WORK MONTH

**Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard:** Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize National Social Work Month. I am often introduced as a former social worker and a former social work educator. Well, let me tell you that I never stopped being a social worker. Now I just do it here in the Senate. Every single day, I bring my social work lens to debates and deliberations.

Social work is often divided into two silos. The first is front-line social work, and the second is developing social policy and social work research. During my time in the Senate, I have been collaborating with the Canadian Association of Social Workers with a shared agenda to empower social workers to have a presence and to use their voices in the creation of social policy and legislation.

My parliamentary research assistant Anne-Marie Hay is also a social worker who embodies the sentiment of social work in the Senate. Anne-Marie was my first student in the Senate and started in my office while completing a master's degree in social work at Carleton University. When I was appointed to the Senate, I decided to provide social work students with an opportunity to do their practicum placements in my Senate office. Anne-Marie shares my passion for social justice and racial justice, and that is evident in all the work we do together. I see many social work students shy away from policy — and, in fact, some run away from policy — but Anne-Marie's passion for social justice in social work is a perfect example of why it is important to have social workers in policy positions.

Anne-Marie, thank you for the essential social work that you bring to our team in all aspects of our work.

Honourable senators, please join me in thanking all social workers for the important, essential work they do every day. *Asante*. Thank you.

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

#### THE FISH GANG

**Hon. Fabian Manning:** Honourable senators, today I am pleased to present Chapter 74 of "Telling our Story."

When one speaks of Newfoundland and Labrador, the word "fish" often comes to mind. Well, today I am going to tell you about a group of men known as "The Fish Gang" who, over a hundred years ago, left the small fishing outposts of our province and headed to the streets of New York City to help build that city's incredible skyline. American construction companies

recruited Newfoundland fishermen who were used to climbing the high rigging on fishing schooners and, therefore, were not afraid of working on high steel. The risk was high but so was the pay.

Legend has it that the first Newfoundland ironworker was a man named Frank Treahy from Conception Harbour, who quickly sent word back home to the "bys" that there was steady work and good wages to be had erecting skyscrapers in New York. Other Newfoundlanders heeded his call, and by the 1930s, Newfoundlanders represented about a quarter of the membership of Iron Workers Local 40, which covers Manhattan, the Bronx, Staten Island and Westchester County. Some rose to prominent positions in the union. In 1939, Newfoundland native Jim Cole was elected president and served until 1950. The next union president was Ray Corbett, whose family hailed from Harbour Main. He was then followed by Ray Mullett, the son of an ironworker from the now resettled community of Oderin in Placentia Bay. He, in turn, gave way in the early 1990s to another native Newfoundlander, Jack Doyle. You could say they took the place over.

The Newfoundland men were known to swim in schools or stick together and watch out for each other on and off the job. They soon became known as "The Fish Gang," and when their sons took up ironwork, they were called "The Fish Offspring."

The men from Newfoundland were also well known and respected for their strong work ethic, their wonderful personalities and their fearlessness. New York journalist Jim Rasenberger, in his 2004 book *High Steel: The Daring Men Who Built the World's Greatest Skyline*, said:

The Newfoundlander would have been a natural for the work.... He would have possessed the sea legs and the rigging skills that were so important to the job.

He went on to say that the Newfoundlander ". . . would also have been accustomed to working hard under risky circumstances and not fretting too much about it."

Rasenberger added:

Compared to hauling seal carcasses across a shifting icefield in Labrador, or climbing a ship's mast on a stormy sea, the feat of balancing on a steel beam several hundred feet above the streets of New York was a cakewalk.

I am sure many of you have seen one of the world's most famous photographs, which was taken by Charles Ebbets on September 29, 1932, and has been referred to at different times by the titles *Eating over Manhattan* and *Lunch Atop a Skyscraper*. It shows 11 men having their lunch while sitting on a steel beam on the sixty-ninth floor of the Rockefeller Plaza building in New York City. That would be about 850 feet about the city street. The photo has become an icon of 20th-century American photography. While some of the men in the photo

remain unidentified, it is said that the third man from the left is Austin Lawlor of King's Cove in Newfoundland, and the fifth man is Claude Stagg from the fishing community of Catalina.

• (1410)

Knowing that the boys from home always hung out together, I'm confident that there are a few more Newfoundlanders sitting there, dangling their feet.

In 1986, Hana Gartner with "The Fifth Estate" produced a great documentary on "The Fish Gang" called *Ironworkers from Newfoundland: Walking Iron*. It is easily accessible on the CBC website, and I encourage you to have a look. They built buildings like the Sears Tower, the World Trade Center and, yes, the Twin Towers. The hands of Newfoundlanders helped build one of the most fascinating cities in the world.

Years ago, long before safety protocols were put in place, a Newfoundlander was asked during an interview about the dangers associated with the job, and his answer was, "You only fall once."

It is said that wherever you go in the world, you will find a Newfoundlander and Labradorian. They have left our shores and made their marks throughout the world. It was no different with the lads who went to New York so many years ago. Today, I am pleased to pay tribute to "The Fish Gang."

Thank you.

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

#### VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of former member of Parliament Robert-Falcon Ouellette, his wife Febe Ping-Hsiang Kuo and their beautiful four-month-old Luna. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Cardozo.

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

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

[*Translation*]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Yvette Bonny and Nathalie Gadbois. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Mégie.

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

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

[ Senator Manning ]

#### DR. YVETTE BONNY, C.M.

**Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie:** Honourable senators, it is a great honour for me to introduce you to my guest today. She was able to take her rightful place as a Black woman, demonstrate her excellence and make a unique contribution to Quebec society and the advancement of medicine.

Her name is Yvette Bonny. She was born in Haiti in 1938. She studied medicine and provided health care in the rural areas of the country. She emigrated to Quebec in 1961 and did her residency at the Sainte-Justine pediatric hospital in Montreal in 1965. She was the first Black woman resident at that hospital.

She then went on to specialize in hematology at the Saint-Antoine Hospital in Paris, the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal and the Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital, where she did her residency in hematology in 1967 and in pathology in 1968.

When she began her career, she was the third woman hematologist in Quebec and the first with a specialization in pediatrics. However, it was not an easy road. As a Black female doctor, Dr. Bonny had to work that much harder to gain the confidence of her peers and some parents who, when they saw her, doubted her abilities. She often felt as though she always had to prove that she was the best.

Still, these obstacles did not stop her. Dr. Bonny showed her determination throughout her long and outstanding career. On April 2, 1980, she performed the first bone marrow transplant on a child in Quebec. A bone marrow transplant is a procedure to treat leukemia and other cancers and is now done to treat sickle cell disease, a genetic red blood cell disorder.

She was the only pediatric hematologist performing this procedure in Quebec for many years. Over the course of her career, she performed 200 bone marrow transplants.

Her dedication, compassion and humour earned her the nickname "Patch Adams" among her pediatrics colleagues.

She received many awards and honours throughout her successful career. I certainly don't have enough time to list them all, but I would like to point out that she was made a knight of the Ordre national du Québec in 2007 and has been a member of the Order of Canada since 2008.

Dr. Bonny has always been an inspiration to me. She has paved the way for young girls from Haiti who dream of working in health care. She is a role model for the Haitian community and especially for all young Black women.

Colleagues, please join me in congratulating Dr. Bonny on all her accomplishments and in wishing her and her daughter, Nathalie Gadbois, a warm welcome to the Senate of Canada.

Thank you.

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

**THE LATE NADINE GIRAULT**

**Hon. Amina Gerba:** Honourable senators, let me begin by thanking the Canadian Senators Group for giving me their speaking time today.

To this day, and despite more and more scientific research, cancer is still taking a toll in Canadian society. Some of our fellow citizens manage to recover from this disease while others, for the most part, succumb to it.

I rise today to pay tribute to Nadine Girault and honour her memory. The former Quebec minister of international relations and la francophonie was taken by this terrible disease on February 13, 2023.

Born in 1959 in Saint Louis, Missouri, to Haitian parents, Nadine Girault grew up in the beautiful Quebec town of Gaspé where her family settled after fleeing the dictatorship in Haiti.

After graduating from high school in Gaspé, Nadine Girault moved to Montreal, where she earned her bachelor's degree in finance and marketing at the École des hautes études commerciales de Montréal and a master's in business administration at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

Nadine had a rich and varied career, going from Xerox to the Bank of Montreal, with stints at Fonds de solidarité FTQ, Investissement Québec, the Montreal police force, the Royal Bank of Canada and the Desjardins Group.

In 2018, Nadine decided to enter provincial politics and was elected as an MNA for Coalition avenir Québec, representing the riding of Bertrand. Nadine would be appointed as the Quebec minister of international relations and la francophonie under Premier François Legault's first government.

During Nadine's first term, Quebec unveiled its Africa strategy, which included an investment of \$50 million to fund projects and Quebec companies interested in doing business in Africa. It was also under her leadership that Quebec appointed the largest number of women to Quebec delegations around the world.

Nadine was a dignified, elegant, hard-working and very athletic woman. She was a model of selflessness and resilience, an inspiration for the diversity of our country and an example of a leader who made public service a priority.

