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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, November 28, 2023

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Leader of the Opposition who requests, pursuant to rule 4-3(1), that the time provided for the consideration of Senators' Statements be extended today for the purpose of paying tribute to the Honourable Hugh D. Segal whose death occurred on August 9, 2023.

I remind senators that pursuant to our Rules, each senator will be allowed only three minutes and they may speak only once.

However, is it agreed that we continue our tributes to our former colleague under Senators' Statements? We will therefore have up to 33 minutes for tributes. Any time remaining after tributes would be used for other statements.

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE LATE HONOURABLE HUGH SEGAL, C.M.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise today in sadness as we pay tribute to a former colleague; a pillar of the political community; a gentleman who is respected by those on the left, the right and in the middle; a celebrated author; an academic; a humorous pundit; a fiercely proud Canadian and a loving husband, father and loyal friend. The Honourable Hugh Segal died on August 9.

Within hours of his passing, accolades poured in from across the country and around the world, speaking volumes to the influence that Hugh had while in public life.

As Canada's special envoy to the Commonwealth, his impact and, by extrapolation, Canada's impact on the Commonwealth of nations was significant. In his travels to a dozen Commonwealth countries, his speeches and interviews held Canada up as an example of compassion, inclusion, decency and the rule of law.

The proudest day of his professional life was on July 10, 2010, when, as Canada's representative for the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, Hugh met with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. He marvelled how he, the son of a Montreal cab driver and a cashier at an all-night pharmacy, was in Buckingham

Palace shaking hands with the Queen. As he remarked to a friend, using some unparliamentary language, "How the . . . did this happen?"

Hugh, as I said, was fiercely patriotic. He wiped away tears every time he heard the first strains of *O Canada*.

When Senator Segal resigned in 2014, his farewell remarks were brief and pointed. There is no better way to sum up his view of this chamber than to quote Hugh himself. He said:

That this chamber and its members protect the freedom and opportunity that constitute the Canadian brand worldwide, welcoming always the immigrant and refugees who have made us . . . so strong.

That the francophone and anglophone duality of Canada always be protected and promoted

. . . that you are able to balance the partisan and other pressures to foster greater independence from the other place, not in competition with it . . . but in complementarity and sage pursuit of better laws and a better country, and that in that pursuit those who are outside the economic mainstream, who are poor, marginalized, left out and excluded are always highest on your list of priorities.

We can all learn a lesson from the life of this proud Conservative, the happy warrior, who demonstrated that decency and politics are not mutually exclusive, who rose to the challenge and proved that it is possible to disagree without being disagreeable.

I extend sincerest condolences to Hugh's wife, Donna; his daughter, Jacqueline; daughter-in-law, Teaghan; brothers, Seymour and Brian, his extended family and his many friends, among whom I'm proud to count myself. Thank you very much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, it is also with sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to a dear friend and former colleague, the Honourable Hugh Segal, who passed away on August 9. It is difficult to summarize Hugh Segal's life and accomplishments in just a few minutes or to fully capture his joyful, welcoming spirit and eternal optimism. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Born into a family of modest means in Montreal, values instilled in Senator Segal of the importance and dignity of work, fiscal responsibility and empathy for others stayed with him his entire life. One thing that he did not share with his family, however, was an affiliation with the Liberal Party. Although his father had been a campaign manager for a local Liberal MP, Hugh Segal proudly joined the Conservative Party as a 13-year-old in 1963, inspired by prime minister John Diefenbaker's commitment to human rights.

Who would have known back then that young boy would go on to be a trusted and key advisor to many of Canada's greatest Conservative leaders of the past 50 years — from Robert Stanfield to William Davis, to Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper. An extremely intelligent and articulate man, Hugh Segal enjoyed both the clash of the political debate and the painstaking work of policy-making. Since his passing, he has been described by many as a happy warrior, for good reason: No matter what side of the debate you were on, you knew he respected the exchange of ideas.

In August 2005, Hugh Segal was appointed to the Senate to represent Ontario on the advice of prime minister Paul Martin. And — surprise, surprise — he was not asked to sit as an independent; he was immediately welcomed into the Conservative caucus by the then-leader of the opposition, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper. He brought his curiosity, enthusiasm and compassion to every element of his work as a senator, including as chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

No matter what committee study, piece of legislation or motion that came before the Senate, Senator Segal stayed true to his convictions and acted accordingly. As prime minister Harper's special envoy to the Commonwealth, Senator Segal championed the core values that unite us as Canadians, particularly human, political and civil rights.

In 2019, Senator Segal, a member of the Jewish faith, gave an interview to an Anglican newspaper on the importance of a simple but profound concept. He said:

. . . if we believe in a balance between freedom and responsibility, and if we believe in community, one of the critical adhesives that keeps that all together is really hope. So we have to be honest about what are the threats to hope, and then we have to be serious about what we do to sustain and advance and deepen hope at every opportunity we have.

• (1410)

Honourable senators, Canadians still need hope today as much as they ever did. Hugh Segal never wavered from his hope for a bright future for all Canadians and worked his whole life to that end.

On behalf of all of his friends and the entire Conservative caucus, I send our deepest condolences to his wife Donna, their daughter Jacqueline and their entire family. May his memory be a blessing and may he rest in peace.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Senator Hugh Segal was a man of character. He was always fighting for the causes that mattered: the military, the Commonwealth, guaranteed annual income and always for Canadians in need. But as Hugh would describe it, he was simply a Conservative who believed in self-reliance and in that shared sense of obligation we have to one another. His kindness meant he always found a way to support you, even if he doubted your strategy or disagreed with your intent, and he would use his sense of humour and infectious laugh to bridge moments of real difference.

[Senator Plett]

Our friendship of more than 40 years began on the set of "Canada AM" every Thursday morning. The panel was partisan, but never personal. It was a time when friendships mattered more than political allegiance, and Hugh always tried to convince with a better idea, not a louder voice.

He charted a fascinating life course. He was a candidate, an ad man, a progressive, a conservative. He was in the back rooms and at the meeting tables. He was an author, a policy wonk and an academic.

And I know he would be appalled to be seeing what is happening on our university campuses and our streets, and the ill-informed hate that pervades. Hugh was a teacher, and he knew the importance of bringing facts to the fore. I wish he was here to help us through these troubling times to right the balance when this country needs it most.

He believed in a country that must offer freedom from fear as well as freedom from want, and that we must harness the tools necessary to protect those freedoms.

He was also a believer in market freedoms and free speech, provided there was respect for those with whom you disagreed because rights come with responsibility.

During the so-called Senate crisis, Hugh's interventions were powerful, and, personally, I am beyond grateful for his guidance. I am wearing the pin bequeathed to me that he wore when he delivered his farewell speech on the true role of the Upper Chamber. Sober second thought, sound judgment, reflective of the people we serve in our provinces and, above all, to champion the central and indisputable importance of the rule of law, due process and the presumption of innocence as cornerstones of our democracy. Simply put: Hugh believed in justice.

A final word today about his family: I want to thank Donna for sharing Hugh with us as much as she did. She was always the steady hand and the guiding light. And their daughter, Jacqueline, who at her recent wedding to Teaghan — it was beautiful — proved through her eloquent words that she is truly the combined DNA of passion and reason.

We are all wiser for having Hugh in our lives. He challenged us to take our citizenship more seriously, and his legacy will always be that we should expect more of ourselves and be better than we sometimes act. We will try, my friend. We will try.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Gwen Boniface: Honourable senators, on August 9, we lost one of Canada's political and policy heavyweights. And whether it be his self-deprecating humour, his quick-wittedness or his immersive stories of times past, Hugh Segal always found a way to draw you in and make you laugh.

Hugh was a lifelong Red Tory and had an innate ability to work across personalities and parties. This was evident in his appointment to the Senate as a Conservative by Prime Minister Paul Martin. But his history goes back decades.

Hugh was a pundit on “Canada AM,” a show that brought accessible politics to the nation and was hosted by our colleague Senator Wallin. Despite the political debates that would happen with Hugh, Liberal Michael Kirby and NDP Gerry Kaplan, a deep and lasting friendship emerged among the three of them.

As fate would have it, Hugh and Michael Kirby were both appointed to the Senate, and, in 2016, after they had both retired, co-penned a paper entitled *A House Undivided: Making Senate Independence Work*, a must-read for all new senators. Hugh was a fierce advocate for an independent Senate.

But Hugh’s independence didn’t stop at the functioning of this institution. He had quite the personal track record of independence too, practising what he preached. This was demonstrated during the Senate debates on Conservative private member’s Bill C-377, which sought disclosure of labour organization information.

Unions ran deep in the Segal household when growing up. Hugh’s grandfather, Benjamin Segal, helped to revive the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union. In response to a garment shop owner’s demand that production be doubled lest all be fired at the end of the workweek, Benjamin once exclaimed, “We walk out like human beings today or we crawl out like mice on Friday night!” His involvement was simply about dignity and self-respect for those who couldn’t make ends meet despite working hard every day, a true Segalian tradition.

Hugh came from humble beginnings, and he often quipped that he lived on the cheery side of poverty. Unions were important to him, and he deployed his childhood and his passion to rally many caucus members to accept his amendments to Bill C-377 before his retirement.

Hugh cultivated many friends, and I was lucky enough to be in that very long list. Over many years, he answered my calls for advice, insight and, yes, even commiseration.

My late father was a huge admirer of Premier Bill Davis, so his admiration of the premier and the office’s reputation preceded my first meeting with Hugh. I held Hugh in high esteem before I met him, and it only deepened as we became friends. His passion for an independent Senate and fighting for the underdog — be it rallying behind his colleagues in this chamber or implementing a basic income for all Canadians — were never far from his mind, even long after he left this place.

I join with my Independent Senators Group colleagues and others in giving our sincerest condolences to Hugh’s family. To his wife, Donna, his loving daughter, Jacqueline, his new daughter-in-law Teaghan, his brothers Seymour and Brian and his dog, Hamish.

Dear Hugh, I will miss you. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Bellemare: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to our former colleague I greatly admired, the Honourable Hugh Segal, who was appointed as a member of the

Order of Canada in 2003 and as an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2016. He had an extraordinary career in public policy, which included positions such as deputy minister at age 29, chief of staff to Prime Minister Mulroney, director of the Institute for Research on Public Policy, senator and master of Massey College.

Even though his father was a Liberal, Hugh Segal identified as a Conservative starting in his early teen years, and he always had a progressive view of politics.

When I was appointed to the Senate, I knew him by reputation. Although I am a year his senior, we share the same birthday. That piqued my curiosity and I wanted to get to know him better. He was a silent mentor for me. I observed his political positioning and tried to understand his strategic choices. He was very independent and did not always toe the party line. He stepped down in 2014 on a matter of principle.

Senator Segal applauded the changes made to the Senate as of 2015. He even proposed a model for the future in order to enshrine in law the permanent existence of four recognized groups to preserve the Senate’s institutional independence from the government in office.

The Honourable Hugh Segal was a historian by training. He was born in Montreal and a francophile. He always identified as a Progressive Conservative. He was a Red Tory in the noblest sense of the term, meaning that he was first and foremost a progressive who had the common interest at heart, but he was also a Conservative, because he preferred less state intervention rather than more.

One could say that Hugh Segal bore a certain physical resemblance to Winston Churchill, minus the cigar. In any case, he shared Mr. Churchill’s independent spirit and passion for what he believed in.

He was a committed politician and proud of it, but he was also an intellectual. To wit, he tried to get elected but never managed to do so. He wrote at least a dozen books and many articles in which he defended the ideals of peace and the goal of a world without poverty. The title of his book, published in 1996, *No Surrender: Reflections of a Happy Warrior in the Tory Crusade*, is a testament to the character of this great man.

• (1420)

Hugh Segal was an accomplished politician and brilliant orator. He could be incisive, but his sense of humour always shone through. It is not surprising that he was appointed principal of Toronto’s prestigious Massey College, which shapes the leaders of tomorrow. I sincerely hope that his exemplary career will inspire the leaders of today and tomorrow.

The Honourable Hugh Segal played politics with a capital P. As the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney pointed out, he understood that regardless of political stripe, cross-party cooperation is necessary to accomplish great things.

On behalf of the members of the Progressive Senate Group, I would like to express our deepest condolences to his wife, Donna, his daughter, Jacqueline, his brothers, Seymour and Brian, and all his family and friends.

Thank you.

[*English*]

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a very honourable member of our Senate family, the late senator Hugh Segal. He was a political strategist, author, commentator, academic and, as we have just heard, a remarkable senator whose work was impactful not only to the Senate as a whole but to overall policy-making in Canada.

Senator Segal's achievements are numerous. However, I rise today not only to recognize his many contributions and political principles but to acknowledge and remember his unique approach to politics, which allowed him to significantly contribute to shaping policy in our country. By espousing a moderate approach in conveying his political views, Senator Segal was effective in creating positive change for Canadians. Instead of using, as many do in politics, partisan attacks that feed political self-interest, he fought for the common good and social harmony by uniting all sides.

He stood up for his beliefs, regardless of the divergent views emanating from all sides of the political spectrum. Rather than engage in wedge politics, he fostered multi-party cooperation, bringing people together as opposed to dividing them. Understanding opposing views is a critical part of policy-making, and the Honourable Hugh Segal not only created a forum where all views could be heard but did so in a manner that was respectful and productive.

As former prime minister Brian Mulroney said, Senator Segal was "a particularly great man who served Canada well" and "as fine a Canadian citizen as you'll ever find."

Let us remember Senator Segal's many contributions and continue to implement his approach, one based on cooperation and respect, to bring much-needed support and positive change to Canadian lives. Colleagues, Canadian politics and democracy have lost a truly class act.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, both humble and humorous, brilliant and practical, generous and simple, kind, clear, concise and precise — rare amongst political figures — Hugh Segal was a man of principle who never flinched in the face of injustice, was quick to call out inequity and spent his life working to right many wrongs. His advice was always delivered with wisdom and wit, and his loyalty and commitment to truth and integrity were unparalleled.

Lauded by leaders and lay people alike, he always had time to mentor and guide those who had ideas or initiated thinking that he considered worthy of development and promotion. He was quick to support and champion the interests of those who are too often rendered voiceless or otherwise ignored and silenced by others.

[Senator Bellemare]

As a taxi driver told me when I was en route to his visitation, Hugh Segal was kind and caring, and was known and loved by every cabbie in Kingston. He said:

He was this important guy who hung out with us at the train station. He said he learned more about life meeting people who served others, from drivers to servers, than from all the hired researchers in Queen's Park or on Parliament Hill.

Hugh's father, like mine, helped to support his family by driving cabs. No matter his many accomplishments, honours and recognition, Hugh never lost sight of his roots.

Hugh wrote numerous books about public policy, but my all-time favourite is the one he gifted me with his personal message, thanking me for picking up the basic-income torch and continuing what he called "one Tory's lonely fight to end poverty in Canada."

For those of you who have not yet read *Bootstraps Need Boots*, I hope you do. It is particularly relevant right now. The title Hugh chose for his book echoes the Martin Luther King, Jr. quote with which he commences the book. It goes as follows:

It's all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, but it is cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps.

He stood up for the little guy, the least privileged in the face of crass, uncaring, capitalist, cutthroat politics and practice, and may we all emulate the incredible example set by this magnificent human.