As I extend my sincere condolences to her family and her party, I salute the memory of a woman who proudly represented Quebec and the French language abroad.

Rest in peace, Nadine Girault, my dear and sorely missed friend.

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

[English]

**VISITOR IN THE GALLERY**

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Doug Deacon. He is a friend of the Honourable Senator Downe and brother of the Honourable Senator Colin Deacon.

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

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

[Translation]

**KISKA THE KILLER WHALE**

**Hon. Chantal Petitclerc:** Dear colleagues, I rise today to note the death of Kiska, at the approximate age of 47 years.

[English]

Known as "the world's loneliest orca," she died last week after four decades in captivity in Ontario.

Captured off Iceland in 1979, she spent her first year in Canada with the orca Keiko, who was later sold to Mexico and then returned to freedom in Iceland a few years later. Kiska, however, would have no such luck. She remained in captivity and mothered five calves, none of which survived.

After the death of her tank mate, Kiska was to live her last 12 years in solitary confinement.

Many have said Kiska inspired change. I agree, but change also came from the efforts of amazing and strong champions. Today, I want to recognize the many individuals who fight for animal rights and who are committed to making those changes happen.

• (1420)

We make our decisions from the comfort of our suits and seats. As I was reading about the death of Kiska, it allowed me to dive into the many stories of courageous, passionate and strong activists who give their time and lives to defending the rights of animals. They include Phil Demers, Dylan Powell, Camille Labchuk, the humane societies and many others. They dedicate years and decades of their lives. They show up at peaceful protests. They seek justice. They document. They research. They never give up. In the end, they push society — they push Canada — to become a better place. Today, I want to thank them, as they are devastated by the passing of Kiska.

It may feel like they have failed, but they haven't. Because of their relentless actions in the defence of animals, Kiska may very well have been the last captive orca in Canada. Let's hope so.

*Meegwetch.* Thank you.

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

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### ADJOURNMENT

#### NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, March 28, 2023, at 2 p.m.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

#### FOREIGN INFLUENCE IN CANADIAN ELECTIONS

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Leader, according to *The Globe and Mail*, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, learned that a wealthy political adviser to the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP, in Beijing was instructed to donate to the Trudeau Foundation and that the communist regime would reimburse the entire amount of that donation.

Following this report, the Trudeau Foundation returned a \$200,000 gift it received in 2016, leader. The foundation's president and CEO stated, "... ethics and integrity are among our core values . . ." Integrity is important to them, but not until seven years after the fact, leader? The Prime Minister must have known the truth behind this \$200,000 gift — not a small gift.

**An Hon. Senator:** Add inflation to it.

**Senator Plett:** His government appoints two seats on the foundation's board, and his family appoints two seats. This is confirmed in the Trudeau Foundation annual reports and by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

Leader, how can the Trudeau government say there is no link between Prime Minister Trudeau and the Trudeau Foundation? No one believes that this is credible, leader. How can your government say this and expect Canadians to believe this and have confidence in him?

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

Part of the preamble to your question was a quote that the Prime Minister "must have known" of the origins of the deal behind this gift, and that is an assumption you're making and, frankly, somewhat of a smear because you don't know what the Prime Minister was told or knew.

Indeed, as soon as the report became public, the Trudeau Foundation did the right thing and returned it. That's what Canadians know and should understand.

As the Prime Minister has said, the minute that he took office — if not, indeed, immediately before that, but certainly since the time he's been Prime Minister, if not before — he removed himself from any involvement with the foundation. A foundation which, I should add, has done and does important work supporting and mentoring students.

Chinese interference in our elections is an important issue. I know it is the topic that the opposition in the House and here is prosecuting vigorously. That is your right to do. That is how you see your role, and I respect your right to play that role.

However, the fact is that the attempt to focus attention on the serious issue that the government is dealing with in a serious way — to draw everything into the Laurentian elite and the Trudeau Foundation, and that the government or the Prime Minister must have known — does a disservice to the seriousness of this issue and, in my opinion, a disservice to this chamber.

**Senator Plett:** Well, you are right, leader, it is our right to ask these questions.

You know what else is our right, leader? A right to have the answers, as it is the right of all Canadians to have the answers.

**An Hon. Senator:** No more written answers.

**Senator Plett:** If this Prime Minister would, for once, be honest with Canadians and tell us the answers, we would be able to stop asking these questions.

**An Hon. Senator:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Plett:** You say the Trudeau Foundation does great work. Nobody is suggesting it doesn't. But that does not give them the right to accept illegal donations, no matter how much good work they do.

You say I insinuated. You clearly made an insinuation: Don't talk to us or ask me questions about a questionable donation because the foundation is doing good work. How can you put those two together, leader?

As I said yesterday, the Prime Minister shouldn't have any say, leader; he should have no say in how Beijing's interference is being investigated. He could just tell Canadians what he knew and when he knew it. But he won't. Why? Because he was the prime beneficiary.

Instead of a full and truly independent public inquiry, Prime Minister Trudeau named a long-time family friend, a skiing buddy and a member of the Trudeau Foundation to produce a report months from now, leader. This is designed by the Prime Minister to, again, distract and buy time, and he makes a mockery of accountability.

**An Hon. Senator:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Plett:** Leader, how was the former Governor General appointed to the Trudeau Foundation in 2018? Was he recommended by the Minister of Innovation, who is, of course, a member of Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet? Or was he appointed by Prime Minister Trudeau's family?

**Senator Gold:** Well, no one could ever accuse you, honourable colleague, of not doubling down, despite my response.

You mischaracterized and misdescribed my answer completely with regard to the Trudeau Foundation. The record will show that and I won't repeat what I said.

You are now continuing to focus, not on the steps that the government is taking to investigate — properly and responsibly — the allegations of interference, but now, as your leader and others have done, to impugn the impartiality and, indeed, the integrity of the Governor General appointed by Stephen Harper — to Stephen Harper's honour — and who served this country admirably.

In an effort to appeal to those for whom both the Prime Minister and the Laurentian elite — and anybody who happens to be friendly — as somehow on the wrong side of integrity or the best interests of Canada is, once again, a disservice to this chamber and to the importance of this debate.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

## PUBLIC SAFETY

### SOCIAL MEDIA

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

Leader, on February 27, the government announced with great fanfare that TikTok, the Chinese social media platform, was being banned from government devices. We all quickly removed it from our devices because of the risks it could pose.

Again, looking through the lens of Chinese interference, imagine my surprise when I learned today that the Privy Council Office has invested millions of dollars in advertising on the Chinese social network platform.

How can the government, on the one hand, encourage Canadians to stop using TikTok and then, on the other hand, invest millions of dollars in government advertising?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** If I understand your question correctly, and if I understand the government's decision to pull the app, it is for national security reasons. There have been concerns that TikTok can capture user data. There are fears that TikTok is sharing data.

I don't know the details as to how much money was invested in advertising, when it was done or why it was done. I will inquire and give you an answer.

**Senator Carignan:** Leader, do you feel a little less proud when you see taxpayers' money being invested in the Chinese social media platform TikTok to be able to gather data, especially from our young teens? Do you not see an incongruity here?

I listened to your response to the Leader of the Opposition earlier and your response now, and I see a disconnect between what you're saying and what the government is doing. There is a growing recognition of the need for a public inquiry into Chinese interference.

**Senator Gold:** Once again, colleague, I don't know the details of the expenses you mentioned. This is the first I'm hearing of this. I'll have to find out more before I can give you an honest and appropriate answer.

[*English*]

## FINANCE

### OPEN BANKING

**Hon. Colin Deacon:** My question is for the Government Representative. Senator Gold, tax season is upon us. New digital technologies are rapidly allowing for simple, secure, faster and more accurate processing by tax authorities. For example, the United Kingdom's implementation of open banking and their payment initiation services have caused tax payments to be processed with zero payment errors and no increase in resources.

His Majesty's Revenue and Customs and U.K. citizens are seeing meaningful savings in both time and administrative burden when taxpayers are using open banking instead of paying by credit card, manual bank transfer or cheque. Needless to say, it also saves a huge amount of frustration. I have personally experienced that it can take up to three years for the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, to correct their own data input errors.

Senator Gold, saving time, money and frustration when paying taxes are just a few of the multitude of benefits that can result from implementing open banking. Can you please inform us as to the CRA's ambitions on this matter and how they are preparing to deliver on the benefits that open banking can deliver to Canadians?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question, and thank you for your continuing advocacy and for drawing this chamber's attention to this issue and other important issues of innovation, both generally and in the financial sector in particular. I will have to make inquiries to answer the specifics of your question — in regard to how they are embarking — but I would say this: The

government is determined and committed to ensuring that our financial sector operates with the highest regard for privacy and security; it's primordial. And that's why the government launched its Advisory Committee on Open Banking to review the potential areas of new financial technologies, and how they can best and safely be used.

The government is reviewing the advisory committee's recommendations. It's developing its next steps regarding moving forward with a made-in-Canada model of open banking, but I don't know more than that, and I will have to make inquiries.

**Senator C. Deacon:** Thank you, Senator Gold. It's great to hear that — looking for the button to be pushed at some point. One of the reasons is the CRA has 55,000 employees, and I think you may agree that freeing up some of those resources — from an entirely preventable administrative burden — could help the government focus on delivering on its important commitment, as reaffirmed in September 2020, to implement free, automated simple tax return filing for Canadians, as well as deal with problems like offshore tax evasion and fraud — I think Senator Downe might agree with me on that one. The freeing up of the resources might be useful.

**Senator Gold:** I will certainly make inquiries as to what resources are being dedicated to the open banking file, and I have confidence that the CRA is going to do its very best to treat all taxpayers — and all Canadians — fairly as we approach this happy time of the year when we have to face the music in our taxes. Thank you for your question.

[*Translation*]

## TRANSPORT

### BATHURST REGIONAL AIRPORT

**Hon. René Cormier:** My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, it was not so long ago that 40,000 to 50,000 passengers were flying in and out of the Bathurst Regional Airport. Last year, only 15,000 travellers used that airport because of a number of factors, including the frequent cancellation and delays of Air Canada flights.

According to a study commissioned by the airport, 70% of potential customers have to drive several hours to get to another airport in the southern part of the province to catch a flight. According to the airport's CEO, the airport may not survive because it is in a precarious financial situation. It is estimated that the airport is currently running a monthly deficit of over \$100,000, mostly as a result of a decrease in travellers and a shortage of pilots.

Senator Gold, the Bathurst airport is not just a transit hub for planes. It is also very essential infrastructure for health care and a key driver of economic growth in northern New Brunswick.

[ Senator Gold ]

If things continue as they are, the airport will not be able to continue operating beyond the spring of 2023. It is estimated that \$1 million is needed to keep the airport running until the end of the year.

Will your government grant the Bathurst airport the emergency funding it needs to remain open? If so, when will it do that? Time is of the essence.

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

The Government of Canada recognizes the critical importance of all well maintained airports for connecting regional communities across the country, including the Bathurst Regional Airport. These airports support essential air services, including the resupply of remote communities.

As you know, the Bathurst Regional Airport is managed by the Northern New Brunswick Airport Authority.

Over the past three years, the Government of Canada has provided significant financial support to the operator of the airport to compensate for the impact of COVID-19. This funding includes more than \$2 million in financial aid for operating and capital expenditures through the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, the Airports Capital Assistance Program and the Regional Air Transportation Initiative.

The minister met with the Bathurst airport authority to discuss the situation and he will continue to support the regional airports across Canada. He is working with the airlines and other companies to improve regional routes, because increasing the number of passengers in regional airports is vital to their survival.

**Senator Cormier:** Thank you for this information.

Although I believe that everyone can appreciate the assistance provided by the federal government to date, we have to wonder how the federal government will work with the province of New Brunswick, the municipal level and Air Canada to ensure the efficient operation of Bathurst Airport. I would remind you that this is the only airport servicing all of northern New Brunswick and a good part of the Gaspé.

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for the question.

According to my information, Minister Alghabra recently met with the authorities at Bathurst Regional Airport to reassure them that the government will continue working with representatives of the airport and other regional airports to help support them.

I do not know the details of that conversation, but I will reach out to the government to seek further information, if there is any.



• (1440)

[English]

## SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

**Hon. Robert Black:** On Wednesdays, the Canadian Senators Group directs our questions to chairs of committees. Today my question is for our honourable colleague Senator Omidvar, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.

Labour shortages continue to challenge numerous sectors across the country. As an “advocate” in the Senate, I’m particularly concerned about agriculture, agri-food and processing sectors.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture estimates that the labour gaps in agricultural industries and on farms will grow to exceed 123,000 shortages by 2029. As a result, Canada has and will continue to develop a higher dependence on foreign labour, specifically through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. This is a concern for all Canadians as food insecurity is increasing and supply chain backlogs continue.

Senator Omidvar, can you please update this chamber on your study and let us know what areas and topics have been discussed and will be discussed at the Social Affairs Committee, or SOCI, over the coming months? Specifically, how is SOCI consulting with agriculture, agri-food and processing stakeholders to ensure that the agriculture industry continues to grow and feed the world? Thank you, *meegwetch*.

**Senator Omidvar:** Thank you, Senator Black, for your important question and your group’s continued interest in the important work of this committee.

You are absolutely right. Our reliance on temporary foreign workers for meeting labour market shortages to ensure the prosperity of Canadians is an important question and one that the committee is attempting to address in as fulsome a manner as we can. There are many perspectives that we need to pay attention to — those of specific industries, agriculture in particular; the perspectives of regions; and, of course, the perspectives of the workers themselves.

We started our study in November of last year and we held a full panel focusing on agriculture and food. We heard from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, the United Food and Commercial Workers, as well as an academic panel on migrant help. We have received documents from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada and Mushrooms Canada, and we continue to accept submissions.

Senator Black, we also need to focus on hospitality, retail, fish processing and small and rural communities. I predict that our work will continue into the fall, because we have government legislation in front of us.

Suffice it to say that when we come back to this chamber with our report, it will be a full and fair discussion of the recommendations we have heard. I continue to welcome your interest in this question. I also want to acknowledge that, in certain areas, the work of our committee intersects with the work of other committees. We will be talking to you about this further as well.

## JUSTICE

### CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard:** My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, the Treasury Board of Canada has ruled that the Canadian Human Rights Commission has discriminated against its own Black and racialized employees. This revelation is even more disturbing considering that yesterday marked the United Nations’ seventy-fifth International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. After these brave employees have come forward with their stories, Black Canadians can no longer place their trust in the Canadian Human Rights Commission to handle complaints of anti-Black racism.

My question to you, Senator Gold, is this: What actions will the government take to address anti-Black racism in the Canadian Human Rights Commission to ensure the complaints process is equitable for Black Canadians?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your questions. The fact that a grievance was brought and the positive response to the grievance are deeply troubling and disappointing, especially given the context of the institution that is involved. Canadians deserve to be free from racism everywhere in our country and in every space they inhabit, especially in their workplace. Racism has no place in our institutions.

As you know, the government is working to appoint new leadership to the commission, as the chief commissioner’s position is vacant. Dealing with the outcome of the findings of the Treasury Board will be an important part of the responsibilities of the new leadership of the commission.

I’m also informed, colleague, that Minister Lametti had a frank conversation with interim Chief Commissioner Malischewski earlier this week to discuss the steps the CHRC is taking to address this very important issue.

**Senator Bernard:** Senator Gold, I would be really interested — and I think this chamber would be interested — in knowing what steps the government is taking to ensure that the Canadian Human Rights Commission is indeed a workplace where Black and racialized employees will not experience the harm of anti-Black racism.

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for the question. This is important to the government and is a priority for the government.

To answer your question directly rather than speak in more general terms, in addition to the steps I have already described, one way the government is taking action in terms of working towards the appointment of a new leadership and making that a priority for the leadership is through the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat. The secretariat combats discrimination and tackles the effects of discrimination on people and communities across the country, including in the workplace and health care spaces. This is another measure the government is taking more broadly to do its part to reduce — and, ideally, eliminate — racism in the workplace and other spaces in this country.

[Translation]

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### FOREIGN INFLUENCE IN CANADIAN ELECTIONS

**Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu:** Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Yesterday, in response to a question from my colleague Senator Plett about foreign interference in Canadian elections, you said that the Prime Minister did not benefit from any such interference. I find it hard to comprehend why the House leader of the other place, Mark Holland, claimed on Monday that the Conservative motion to compel Ms. Telford to testify could become a vote of confidence in the government. This was presumably to get Mr. Singh on board.

You said yesterday that the federal election was not compromised. That was your answer to Senator Plett.

Senator Gold, will you undertake today, in this chamber, to confirm that the alleged interference by the Chinese government, particularly during the two elections, did not result in the election of any Liberal candidates in Canada?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** I am not in a position to make such an assertion for several reasons. Besides, that is not what I said. I cited the findings of independent expert analyses that were endorsed by several colleagues, including the House leader of the official opposition, showing that the results of the election were not compromised.

As for the status of candidates, I imagine that that will be one of the things reviewed by the designated individuals, who will have the appropriate security clearance to access all relevant information on this issue.

**Senator Boisvenu:** I find your answer rather vague. Yesterday, you were unable to provide an answer to Senator Carignan's question. Senator Carignan pointed out that you are the Government Representative in the Senate and that you sit on the Privy Council. Why then are you unable to tell us in this chamber that the Prime Minister was never made aware of the Beijing regime's interference in the federal election?

[ Senator Gold ]

• (1450)

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for the question. I would like to explain, for those who have less experience than you, honourable colleague, that just because I am a member of the Privy Council it does not mean that I have access to the information on national security that was provided to the Prime Minister or parliamentarians. I thank you for the confidence you have in my role, which I am pleased to fulfill to the best of my abilities.

However, I simply do not have access to that information. Even if I did have access to information concerning national security, I would not be allowed to share it publicly, as you are well aware.

[English]

## CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Leader, it has been raised with you previously that the cost of housing has skyrocketed under the Trudeau government. For example, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association, house prices in the interior of my province of British Columbia have gone up over 43% in the last five years. In the Statistics Canada survey released last month, 46% of British Columbians said they were very concerned about their ability to afford housing or rent. The Trudeau government's Shared Equity Mortgage Providers Fund and First-Time Home Buyer Incentive have both been failures. The Tax-Free First Home Savings Account is still not in place.