Donna, Jacqueline, Teaghan and all of your family and friends, thank you for sharing Hugh with us.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators and family of the Honourable Hugh Segal, I endorse all the tributes made already and wish to add some brief additions.

In a low moment soon after I arrived in this place, Senator Segal took the time to listen and explain to me why independent senators are needed to strengthen and make our democracy more inclusive. We are facing the degradation of the "civil" in civility, in civil society and in civilization. As parliamentarians, we have a particular duty to defend and to strengthen our democracy.

Senator Hugh Segal was a parliamentarian with a vision and the courage to reach across political lines to work effectively on important, overarching issues deeply affecting our democracy. It was a loss when he left the Senate years before his mandatory

retirement. In the book that Senator Pate mentioned, *Bootstraps Need Boots: One Tory's Lonely Fight to End Poverty in Canada*, he wrote:

I believe firmly that the core freedoms from want and from fear, essential to any society's prospects, as well as to global peace and security, are best preserved [through] a basic income for all

His vision and leadership can be seen now in Bill S-233, sponsored by Senator Pate, and Bill C-223, sponsored by MP Leah Gazan, as the coordinated effort from within the Senate and House of Commons for access to a livable basic income, his dream.

Threats of nuclear strikes exposed in Russia's illegal war against Ukraine and in the Gaza crisis add to the significance of another example of Senator Segal's visionary leadership more than 13 years ago. In June 2010, when Senators Segal, Nancy Ruth and Roméo Dallaire, in keeping with initiatives by their predecessor, the Honourable Douglas Roche, led the Senate, joined months later by the House of Commons, in unanimously adopting the motion to ". . . recognize the danger posed by the proliferation of nuclear materials and technology to peace and security"

We would all benefit from his leadership during this greatest threat to civilization now. In adding this example of his visionary leadership, I wish to add honour and gratitude to his memory.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

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 Donna Segal, wife of the late Honourable Hugh Segal, and their daughter Jacqueline. They are accompanied by family members and friends.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE LATE HONOURABLE HUGH SEGAL, C.M.

SILENT TRIBUTE

The Hon. the Speaker: Donna, Jacqueline and other family members, friends and co-workers of the Honourable Hugh Segal, on behalf of all senators, I express my sincere condolences and share my deepest sympathies with you during this difficult time.

Honourable senators, I would ask that you all rise and join me in a minute of silence.

(Honourable senators then stood in silent tribute.)

• (1430)

ANTI-SEMITISM

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, once again, a Jewish community centre in my hometown of Montreal has come under violent attack, this time with a Molotov cocktail. This latest attack occurred at the Jewish Community Council of Montreal just after midnight on Monday. Thankfully, no one was present at the time, and damage is said to be minimal.

This is just the latest attack targeting the Jewish community in Montreal following several shootings a couple of weeks ago. The rise in anti-Semitism in my hometown and, indeed, across Canada and around the world is frightening, and the repeated violence and attacks on the Jewish community are despicable and indefensible.

We must all join our voices together in condemnation of these acts. Otherwise, we must recognize that in remaining silent or, as some parliamentarians have done, delegitimizing Israel's right to defend itself and falsely accusing them of war crimes, we are sending a message that it is open season on Jews in Canada and around the world.

Words matter, as so many of you have pointed out on so many occasions. We are sending a similar message of tacit approval when the authorities in this country allow calls for intifada and chants of "Death to Jews" on our streets to go unchecked.

Colleagues, if anti-Zionism isn't anti-Semitism, then why are Jewish businesses, Jewish community centres, Jewish schools being attacked in response to the war between Israel and Hamas?

It must end. I hope all of you agree with me that when we say that everyone deserves to feel safe, especially in their homes and in their work, that also includes Jewish people. All Canadians, including Jewish Canadians, deserve to feel safe.

Thank you, colleagues.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Patti Hill, International President of Lions Clubs International. She is accompanied by delegates from the Lions of Canada. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Hartling.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

LIONS CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

Hon. Nancy J. Hartling: Honourable senators, it is with great pleasure that I rise to acknowledge and appreciate the Lions of Canada, who are visiting us on Parliament Hill this week. Tonight, they are hosting a reception in the Valour Building, Room 228, between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., and all are welcome.

I first became acquainted with the Lions Club when I was a preteen. That's a few years ago, but I can remember it well. I took swimming lessons at the Lions Club, in a pool in Salisbury, New Brunswick. I loved spending my summers with my aunt, uncle, nanny and cousins. My Uncle Bill, a family doctor, was very involved with the village's Lions Club, and I was always impressed with their accomplishments, especially the wonderful swimming pool where I earned my swimming badges. It is just one of their great accomplishments, which they continue today.

What is the Lions Club? Since its inception in 1917, Lions Clubs International has made a huge impact on many issues. Their motto, "We Serve," includes five pillars of "Lionism": diabetes, vision, hunger, environment and disaster relief, and childhood cancer.

The heart of a Lion, or a Leo, beats for service.

They believe in changing the world by serving the needs of both local and international communities. More than 1.4 million Lions around the world respond to local and global challenges with kindness and care through their volunteer work.

One great example is in my hometown of Riverview. The Lions Club there was founded in 1960 and has been a vital part of Riverview. They evolved from a two-room schoolhouse to a club that is widely used by many and has increased its bookings from 350 to 700 annually, with 90% of the users being non-profit. The space has been renovated, and it's an amazing place to go.

They host fundraising activities, including many pancake breakfasts every year to raise funds and support local causes. These breakfasts are important not only for the funds that they raise but for community engagement. When I am home, I very much enjoy and appreciate these events.

It's a 100% volunteer organization, with volunteer hours that exceed 5,000 hours yearly. That is incredible service.

Thank you, Riverview Lions' Jerry Kirkpatrick, for your leadership and for providing me with information about your club. Thank you to all your club members. You've made a huge difference.

The Lions Club is appreciated for its service-journey approach towards personal and humanitarian fulfillment, with actions visible and with tangible impact. Our world is a better place because of your commitment, your contributions and your many volunteer hours of service.

Thank you, Dr. Patti Hill, President of Lions Clubs International, and your delegation for being with us today. Congratulations on your outstanding work.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for making such a difference in the world.

[*English*]

Thank you for being with us today.

[Senator Hartling]

FOOD BANKS CANADA

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, the holiday season is around the corner. Let's make it a happy holiday season for all. Let's help our local food banks.

Food banks are essential. The persistence of poverty inevitably begets food insecurity, underscoring the continued necessity of these charitable institutions.

Feed Ontario released a report yesterday, indicating that over 800,000 Ontarians used a food bank between April 2022 and March 2023.

[*Translation*]

In Quebec, the situation is similar. According to Food Banks of Quebec, nearly 900,000 people used a food bank every month this year.

According to the most recent data, 71% of food banks in Quebec did not have enough food to meet the needs of the public over the past year. That is why it is more important than ever to support community organizations across the country that serve our fellow citizens by offering them food and other essential products.

I am thinking, for example, about Moisson Montréal, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2024. Since 1984, this charitable organization has been collecting and distributing free donations of food throughout the year to Montrealers in need, by regularly serving more than 300 community organizations.

There are many organizations like Moisson Montréal across the province and from coast to coast.

[*English*]

According to Food Banks Canada, there are more than 4,750 food banks and community organizations across the country that work towards addressing hunger. Food banks are that rare business that actually wants to go out of business.

Honourable senators, once again, let's make it a happy holiday season for all. I encourage us and I invite all Canadians to volunteer at their local food banks during the holiday season. If you can, please donate food, essential goods or Christmas presents so that families and individuals in our communities can truly enjoy the holidays without having to choose between feeding their kids or heating their homes.

Here in the Senate, I hope senators and staff will contribute to our Toys for Tots campaign under the stewardship of our Honourable Speaker.

Together, let's help make the holidays just a little bit merrier and brighter for those in need.

Thank you.

• (1440)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES—NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the contributions of international students in Canada and the various challenges, such as fraud and physical, emotional, and sometimes sexual abuse, that many of them face.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON SICKLE CELL DISEASE BILL

PETITION TABLED

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table a petition from the residents of Alberta and Ontario expressing their support of Bill S-280, An Act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease.

[*English*]

QUESTION PERIOD

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, on November 16, the Windsor police said that 1,600 foreign workers would come here next week for work on the Stellantis battery plant, which is heavily subsidized with \$15 billion of Canadian taxpayers' money.

Since then, we have heard nothing but confusion from the Trudeau government. One Trudeau cabinet minister said only one foreign replacement worker was involved. The next day, another minister said it was a fairly small number. Last Thursday, the company said 900 workers would be coming. In turn, Canada's Building Trades Unions called this an insult to workers and taxpayers.

Leader, this mess could be cleared up today if the Trudeau government came clean with Canadians for once and released the contracts. Senator Gold, will you do so?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. The plant to which you are referring is an important contribution not only to our economy but also to positioning ourselves going forward.

My understanding is that the foreign workers to which you refer — the great majority of them — are essentially going to be here as temporary, visiting workers in order to help establish the plant and install the heavy grade equipment necessary. My understanding is that this project will create thousands of good-paying jobs for Canada. It's a project that is good for all Canadians and for our economy.

Senator Plett: No problem releasing the contracts. This is just another example of how the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. We learned on Friday that the Northvolt battery plant in Quebec will also employ hundreds of foreign workers, despite receiving \$7 billion from Canadian taxpayers. Volkswagen is also getting a massive subsidy to build a battery plant in Ontario to the tune of \$14 billion. How many foreign workers will Volkswagen bring to Canada, leader?

Senator Gold: Again, the use of temporary foreign workers to assist our economy is a well-established feature in all aspects of our economy to help Canada and our companies — in this particular case — set up and establish themselves properly for the future. It is the appropriate thing to do for the government and for the companies that are investing in Canada.

PUBLIC SAFETY

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Gold, on March 30, 2022, when I asked the then public safety minister Marco Mendicino about a foreign agent registry, he replied that the idea merits study. One year later, we had the same minister in the same chamber. I asked again, and he said that his government was in the midst of conducting robust public consultations, that significant progress had been made and that he was more than optimistic that a registry would be put in place in less than a year. That particular position was echoed in this place on a number of occasions by you yourself, Senator Gold.

We're within four months of another broken promise from this Trudeau government, and I guarantee we won't see any bill between now and Christmas. Will we see a foreign registry bill over on the House side between now and Christmas 2023?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and, again, for your advocacy on behalf of the foreign registry. The government has said — and I'll repeat — that it is actively working on developing a foreign agent registry. The government is committed to getting it right, and when it is ready to bring forward the plan and legislation, it will do so.

Senator Housakos: Senator colleagues, do you see how discombobulated this government is? Senator Gold, the Attorney General has now stated over the last few days that your government will not be introducing a foreign agent registry. So

what happened to all the consultations and optimism that were in your response to my question? The truth is that your government never had any intention of introducing a registry.

It has now been two years that we have been hearing this misinformation or disinformation. Is it a question of real incompetence on the part of the government, or is it just blatant dishonesty, period?

Senator Gold: It is neither, honourable colleague. Again, I think that your insinuations are not appropriate. I am advised that the government is still actively working on the registry, and if and when I'm advised otherwise, I will so report.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

THE LAW COMMISSION OF CANADA

Hon. Renée Dupuis: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, I didn't find a mandate letter for the new Minister of Justice who was appointed in 2023. However, the previous mandate letter addressed to the then-justice minister in December 2021 directed him to revive the Law Commission of Canada so it can provide independent advice on law reform needed on the complex legal issues Canadians face, such as systemic racism in the justice system.

In several of its reports on bills, the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs urged the government to undertake a substantial revision of the principles established in the Criminal Code in 1920, principles grounded in the values of the 19th century.

Senator Gold, did the Prime Minister give the commission he established a mandate to substantially revise the Criminal Code?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. I'm told that the Government of Canada announced the appointment of Professor Shauna Van Praagh, a long-time friend and colleague, as president of the Law Commission of Canada.

The government also appointed Sarah Elgazzar and Aidan Johnson as part-time commissioners in accordance with the Law Commission of Canada Act. I'll have an opportunity to meet with Professor Van Praagh in the weeks to come, so I'll get more information pertinent to your question then.

Senator Dupuis: If the minister has not done so already, when will the Law Commission of Canada be mandated to conduct such a revision? I understand that the commission can act on its own initiative, but if asked to do so by the minister, it would have to comply.

I would like to know when the commission will be mandated by the Minister of Justice to undertake this revision.

[Senator Housakos]

Senator Gold: If I understand correctly, the question has to do with the mandate of existing appointments. I will get more information to answer your question.

[English]

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD POLICY

Hon. Marty Deacon: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Last Monday, we celebrated National Child Day. A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to meet with the Canadian School Boards Association, representing trustees and chairs of school boards. Their number one issue was the health of students, particularly ensuring that students do not go to school hungry. This has never been more important with food bank usage up 41% from last year.

Canada remains the only G7 nation in the world without a national school food program. The government held consultations on this policy a year ago. I have asked this in yearly intervals since the Liberals campaigned on a school food program. I would like to ask again today: When will the government fulfill this commitment?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. It's important that all levels of government contribute and collaborate so that our kids can be properly nourished and therefore take the benefit of the education that we provide.

• (1450)

I'm not in a position to comment on the progress or discussions that may be taking place with regard to a national program. Again, at the risk of repeating myself, this is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, as we know, in terms of delivery of education in the provinces. But I certainly will make efforts to inform myself further.

Senator M. Deacon: Thank you. Yes, the schools are a provincial jurisdiction for sure, but we have had the promise of a national school food program. I want to reiterate we have these partners that are willing — in a very reasonable way, with good energy — to help and support the government that also keep asking the question.

Senator Gold: Again, the government is in active discussions with its provincial counterparts in the area of health, in the area of education, and I have every confidence that these are subjects that continue to be discussed at those levels.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Hon. Robert Black: Time and time again, Senator Gold, I have heard from rural Canadians that they are frustrated with the lack of attention paid to their regions. Residents in rural areas have had to tackle various infrastructure challenges to guarantee a secure environment for living, recreation and working within their communities.

Rural communities have a critical shortage of affordable housing options, yet it hasn't received the same attention as urban centres. Without affordable housing, many communities cannot prevent homelessness or help people through the housing continuum. In addition to providing community members with a safe and adequate place to live, affordable housing also strengthens social inclusion and promotes a sense of community, and so investing in rural infrastructure is an investment in the future.

My question to the Government Representative in the Senate is: What initiatives or programs is the government currently implementing to promote the development of affordable housing in rural communities? Can you outline the government's long-term strategy for sustainable, inclusive rural housing development?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator, for the question. The government is aware that rural communities have unique, and in some cases very dire, housing needs. I have been informed through the Rental Construction Financing Initiative within the National Housing Co-Investment Fund and the Rapid Housing Initiative, the government has already invested over \$523 million in affordable housing in rural communities.

In addition, an over \$16 billion investment in housing is being made through the Fall Economic Statement, and it will build upon these major investments in rural and remote housing.

Senator Black: Thank you. How does the government plan to adapt its approach to accommodate evolving demographic and economic trends in rural areas?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. I can assure colleagues that the government is very aware and mindful of the demographic issues and the changing economic trends in rural areas, and will continue to work to do its part to address the unique housing challenges faced in rural and remote communities.

INDUSTRY

INNOVATION

Hon. Marty Klyne: Senator Gold, according to a recent article in sciencepolicy.ca, Canada is falling behind other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or

OECD, countries in research and development investments, which is key to attracting and retaining the brightest, most creative and innovative minds.

In 2021, the Senate Prosperity Action Group report recommended greater focus, investment and execution in Canada transitioning to the fourth industrial revolution and specifically to the digital and intangible economy.

Three specific recommendations from that group follow: one, facilitating access to capital, including encouraging our financial institutions and pension plans to invest within our procurement system; two, positioning our innovative companies strategically within our procurement system; and three, building better partnerships between academic institutions and businesses, fostering commercialization of innovation.

Senator Gold, what is the government taking to raise our standing in the OECD on research and development?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The government recognized the important and indeed outstanding contribution that researchers and scientists make to the health, well-being and prosperity of all Canadians.

I'm advised that since 2018, the government has committed more than \$15 billion to support research and science across Canada. The government has added 600 new Canada graduate scholarships, and increased the duration of paid parental leave for scholarship and fellowship holders from 6 months to 12 months.

My understanding is the government has heard the call from the research community to increase the value of scholarships and fellowships. It will continue to work with the three federal granting agencies and the research community to continue to explore ways that it can better support the next generations of researchers and top talent this country can produce.

Senator Klyne: When it comes to innovation, the Senate Prosperity Action Group's report notes some factors holding Canada back. These include a national scarcity of C-suite talent with experience scaling up businesses, a shortage of skilled STEM talent with fierce global competition, a lack of affordable high-speed internet in parts of Canada and the slow adoption of technology by businesses and governments.

Senator, how will the government overcome these barriers to prosperity?

Senator Gold: Well, thank you for that important question, broad though it is. In order to support and nurture the folks with the skills to which you refer, I understand that the government is working with its agencies to develop new opportunities aimed at increasing science literacy and the participation of Canadians in STEM, including those from under-represented groups.

[Translation]

FINANCE

FEDERAL DEFICIT

Hon. Claude Carignan: My question is for the government leader.

Leader, the 2023 fall economic update states the following, and I quote:

Over the past three years, despite a volatile global economic environment, the government's responsible economic plan has enabled year-end financial results to consistently better annual deficit targets.

However, according to the economic statement, deficits in the coming years will be nearly double those projected in last March's budget. In fact, the deficit will reach \$27.1 billion in 2026-27 and \$23.8 billion in 2027-28, whereas eight months ago the forecasts were \$15.8 billion and \$14 billion for those same years.

Leader, did the minister reread her economic statement before delivering it?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): In this phase of the plan it has implemented, the government continues to ensure that our economic development is benefiting everyone. I am told it is working well. Over 10 million Canadians are working right now, in contrast to the period before the pandemic. Inflation continues to fall, and pay gains for workers are outpacing the rate of inflation. According to private-sector economists, it is quite possible, if not probable, that we will avoid the recession that was predicted not so long ago.

Senator Carignan: Leader, you did not answer my question.

The minister mentioned in her economic statement that she is still hitting her targets and even exceeding them. However, the economic statement says that the deficit will be twice the amount she announced.

My question was simple: Did the minister reread her speech before delivering it?

Senator Gold: The statement highlights the government's priorities. There are two major challenges the statement responds to: action to support Canadians, and action to address the housing crisis.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Leader, in October, Senator Plett and I both received written answers to questions regarding the contracts given to Accenture to run the Canada Emergency Business Account, or CEBA, loans program for small businesses. The answer states Export Development Canada implemented a disclosure process for contracts in December 2021 after Accenture was awarded the contract for CEBA. One of the answers shows that the Trudeau government entered into multiple contracts with Accenture after December 2021, yet these were never proactively disclosed. This includes four contracts from January and February of this year worth a combined \$60 million. Leader, what good is a disclosure process that keeps contracts like these hidden from Canadians?

• (1500)

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. It's my understanding that those contracts that were disclosed are those that can be disclosed under the terms of the contracts and whatever confidentiality requirements are at play. The government will continue to act responsibly in that regard.

Senator Martin: Leader, I specifically asked you when Minister Freeland and Minister Ng became aware of Accenture's involvement in the CEBA program. The answer I received did not even come close to answering my question. Leader, if access to information, transparency and accountability mean anything to your government, will you go back and ask them to answer my specific question: When did the ministers know?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. When senators ask questions to which I don't have the answers, I make every effort to get the answers. I'm glad that you received an answer but disappointed that it was not to your satisfaction. I will continue to do my best to get answers from the government to the questions senators ask.

[Translation]

HEALTH

NICOTINE PRODUCTS

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

Senator Gold, Health Canada has just approved the over-the-counter sale of flavoured nicotine pouches for oral use. These new products, which contain four milligrams of nicotine, are not regulated as tobacco products. They have been approved under the Natural Health Products Regulations, which do not provide for a minimum age for purchase.

We have been told that the target client base are adults who want to quit smoking. However, what the Canadian Cancer Society has shown us is that these new products are being advertised on social media, television and billboards near schools, and that they are “lifestyle” ads. Some experts and organizations recommend suspending the sale of these pouches and adopting regulations.

We’ve gone to great lengths as a society to protect our young people from smoking. Shouldn’t the government, as a precautionary measure, follow the recommendations of these organizations in a timely fashion?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. The government takes the marketing of nicotine-containing products to young people very seriously. Health Canada and the federal government will continue to do what it takes to protect Canadians.

[English]

Senator Petitioner: Senator Gold, in April, the Netherlands announced it was banning the sale of all types of nicotine pouches. Since October, the sale of nicotine pouches is no longer allowed in Belgium. Denmark is regulating the use of nicotine pouches under its existing tobacco law. Can you assure me that Canada is also going to take leadership and will not wait until damage is done?

Senator Gold: Thank you. I know that Health Canada and the Government of Canada will look carefully at the experience in other countries and continue to take that under consideration as it considers what steps to take.

PUBLIC SAFETY

ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: My question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate is about the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC. It is pervasive, widespread and the primary instrument that keeps a murderous Islamic regime in power in Iran. It is implicated in torture, kidnapping and executions, not just within but also possibly outside of Iran.

Leader, when will the government consider and take action on the two motions passed unanimously in the House of Commons and in this chamber? And if it will not, why not?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Well, as the Government Representative in the Senate, I’m pleased to again rise on this issue. The government takes very seriously, as do I, the pernicious role that the regime in Iran is taking, whether in its own country or all corners of the world. As I have stated on many occasions, senator, the government has taken very serious action to impose sanctions on large segments of the administration apparatus within the regime, banning IRGC officials from Canada forever and imposing sanctions on elites and the security forces, as well as on their economic and security apparatus. It will continue to consider further measures in order to register its abhorrence of the actions of the regime.

Senator Omidvar: Senator Gold, this is not some abstract idea that only reaches into the lives of Iranians in Iran. It is actually present here in Canada, with the unexplainable presence of visitors or residents in Canada who are associated with the IRGC. Iranians in Canada tell me that this is salt in the wound. What are we doing to prevent the arrival of individuals closely associated with the IRGC? How are we protecting Iranian Canadians?

Senator Gold: The government has done a great deal in order to identify — in a focused way that protects Iranian citizens, whether here or elsewhere, who are not part of the regime — and continue to monitor, as it generally does, all such activities to ensure that Canadians and Iranian citizens in Canada are protected.

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

HOSPITALITY EXPENSES

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, one in five Canadians are skipping meals, and 2 million Canadians rely on food banks. In fact, a record 800,000 people in Ontario are relying on food banks, including one out of ten people in our largest city of Toronto. Canadian families are also eating less nutritious foods because they simply cannot afford to feed themselves. Amid this suffering, last year, 39 members of Prime Minister Trudeau’s cabinet spent \$46,000 on catering during a three-day retreat focused on — get this — affordability.

During this year’s affordability retreat for the Trudeau cabinet, our out-of-touch Prime Minister’s very own department spent \$160,000 on lodging and transportation. Leader, when people are using food banks and going hungry, how can you justify this?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The Government of Canada has taken important measures to assist Canadians who are going through this difficult time. That includes the support that it continues to provide for Canadians of modest incomes, whether it’s in regard to housing or food. In addition, the government has introduced, in the other place, additional measures to enhance competition, including in the food industry. It will continue to take the appropriate measures within its jurisdiction to assist Canadians during these difficult times.

Senator Plett: Leader, this year’s edition of the Trudeau cabinet’s affordability retreat took place in Charlottetown, where one third of food bank users are people who have jobs, according to Food Banks Canada. The \$160,000 I just mentioned was only the amount spent by the Privy Council. Leader, can you tell us how much the Trudeau government spent in total on this year’s so-called affordability retreat?

Senator Gold: Senator, thank you for your question. The fact remains that the Government of Canada is, remains and will continue to be committed to doing real things on the ground for real people. It will continue to do what it can, within its means and jurisdiction, to assist Canadians through these difficult times.

CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

• (1510)

Senator Gold, a representative from the Government Representative Office, or GRO, recently told me that the GRO had received a directive from cabinet that stipulates the government will not be accepting any additional amendments to Bill C-29. Moreover, if an amendment occurred at third reading, the government would be prepared to reject it.

I have sent a message to the minister requesting information on this, but I have yet to receive a response. As such, Senator Gold, can you please respond as to why cabinet would interfere in the work that I and other senators do in the Senate?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): With the greatest of respect, senator, your information or assumptions are not correct. To the best of my knowledge — I am the Government Representative in the Senate, and I sit on a cabinet committee — we have received no such directive, and we do not receive directives from cabinet vis-à-vis matters of that kind.

Moreover, the Government of Canada respects the work of the Senate. It does not necessarily agree with every amendment that may be proposed — and certainly not every amendment that may be passed by the Senate — but the record of this government stands in very significant contradistinction to the record of any previous government in the history of the Senate in terms of showing respect for the Senate's work and accepting a significant number of amendments.

I will certainly look into this matter, senator, but, respectfully, I do believe that the information to which you refer is not correct.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Seidman, seconded by the Honourable Senator Poirier, for the adoption of the first report of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, entitled *Consideration of an Inquiry Report from the Senate Ethics Officer*, presented in the Senate on November 21, 2023.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 12-29(2), a decision cannot be taken on this report, as yet. Debate on the report, unless some other senator wishes to adjourn the matter, will be deemed adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate.

Is that agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Pursuant to rule 12-29(2), further debate on the motion was adjourned until the next sitting.)

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION BILL

THIRD READING—DEBATE

On the Order:

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

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, *kwe, tansi*. As a senator for Manitoba, I recognize that I live on Treaty 1 territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

I acknowledge that the Parliament of Canada is situated on unceded and unsurrendered Algonquin Anishinaabe territory.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-29, an act to establish a national council for reconciliation. I support this legislation. I intend to vote in favour of it, and I hope to do so today. I hope Bill C-29 will receive the same unanimous support here as it did in the other place.

I want to acknowledge everyone who supported this bill in committee and participated in debate at each stage. I especially want to thank Senator Audette for her leadership and collaborative approach to shepherding this bill through the Senate.

[English]

Bill C-29 responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 53 to 56, which called for an independent national council empowered to monitor and evaluate government accountability for reconciliation efforts; to establish national action plans in furtherance of this goal; and, in other ways, to promote public dialogue and to foster reconciliation across all levels and sectors of Canadian society.

In his third-reading remarks, Senator Klyne highlighted the urgency and obligation we have to pass this bill into law. He also eloquently touched upon our accountability and responsibility in this chamber. He said:

When it comes to reconciliation, good enough is never good enough. Indigenous nations and federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments and legislatures must constantly be working to strengthen relationships and achieve the best possible results. Honesty, courage and criticism are essential to progress in society

Good enough is never good enough. In that spirit, I wish to highlight a small but significant issue that merits our attention regarding the distinctions between First Nations and Métis peoples' historical land use, occupation and governance.

On November 15, a letter written by Grand Chief Cathy Merrick of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs was delivered to the Prime Minister. Senators all received a copy of this correspondence, and I will now quote extracts from Grand Chief Merrick's letter to help explain the amendment that I will propose to you today:

Dear Prime Minister:

On behalf of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, or AMC, I write to you today to address a concerning misconception amongst Canadian politicians about the distinctions between First Nations and Métis peoples' land use, occupation and governance. The AMC is aware that an amendment to Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation, proposed by Senator Mary Jane McCallum in a recent debate of the Senate, failed to pass. The proposed amendment was in reference to the preamble, which states that Indigenous peoples have lived and governed these lands since time immemorial.

Senator McCallum sought to correct an inaccuracy associated with overgeneralization of the term "Indigenous" by replacing it with "First Nations and Inuit peoples" in order to reflect the lived realities of the three distinct groups commonly referred to as "Indigenous."

The AMC is concerned that the content of the debate, and subsequent failure of the Senate to pass the amendment, reflects a lack of knowledge that Canadian politicians have in regard to the unique histories of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Accordingly, I would like to take the opportunity to provide education on this topic. Out of respect for the multi-juridical nature of Canada and the many legal orders that comprise it, I cite both First Nations and Canadian law in the following explanation.

Prior to European contact, First Nations existed on the lands now known as Canada since time immemorial, with our own unique laws and rights derived from the Creator. This truth is echoed across the sacred creation stories of First Nations in Manitoba, and Canada more broadly. Creation stories have multiple versions, each of which is true. They are passed down over generations by elders who teach us to know who we are and understand our spiritual relationship with the land. For a fulsome example, I refer you to D'Arcy

Linklater et al., *Ka'esi Wahkotumahk Aski, Our Relations With The Land: Treaty Elders' Teachings, Volume 2*, where Anishinaabe Elder Ken Courchene sets out the origins of Turtle Island. Through this sacred story, he confirms that the Anishinaabe were gifted with their lands and traditional territories by the Creator.

Anishinaabe Elder Donald Catcheway further affirms that the Creator placed the Anishinaabe on the land first and gave them responsibility and stewardship over it. As such, the Anishinaabe have an obligation to care for the land, which is tied to their ability to learn from it and enjoy its gifts.

In more recent history, First Nations have exercised their own sovereignty alongside the Crown's assumed sovereignty through negotiated treaties and in respect of our sovereign nationhood. In contrast, the Métis people, many of whom are our relatives, arose only after contact with the Europeans. This distinction cannot be overlooked, because it informs the rights and obligations that our people owe and are owed.

In *R. v. Desautel*, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed:

. . . the Aboriginal peoples of Canada under s. 35(1) are the modern successors of those Aboriginal societies that occupied Canadian territory at the time of European contact

At the same time, the court clarified that there are distinctions between First Nations and Métis section 35 rights "Because Métis communities arose after contact between our Aboriginal peoples and Europeans . . ." The court emphasized its previous opinion in *R v. van der Peet* that:

The manner in which the aboriginal rights of other aboriginal peoples are defined is not necessarily determinative of the manner in which the aboriginal rights of the Métis are defined.

Likewise, in *R v. Powley* —

• (1520)

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Sorry, Senator McPhedran, but there is a buzzing that can be heard every once in a while. Colleagues, could you make sure that your telephones are off? The microphones are picking this up and that's what we're hearing every once in a while, especially if it's near a microphone. Thank you. Please continue, Senator McPhedran.