So, leader, why should Canadians struggling to find housing or pay their rent believe your government will help them when what you have brought forward so far hasn't worked?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. Again, the issue of the affordability of housing is an important one. So thank you for raising this issue.

However, colleague, it is simply not the case that the federal government — any federal government, past, present or future — can be held exclusively or even mainly responsible for the increased housing prices, especially in a market such as the one you have described. Having lived in Vancouver myself for almost four very happy years, we know that the price of housing and the rise of prices is a function of many factors for which even provincial governments who have a responsibility for housing could or should not be held largely responsible.

That said, I also respectfully disagree with your characterization of the efforts the government has made, and will continue to make, to help Canadians become first-time home buyers, offset the costs of maintaining their homes or, indeed, finding rental homes. There are many more programs than you mentioned, and they have not been an unmitigated failure, though no program can ever claim 100% success.

The government will continue to assist Canadians as they meet the challenges of home prices. It is encouraging that inflation — at least generally, though not in the grocery store — is coming down continually, and we are hoping that the responsible fiscal measures the government has been taking to get us through the pandemic and out of the pandemic will bear fruit and that the housing market will become more accessible to more Canadians.

#### ANSWERS TO ORDER PAPER QUESTIONS TABLED

##### FOREIGN AFFAIRS—DIPLOMAT PAY

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** tabled the reply to Question No. 36, dated November 23, 2021, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding diplomat pay.

##### FOREIGN AFFAIRS—MINISTERIAL EXEMPTIONS GRANTED UNDER COVID-19 QUARANTINE RULES

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** tabled the reply to Question No. 67, dated November 23, 2021, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding ministerial exemptions granted under COVID-19 quarantine rules — Global Affairs Canada.

##### HEALTH—MINISTERIAL EXEMPTIONS GRANTED UNDER COVID-19 QUARANTINE RULES

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** tabled the reply to Question No. 67, dated November 23, 2021, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding ministerial exemptions granted under COVID-19 quarantine rules — Public Health Agency of Canada.

##### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP—MINISTERIAL EXEMPTIONS GRANTED UNDER COVID-19 QUARANTINE RULES

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** tabled the reply to Question No. 67, dated November 23, 2021, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding ministerial exemptions granted under COVID-19 quarantine rules — Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

##### PUBLIC SAFETY—MINISTERIAL EXEMPTIONS GRANTED UNDER COVID-19 QUARANTINE RULES

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** tabled the reply to Question No. 67, dated November 23, 2021, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding ministerial exemptions granted under COVID-19 quarantine rules — Public Safety Canada.

##### FOREIGN AFFAIRS—INTERNATIONAL AID TO RUSSIAN OR BELARUSIAN ORGANIZATIONS

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** tabled the reply to Question No. 181, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding international aid to Russian or Belarusian organizations.

##### INTERNATIONAL TRADE, EXPORT PROMOTION, SMALL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT—INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** tabled the reply to Question No. 194, dated January 31, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding international trade.

##### TRANSPORT—VIDEO RELEASED BY MINISTER

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** tabled the reply to Question No. 195, dated January 31, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding a video released by the Minister of Transport.

##### HEALTH—NATIONAL COVID-19 ELECTRONIC VACCINATION PASSPORT

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** tabled the reply to Question No. 201, dated February 2, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Health Canada.

#### DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on March 24, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Housakos, concerning the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on May 17, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Martin, concerning credit card merchant fees.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on May 18, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Martin, concerning the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on June 21, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Martin, concerning fees to small businesses — Export Development Canada.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on June 21, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Martin, concerning fees to small businesses — Department of Finance Canada.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on June 21, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Martin, concerning fees to small businesses — Farm Credit Canada.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on June 21, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Martin, concerning fees to small businesses — Business Development Bank of Canada.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on June 21, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Martin, concerning fees to small businesses — Corporations Canada and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on October 6, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Omidvar, concerning the *Special Economic Measures Act*.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on November 22, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Marshall, concerning the Departmental Results Report.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on December 13, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Housakos, concerning the Embassy in Armenia.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on February 7, 2023, by the Honourable Senator Wells, concerning a Canadian airline crew detained abroad.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Leo Housakos on March 24, 2022)*

#### **Department of Finance Canada**

In Budget 2017, the government committed to invest \$256 million to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This represents the estimated Canadian dollar cost to purchase paid-in shares worth US\$199.1 million. The government has made four payments to date, each valued at US\$39.8 million.

The government remains committed to promoting strong and inclusive economic growth in Canada and around the world. As part of this, Canada is a member of several Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), including the AIIB. Canada's investment in this MDB is made alongside many like-minded shareholders, including Australia, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.

## FINANCE

### CREDIT CARD MERCHANT FEES

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on May 17, 2022)*

#### **Department of Finance Canada**

As announced in the 2022 Fall Economic Statement, the government is working with the payment card industry and businesses to lower credit card transaction fees for small businesses in a manner that does not adversely affect other businesses and protects existing reward points for consumers.

The government is moving quickly and has initiated discussions with payment card networks, financial institutions, acquirers, payment processors and business associations.

Concurrent with the Fall Economic Statement announcement, the government released draft legislative amendments to the *Payment Card Networks Act* and indicated that should the industry not come to an agreement in the coming months, it would introduce this legislation at the earliest possible opportunity in 2023 and move forward with regulating credit card transaction fees.

## CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

### FIRST-TIME HOME BUYER INCENTIVE

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on May 18, 2022)*

#### **Department of Finance Canada**

The First-Time Home Buyer Incentive, which launched in 2019, allows eligible first-time home buyers to lower their borrowing costs by sharing the cost of buying a home with the government.

In response to feedback from Canadians, in 2021 the Government of Canada expanded the eligibility criteria of the program to help Canadians seeking to purchase a home in the higher priced markets of Toronto, Vancouver, and Victoria.

Budget 2022 extended the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive by three years to March 31, 2025. The Government continues to assess options noted in Budget 2022 to make the program more flexible and responsive to the needs of first-time home buyers, including single-led households.

**FINANCE****FEEES TO SMALL BUSINESSES**

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on June 21, 2022)*

**Export Development Canada (EDC)**

Export Development Canada does not charge fees for any of our advisory services.

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on June 21, 2022)*

**Department of Finance Canada**

As announced in the 2022 Fall Economic Statement, the government is working with the payment card industry and businesses to lower credit card transaction fees for small businesses in a manner that does not adversely affect other businesses and protects existing reward points for consumers.

The government is moving quickly and has initiated discussions with payment card networks, financial institutions, acquirers, payment processors and business associations.

Concurrent with the Fall Economic Statement announcement, the government released draft legislative amendments to the *Payment Card Networks Act* and indicated that should the industry not come to an agreement in the coming months, it would introduce this legislation at the earliest possible opportunity in 2023 and move forward with regulating credit card transaction fees.

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on June 21, 2022)*

**Farm Credit Canada**

Farm Credit Canada does not currently charge fees for business advisory services such as mentorship and training.

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on June 21, 2022)*

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) offers a range of advisory services, such as mandates focusing on sales & marketing, operational efficiency, and digital technology, and charges fees for services that are delivered by consulting professionals. In addition, BDC offers tools, articles and advice free of charge on its website. BDC continues to revise its activities, including fees, to ensure alignment with current market conditions and the needs of Canadian small and medium sized businesses. More information regarding BDC's advisory services is available at the following website: <https://www.bdc.ca/en/consulting>.

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on June 21, 2022)*

Corporations Canada and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada continue to explore ways of making it easier and more affordable to start and grow a business in order to support small and medium-sized businesses in Canada. Corporations Canada conducts a fee review every 5 years and these have led to beneficial fee reductions in the past. For example, the last fee review process in 2019 led to a reduction of 40% in Annual Returns fees in 2020. As part of the next fee review process, Corporations Canada will assess the impact of an incorporation fee reduction with stakeholders and partners and seeking new ways to reduce business start-up costs, particularly for entrepreneurs where the cost of incorporation represents a systemic barrier.

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****SPECIAL ECONOMIC MEASURES ACT**

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Ratna Omidvar on October 6, 2022)*

**Global Affairs Canada (GAC)**

Canada is horrified by the Iranian regime's actions, which have culminated in the tragic killings of Mahsa Amini and hundreds of brave protestors.

Canada announced new measures to go even further, this includes:

- banning the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officials from Canada, forever;
- creating a new sanctions bureau and keep increasing sanctions on Iran;
- expanding ability to seize and freeze assets.

Canada has some of the toughest measures of any country in the world against the Iranian regime. Impunity is not an option. Canada stands with the Iranian people.

**FINANCE****DEPARTMENTAL RESULTS REPORT**

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Elizabeth Marshall on November 22, 2022)*

**Department of Finance Canada**

The department has prepared its Departmental Results Report (DRR) for the year ending March 31, 2022. The 2021-22 Departmental Results Reports were tabled by

Minister Fortier, President of the Treasury Board, in the House of Commons on behalf of all departments, on December 2, 2022.

As required by the *Financial Administration Act*, the Debt Management Report must be tabled in each House of Parliament annually within 30 sitting days of the tabling of the Public Accounts in the House of Commons. The Public Accounts were tabled on October 27, 2022 and *The Debt Management Report 2021-2022* was tabled in both houses of Parliament on December 14, 2022, which was within the legislative deadline.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### EMBASSY IN ARMENIA

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable Leo Housakos on December 13, 2022)*

On June 29, 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced an expansion of Canada's diplomatic presence and capacity in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Caucasus.

Following work and a report by Stéphane Dion, Canada's Special Envoy to the European Union and Europe, on ways to increase Canadian support for Armenian democracy, our government committed to open a full embassy with a resident ambassador in Yerevan, Armenia's capital. This will help build stronger bilateral ties and support Armenia in its democratic development.

As a step towards this commitment, and in light of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Canada – Armenia relations, it was further announced by Canada's Ambassador to Armenia, Alison LeClaire, on November 24, 2022, that a new consulate in Yerevan would be opened as of December 15, 2022, headed by Honorary Consul Vardges Avagyan. This consulate will offer essential consular services to Canadians living, studying, working, and travelling in Armenia, including emergency consular assistance and passport and citizenship services.

## TRANSPORT

### CANADIAN AIRLINE CREW DETAINED ABROAD

*(Response to question raised by the Honourable David M. Wells on February 7, 2023)*

#### Transport Canada

Transport Canada takes all allegations of incidents involving aviation safety and security seriously. The responsibility for aviation security at Punta Cana International Airport rests with the Dominican Republic.

The incident involving the Canadian crew that was detained occurred at the general aviation or private terminal of the airport, not the main terminal building where scheduled commercial flights to Canada operate.

The main terminal and commercial aircraft area are protected by several more layers of security, and are separate from the general aviation area. Transport Canada does not have the legal authority or mandate to conduct a criminal investigation in a foreign State and has respected the due process of the Dominican Republic criminal justice system.

Transport Canada made arrangements with the Dominican Republic's Cuerpo Especializado en Seguridad Aeroportuaria y de la Aviación Civil (CESAC) (Specialized Corps in Airport Security and Civil Aviation) to conduct an assessment of the airport. This was completed in February 2023. The assessment focused on commercial flights to Canada, and included a tour and review of the general aviation area.

No major security issues were discovered during this assessment. Transport Canada continues to collaborate with the civil aviation authority to encourage the continuous improvement of aviation security.

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## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION BILL

#### SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Audette, seconded by the Honourable Senator Mégie, for the second reading of Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. This is not a simple bill as some believe. A statement was made by a member of the transitional committee advising the reconciliation council for parliamentarians to take off their political caps when considering this bill. This was an ignorant remark and silencing tactic showing how little some Indigenous peoples understand what has happened to their own.

• (1500)

Reconciliation is not the simple act of removing a cap or passing legislation. When you are born already trapped in the Indian Act, you are not wearing a cap; you are a political entity. The oppressive systems of the act reshaped our identities,

communities, lives and spirits, and that violence still lives within us as First Nations. Understanding and unbraiding the complex racist colonial systems that were involved in the making of the Canadian state is a lifelong process. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC, stated:

The Survivors acted with courage and determination. We should do no less. It is time to commit to a process of reconciliation. . . .

The Senate has the responsibility to ensure that this process is doable and that it is transformative.

When I asked Minister Miller if he was open to amendments, he assured us that he was. As First Nations' lawyer Ken Young said, we have one chance to do this right. We need to ensure that it does not negatively impact or interfere with section 35 rights.

Honourable senators, the complexity of Bill C-29 involves the intentional lumping together of different peoples who have been impacted by colonialism in different ways: First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-status. Some are at different levels of engagement and some are not engaged at all with the federal and provincial governments, and we all have unique, unresolved issues specific to our histories. The Calls to Action are based on the stories of residential school survivors, so how are the people who didn't attend or aren't intergenerational residential school descendants going to be able to use the interpretation of reconciliation of this bill as based on the TRC? As Manitoba Métis Federation President David Chartrand said, "The vast majority of the TRC and its recommendations were aimed at reconciliation with First Nations." As such, First Nations should constitute 50 plus 1 of the committee membership.

In the book entitled *Visions of the Heart: Issues Involving Indigenous People in Canada*, Joyce Green, in the chapter on enacting reconciliation, writes:

. . . it is important to note that the Commission's terms of reference did not include consideration of the many day schools deployed for the same objectives as residential schools, nor did they permit consideration of or compensation of the many Métis and non-status Indian students who were the subjects of the same kinds of abuses and deprivations as were status Indian students.

To include the four Indigenous groups — First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-status, which includes many Sixties Scoop survivors — in one national council for reconciliation does a disservice to all. As I have said, each has different outstanding issues that have not been resolved by the federal government. All deserve to have their own version of reconciliation that is meaningful and transformative. Pitting one against the other, as we are doing in this bill, is not reconciliation.

Honourable senators, when considering the TRC's final report, conciliatory efforts are involved in Calls to Action 43 to 94 and will need to be monitored as per clause 7(b) of Bill C-29. Monitoring multiple calls to action is a huge task for one committee that involves disparate groups.

According to the Library of Parliament's gender-based analysis on this bill:

Other commissions and inquiries, including those covering matters related to diverse groups of Indigenous peoples, have recommended mechanisms to review implementation of their recommendations. For example, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and Girls . . . was mandated to 'report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls.' The National Inquiry published its final report in June 2019, which included 252 Calls for Justice. . . . However, Bill C-29 does not require the Council to examine the implementation of the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice.

The complexity of Bill C-29 involves individual and collective reconciliation for those who have been impacted by residential school. The majority will be First Nations. What, then, will reconciliation look like for the different groups of Métis and for the non-status, including the Sixties Scoop survivors? How can the committee determine reconciliation efforts when these varying histories and their effects have not been established?

Honourable senators, the uncertainty surrounding Bill C-29 includes the term "reconciliation" itself. Reconciliation has different meanings for different groups and its lack of definition in the bill will cause problems. In *The Sleeping Giant Awakens: Genocide, Indian Residential Schools and the Challenge of Conciliation*, by David B. MacDonald, the author states:

. . . *reconciliation* implies the need to revisit some point in time when relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers were productive, respectful, and healthy. Where the term *reconciliation* works better may be among Indigenous peoples, where various aspects of colonialism severely weakened some families and communities, introducing forms of lateral violence and inter-generational trauma, while also disrupting several millennia of interdependent relations with animals, plants, waters, and lands.

For greater clarity, the TRC defined "reconciliation" by stating:

It's about coming to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict and establishes a respectful and healthy relationship among people going forward. It is in the latter context that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has approached the question of reconciliation.

The report continues:

. . . there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgment of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.

In the same report, when the question was asked, “. . . how, given the history of the residential schools, could Canada be a better place,” survivor Victoria Grant-Boucher said:

I’m telling my story ... for the education of the Canadian general public ... [so that they] can understand what stolen identity is . . . how it affects people, how it affects an individual, how it affects family, how it affects community.... I think the non-Aboriginal person, Canadian, has to understand that a First Nations person has a culture.... And I think that we, as Aboriginal people, have so much to share if you just let us regain that knowledge.... And I also take to heart what Elders talk about ... we have to heal ourselves. We have to heal each other. And for Canada to heal, they have to allow us to heal before we can contribute. That’s what reconciliation means to me.

Allow us to heal before we can contribute — this is a profound statement. Individual healing is required. Collective community healing is required. These are both essential to further conciliation effects at institutional levels which will require different forms of action. Reconciliation will require “. . . real social, political, and economic change.”

Colleagues, when considering the individual healing that needs to occur, we must acknowledge that such healing will be a different journey from person to person, but it will also be markedly different between men and women. As Joyce Green writes in her paper entitled *Enacting Reconciliation*:

. . . colonialism has been gendered, thus, its effects are experienced differently by men and women, and reconciliation itself must be gendered. The Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) writes that “The ongoing violation of Indigenous women through systemic subjugation, marginalization and violence is a legacy of colonialism in Canada . . . .” NWAC notes that Indigenous women have also been subjected to intergenerational “gendered injustices of marginalization, dispossession and violence within their own communities as well as in the larger Canadian society” as a consequence of colonialism and the residential school experience . . . . The truth of this is evident in the numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women . . . .

• (1510)

Until the issue of gendered violence against women and girls is addressed, there can be no reconciliation.

Honourable senators, we must also reflect on Bill C-29 in light of this chamber’s recent passage of federal legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP. In the book *Pathways of Reconciliation*, author Sheryl Lightfoot states:

. . . the TRC linked reconciliation and implementation of the UN Declaration so tightly together that it is now simply impossible for one to support the TRC and not support full implementation of the UN Declaration.

She continues:

As a standard-setting tool, the forty-six articles of the UN Declaration are intended to guide state action toward relationships with Indigenous peoples; they are based on justice and serve as a framework of mutual recognition and respect, with the self-determination of Indigenous peoples at its core.