Senator McPhedran: The letter continues:

This approach accords with the courts subsequent decision in *R v. Desautel*, which recognizes the distinctions between the section 35 rights of First Nations and Métis based on their history of land use, occupation and governance. First Nations and Canadian law are consistent in this matter. First Nations have lived and governed these lands since time immemorial, while the Métis originated after European contact. Ignoring this fact promotes insensitive overgeneralizations and prioritizes the use of inclusive language over truth. These actions are contrary to your

government's reconciliation efforts and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's assertion that, "Without truth, justice and healing, there can be no genuine reconciliation."

Sincerely,

Grand Chief Kathy Merrick,

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

Honourable colleagues, I have considered the position put forward by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and I am guided by Grand Chief Merrick. As senators and legislators, we are all very aware of the power of words and the need for clarity and precision.

The good intent of this legislation is evident, but good enough is not good enough. We can all recognize that. When clarity can be brought to an issue, it only serves to strengthen the whole and to strengthen the law. No legislation is ever perfect, but in instances where a clear remedy is available to us as senators, we should act.

Acknowledging this distinction and providing for greater precision in language does not in any way diminish the intent, content or operability of this legislation. This proposed amendment provides clarity where it has been requested by people who are directly affected but cannot speak here in this chamber. This amendment responds to the concerns brought forward by Senate colleagues and by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs from my province.

Some say that a preamble is unimportant, it has limited effect and it can be viewed as aspirational signalling. In fact, a preamble serves a role and can be an interpretive aid in the event of ambiguity in a substantive provision of a statute.

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Therefore, honourable senators, in amendment, I move:

That Bill C-29, as amended, be not now read a third time, but that it be further amended in the preamble, on page 1, by replacing lines 1 and 2 with the following:

"Whereas, since time immemorial, First Nations and Inuit peoples — and, post-contact, the Métis Nation — have thrived on and managed and governed".

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, I rise to speak in support of Senator McPhedran's amendment to Bill C-29, the national council for reconciliation act.

Colleagues, the term "time immemorial" has been used in many research articles, books and documents; it has been used by First Nations leaders, Elders, knowledge keepers and scholars. In our First Nations ways of being and knowing, it is a tribute to our

connection to Creator and in our prayers, in Cree, we say *kâkike*, *kâkike*; forever and ever. It is a reminder of our sacred responsibility to the seven generations before us and that these ancestors also had their seven generations before them. It is also a reminder of our responsibility to the generations yet to come, including my grandson's seven generations.

I now speak to the term "time immemorial" from a Cree perspective. In the book entitled *Untuwe Pi Kin He Who We Are: Treaty Elders' Teachings Volume I*, Nisichawayasi Nehetho Nation and Kihche'otthasowewin — the Great Law of the Creator, Elder D'Arcy Linklater shares the great law of the creator from the Nisichawayasi Nehetho perspective. This is comprised of 12 laws of which the fourth states *Aski Kanache Pumenikewin*, which means that the conduct of a person must be in accordance with the sacred duty to protect *N'tuskenan*, the land, life, home and spiritual shelter entrusted to us by *Kihche'manitou*, for our children, *michimahch'ohc*. That is a different form of time immemorial.

Honourable senators, I spoke yesterday to Elder Claudette Commanda at the installation of the Indigenous Chiropractors Caucus. In her prayers, she said that her ancestors from Kitigan Zibi First Nation have been here since time immemorial and their lands remain unceded today. These are the lands we stand on. The First Nations knowledge of the term "time immemorial" and seven generations is uniquely situated on Turtle Island and keeping the land pristine.

I would like to draw your attention to the April 2019 report by the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal peoples entitled *How Did We Get Here? A Concise, Unvarnished Account of the History of the Relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canada*. This report's section entitled, "From Sovereign Nations to Wards of the State: The Story of First Nations' Relationship with the Crown" has a subsection entitled "From Time Immemorial: The Life of First Nations Before the Arrival of Settlers," where it states:

For thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans, First Nations lived on their traditional territories, depending on the lands and waters around them for sustenance. First Nations relationships to the land were a central part of their identity, as reflected in the diversity of cultures, laws, languages, ways of life and forms of governance that flourished across the area that is now Canada. . . .

The report continues:

When newcomers first arrived on the shores of Eastern Canada, they brought with them ideas about the land and the Indigenous inhabitants of the country, embodied in the concepts of *terra nullius* and the doctrine of discovery. . . . As explained by Elder Fred Kelly, the concept of *terra nullius* allowed 'a discoverer ... [to] occupy the land by virtue of the fact that there is nobody there other than the animals'; this essentially allowed a discoverer to overlook the presence of Indigenous Peoples who were living on that land. A related concept, the doctrine of discovery 'held that the discovery of such lands gave the discovering nation immediate sovereignty and all right and title to it.

In contrast, First Nations relied on the land for their sustenance — hunting, fishing or farming to feed their families and communities. For the Cree, land is ‘not about ownership and money.’ Instead, Cree People have a holistic understanding of land reflected in the concept of *uski*, which ‘includes all living things, such as the animals, plants, the trees, the fish, the rivers, the lakes and...the rocks...[and] also includes our concept of the sky world.’ The Cree view the land as integral to their culture, language and identity, and recognize that humans ‘are only a small part of our environment and...totally dependent on *uski* for their survival.’

• (1530)

The Government of Canada website, regarding the UNDRIP, or United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, Action Plan, in “Chapter 1: Shared priorities,” states:

As a preliminary note to this Chapter, Canada recognizes that the UN Declaration Act states that “measures to implement the Declaration in Canada must take into account the diversity of Indigenous peoples and, in particular, the diversity of the identities, cultures, languages, customs, practices, rights and legal traditions of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis and of their institutions and governance structures, their relationships to the land and Indigenous knowledge.”

Canada recognizes that while some priorities may be shared among First Nations, Inuit and Métis, adopting a distinctions-based approach requires that Canada’s relationships and engagement with First Nations, Inuit and Métis include different approaches or actions and result in different outcomes. . . .

Honourable senators, in legal terms, “time immemorial” originated in English common law, where it referred to a legal concept signifying a period way back in time where there is no recollection of record to prove a custom, right or claim.

In the U.K., a statute of the year 1275 said that the time before King Richard I’s reign or 1189 was declared to be time immemorial.

You will see the difference here between how the two define the word.

Colleagues, much of the remaining information I will share is taken from a book published by the Thompson Rivers University entitled *Histories of Indigenous Peoples and Canada*, which reads:

Canadians — including many Indigenous people — came to understand Indigenous histories as tangential, small, unimportant, and even a blind alley. This kind of thinking enabled Canadian authorities and citizens to regard Indigenous communities as being “without history,” as in, *outside* of history. And no one outside of history is going to fare very well . . . We — all of us — are those Canadians invited to engage in the Truth and Reconciliation process.

Some truths are unknowable but what we *can* know, what truths we can distill from the past will be essential to the long hard climb toward reconciliation.

One common form of histories across cultures is that they legitimate a society’s claim to be where it is. . . . For millennia, Indigenous history was maintained by many means —

— including oral history.

Privileging the written word, European and Euro-Canadian historians overwhelmingly disregarded and sometimes disparaged the oral tradition. In New France, British North America, and Canada, the colonialist strategy was more subtle: it simply denied the existence of a historic past [of the First Nations]. Since material records by First Nations were dependent on an interpreter, these skills became less common as alien diseases, warfare and relocation interrupted the connection between the past and its heirs and hence the importance of oral history.

The book continues:

A systematic academic archaeological dig that stretched from the 1880s to the 1950s in Marpole Midden, a traditional village and burial site of enormous importance, pointed to occupation that stretched back at least fifteen hundred years and abandonment sometime in the mid-1700s. . . . The *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper in 1948 took the view that, whoever they were, the people whose remains constitute the Marpole Midden “. . . were not Indians certainly.” This tendency to deny a history before colonization survives in the practice among some scholars and commentators — still found in some quarters today — to refer to the period before the arrival of Europeans as “pre-historic.” This alleged absence . . . allowed newcomers to write their own history over top of Indigenous Histories . . . Europeans in the early contact period might transcribe Indigenous voices, but that is always filtered through the Europeans’ lens of what is important and how they understood the speaker. For example, they were more likely to journal about beaver pelts than . . . Cree moral debates and Ktunaxa understandings of the past.

Honourable senators, we must ensure that, as educated and civilized champions of the marginalized, we do not continue to place First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories into a monolith, and that we do not adopt legislation that, once again, ignores First Nations histories.

We have to ensure that we do the right thing and continue to accurately place First Nations within Canadian history. What remains problematic is the persistent use of the term “Indigenous”; it remains a form of assimilation.

Colleagues, when Bruce Trigger broadened historical approaches now described as ethno-history, he was able to transform understandings of the pre-, proto- and post-contact history of the Wendat.

At first, Western scholars were astonished that Indigenous knowledge included centuries-old elements. One example included:

The Heiltsuk, a.k.a. Bella Bella, people's history and their insistence that their direct ancestors lived in their region for many millennia; recent archaeological evidence validates this claim back about fourteen thousand years.

"Vindication" may seem like the right word here, but it has been more like an education. Euro-Canadian society as a whole has been slow to grasp the strength and depth of Indigenous historical knowledge . . . Indigenous societies speak of knowledge keepers, not necessarily knowledge providers. Under no obligation to disclose their historical knowledge, Indigenous peoples nevertheless have the right to demand truthfulness in historical studies —

— and in this case, truthfulness in legislation.

Honourable senators, changing the wording in the amendment — to reflect the truth — is not about denying the status and authority of the Métis. It was never about excluding.

My intention, and the intention of the amendment before us, is in regard to historical accuracy. Such an amendment is not signalling that Métis are of lesser importance. It is a historical fact that they came later in Canadian society because of the Métis shared biology between a First Nations woman and a European man.

Honourable senators, if we deny historical accuracy, then we are facilitating a harmful illusion of Canada's history that will ultimately have deleterious impacts on First Nations rights, history and culture.

We must be resolute that we approach our work in giving sober second thought with diligence, and that includes ensuring the legislation we pass is fundamentally accurate.

In the book entitled *We All Go Back to the Land: The Who, Why, and How of Land Acknowledgements*, author Suzanne Keptwo states:

Although the Land Acknowledgement is perceived as a relatively new phenomenon, it prompts mainstream Canadians to re-imagine an inhabited world — a world prior to European settlement, that is unlike any other —

• (1540)

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator McCallum, I'm sorry, your time for debate has expired.

Senator McCallum: I will be three minutes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator McCallum: Thank you.

[Senator McCallum]

. . . to re-imagine an inhabited world — a world prior to European settlement, that is unlike any other, and that will never be the same. The descendants of that world are still here, still striving to be understood and to remain connected to a Land that has been drastically altered. And, yes, that connection to the Land is typically perceived as political. That connection remains an ongoing reality lasting for hundreds of years now.

Colleagues, I urge you to support Senator McPhedran's thoughtful amendment. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

2023 FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette rose pursuant to notice of Senator LaBoucane-Benson on November 22, 2023:

That she will call the attention of the Senate to the *2023 Fall Economic Statement*, tabled in the House of Commons on November 21, 2023, by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P., and in the Senate on November 22, 2023.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to last week's Fall Economic Statement. The statement provided relief to many Canadians on some key economic concerns regarding a crackdown on excessive cellphone fees and banking fees, which are issues that I have been pointing out for many years.

Another issue that I have been attacking at our Banking Committee in regard to housing affordability is the rigid rules imposed by the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, or OSFI, on our financial institutions for mortgages. The federal government is now calling on our financial institutions to allow a longer mortgage period to relieve the pressure of high interest rates for homeowners as we move to decrease inflation, notwithstanding that most of the inflation has been caused by petroleum companies doubling their profits in the last years.

The Fall Economic Statement also touches on a recent announcement of a pause for home heating oil, which allows me today to make clarifications.

Colleagues, for many years, I have sat here listening to budget bills that provided billions of dollars to urban communities for their transit systems. Since 2015, the federal government has announced \$13 billion to upgrade urban transit systems. In the last budget, they announced an additional \$14.9 billion, which constitutes a total of \$27.9 billion for urban transit only.

During these announcements, these budget bills, I sat wondering: "How was that fair? How was that fair for rural communities in Canada?" The reality is that it was not, since most rural communities do not have transit systems.

Reflecting on the why of these billions for urban transit announcements, I said nothing. Why I said nothing is because these projects to remove carbon emissions in urban centres at the end of the day is better for all Canadians.

When the federal government announced a week ago the home heating oil pause for rural communities, I felt a little better about my tolerance for the billions of dollars for urban transit. However, to my great surprise, in this chamber and outside of this chamber, many senators from both rural and urban areas described that policy as unfair. Criticism towards Atlantic Canadians was unwarranted when one looks at the entire picture, the facts and not the rhetoric. My heart was pounding every time someone stood up against this first-ever measure for rural Canadians to deal with reducing their carbon emissions.

Well, today, honourable colleagues, I am silent no more. Today, I stand to defend our rural Canadians. Today, I stand to defend our Atlantic region from selective opinions that took no consideration at all of all carbon emission investment the federal government has provided to urban transit to reduce urban emissions.

I've never heard in this chamber any criticism of investment for urban transit. Criticism towards rural Canadians — not only from Atlantic Canada — who finally got a break to reduce their emissions from the federal government was unfair. Our lower-income rural Canadians also want to be full participants in Canada's and the world's emission-reduction initiatives.

Here are the facts about the three-year pause, facts that you can verify in the paper issued by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, on November 17.

That announcement has three elements. First, it pauses the fuel carbon pricing on home heating oil for every Canadian. Second, it doubles for three years the carbon-pricing rebates in rural Canada. And third, it adds \$5,000 to the Oil to Heat Pump Affordability program, providing, in partnership with provinces that want to participate, that for low-income homeowners the average heat pump would be free and helping homeowners reduce their emissions and their energy bills by up to \$2,500 a year. Hopefully, this third element is clear to you.

Now, let's go to the impact of pausing the carbon pricing on heating oil for all Canadians, which represents 1.1 million homes. Out of those 1.1 million homes, 267,000 are in Ontario, 287,000 are in Atlantic Canada, and the rest, that is 546,000 homes, are spread in all rural areas of Western and Northern Canada. Are you still telling me this is an Atlantic program?

• (1550)

The three-year pause from the few months in 2023 to the fiscal year of 2026-27 is estimated to be \$1.075 billion. In addition, the facts are that the pause on fuel carbon pricing on heating oil for rural areas corresponds to 26% for Atlantic Canada, 24% for rural Ontario and 50% for all other rural areas west of Ontario.

Now that you have the facts on this first component of the announcement, let's move to the facts regarding the second component, which is the doubling of the rebate for rural Canadians by province for the fiscal years 2024-25 to 2030-31 — seven years.

Newfoundland represents an amount of \$161 million; Nova Scotia, \$189 million; New Brunswick, \$117 million; Ontario, \$1.005 billion; Manitoba, \$243 million; Saskatchewan, \$449 million; and Alberta, \$881 million top-up. That makes a total of \$2.97 billion.