Lightfoot quotes S. James Anaya, former United Nations special rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples, who offered the following suggestions for steps toward UNDRIP implementation:

First, State officials as well as Indigenous leaders should receive training on the Declaration on the related international instruments, and on practical measures to implement the Declaration.

This training must be mandatory for the council’s committee members. Anaya continues:

Additionally, States should engage in comprehensive reviews of their existing legislation and administrative programmes to identify where they may be incompatible with the Declaration. . . . On the basis of such a review, the necessary legal and programmatic reforms should be developed and implemented in consultation with indigenous peoples.

States should be committed to devoting significant human and financial resources to the measures required to implement the Declaration. These resources will typically be required for the demarcation or return of indigenous lands, the development of culturally appropriate educational programmes, support for indigenous self-governance institutions and the many other measures contemplated by the Declaration.

Lightfoot concludes:

As the TRC *Summary Report* noted, ‘Studying the Declaration with a view to identifying its impacts on current government laws, policy and behaviour would enable Canada to develop a holistic version of reconciliation.’

Colleagues, the TRC rated reconciliation in UNDRIP as being intertwined variables. If we pride ourselves in collectively passing UNDRIP, why do we continue to pass legislation that



goes against the principles of UNDRIP, and accordingly against reconciliation itself?

Honourable senators, to have this bill be truly conciliatory, changes must be made to get it there. Under the heading Purpose and Functions, section 7(a) should be amended to say, “develop and implement a multi-year national action plan to advance reconciliation based on the framework of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

There are profound questions surrounding the lack of guaranteed funding. The issues with this bill are large, and the approach it takes is not conducive to reconciliation. I urge you to think about these matters when considering the bill. *Kinanâskomitin*. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Senator Brazeau, do you want to join the debate?

**Hon. Patrick Brazeau:** I have a question.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** I'm sorry, Senator McCallum's time is up.

[*English*]

Senator McCallum, we have a question. Do you wish to ask for five minutes?

**Senator McCallum:** Yes, please.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Do we have consent for five minutes?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**Senator Brazeau:** My question is with respect to the membership of this organization. Obviously, the government has decided to exclude one Indigenous organization called the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

Our Constitution gives us the definition of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada: It states that it includes — it is not limited to — the First Nations, Inuit and Métis. However, as far as I know, since 1969 and 1971, there has been close to five national, federally funded organizations. Are you aware of why this organization, when we are talking about reconciliation, is specifically and purposefully excluding one organization? I would like to know if you are aware of why that is.

**Senator McCallum:** Thank you for the question. No, I'm not aware of that. I did look into it, and, at one point, they were included. I saw this when I looked at the final report, and then they were removed at the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. I don't know what the reason for that was, but that is something that needs to be addressed in the committee.

When it goes to committee, I urge that this issue is not rushed through — we need at least two or three weeks of discussion because there are about 10 people that I will ask to present. Canadians need to know what the issues are behind this bill, and we need to do it justice. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Dalphond, for Senator Anderson, debate adjourned.)

**BILL TO AMEND THE CANADA ELECTIONS ACT AND  
THE REGULATION ADAPTING THE CANADA ELECTIONS  
ACT FOR THE PURPOSES OF A REFERENDUM  
(VOTING AGE)**

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McPhedran, seconded by the Honourable Senator White, for the second reading of Bill S-201, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Regulation Adapting the Canada Elections Act for the Purposes of a Referendum (voting age).

(On motion of Senator Tannas, debate adjourned.)

• (1520)

**CRIMINAL CODE**

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Wallin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Tannas, for the second reading of Bill S-248, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

**Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia:** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support of Bill S-248, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), introduced by Senator Wallin. I would like to thank Senator Wallin, whose continued advocacy for expanding eligibility for advance requests for medical assistance in dying, or MAID, is grounded in evidence-based research, compassion and a patient-centred approach.

This bill contains two main objectives, the first being that it would amend the Criminal Code to permit an individual whose death is not reasonably foreseeable to enter into a written agreement to receive MAID on a specified day if they lose capacity to consent prior to that day. The second objective is to permit an individual who has been diagnosed with a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability to make a written declaration to waive the requirement for final consent when receiving MAID if they lose capacity to consent, are suffering from symptoms outlined in their written declaration and have met all other relevant safeguards outlined in the Criminal Code.

In effect, this bill would allow competent persons to make advance requests for medical assistance in dying. In the most practical sense, it would broaden the range of options for patients who are faced with difficult circumstances and, at times, agonizing decisions.

Honourable senators, we have heard from Senators Wallin, Seidman and Kutcher, who delivered well-researched and articulate arguments as to why this bill needs to be further studied at committee. Senator Wallin's proposal for expanding the right to advanced requests for MAID isn't new. As Senator Seidman highlighted, it was a recommendation made more than six years ago to the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, which she was a member of, by many witnesses with knowledge and expertise in the areas of law, health and ethics. Senator Wallin also proposed this amendment last year during our study of Bill C-7, which passed in this chamber but was later rejected by the government of the day, who handed it over to the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying for further study and consideration.

I would like to commend the work of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, which, as we are all aware, has conducted a parliamentary review on some of the key issues in Bill C-7, including advanced requests. The committee, co-chaired by our honourable colleague Senator Martin, recently tabled their second report, *Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada: Choices for Canadians*. This work is supported by our honourable colleagues including Vice-Chair Senator Mégie and members Senators Dalphond, Kutcher and Wallin. I'd like to highlight that in this report, the committee recommends that the Government of Canada amend the Criminal Code to allow for advance requests following a diagnosis of a serious and incurable medical condition, disease or disorder leading to incapacity.

Honourable senators, legislation can often seem theoretical, distant and cold. However, Bill S-248 involves real people, real families and agonizingly real choices made in a context that cannot possibly be understood by those who have not lived or experienced it.

I recognize that this is a deeply emotional and polarizing issue, and I respect the deeply held moral and spiritual beliefs of many in this chamber that we should not be in the business of making it easier to end a human life.

My perspective on this issue comes from over 35 years as a practising physician and having the gut-wrenching experience of witnessing incurable medical conditions slowly and steadily destroy everything that resembles life and living. I have witnessed the harsh toll that these conditions take on both patients and their loved ones. And so, the polarity of emotions in my own head and mind seem to be at constant odds. This is indeed a sensitive subject with a strong emotional and spiritual foundation, and based on my lived experiences in caring for individuals with cognitive impairment, neurodegenerative disorders, brain tumours and other neurological diseases that slowly and steadily strip away so much of what makes us who we are.

Honourable senators, I have always marvelled at the complexity of the human brain. Weighing a mere 1.4 kg, it shapes so much of what it means to be human, and its

degeneration leaves behind sequelae that are heart-rending. Medical advances mean that we live longer and have a plethora of diagnostic and therapeutic options. The progress and understanding of medical science is indeed a marvel to behold. And yet, when it comes to understanding the brain, we remain somewhat in the dark.

Many of us have witnessed the effects of loss of cognition in our loved ones, friends and communities. The process is hardly ever linear. Plateaus and systematic decline are interwoven until all that remains is a shadow of what was a productive life.

In medical school, I had the opportunity to study dementia and neurocognitive disorders. During an elective in Edinburgh, Scotland, I had my first experience of working and studying in a "dementia unit," as it was called. It was here that I first witnessed the impact of the loss of higher function on loved ones and caregivers. I felt so helpless and forlorn, and this memory would come back to haunt and remind me of how very cruel this malady is as I took charge of caring for my own unit and individuals in various stages of cognitive decline in my beloved Twillingate.

Honourable senators, let me categorically state that I would never canvass, suggest, coerce or advise MAID. It is a decision that must and should always be left to the individual and their determination as to why, how or when they might seek such an option. If asked, I will offer all options for individuals and families to consider and include the key members of my team in that complex and emotionally charged process. I've often turned to clergy and psychologists myself for personal reflection, and perhaps redemption, when facing these questions.

My time in practice has taught me that even when every treatment option is offered to those in cognitive decline, there is a progressive point in some individuals that does cause irremediable pain and suffering, physical and emotional pain, searing dissociation that is caught in the eyes of the victim — haunting, cruel and unremitting.

Does life's moral compass always bend towards justice? I don't know the answer to that. But watching people that I've loved so dearly go through this agony has left me wounded and scarred. I have witnessed countless tragic and painful experiences: the angst of confusion, agitation, delirium, combativeness, personality changes, loss of bodily function, infections and often helplessness.

A dear friend once said to me, "Ravs, all I can remember is the pain and confusion in mum's eyes. All my other wonderful memories have been drowned out by this one image. What could we have done differently?" My answer is that I'm not sure. I'm hurting too. She knit me a pair of woollen socks, she baked me pies and she loved inviting me in for pea soup on Saturdays. She was so wise. I miss her, too.

We, as the providers of care, often feel the most helpless, trying our best to provide evidence-based care for our community members — people we know and love so dearly.

So yes, I've seen a lot of suffering and pain, and I do not have all the answers. But the memories linger and surface. There are the blood-curdling screams, aggression and agitation and cruel

verbal assaults on loved ones. Even when you know why it is happening, you live with it, day in and day out, in a state of disbelief and despondency.

• (1530)

So the difficult question arises repeatedly from patients: “What if I did not have to go through this? What if it did not have to be this way? Can I make this decision? What if I change my mind? Will I still go to heaven? I’m afraid. I can’t bear to watch my family agonize over me if I lose it altogether.”

Honourable colleagues, Bill S-248 offers competent patients options. It is our duty to assess whether those options are feasible in allowing Canadians the choice of how they wish to plan their lives when faced with such unbearable situations. This is an important piece of legislation. It requires all of our careful thought, consideration and study at the next legislative step at committee. Thank you, *wela’lin*.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

### NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER BILL

#### SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Ravalia, seconded by the Honourable Senator Duncan, for the second reading of Bill S-253, An Act respecting a national framework for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

**Hon. Salma Atallahjan:** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on Bill S-253, An Act respecting a national framework for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. I would like to thank Senator Ravalia for introducing this bill. We have been aware of the serious and lifetime consequences of prenatal alcohol exposure for over 40 years, and yet Canada continues to lack a comprehensive, coordinated national framework.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or FASD, is not only a health issue; it is fundamentally about Canadians’ human rights. As things stand now, countless Canadians may be needlessly struggling from a lack of formal diagnosis and support. As with many issues I have spoken to in this chamber, FASD is often found among vulnerable segments of the population. I believe one of the most heartbreaking aspects of prenatal alcohol exposure is that it is ultimately preventable.

Honourable colleagues, I will be brief, as I believe this bill to be simple, necessary and long overdue.

FASD is not to be taken lightly, as it is the leading cause of neurodevelopmental disability in the country, affecting approximately 4% of the population, which represents over a million Canadians. Of course, there are most likely many more,

but we lack the comprehensive data and accessible diagnostics to truly grasp the proportion of Canadians with FASD. Some are born with permanent brain damage, while others, exposed to large amounts of alcohol before they are born, suffer through withdrawal during the very first weeks of their lives. Among the primary disabilities of FASD are issues with memory, filtering out distractions and cognitive processing.

Senator Richards eloquently described the agony that children with fetal alcohol syndrome often live with. They are often unable to stand noise or physical touch, and they live in their own world. To make matters worse, they are susceptible to suggestion from a deep desire to connect with others and be loved. It is not surprising that many struggle to meet society’s age-based social and academic expectations.

Unfortunately, rates of FASD are much higher in certain segments of the population, such as low-income populations, children in care, individuals involved in the justice system, homeless Canadians and Indigenous communities. Research suggests that about 90% of individuals with FASD struggle with mental health issues, and nearly 60% find themselves involved with the justice system, either as an offender or as a victim.

Canadian researchers have estimated that among young offenders, youth with FASD are 19 times more likely to be incarcerated than youth without the disorder. Hence, Canadians with FASD are particularly vulnerable and may experience greater susceptibility to justice involvement and victimization.

The cognitive issues linked to FASD can also make it difficult to access housing, as they may struggle with time and money management, have memory issues and struggle to understand the consequences of their behaviours. Therefore, Canadians with FASD navigate a world in which they must live with the dual impacts of a cognitive impairment and environmental adversity, and they are more likely to experience homelessness.

According to a study exploring the lived experiences of individuals with FASD who are supported by the homeless-serving sector in Calgary, many individuals experiencing homelessness self-report a diagnosis of FASD. Studies also suggest that women experiencing homelessness tend to be more likely to have children with FASD, thus perpetuating a cycle of suffering.

Bill S-253 would require the Minister of Health to develop a national framework designed to support Canadians with FASD, their families and their caregivers. The framework would include measures to standardize guidelines, improve diagnostic and data-reporting tools, expand knowledge bases, facilitate information exchanges and increase public and professional awareness, to name but a few.

The research behind this bill is extensive and inclusive. I would like to congratulate Senator Ravalia on tackling this important yet often overlooked issue. I particularly believe that the required consultations with other ministers, representatives of the provincial and territorial governments, relevant stakeholders, Indigenous communities and organizations and any person or entity deemed appropriate will be crucial in the development of the framework.

My concerns regarding Bill S-253 have less to do with the bill itself and more to do with the Minister of Health's application of the consultation requirements. The discrepancy between a minister's perception of the success rate of consultations and the perception of those directly affected by the topic is often discussed in committee hearings. This has been particularly prevalent in the Human Rights Committee hearings on Islamophobia in Canada. I would be remiss to fail to highlight that recurring problem.

I was deeply moved by Senator Richards' speech a few weeks ago, and I would like to take a moment to thank my honourable colleague for sharing such a personal and moving story. It was eye-opening and heartbreaking. I cannot even begin to fathom the distress your sister-in-law must face every day, wondering how her brother is faring.

Honourable senators, Canadians with FASD deserve to grow up in a safe environment rather than face disproportionate incarceration, stigmatization, violence and rejection. When I walk in Ottawa, outside this very chamber, I wonder how many homeless folks I come across could have been spared such a life of hardship if they had been given a proper chance. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

## 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. Julie Miville-Dechéne:** Honourable senators, I rise at second reading to speak in support of Bill S-254, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (warning label on alcoholic beverages), which was introduced by Senator Patrick Brazeau and aims to add a cancer warning label to liquor bottles.

At times, our past calls out to us and guides our actions in this chamber. That is the case for me today.

My father was an alcoholic. He died, drunk and freezing, one bitterly cold January night in Quebec City, when I was eight years old. In my family, talking about my father and the ravages of alcohol has long been taboo.

[ Senator Atallahjan ]

That is why I have deep respect for Senator Brazeau's initiative, knowing that he managed to overcome this affliction for his own good and that of the people around him, and that he was brave enough to speak about it publicly.

• (1540)

Senator Brazeau also decided to draw on his personal experience to contribute to the legislative process in the hope of making a difference. He conducted research, mainly with labelling experts, in order to propose legislation. I thank him for that.

I have to say that the stars seem to be aligned for my colleague.

One month after introducing his bill, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction recommended the introduction of mandatory labelling of all alcoholic beverages with the number of standard drinks in a container and health warnings.

This same research centre advises the federal government on these matters. In its recent report, it caused shock waves by making draconian changes to the guidance on safe alcohol consumption based on new studies. The risk of negative outcomes associated with alcohol use is low for those who consume only two drinks or less per week.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction reports that three to six drinks per week increases the risk of developing certain types of cancer, such as breast, colon and rectal cancer. The fact that alcohol is a carcinogen that can cause at least seven types of cancer is often unknown or overlooked by the general public. Alcohol consumption causes nearly 7,000 cancer deaths every year in Canada.

In many ways, I'm surprised that warning labels on alcoholic beverages do not already exist. Consumer products are covered in warnings, sometimes going so far as to remind us not to eat dish soap or put our children in the microwave. In this context, while we have long been aware of the link between consuming alcohol and cancer, liver problems and cardiac disease, it is hard to understand why alcohol is exempt.

What is the reason for this apparent complacency? Senator Brazeau gave us a good hint when he talked about a study that was being conducted in Yukon about putting health warnings on bottles but was stopped after just 29 days as a result of pressure from the alcohol lobby.

To date, the provincial governments have also refused to take action. That may be because they consider the sale of alcohol to be profitable to their finances. Is that really true? In Quebec, for example, the SAQ pays \$1.2 billion in annual profits to the government. Conversely, however, the Institut national de santé publique estimates that the health, justice and loss of productivity costs associated with excessive alcohol consumption total \$2.8 billion per year.

When preparing this speech, I took a quick look at the federal regulations on the labelling of alcoholic beverages. There are pages and pages of technical details about sulfites, the origin and percentage of alcohol, the font size and even the placement of words, but there is absolutely nothing about the health risks.

Under Quebec regulations, labels cannot contain any information that could lead consumers to believe that drinking alcoholic beverages may be good for their health. That is a good thing. The Quebec regulations also indicate that the American or European health risk warnings are acceptable as long as they are written in French. In this case, I think that the protection of our language should be accompanied by a better protection of our livers.

For example, a label on a bottle may indicate that, according to the U.S. Surgeon General, drinking alcohol impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery and may cause health problems. However, there is no similar warning from the Canada or Quebec public health authorities. Unfortunately, in that regard, we are in good company. Most countries exempt alcohol from the labelling standards for psychoactive substances.

I think it is time to review those unwarranted exemptions.

Will a warning on the health risks change Canadians' drinking habits? That is the big question.

In reviewing the literature, I found that the studies were inconclusive. Still, the 2017 Yukon study showed that 20% of consumers felt better informed because of these warnings. Furthermore, participants in studies on improved labelling consistently and strongly support these measures.

Should we wait for unassailable scientific evidence of the effectiveness of these measures before changing the labels? I don't think so. Increased cancer risks for people who drink alcohol are real, scientifically proven and mostly unknown to the general public. I myself knew nothing about it. As in other areas, I support the precautionary principle. In this case, it's not about raising taxes or prohibiting alcohol. We're simply proposing a way to better inform the public. I would find it difficult to oppose such a simple and justifiable transparency measure.

Honest labelling is essential. Consumers have a right to know the risks and must have the tools to make informed choices. The choice is theirs, of course.