I would like to raise a certain concern here. I would like the attention of Senators Downe, Francis and MacAdam because, as per the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, there is no top-up for P.E.I. because, again, there is an issue with Statistics Canada that says the entire island of P.E.I. is a cosmopolitan area; it's not considered rural. Colleagues, we have to work, look and clarify this situation one more time for P.E.I.

The doubling rebates for rural Canada are distributed as follows: 15.5% for rural Atlantic Canada, 33.8% for rural Ontario and 52.9% for Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, which takes the greater share of that percentage. Again, colleagues, Atlantic Canada is only 15.5% of that portion.

Honourable senators, now that you have all the facts about this announcement for rural Canadians, do you not see that some — including the media — have criticized Atlantic Canada in a very biased way that is unacceptable to me? You should understand why I am standing here to present the facts, not the politicized myths.

The total amount for part one and part two of the announcement represents an investment of \$4.04 billion over seven years for rural areas. Compare that to the urban transit announcement that I mentioned earlier that amounts to \$27.9 billion. Notwithstanding the fact that urban transit users write off transit expenses on their income tax while rural residents need a car, fuel, insurance and car repairs to go to work without being able to expense any of that on their income tax. Now you understand why I cannot stay silent to some calling it unfair. At least look at the facts.

The Senate requires a higher degree of analysis from each of us, individually and collectively. I have always stood in this chamber for fairness for all Canadians, but when faced with statements that have not been researched being made against Atlantic Canadians and rural Canadians, I will stand up. I will stand up even alone, if need be, but I will stand and state the facts to correct the rhetoric. Thank you.

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Thank you, Senator Ringuette, for your comments. They are always interesting.

I was caught off guard when the federal government designated Prince Edward Island as "cosmopolitan," I think was your word, not rural. I was wondering if you could elaborate on that. What does that actually mean regarding this initiative announced last week by Prince Edward Island?

As you know, in our province, we have no natural gas. Oil and propane are imported, and additional transportation costs are extremely high. I know many people who had oil bills of \$800 to \$1,000 every four weeks. The provincial government has a program that if your household income is below \$75,000, you get free heat pumps. The federal government has now announced an additional program, but P.E.I. is well on the way with heat pumps, solar panels and other offsets.

I'm wondering if you could elaborate upon that comment about P.E.I. Thanks.

Senator Ringuette: From the document of the PBO that I have studied, the PBO didn't put any allowance in the doubling for rural areas of P.E.I. because, technically, according to Statistics Canada, the entire island of P.E.I. is a metropolitan area. That's why I wanted to alert our P.E.I. colleagues that we need to investigate this. If it needs to be corrected, we need to correct this because this would be greatly unfair.

I live in a community of 15,000, and it's not considered metropolitan. It's considered a rural community.

The Hon. the Speaker: Your time has expired, senator. Are you asking for more time?

Senator Ringuette: Five more minutes, please, senators.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Thank you, Senator Ringuette, for your commentary. I think it's timely so that Canadians understand that homes are heated with oil across the country. I appreciate that outlay. I also appreciate your commentary around facts-based analysis.

The challenge I have is similar to Senator Downe's in that I have to question all aspects of the information now because if the province of Prince Edward Island is considered a metropolitan area — a single entity — I have to question the folks who made that statement. I've been to P.E.I. many times. I've biked across the island on the bike paths. The vast majority of that time, you're pedalling through farmland and the seaside. Summerside itself is barely a metropolitan area.

That calls into question the legitimacy of the commentary made by the PBO or whomever, but it also makes it suspect in terms of the reliability of the rest of the analysis that was done.

Senator Ringuette: The analysis from the PBO is very much accurate. The fact that he didn't include P.E.I. in his data is, again, statistical.

This is the second time in six months that I have raised the issue that Statistics Canada is not being accurate for the residents of P.E.I. We need to get together, and I'm willing to work with

[Senator Downe]

Island senators in order to clarify all of these unfortunate situations for Islanders. It's not correct. As far as I'm concerned, the entire island of P.E.I. is a gathering of rural communities.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Senator Ringuette, you spoke about a sum of \$15,000. There was a \$10,000 incentive from the federal government that was increased by \$5,000. For the time being, New Brunswick is the only province that has a free heat pump program.

In your speech, you also mentioned that other provinces will likely get in on the project. That would be a good thing, especially in Ontario, where there are about 200,000 families who are still using heating oil. Several provinces were offering incentives for electric vehicles, but those amounts have been discontinued, namely in Ontario where there was a \$7,000 incentive. Do you have any information about the Atlantic provinces, for example Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia? Do they also have a program like New Brunswick's so that they can take advantage of that three-year window to make this change?

Senator Ringuette: No, I do not have that information. In fact, I have given you the most up-to-date information. At the moment, New Brunswick is the only province that has signed an agreement with the federal government to help homeowners install heat pumps.

We have to recognize that, across the country, we are talking about 1.1 million homes in rural areas that can take advantage of these heat pumps within the three-year window. A lot of effort has been put into this. I am pleasantly surprised that New Brunswick has already signed an agreement, and I hope that all the other provinces will do the same. It is easy to criticize, to say that the cost of living is challenging and to blame the federal government, but it is time for the provinces to get on board, too, if they truly recognize the challenges people are facing. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator LaBoucane-Benson, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT FOR WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator Mégie, for the second reading of Bill S-218, An Act to amend the Department for Women and Gender Equality Act.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15, and, with leave of the Senate, I would like to move the adjournment of the debate.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

HEALTH-CENTRED APPROACH TO SUBSTANCE USE BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

Hon. David M. Arnot: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-232, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the decriminalization of illegal substances, to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Colleagues, I ask you the following: What is one of the greatest moral failures of the 21st century? My answer today is the opioid crisis. I believe I can safely predict that 50 years from now, Canadians will look back on this era and ask how legislators and policy-makers could have been so blind. How could they have steadfastly carried down a road that was so clearly leading to a dead end? I commend our colleague the Honourable Senator Boniface for putting forward this bill, as she has succinctly and convincingly argued that a national crisis deserves a national response.

Fundamentally, the impact of this national crisis on Canada is clear. The war on drugs is lost, and the cost is the lives of our fellow Canadian citizens.

Between January 1 and November 2 of this year, in my home province of Saskatchewan, the coroner's office recorded 395 confirmed or suspected drug toxicity deaths. Over 90% of those deaths were related to fentanyl or fentanyl-like substances. As with most provinces, coroners only investigate under specific circumstances and at specific locations. Also, that data doesn't show any of the people who were thankfully revived by naloxone, or who required an ambulance to an emergency room or hospital stay.

It has been reported that a single overdose can cost as much as hundreds of thousands of dollars, but it can be even more: A long stay in an intensive care unit for an overdose can cost millions of

dollars. The costs also say nothing of the personal, familial and community impacts of substance use disorders and drug toxicity deaths. Those impacts reverberate and persist.

Data suggests this assertion. For instance, the 2019 Canadian Alcohol and Drugs Survey — released at the end of 2021 — found that in 2019, 4% of Canadians reported having used at least one illegal drug. Other research found that an estimated 3% of Canadians have used one of five illegal drugs, including cocaine, or crack; ecstasy; speed, or methamphetamine; and hallucinogens. Further, almost 18% of Canadians report that they have used an illegal drug at some point in their lifetime, with hallucinogens being the most used. In 2019, 14% of Canadians reported being harmed in the past year due to someone else's alcohol use, and 2% reported being harmed due to someone else's drug use.

While illegal drug use is remarkably indiscriminate as to the lives it touches, some in our country are affected disproportionately through the criminalization of illegal drug use. Earlier this year, I had a discussion with two young doctors — Dr. Shayan Shirazi and Dr. Ryan Krochak — both who are students at the University of Saskatchewan. They spoke of the increased vulnerability to substance use disorders of Indigenous peoples being framed by trauma related to colonization.

Simple possession has led to over-policing and high rates of incarceration of Indigenous peoples. Over 30% of the Canadian federal inmate population is Indigenous, despite comprising approximately 5% of the Canadian population. In 2003, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation reported:

... the residential school system contributed to the central risk factor involved, substance abuse, but also to factors shown to be linked to alcohol abuse, such as child and adult physical, emotional and sexual abuse, mental health problems and family dysfunction. The impact of residential schools can also be linked to risk factors for poor pregnancy outcomes among women who abuse alcohol, such as poor overall health, low levels of education and chronic poverty.

I thank Senator Boniface and Senator Pate for exploring this ongoing impact and the disproportionate incarceration of Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women.

I reached out to two women from my home province of Saskatchewan this year. These women — both of them mothers — share a bond forged in tragedy. They both lost sons because of tainted drugs. Marie Agioritis lost her son Kelly Best due to a counterfeit OxyContin pill laced with fentanyl in 2015. He was described as living “a life full of fun, love, laughter, plans, dreams, friends, and family . . .” and had aspirations of becoming an electrician. Kelly was only 19 years of age. Ms. Agioritis pointed out to me that, in war, the first objective of peacekeepers is to deal with trauma. She also told me that there are too many talking points and not enough actions. One all-too-common and painful talking point that she hears about those substance abuse disorders is the old saw, “If you mess with the bull, you'll get the horns.”

• (1610)

I am told that the youth of today do not believe this and that their perspective is different. I believe that youth are a source of hope; at the same time, they are the low-hanging fruit in a national strategy for education that is evidence-based and not driven by misinformed public opinion or tainted by the “if you mess with the bull, you get the horns” ideology.

Like Ms. Agioritis, Jenny Churchill is a tireless advocate for public education, supports and a medical-model view of substance use disorder. Ms. Churchill lost her son Jordan in 2018 due to a fentanyl overdose.

For her, a successful national strategy will be responsive primarily to the needs of three groups of Canadians: those with substance use disorders, people who use substances recreationally and the youth cohort.

Both Marie and Jenny are members of the Moms Stop the Harm group, a Canada-wide network of moms and families advocating for evidence-based treatment and policy change. They want policies and a national strategy that would do three things effectively: one, save lives; two, reduce health care costs; and three, reduce criminal behaviour on the streets.

A partnership research project with Moms Stop the Harm reported that over 19,355 Canadians died from opiate overdose between January 2016 and September 2020. A unique aspect of this research is that it involved those who had lost a loved one to an opioid overdose, mostly moms, almost half of whom experienced stigma or judgment from their peers after the death of their loved one.

Decriminalization is not a cure-all for that kind of pain or for drug supplies that are increasingly adulterated and contaminated by fentanyl and its analogues.

What decriminalization does is provide a venue for an individual — a person, a Canadian citizen — who uses or may be addicted to illegal drugs to be seen first as an individual, a person and a Canadian citizen.

The Canadian state has a vested interest in the health and well-being of all its citizens. The federal government has a duty and moral obligation to every one of its citizens. This is evident when government agencies work hard to repatriate Canadians stranded because of a global pandemic or conflict and war.

The war on drugs, by most accounts, is either an abject failure or a losing battle. We are losing because the war on drugs is most often a war on people whose lives hang in the balance. A recent study by Scher et al. found that “. . . Canada’s drug laws may shape public attitudes toward people who use drugs . . .” and create the resulting “. . . structural, social and self-stigma experienced by people who use drugs.”

As Dr. Harry Rakowski, a senior cardiologist at the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre and Professor of Medicine, University of Toronto, asserted, “We keep losing the war on drugs because we are fighting the wrong enemy.” He argues that Canada needs to address the antecedent issues, harms, traumas and root causes. I agree that this is a necessary step. However, without a national conversation and strategy, we will not be able to address the root causes or challenge the concerns of those who argue for continued criminalization — concerns such as an increase in drug use; impacts on public safety, youth and international relations; and limited treatment infrastructure.

A truism about the justice system is that it is inherently reactive and only rarely proactive. I believe that Bill S-232 will create a national strategy for the decriminalization of illegal substances and will be an opportunity to be proactive in stopping the harm created by failed drug policies.

Dr. Shirazi and Dr. Krochak provided me with a well-researched brief in which they stated:

Canada’s drug toxicity crisis is a complex issue with no single or immediate solution; however, it is well established that substance abuse disorders are a medical issue, not a criminal one. Canada is not going to arrest its way out of its drug toxicity crisis. Ultimately, decriminalization is a policy that will save the taxpayer money, fight the drug toxicity crisis and, most importantly, save lives.

Experts have been clear, however, that decriminalization is not an ultimate solution, but may be a necessary step. This bill takes an important and necessary step toward finding solutions. It recognizes that substance abuse disorder is a public health issue and not a criminal justice matter.

Canada has a moral obligation to help individuals and our society through legislation and law, including in regard to offences under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Five years ago, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police released a statement supporting:

. . . decriminalization strategies such as increasing diversionary opportunities, alternate sanctions and health partnerships, while exploring the evolution of harm-reduction techniques such as safe supply and supervised drug consumption sites.

The national conversation Bill S-232 proposes must consider the research and data that finds decriminalization is a means of harm reduction and, in turn, of enabling positive health outcomes.

Dr. Rebecca Seliga, a member of the University of Ottawa Department of Emergency Medicine, summarized this by stating:

While some may argue that decriminalization is just a buzzword alone, we already know that its counterpart, criminalization, does not work.

Colleagues, it is time for the conversation to begin in earnest; it is time for a national response to a national crisis. I support Bill S-232 and hope it will be sent to the committee as soon as possible. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: I rise today as the critic for Bill S-232, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the decriminalization of illegal substances, to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, which was introduced by the Honourable Gwen Boniface.

Honourable colleagues, Bill S-232 addresses an alarming and worrisome public health issue in our country. Drug use continues to kill many Canadians every day, and it impacts the health of thousands more. Some of the deadliest psychoactive substances are the notorious opioid analgesics, such as heroin and fentanyl.

According to the Canadian Alcohol and Drugs Survey, CADS, 4.4 million Canadians aged 15 and up reported having used opioid pain relievers in 2019, up 12% from 2017. Of those 4.4 million people, 269,000 reported problematic use of those drugs. According to the Government of Canada, there were 3,556 opioid-related deaths from January to June 2022, an average of 20 per day. Of those deaths, 76% were caused by fentanyl overdose.

Yes, the opioid crisis in Canada is raging, but we must not lose sight of the impact of other types of illegal drugs on many Canadians. According to CADS, in 2019, 1.1 million Canadians reported having consumed drugs in one of the following six categories: cocaine and crack, speed and methamphetamine, ecstasy, hallucinogens, heroin and salvia. In Quebec, those drugs killed seven times more users than fentanyl from January to April 2022.

• (1620)

Drug use not only kills people, it also has major impacts on the lives and health of drug users. In addition to their harmful mental and physical effects, drugs can insidiously compromise the user's social, professional, intimate and financial life. For some, life spirals out of control and, sadly, they end up homeless. In 2019, over one million Canadians reported that drugs had negatively impacted their own lives.

Drug use also affects crime rates linked to family violence, theft and sexual assault. Honourable senators, drug use is a serious public health problem in Canada. It deserves more of our attention so that we can come up with constructive solutions to help people struggling with hard drugs and to effectively fight traffickers, who exploit human misery for profit and must be held accountable for the many lives lost.

In Canada, we may need to consider the sale of deadly drugs as nothing less than premeditated murder. Bill S-232 is a legislative response to the substance abuse problem that I just described; according to the critic, it has two objectives.