The industry's response so far has been predictable. The lobby claims that labels are ineffective and that it would be better to direct consumers to specialized resources, because cancer is a complex disease. However, it is well known that consumers rarely consult these external sources.

Alcohol is one of the leading causes of premature death and disability in Canada. The fact is that 81% of Canadians drink alcohol, and 31% drink too much.

It is time the public was properly informed about all the risks posed by what has become, in our society, the "social lubricant" of choice.

Labelling is one of the transparency tools available to public authorities. Let's use it without moderation.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

## ARAB HERITAGE MONTH BILL

### SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate)** moved second reading of Bill C-232, An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month.

He said: Honourable senators, I'm pleased to rise today as the Senate sponsor for Bill C-232, which would designate the month of April as Arab heritage month. Introduced in the other place by MP David McGuinty, the bill passed unanimously on March 28 of this year and is now here before this chamber.

Heritage months give Canadians the opportunity to celebrate their diversity and to engage in dialogue about their culture and that of others. We already celebrate several other months: Tamil, Irish, Asian, Caribbean, Italian, Portuguese, Islamic, Black, Sikh, Jewish, Indigenous, Filipino, German, Hispanic or Latin American and, of course, Women's History Month. In the coming weeks, I hope we can all vote to add Arab heritage month to this important list.

The first Arab immigrant to arrive in Canada was Ibrahim Abu Nadir, who settled in Montreal in 1882, some 140 years ago. Since then, the Arab communities in Canada have grown to over 1 million people. They are our neighbours, friends and colleagues. They are our teachers, nurses, doctors and lawyers. We eat in their restaurants, shop in their stores, dance to their music and read their books. Simply put, we share a life together in our great country.

Colleagues, it is fitting, proper and timely that we recognize the important contributions that Canadians of Arab origin make to our country — contributions that have been and continue to be remarkable in all sectors of Canadian society. But it's also important that we hear about their lived experience as they seek to build their lives in Canada. Recognizing April as Arab heritage month will give all Canadians the opportunity to do just that.

Many Canadians of Arab origin are very well known to Canadians even though not everyone may realize their backgrounds. Think of actor Keanu Reeves, rapper Belly, singer Zaho, comedian Rachid Badouri in my province and — and here I date myself, colleagues — pop stars Paul Anka and Andy Kim. There are politicians, such as premiers Joe and Robert Ghiz of Prince Edward Island, and the many past and current parliamentarians in both the House and here in this chamber.

• (1550)

There are business leaders such as Ablan Leon, who founded Leon's furniture company in 1909, or media personality Kevin O'Leary; journalists such as Mohamed Fahmy and Nahlah Ayed, both award-winning war correspondents and authors; and, of

course, Giller Prize winner and internationally acclaimed author Rawi Hage. There are athletes such as NHL veteran Nazem Kadri and Fabian Joseph, former captain of Canada's men's national ice hockey team and winner of two Olympic Games silver medals. The list goes on and on.

There are countless more Canadians of Arab origin whose contributions are equally impressive, but they are not as well known to the public, if indeed they are known at all. So let me take a few minutes to tell you about three people whom I have come to know and why they have made me proud to be the Senate sponsor of this bill.

Amal Elsana Alh'jooj is a graduate of McGill University with a doctorate in social work, and she's the former executive director of McGill's International Community Action Network. Born in an unrecognized Bedouin village in Israel's northern Negev, Amal is a determined advocate for the rights of Bedouins in Israel, for the rights of women within Bedouin communities and an active promoter of peacebuilding between communities both here in Canada and abroad. Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005, Amal has been the recipient of numerous awards for her human rights work. She has resided permanently in Montreal since 2012.

I first met Amal well over 20 years ago in connection with some philanthropic work I was doing on behalf of the Montreal Jewish community. I had the privilege of being part of several groundbreaking projects that she had initiated, and our working relationship quickly blossomed into a true friendship. Amal has taught me a great deal — about courage, about perseverance and, most of all, about how one person can affect real change both at home and globally. Her work here in Canada and abroad should serve as an inspiration to all who aspire to making our country and our world a better place.

[*Translation*]

The second person that I want to talk about is Karim Benyekhlef, a professor at the University of Montreal's faculty of law. Although he is not really known outside legal circles, he makes an important contribution to our country.

Karim is a world-renowned academic and innovator in the area of access to justice. In 1995, he founded the very first French online legal journal, *Lex Electronica*. He established the Cyberjustice Laboratory in 2010 and is currently its director. He is also leading a national and international project that seeks to put AI to work for defendants and justice system stakeholders in order to improve access to justice. Also, at the invitation of Justice Canada, he will represent Canada in the Canada-Europe dialogue on the digitalization of justice systems.

I met Karim for the first time over 30 years ago when I became a director on the board of the University of Montreal's research centre for public law, where I spent a sabbatical year in the 1980s. I got to know him even better during the eight years he served as the director of that research centre. I was, and still am, awed by his intelligence, his productivity and, most importantly, his commitment to exploring and promoting technology to improve access to justice for Canadians.

[*English*]

Finally, let me tell you about Khalid Elgazzar, a Canadian lawyer, indeed an Ottawa lawyer, of Egyptian origin, whom I met when I was the Senate sponsor of Bill C-59, An Act respecting national security matters.

I was introduced to Khalid by the father of a young boy who had been placed on the no-fly list when he was a young child — not because of anything he did or any threat he posed, simply because of his name. While travelling with his father, Sulemaan, to see his beloved Montreal Canadiens play the Maple Leafs, Adam Ahmed, a young boy, was flagged as a possible security threat. He was six years old. This happened a second time four years later, on another trip to see his favourite hockey team.

Now, Adam's father, Sulemaan, was one of the founders of the #NoFlyListKids group, which was a grassroots coalition determined to get the government to introduce changes to Canada's Passenger Protect Program that were embodied in Bill C-59.

Khalid Elgazzar was their legal counsel and partner. For four years, he worked with them behind the scenes, pro bono, as they sought to remedy an injustice suffered by thousands and thousands of Canadian kids. Sulemaan tells me that Khalid was critical to their success in achieving their goal.

But Khalid's commitment to help his fellow Canadians didn't end there. He was also part of Conquer COVID-19, a grassroots initiative that succeeded in delivering more than 3 million items of personal protective equipment into the hands of front-line health workers and vulnerable communities during the very early months of the pandemic.

Although he is unknown outside his own personal and professional circle, Khalid's commitment to social justice and to helping his fellow Canadians provides one more example of why this bill is so important.

Thus far, I have focused on a fraction of some of the many contributions made to Canada by Canadians of Arab origin, but there is another side to this story, a less flattering side and one that speaks to the individual experience of many Arab Canadians as they seek to integrate into Canadian life — a lived experience that further testifies to the importance of this bill.

All immigrants face difficulties and hardships when they arrive in a new country. Such was the case for those who came from Arab countries or the Maghreb or elsewhere. They and their children struggled against discrimination and exclusion in housing, in employment and in their day-to-day lives. But since the events of 9/11, the obstacles they face have increased, with attacks on individuals, on community centres and places of worship, a far-too-common reality for far too many.

Heritage months are primarily designed to celebrate culture, but they can serve to remind us of how easily a culture can be misrecognized and marginalized. Workable multiculturalism requires that we stay vigilant.

In my work with Ensemble pour le respect de la diversité, a not-for-profit organization in Montreal, we have, for over two decades now, been committed to combatting anti-Arab prejudice. Ensemble's team of experienced educators works with thousands of students every year to help them understand the repercussions of these prejudices and stereotypes on our fellow citizens and to provide support to those Arab Canadians who are the victims of bullying and stereotyping in our schools.

Recognizing April as Arab heritage month will give Canadians of Arab origin a chance not only to share and to showcase their culture with us but also to raise our awareness of the struggles they continue to face as they seek to make their lives in Canada.

Colleagues, we often talk about how diversity is our strength in Canada as a country, and I believe fervently that this is so, but for this diversity to be fully appreciated, for Canada to grow even stronger, we must create opportunities to learn about others and from each other as well.

Passing this bill represents one such opportunity. As eminent Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor reminds us, the recognition of our differences is not a simple courtesy we owe people; it is a vital human need. In implementing Arab heritage month, we recognize how integral Canadians of Arab origins have become to our Canadian identity.

I would like to conclude by reading into the record a quote from my dear friend Amal, which she provided to me yesterday. I will adjust it because I was to have spoken to this yesterday.

Yesterday, Tuesday, was, she writes:

. . . Mother's Day in the Arab world. The value of family, and especially the mother, is the foundation of Arab society. Marking April as Arab Heritage Month gives us — Arab Canadians — the opportunity to share our culture and talents with the general Canadian public, not only to learn, but also to celebrate with them.

Colleagues, as we fast approach the month of April, I ask you to join me in giving this bill speedy passage so that we may all participate in Arab heritage month this year. Thank you, colleagues.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Honourable senators, I see two senators rising, probably for questions. It is now four o'clock. Senator Gold has unlimited time. We will pick this up, with the questions, at the next sitting.

(Debate adjourned.)

*(At 4 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on September 21, 2022, the Senate adjourned until 2 p.m., tomorrow.)*

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