The first objective is to require the federal government to consult with the provinces and territories in order to present Parliament with a national strategy for the decriminalization of all drugs. The second objective is to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, to repeal the provisions that make possession of certain substances an offence. In other words, we are talking about decriminalization from a purely legal point of view.

In my view, a third objective is missing from Bill S-232. It should include a provision requiring the government to develop a concrete public health strategy that provides for detox before decriminalization.

While I applaud Senator Boniface's useful work and the laudable objectives of her bill, I believe that the approach of outright decriminalization of drugs is premature and that it only partially addresses the problem.

In her speech at second reading, the senator indicated that the part of the bill seeking the total decriminalization of simple possession through the repeal of drug law sections would be done by an order-in-council issued by the Governor in Council, and according to their wishes, after the strategy is finalized so it can be put in place, if this bill passes.

When it comes to public health, it is rare to see anyone want to decriminalize anything while waiting to see what happens later. That is this government's strategy. Decriminalization for the Trudeau government is not a public health strategy; it is dogma.

The senator's approach is certainly prudent. However, I would like to state an important caveat on this point: Nothing in the bill states that this strategy, which is apparently complete and takes all challenges and perspectives into account, has to be implemented and analyzed first before the possibility of decriminalizing all drugs can be considered.

I think it is premature and even dangerous to consider passing a bill that proposes repealing sections of the law that criminalize simple drug possession at this stage of the process, when no complete strategy has been implemented, which might well take years to happen.

This is an important point, colleagues, because the bill we are studying does not set any legislative framework to decriminalize drugs. As a result, any possession of any illicit drug for personal use will no longer be considered criminal, regardless of the nature of the substance and the quantity in possession.

It is important to keep in mind that the purpose of the bill is to prevent drug overdose deaths, which are largely attributable to a bad supply that is extremely dangerous.

People use illicit drugs without knowing what is in them or where they came from. Often the user is not aware that those drugs may contain all sorts of harmful or deadly substances, such as fentanyl-type opioids or fentanyl analogues. That is especially true of crack.

I would like to share with you a sad incident that occurred last Friday in Laval to demonstrate how dangerous Bill S-232 is and how it could give drug users and the population in general a false sense of security.

I am talking about the murder of 61-year-old Mireille Martin. I want to take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences to her family and friends. Mireille Martin led a quiet life in an apartment building near her nephew, Jérôme Frigault, an ordinary young man in his 30s. According to his best friend, Jérôme regularly took methamphetamine tablets, commonly known as speed. Late last Thursday, the Laval police went to Ms. Martin's address after receiving a complaint about excessive noise coming from her apartment. They left without taking any action. Two hours later, Mireille stumbled out of her apartment bleeding and died on the sidewalk after being stabbed to death by her nephew, who was in a psychotic state.

She was yet another victim, another case of femicide. To date, 2023 has been a record year in Quebec for this type of criminal death. Was this murder preventable? Possibly, given that the police who arrived at the scene two hours prior to the tragedy would have likely noticed the murderer's agitated state. Why did they not remove him from the building or take him to hospital until he calmed down? The investigation will undoubtedly shed light on this horrible tragedy, or at least I hope it will.

This is a compelling example of why I fear decriminalizing all drugs, especially the deadliest ones. This bill gives drug users and politicians alike a false sense of security. What is more, it throws the door wide open to drug dealers.

It is all the more disturbing to note that the more lethal the drug, the smaller the quantity consumed. Therefore, most of the time, it is difficult to prove that the quantity of drugs seized was for the purpose of trafficking.

I would like to give you another example of how young people interpret the decriminalization of dangerous drugs as normalization. According to today's edition of *La Presse*, the number of Quebec teens using illegal vapes to consume cannabis has exploded over the past four years, tripling since 2019. According to doctors, vaping cannabis increases the risk of addiction and mental illness.

According to a 2023 survey of approximately 24,000 adolescents, 12% said they use cannabis, compared to 15% in 2019. However, 66% said they vape cannabis, compared to 20% in 2019. Teens acquire cannabis vapes on the black market because it is illegal to sell them to anyone in Quebec, even adults.

Some of these devices are rechargeable, while others, called wax pens, are disposable. Some schools report students fainting after using them. The fact is, the vape juice these young people

are consuming can contain as much as 90% THC, compared to the 30% maximum in products sold by the Société québécoise du cannabis.

This desired decriminalization, regardless of its potentially deadly risks, will undoubtedly lead to the same outcome as the legalization of cannabis, a drug with an illegal market that still controls 50% of sales today. This means that 50% of consumers buy cannabis of uncontrolled quality and origin.

• (1630)

This highly touted decriminalization will have little impact on death tolls or lethal drug trafficking, because, for the past eight years, the federal government has failed to implement any kind of strategy to guide consumers to public health services for detox support, like Portugal did when it introduced a detox strategy prior to decriminalization. Portugal's strategy was a success. To do otherwise and believe we could achieve the same result is totally irresponsible.

Bill S-232 takes a somewhat simplistic and especially dangerous view of Canada's illegal drug market. We have a duty to do better. Most importantly, we have an obligation to avoid making the situation worse by putting more lives in danger.

Bill S-232 in no way addresses the issue of minors. I would remind my colleagues that the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and the Criminal Code apply to anyone aged 12 or over, and that the Youth Criminal Justice Act does not contain a specific provision criminalizing drug possession. Without important clarifications, Bill S-232 will allow adolescents to possess any type of psychoactive substance in undefined quantities, without giving the police or judicial authorities any powers to prevent or dissuade teens from using them. This important aspect must not be overlooked, in order to avoid any unintended consequences to Senator Boniface's desired objective.

Honourable senators, I will quote another passage from Bill S-232, but first I would like to point out that I'm opposed to the very principle of this bill.

In my opinion, the decriminalization of all drugs runs contrary to the balance that is needed between the problem of drug addiction and criminal justice objectives.

Now I'd like to talk about how the justice system has already adopted diversion measures for drug possession over the past 10 years.

Currently, our justice system is adapting more and more to the drug addiction issue. You will recall that Bill C-5, which we passed on November 17, 2022, provides diversion measures for simple drug possession in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Three new paragraphs that came into effect with the passage of Bill C-5 read as follows:

(c) criminal sanctions imposed in respect of the possession of drugs for personal use can increase the stigma associated with drug use and are not consistent with established public health evidence;

(d) interventions should address the root causes of problematic substance use, including by encouraging measures such as education, treatment, aftercare, rehabilitation and social reintegration; and

(e) judicial resources are more appropriately used in relation to offences that pose a risk to public safety.

I would also remind senators that the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act already contain provisions granting discretionary power to the justice system to delay sentencing so that a person who has been found guilty of an offence can participate in a drug treatment court program. If that program is successful, the offender may receive a reduced sentence. What is more, if the offence is punishable by a minimum term of imprisonment, the court is not required to impose that minimum prison sentence.

I would like to quote subsection 10(4) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which states the following:

(4) A court sentencing a person who is convicted of an offence under this Part may delay sentencing to enable the offender

(a) to participate in a drug treatment court program approved by the Attorney General; or

(b) to attend a treatment program under subsection 720(2) of the *Criminal Code*.

Finally, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada Deskbook already contains directives on how to deal with the opioid overdose issue. Here is one of them:

The Guideline seeks to avoid short durations of incarceration for violation of bail conditions by accused with a substance abuse disorder. This Guideline was created in order to address the epidemic of opioid overdoses through a targeted focus upon the risk of opioid-related overdoses by those with a substance use disorder.

The examples I have just cited demonstrate the pragmatism currently being shown by the Canadian justice system. The balance it has subtly attempted to strike over the years between the problem of drug addiction and the objectives of criminal justice shows a willingness to adapt to the addiction situations experienced by drug users. In my opinion, it is inappropriate to remove the important role played by the justice system and to treat the problem of drug addiction as a public health issue. In fact, this bill is almost a decade behind the Canadian justice system.

Honourable senators, possible exemptions under the current law already exist. These exemptions allow the Minister of Health to identify cases and conditions under which possession of narcotics for personal use can be acceptable in our society. These exemptions help ensure some degree of control, with an opportunity to set guidelines for drug possession, while recognizing specific needs and authorizing the tools and means to support harm reduction among certain populations, for example, by establishing safe injection sites.

These injection sites exist almost everywhere in major Canadian cities. People can show up to these sites and consume narcotics. These centres provide people with a safe place, with sterile consumption equipment, where health professionals are on hand to respond to emergency situations.

The exemption set out in section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act allows the staff to possess small amounts of controlled drugs in the course of their professional activities. Analyses to test the composition of a drug can also be performed before clients of these centres consume their drugs, thus preventing accidental deaths due to the presence of undesirable substances. Some users can also obtain medical prescriptions for the consumption of controlled substances under medical supervision, under this exemption to the law.

That is the approach taken by British Columbia, which requested and obtained an exemption to be able to experiment with the decriminalization of drugs at the provincial level. That exemption is valid until January 31, 2026.

British Columbia is being hard hit by fatal opioid overdoses. Thanks to this exemption, in British Columbia, any adult can possess 2.5 grams of four types of illegal drugs: opioids, cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA. Moreover, this exemption does not apply in certain locations, such as elementary and secondary schools, child care facilities, airports and aboard Canadian Coast Guard ships and helicopters.

Honourable senators, given that exemptions already exist in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and that the justice system is adapting each and every year to the problem of addictions, I do not consider it either useful or responsible to remove the role the justice system plays in addressing this problem.

I agree with Senator Boniface that we need a national strategy that provides better social services and more support to users, who should also be offered medical treatment.

Decriminalization could never be the ultimate solution to the drug addiction problem for the reasons I have already outlined.

In my analysis, Bill S-232 in its current form is a far too simple a response to a very complex problematic situation.

Most importantly, it does not include plans for a real public health strategy to combat drug addiction. This bill risks creating even bigger problems if a comprehensive strategy is not developed before we think about decriminalizing drugs.

Decriminalization should only happen if it is truly a desirable solution, after comprehensive studies and analyses have been conducted. That is not yet the case.

Let's hope we will have the opportunity to address these issues in committee soon. Thank you very much.

• (1640)

[*English*]

Hon. Gwen Boniface: Would Senator Boisvenu take a question?

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Would you take a question, Senator Boisvenu?

Senator Boisvenu: Absolutely.

[*English*]

Senator Boniface: Let me first say thank you very much for your speech and for your ongoing passion on issues within the criminal justice system.

What I would like to really speak about is the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, or CACP, report, particularly from the perspective that I think we actually think more similarly than we do differently. In the CACP report, which this bill is placed on, it said:

. . . It will be key in a Canadian context that treatment facilities are established and operational ahead of decriminalization and have the capacity to take in individuals diverted through police contact. . . .

So the point of the bill — and perhaps this will be the important aspect the committee looks at — is to make sure that strategy, what we have learned from the strategy and the systems are in place to better accommodate people who are running into issues with drugs.

If I heard your speech correctly — I want to make sure I'm clear — my sense is that you see the importance of having those systems in place before moving to decriminalization, which is what the bill is intended to do.

[*Translation*]

Senator Boisvenu: Yes, indeed.

Since marijuana was legalized in 2016, I have studied the decriminalization approach taken by many countries, beyond marijuana. Some U.S. states have also decriminalized or legalized certain drugs, but none of them went forward with legalization before establishing a national public health detox strategy.

Basically, what users are being offered in those states is first a health-based approach and then a legal approach. Here, however, we do the opposite. We say we will decriminalize drugs and then wait and see about adopting a public health policy later.

My problem is that I see a risk here. I do not believe that if this bill passes this fall or next spring, this government will implement a detox strategy in the next two or three years. I do not see how it could. I see that the government has taken no

action on other major issues like spousal violence or sexual violence, even though both are major national issues. The way I see it, one plus one equals two.

[*English*]

Senator Boniface: May I ask a follow-up question?

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Would you take a supplementary question, Senator Boisvenu?

Senator Boisvenu: Yes.

[*English*]

Senator Boniface: Would you agree with me, Senator Boisvenu, that that's exactly the issue that a committee should look at in terms of this? I think we share the same view in terms of having this in place, and if the committee looked at it from that perspective, I think it would be beneficial. Would you agree?

[*Translation*]

Senator Boisvenu: Absolutely. You know that drug treatment programs are health care services that fall under provincial jurisdiction. This government has made the most cuts to health care transfers. Because of the way Canada's immigration policy works, all of the provincial health care systems are overwhelmed. It seems to me as though we are giving the provinces a responsibility without knowing exactly what that responsibility is and what kind of funding there will be for it. That is why I am saying that we are putting the cart before the horse. Could we do the opposite?

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF CORRUPT FOREIGN OFFICIALS ACT (SERGEI MAGNITSKY LAW)

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Housakos, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, for the second reading of Bill S-247, An Act to amend the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law).

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): With leave of the Senate, I move the adjournment of the debate in the name of Senator Housakos.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

HELLENIC HERITAGE MONTH BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Loffreda, seconded by the Honourable Senator Moncion, for the second reading of Bill S-259, An Act to designate the month of March as Hellenic Heritage Month.

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, this item is adjourned in the name of Senator Martin. I ask for leave of the Senate that, following my intervention, the balance of her time to speak to this item be reserved.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Cardozo: Colleagues, I'm honoured to discuss today Bill S-259, which will bring into effect Hellenic heritage month in Canada. I thank Senator Loffreda for introducing this bill in the Senate.

I am of a fan of heritage days and months in Canada because they focus on a community's presence in Canada. It is an annual occasion to highlight the history of — and more importantly, the contribution of — particular communities. Personally, I prefer celebrating the cultural group in Canada rather than celebrating the national day of another country, its flag and its history.

[Translation]

That is why I would like to draw your attention to this paragraph of the bill's preamble, which reads as follows:

And whereas the celebration of Hellenic Heritage Month would encourage Greek Canadians to promote their culture and traditions and share them with their fellow Canadians;

As a mature multicultural country, there are many things to recognize and celebrate in our various ethnocultural communities.

[English]

Canadians of Greek origin are well-established in Canada and make a contribution in many sectors. To demonstrate this, let me list 10 people in very different sectors, and colleagues, let's see how many of these Canadian nation builders you will have heard of. Please keep your own score, and if you have gotten at least 9 out of 10, you can earn the title of honorary Greek Canadian for the day.

In sport, I want to mention the NHL's Nick Kypreos, who played for the Toronto Maple Leafs and the New York Rangers.

There is the innovative Mike Lazaridis, who was founder and co-CEO of Research in Motion.

In media, Vassy Kapelos is a chief political correspondent with CTV, who keeps a sharp eye on all of us lawmakers in Ottawa; and George Stroumboulopoulos, who is surely the hippest and most provocative journalist in Canada. Nik Nanos is the founder of the venerable Nanos Research, who regularly appears in many media to discuss his public opinion research.

In politics, Gus Mitges, who I had the good fortune to work with fairly closely, was a Progressive Conservative MP from Ontario. He was perhaps the first Greek Canadian elected to Parliament, and he chaired the House Multiculturalism Committee. Eleni Bakopanos, a Liberal from Montreal, served for nine years in Parliament, and has continued to play a leadership role in Equal Voice promoting women in politics. Niki Ashton from Manitoba has been in Parliament for 15 years, and sought the national leadership of the New Democratic Party in 2017.

In law, Madam Justice Andromache Karakatsanis serves on the Supreme Court of Canada.

And surely the most beloved Greek Canadian has to be — any guesses?

An Hon. Senator: Leo Housakos.

Senator Cardozo: No. Nia Vardalos, leading actor in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, a story that most ethnic communities can closely relate to.

Indeed, there have been at least four senators, I should add, who are of Greek origin.

I would like to take a moment to read a short excerpt from my friend the Honourable Eleni Bakopanos, who sent me these words as I prepared to speak on this bill. She wrote:

I am proud that Canadians of Hellenic origin have contributed in every sphere of activity, both in the public and private sectors, in Canada. And, I would pay tribute to the first generation of immigrants, like my 93-year-old parents, who left behind everything, their home, their families, their friends and their jobs, in order to give their children a better future.

There are very few countries in the world where a woman, born in another country, Greece in my case, would be elected as a Member of Parliament. It was a great privilege and honour to be elected and serve my fellow Canadians. I thank my parents every day for choosing Canada!

• (1650)

Indeed, Ms. Bakopanos speaks to the story of most Canadians of Greek origin.

That said, I want to take this opportunity as we talk about Hellenic Canadians to reflect upon our changing world, how the affairs of the world play out here in multicultural Canada and why a heritage month is an important idea.

I take this opportunity with this community because Canada has very good relations with Greece, and there is relatively little controversy in Greece these days. It is a safe time and safe space to raise these issues without having to tread on eggshells.

Colleagues, as our Canadian multiculturalism matures, I want to challenge us to think about some contemporary issues. Our diversity and links to other countries and regions across the world come with benefits as they come with challenges. The benefits include building positive linkages between Canada and the world in the increasingly interconnected world. We can more easily learn about other economies, cultures, art, literature and food. We can build more easily economic linkages in areas like science, technology and trade.

We can also gain a more in-depth understanding of countries in the world. We have certainly gained much from all the communities that come here. In the case of Greece, I would add that we have also stood to learn about philosophy and democracy.

As diaspora communities in Canada become larger and more politically mature, they naturally press to have more influence on Canada's stand in international affairs. Honourable senators, this is where it becomes more interesting, more beneficial and more challenging. As our diversity has increased over the last century, we not only have supporters of various countries and perspectives abroad; we have supporters of different sides of controversies within specific regions. They each demand that the Canadian government do more for their side and less for the other side. This is all natural.

While these issues have been present for decades, we have seen these issues play out most recently in matters relating to Ukraine and Eastern Europe, China, India, Iran and the Middle East, just to name a few. In a democratic country, we may all agree that Canadians of all origins should be able to interact in the public sphere about the perspectives they have, and they should be able to hold lawful demonstrations to press their point, even if those protests might sometimes be very large and inconvenient to citizens — hopefully, for short periods of time.

Sometimes, we have all been on the same page and had a national consensus around certain issues, such as the invasion of Ukraine or the ending of apartheid in South Africa, but those are the rare ones. What we cannot agree to is violence of any kind — violence directed at the Canadian government or politicians or toward Canadians who may be perceived to have different views or people of different religions and ethnicities. People of opposing perspectives should be able to have peaceful demonstrations, even if they end up in similar locations at the same time.

Importantly, Canadians of all backgrounds must feel free to live their lives freely and never have to face violence or threats of violence in or near their homes, in public transit, schools, colleges and universities.

We have a serious problem in Canada when Canadians are concerned about their safety if they wear a yarmulke, a shtreimel, a tallis, a hijab, a sari, a turban or a braid.

[Senator Cardozo]

Lest it not be forgotten, I want to add that foreign influences of a negative sort don't only come with diaspora communities from Europe, Asia and elsewhere. They come from the United States, where the convoy occupation that descended upon Ottawa early last year had strong influences from radical political forces south of the border, most notably the folks who carried out the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Such forces are rapidly spinning out of control in the United States, and we must be crystal clear that occupying our beloved capital or border crossings by these radical elements must never be tolerated. There must be no place for culture wars and warriors in Canada, especially those who seek to whip up political rage, anger or violence. Going forward, with the advancement of social media and artificial intelligence, sadly, Freud's idea of narcissism of minor differences is becoming an obsession of intolerable differences.

As I sum up, I want to invite us as Canadians — those from various diaspora communities, parliamentarians and the general public — to rethink some of the things we do. Perhaps it's time to think about moving away from celebrating national days of other countries, having flag raisings and other events that relate to those other countries. Perhaps it's time to shift our focus heavily toward made-in-Canada heritage days and months, celebrations and commemorations.

Coming back to the Hellenic heritage month in Canada, I welcome it. I urge us as Canadians to think generously but carefully about how we focus our energies on celebrating the history and presence of various communities in Canada and that we keep disruptive or violent foreign influences in check.

[*Translation*]

I commend all of the Canadians who have been working for years to make Hellenic Heritage Month a reality. We are about to make that happen. Thank you very much for this gift to Canada. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

(Debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS DYKELAND SYSTEM BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Quinn, seconded by the Honourable Senator Verner, P.C., for the second reading of Bill S-273, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada.

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Honourable senators, I am pleased to join the discussion today on Bill S-273, Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System act, tabled by our Maritime colleague Senator Quinn. I rise as the critic of this legislation.

For those less familiar with topographical terminology, an isthmus is a narrow strip of land separating two expansive bodies of water and connecting two larger landmasses. As Senator Cotter accurately pointed out in his speech, “isthmus” certainly qualifies as one of the most difficult words to pronounce in the English language, at least for those of us who speak English as our first language. It is no wonder Maritimers have always euphemistically referred to the general area as the Tantramar Marshes. It’s so much easier to pronounce.

There are four distinct and significant isthmus formations in Canada: the Isthmus of Avalon, connecting the Avalon Peninsula with the main portion of the island of Newfoundland; the Sechart Isthmus, on B.C.’s Sunshine Coast; the Niagara Isthmus, separating Lakes Erie and Ontario; and, in this case, the Isthmus of Chignecto. The Chignecto Isthmus separates the Northumberland Strait in the Gulf of St. Lawrence from the Bay of Fundy to the southwest, and it connects the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

But this 13-mile-wide strip of land connecting Nova Scotia to the North American continent exists in unique circumstances. As the only land link between Nova Scotia and the mainland of Canada, it serves a vital role to industry and our economy, with over \$35 billion in trade transiting the corridor annually, as well as 15,000 vehicles daily and millions of people annually.

• (1700)

All roads and rail service, fibre optic telecommunications and pipelines depend on this corridor. It should also be remembered that this highway access is almost as important to Newfoundland as it is to Nova Scotia. What makes the area of immediate structural concern, however, is that it sits on land only slightly above sea level, and that land, while very fertile, is also very flat. This vulnerability presents a particular risk that must be mitigated, especially with the Bay of Fundy subjecting the area to the highest and strongest tides in the world.

I’ve heard repeated references to climate change, but I remind honourable senators that the rising nature of the Atlantic Ocean has been around long before the term “climate change” was coined, and the practical necessity of diking this land and protecting this unique coastline has been evident for well over three centuries.

Senator Quinn provided this chamber with a useful overview of the history of the dike land systems established by the Acadians beginning in the late 17th century. They built a series of earthen dikes to protect agricultural lands from the ever-active tides of the Bay of Fundy. Many of these earthen dikes remain, although they are only a couple of feet high for the most part.

When the New England planters arrived to farm the vacated land beginning in 1759, they revived and expanded the existing agricultural dike lands over the ensuing decades, building bigger

dikes, culminating in the building of the Wellington dike between 1817 and 1825, which protects over 3,000 acres of prime farmland and is over 50 feet high and 120 feet at the base.

In 1948, after persistent pressure from Maritimers who recognized that the dike lands required significant enhancements, Parliament passed the Maritime Marshland Rehabilitation Act, which obligated the federal government to pay 100% for the construction and reconstruction of dikes and dams in the area. Now, 75 years later, these are the same dikes that need to be replaced, upgraded or reinforced at an estimated cost of \$650 million. I think all my Maritime colleagues would agree that we have been experiencing severe weather events in our region at an alarming frequency — certainly more frequently than I can remember in my lifetime. As you recall, this summer Nova Scotia experienced record-shattering rainfall during a 24-hour period in July with some areas receiving nearly 10 inches of rain. That’s 250 millimetres. This is rainfall of historic proportions.

Atlantic Canadians have also been experiencing increased threats from hurricanes in recent years. With ocean surface temperatures rising along the eastern seaboard, scientists have noted the Atlantic coast is becoming a breeding ground for tropical storms and hurricanes sweeping north. They are increasing in intensity and they are increasing in frequency, bringing with them heavy wind, rain, dangerous ocean swells and leaving a trail of destruction behind for Atlantic Canadians.

Colleagues, when you add the severity and frequency of these weather events to the reality of rising sea levels, it’s understandable that the governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and the residents have increased anxieties about the adequacy of the dike system at Chignecto.

What would happen if there was a failure of the dated infrastructure? What if, suddenly, that narrow piece of land — vital for trade, a utility corridor for this country and a lifeline for Nova Scotia and Newfoundland — became compromised and impassable? We can only imagine the result would be devastating for our national economy, our industries as well as the people and businesses of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.

Since the federal government has the responsibility for interprovincial trade, the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia governments believe that Ottawa should take on 100% of the cost. But the federal government is only offering to cover 50% through the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund. This is not only unfair, it is unjust and it is unequal. What Senator Quinn has proposed with this bill is to declare the dike land systems at Chignecto to be for the general advantage of Canada, a policy principle that has its foundation in our Constitution and which allows for the federal government to assume jurisdiction over works which it deems to be in the national interest.

Senator Quinn rightly points out that the Fathers of Confederation provided Parliament with a declaratory power to determine works that are in the national interest, transferring jurisdiction for those works to the federal level. And what Senator Quinn is proposing is not unprecedented.

For years, the American-Canadian border at Windsor and Detroit has served as Canada's single business and commercial land corridor between our two countries, but the privately and American-owned Ambassador Bridge was the sole access for road traffic, and it could often be congested to the detriment of both commerce and the movement of people.

In 2012, the Harper government resolved to fix the problem with the decision to build the Gordie Howe International Bridge, which will open in 2025. It wasn't required to adopt any declaration to build the bridge as all international crossings are the responsibility of the federal government and the demand for a new bridge had been around for a long time. The \$4-billion structure would be paid for through its tolls, a user-pay approach that I have always supported in principle where and when it makes sense.

Then in 2014, the Harper government enacted the New Bridge for the St. Lawrence Act, in which it declared the Champlain Bridge in Montreal and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada. The very busy original Champlain Bridge was found to be structurally unsound, but the Government of Quebec and the City of Montreal said they couldn't afford to pay for the new bridge. However, unlike the Gordie Howe International Bridge, this is unquestionably a provincial matter. Municipalities are creatures of the provinces, and municipal bridges are simply not the responsibility of the federal authority in this country. But the need was urgent, hence the decision of the Harper government to assist in the construction of the new Champlain Bridge.

However, the federal government also declared that its commitment came with the understanding that the bridge would be tolled and that the federal taxpayer would be reimbursed for the upfront costs of the new Champlain Bridge. I agree wholeheartedly with that economically responsible approach, which solves an immediate problem but also respects divisions of power under the Constitution.

After the election of the Trudeau government, they dropped the reasonable and financially responsible decision to toll the new bridge. Instead, the new Trudeau government gifted to Montreal an expensive and important piece of infrastructure that is unquestionably a municipal and provincial responsibility. The new bridge is to be paid for exclusively by the Canadian taxpayer with the considerable price tag of \$4.2 billion.

Colleagues, I think the Champlain Bridge is of vital importance to our economy and that it was a sound initiative by the federal government to replace the aging original structure. However, I also believe the Trudeau government should have done the fair, equitable, honourable and financially responsible thing and kept the tolls on the bridge. Since they established this precedent, all regions, provinces and Canadians should be treated equally in matters of this nature.

For reference, compare the issue of management regarding the new Champlain Bridge to that applied towards the Confederation Bridge connecting Prince Edward Island to the mainland. I remember that project very well. The late Stewart McInnes was the then-minister of public works, and I was the executive assistant when the decision was made to build the Confederation

Bridge. The government had a foundational obligation going back to 1873 to provide transportation infrastructure to Prince Edward Island, which traditionally meant a ferry service.

Why is it fair today for Prince Edward Islanders and those who visit the Island to continue to pay tolls while other bridges paid for by the federal government are exempt, especially when infrastructure like the Confederation Bridge is actually the responsibility of the federal authority? These are reasonable questions.

Canadians today are finally realizing that financial responsibility and the Trudeau government repel each other like the same poles of a magnet, and their latest scheme regarding selective tax exemptions for home heating illustrates that fair and equal treatment of Canadians appears to be something beyond their capacity.

I would be remiss if I did not note that the Nova Scotia capital has two bridges spanning Halifax Harbour, funded by the provincial and municipal governments, paid for and maintained by the tolls charged to those who use the bridges — no federal money for these bridges and no removal of our tolls. I don't begrudge any municipality, any province or anyone in this country anything if it makes life a little better for all concerned, but it's time we return to a government that didn't treat Canadians differently in different parts of the country. Canadians deserve better than this.

Given that the \$4.2-billion Champlain Bridge serves as a vital economic corridor with approximately \$20 billion worth of goods crossing from the island of Montreal to the south shore of the St. Lawrence, I share the view that this is a justifiable federal investment, but the precedent has been set. In the interests of regional fairness, the same logic should be applied to vital infrastructure of national interest in the Maritimes. The Isthmus of Chignecto is a critical choke point with \$35 billion of annual business, and the cost of the proposed solution is merely one seventh of the cost of the Champlain Bridge. The federal government should step up and do its job and stop prevaricating.

It's not uncommon for Maritimers to be forgotten or treated like second-class citizens by governments in Ottawa. In fact, it was foreseen by our Fathers of Confederation. When John A. Macdonald and the Fathers of Confederation met for two weeks in Charlottetown, a full six days were spent solely on the creation of the Senate and its composition. They established a Senate that is formed on the basis of regional representation. Although we are appointed by province, our representation is regional, and we have to remind ourselves that one of our duties is to ensure regional fairness.

• (1710)

I have no doubt that the protection of this vital corridor is in the national interest, and I commend Senator Quinn for taking the initiative with this bill and supporting its advancement. So let's get it to committee so we can ask the important questions. Let's ask about the vulnerability of the dike system to weather events and the consequences of this land link being washed out.

Let's ask how it would affect interprovincial trade and the industries that rely on the railway and highway or how international trade would be affected if the Port of Halifax could not import and export as usual. Let's ask how Newfoundland would handle being cut off from its major supply line.

Senator Cormier indicated in his speech that he has some concerns about the federal use of the declaratory power of the federal government, and quoted our esteemed former colleague André Pratte as a source for his uncertainty. I don't recall hearing these reservations being expressed when it was announced that the federal taxpayers would pay for the new Champlain Bridge, so perhaps his views have been modified in the meantime. However, I submit these reservations are esoteric concerns, and the real issue now is one of equal treatment for regions of this country, something which should be top of mind for every senator.

Colleagues, let's send this bill as soon as possible to committee for further study. Canada has an isthmus to protect and preserve. Thank you.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Would the senator take a question?

Senator MacDonald: Yes.

Senator Quinn: Thank you, Senator MacDonald for the speech that lays out all kinds of clear rationale as to why we're considering this particular bill at all.

I wanted to ask a couple of questions to bring clarity to some of the points you raised. The first is the Champlain Bridge; you correctly identified that as a project that was undertaken by the federal government, but I want to confirm that it was indeed under the use of the declaratory power that is contained in the Constitution.

The second question, if I may, because I may not get on the list again, is: Will the use of the declaratory power for the isthmus project require the government to spend anything more than the 50-cent dollars that they have already committed to under the program? Otherwise, they can spend nothing or they can assume full responsibility. Isn't the crux of the declaratory power that it's a policy decision and we simply want to get it to committee, as you said?

Senator MacDonald: Senator Quinn, I'll answer the second question first. There is no requirement that the declaratory power be attached to the expenditure of money up to the eventual cost of it; who is going to fund it? We're not forcing anybody to spend money or declare how much money has to be spent.

In terms of the declaratory power, it's certainly my understanding that the Champlain Bridge was built under the declaratory power, unless I misunderstand that, but I do not believe I do. I believe that's correct.

Senator Quinn: No. Thank you for that clarification.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it being 5:15 p.m., I must interrupt the proceedings. Pursuant to rule 9-6, the bells will ring to call in the senators for the taking of the deferred vote at 5:30 p.m., on the motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Carignan, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Seidman.

Call in the senators.

• (1730)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—
MOTION IN AMENDMENT NEGATIVED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson, for the third reading of Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (bail reform), as amended.

And on the motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Carignan, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Seidman:

That Bill C-48, as amended, be not now read a third time, but that it be further amended in clause 1 (as amended by the decision of the Senate on October 26, 2023), on page 3, by replacing lines 11 to 13 with the following:

“cused has, within five years of the day on which they were charged for that offence, been previously convicted of or been serving a sentence of imprisonment for another offence in the commission of which vio-”.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the question is as follows: It was moved by the Honourable Senator Carignan, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Seidman:

That Bill C-48, as amended, be not now read a third time, but that it be further amended in clause 1 (as amended —

Shall I dispense, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Carignan negatived on the following division:

YEAS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| Ataullahjan | Patterson (<i>Nunavut</i>) |
| Batters | Patterson (<i>Ontario</i>) |
| Boisvenu | Plett |
| Carignan | Quinn |
| Dagenais | Richards |
| Housakos | Seidman |
| MacDonald | Smith |
| Marshall | Tannas |
| Martin | Verner |
| Mockler | Wallin |
| Oh | Wells—22 |

NAYS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Anderson | Jaffer |
| Arnot | Kingston |
| Bellemare | Klyne |
| Black | LaBoucane-Benson |
| Boehm | Loffreda |
| Boniface | MacAdam |
| Burey | Massicotte |
| Busson | McCallum |
| Cardozo | McNair |
| Clement | McPhedran |
| Cordy | Mégie |
| Cotter | Miville-Dechêne |
| Coyle | Moncion |
| Dalphond | Moodie |
| Deacon (<i>Ontario</i>) | Omidvar |
| Dean | Pate |
| Downe | Petitclerc |
| Duncan | Petten |
| Dupuis | Prosper |
| Forest | Ravalia |
| Francis | Ringuette |
| Galvez | Ross |
| Gerba | Saint-Germain |
| Gignac | Simons |
| Gold | White |
| Greenwood | Woo |
| Harder | Yussuff—55 |
| Hartling | |

ABSTENTIONS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

| | |
|---------|---------|
| Aucoin | Osler—3 |
| Bernard | |

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is now time for the taking of the deferred vote on the motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Moncion, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dupuis.

GREENHOUSE GAS POLLUTION PRICING ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—
MOTION IN AMENDMENT NEGATIVED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Wells, seconded by the Honourable Senator Batters, for the third reading of Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act.

And on the motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Moncion, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dupuis:

That Bill C-234 be not now read a third time, but that it be amended, in clause 2,

(a) on page 2, by replacing lines 24 to 37 with the following:

“of the day on which this Act comes into force.”;

(b) on page 3, by deleting lines 1 to 9.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the question is as follows: It was moved by the Honourable Senator Moncion, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dupuis:

That Bill C-234 be not now read a third time, but that it be amended, in clause 2,

(a) —

Shall I dispense, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

• (1740)

Motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Moncion negated on the following division:

YEAS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

| | |
|-----------|------------------|
| Aucoin | LaBoucane-Benson |
| Audette | Loffreda |
| Boehm | Massicotte |
| Boniface | McNair |
| Cardozo | McPhedran |
| Clement | Mégie |
| Cordy | Miville-Dechéne |
| Coyle | Moncion |
| Dalphond | Moodie |
| Dean | Omidvar |
| Dupuis | Pate |
| Forest | Petitclerc |
| Galvez | Petten |
| Gold | Ringuette |
| Greenwood | Saint-Germain |
| Harder | White |
| Hartling | Woo |
| Kingston | Yussuff—36 |

NAYS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Anderson | Marshall |
| Arnot | Martin |
| Ataullahjan | McCallum |
| Batters | Mockler |
| Bellemare | Oh |
| Black | Osler |
| Boisvenu | Patterson (<i>Nunavut</i>) |
| Burey | Patterson (<i>Ontario</i>) |
| Busson | Plett |
| Carignan | Prosper |
| Cotter | Quinn |
| Dagenais | Ravalia |
| Deacon (<i>Ontario</i>) | Richards |
| Downe | Ross |
| Duncan | Seidman |
| Francis | Simons |
| Gignac | Smith |
| Housakos | Tannas |
| Klyne | Verner |
| MacAdam | Wallin |
| MacDonald | Wells—42 |

ABSTENTIONS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Bernard Gerba—2

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: The Senate will now resume consideration of the motion for third reading of Bill C-48. We will then proceed with our study of Bill C-234, resuming the item of business interrupted at 5:15 p.m., once those proceedings are completed.

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson, for the third reading of Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (bail reform), as amended.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I move the adjournment of the debate.

The Hon. the Speaker: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Seidman, that further debate be adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate.

Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

An Hon. Senator: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: Those in favour of the motion will please say “yea.”

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

The Hon. the Speaker: Those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

The Hon. the Speaker: I think the “nays” have it.

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker: I see two senators rising. Is there agreement on a bell?

An Hon. Senator: Fifteen minutes.

The Hon. the Speaker: Fifteen minutes? The vote will take place at 6:03 p.m. Call in the senators.

• (1800)

Motion negated on the following division:

YEAS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

| | |
|-------------|----------|
| Ataullahjan | Mockler |
| Batters | Oh |
| Black | Osler |
| Boisvenu | Plett |
| Burey | Quinn |
| Carignan | Richards |
| Dagenais | Seidman |
| Housakos | Smith |
| MacDonald | Wells—19 |
| Marshall | |

NAYS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Anderson | Kingston |
| Arnot | Klyne |
| Aucoin | LaBoucane-Benson |
| Bellemare | Loffreda |
| Bernard | MacAdam |
| Boehm | Massicotte |
| Boniface | McCallum |
| Busson | McNair |
| Cardozo | Mégie |
| Clement | Miville-Dechêne |
| Cordy | Moncion |
| Cotter | Moodie |
| Coyle | Pate |
| Dalphond | Patterson (<i>Nunavut</i>) |
| Deacon (<i>Ontario</i>) | Patterson (<i>Ontario</i>) |
| Dean | Petitclerc |
| Duncan | Petten |
| Dupuis | Prosper |
| Forest | Ravalia |
| Francis | Ringuette |
| Galvez | Ross |
| Gerba | Saint-Germain |
| Gignac | Simons |
| Gold | Tannas |
| Greenwood | Verner |
| Harder | White |
| Hartling | Yussuff—54 |

ABSTENTION
THE HONOURABLE SENATOR

Downe—1

• (1810)

Some Hon. Senators: Question.

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is now six o'clock, and, pursuant to rule 3-3(1), I am obliged to leave the chair until eight o'clock, unless it is your wish, honourable senators, to not see the clock. Is it agreed to not see the clock?

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

[*English*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, leave was not granted. The sitting is, therefore, suspended, and I will leave the chair until 8 p.m.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (2000)

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson, for the third reading of Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (bail reform), as amended.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to and bill, as amended, read third time and passed, on division.)

GREENHOUSE GAS POLLUTION PRICING ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Wells, seconded by the Honourable Senator Batters, for the third reading of Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act.

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Honourable senators, I rise as the critic of the private member's bill, Bill C-234, in our third-reading debate. For those who are new, that means that I can speak for up to 45 minutes, so bear with me.

As you know, this bill proposes to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act to grant to farmers an eight-year exemption — not three years — in connection with the use of natural gas and propane for grain drying and heating or cooling of farm buildings used for raising livestock or growing crops.

The Conservative Party, its leader and some Conservative premiers have positioned this bill as a vanguard to axe the carbon tax. Today, in the House of Commons — on opposition day — the Conservatives moved the motion urging the Senate to adopt this bill. If this motion is adopted, I understand that Senator Plett will resist it, as he did with previous similar motions that were adopted, such as the motion concerning the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP, bill that was sponsored by MP Saganash, or when MP Ambrose sponsored the bill about judges' training — where he made a speech about the fact that it was unacceptable for the House to be trying to tell us what to do. The vote will be tomorrow afternoon after Question Period, and we will know the day after what Senator Plett thinks of it.

Clearly, they are of the view that the price on carbon should not be part of the Canadian framework for climate action. This is a policy decision that I respect, but do not share.

An increasing price on carbon is a strong incentive to reduce emissions by using more efficient equipment or switching to greener sources of energy.

From a recent piece published in *The Economist* on October 1, 2023, it says:

If global warming is to be limited, the world must forget fossil fuels as fast as possible—that much almost everyone agrees upon.

I'd say almost everyone. How we do this is the complicated part. The article continues:

Economists have long favoured putting a price on carbon, a mechanism Europe introduced in 2005. Doing so allows the market to identify the cheapest unit of greenhouse gas to cut, and . . . to fight climate change at the lowest cost. . . .

Another fact is that Canada is not on its way to meet its undertakings under the Paris Agreement. Moreover, last week, scientists released data showing that the world briefly crossed the 2-degree warming red line on November 17.

As stated in Senator Harder's closing speech on Bill C-12, the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, in 2021, which was two years ago — and I think these words are still full of meaning:

With the challenge of climate change, we live at the most consequential time in human history. We must not be the broken link in the chain. If we do not cooperate toward the shared and necessary objectives of saving the environment,

we will fail ourselves, our children, our grandchildren and all generations. We will fail the miraculous creatures with whom we share this planet. We are now their only hope, and their only threat. We must choose to do better.

In the Senate, we should contribute to this goal in the critical years ahead and, for the sake of our grandchildren, we should and must be bold.

I will now move to Bill C-234. Colleagues, unfortunately, the case for Bill C-234 is sustained by the repetition of falsehoods and the repetition of talking points, such as farmers are stewards of the land and, therefore, do not need to endure policies to ensure a greener economy, because they will go for a greener economy by themselves. Contrary to what economists state, they will — by themselves — go for different ways of doing things that might be more expensive.

Today, I will address eight false arguments repeated by well-financed lobbies:

The first is that Bill C-234 aims to correct an inadvertent omission in the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act from 2018 by not exempting natural gas and propane after having exempted gasoline and fuel used on farms.

The second is that carbon pricing drives inflation and makes food produced by farmers unaffordable.

The third is that carbon pricing has made the overall costs of natural gas and propane an unbearable burden for farmers.

The fourth is that significant efficiencies are unavailable in grain drying with the current technology.

The fifth is that alternatives and efficiencies are unavailable for barn heating or cooling with the existing technology, contrary to the heating of other types of buildings.

The sixth is that a Senate amendment to the bill will automatically kill the bill.

The seventh is that this bill will not weaken Canada's carbon pricing framework and our plan for climate action.

The eighth is that removing the price on carbon will incentivize farmers to invest these savings to reduce emissions.

Based on the evidence made before the committee, I will conclude by proposing an amendment to the bill to remove the exemptions for barn heating and cooling. As a matter of fact, even the House of Commons sponsor of the bill, MP Lobb, confirms that more efficiencies and alternatives are readily available for the heating and cooling of farm buildings.

The first falsehood is that Bill C-234 aims to correct the inadvertent omission of natural gas and propane at the time of adoption of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act in 2018, since the bill exempts gasoline and fuel used on farms, which represent about 97% of the carbon emissions of Canadian farmers. This claim has been repeated in this very chamber.

• (2010)

At the Agriculture Committee, officials from Finance Canada and Environment Canada explained that the federal carbon pricing system was based on B.C.'s carbon pricing, which was already in place at the time. To make it effective, the government's suggestion was to apply carbon pricing as broadly as possible with targeted relief.

One example of this targeted relief was an exemption on the price of carbon for gasoline and diesel as long as it is used for eligible farming machinery, such as the huge tractors and combines we often see on the roads or in the middle of fields in the countryside. They were exempted because there was no real alternative to propel this type of engine — at least, not in 2018, and I am not aware of any combine powered by electricity now. Electric cars are becoming the trend, but there is so far no trend of electric combines or tractors.

Natural gas and propane are used mostly for heating buildings and are a different matter. They were excluded in B.C. as well, as with the government policy here.

So it's not an omission. We're not dealing with the same thing. We're dealing either with machinery or the heating and cooling of buildings. They don't use the same fuel. I don't know of any farms using gasoline to heat up barns.

Furthermore, as we all know by now, the government has the power to exempt a fuel by regulation. This power has been used recently to exempt oil used to heat houses. Despite Bill C-234 and its predecessor, the government has refused to use that power to grant exemptions for natural gas and propane, even if limited to farmers, confirming that this was not an omission but a policy choice.

The second falsehood is the claim that carbon pricing drives inflation and makes food unaffordable. Canada's inflation rate is currently 3.8%, while it is 3.7% in the U.S., 4.3% in the European Union, 4.9% in France specifically and 6.7% in the U.K. Thus, it seems that we are doing better than many other developed countries. Maybe our country is not broken after all.

[Senator Dalphond]

On September 8, Tiff Macklem, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, indicated that about 0.15% of the Canadian inflation rate can be attributed to the carbon price. To put it differently, the increase in the price of carbon this year accounts for an extra \$0.30 on a \$200 grocery bill.

If you want to go back and measure from the introduction of the carbon pricing legislation in 2019, it now accounts for an extra \$1.20 on a \$200 grocery bill. For that very reason, Trevor Tombe, Professor of Economics at the University of Calgary, affirms that the carbon tax is responsible for less than 1% of grocery price increases. I'm not saying it; it is an economist who is saying it. It is also the Governor of the Bank of Canada who is saying it, though he may be fired for doing so if there's a change of government.

Repeating ad nauseam that the carbon price is responsible for the sad inability of many Canadians to eat properly does not turn a falsehood into the truth. However, it may explain why the party that wants to axe the tax would like to axe the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

Responsible politicians should focus on the real causes of the rapidly increasing costs of food and life in Canada and not the carbon tax.

The third false claim is that carbon pricing has made the cost of using natural gas and propane in the care of their animals — especially poultry — unaffordable for farmers.

[*Translation*]

What are we talking about exactly? According to the numbers provided by Statistics Canada and the Parliamentary Budget Officer, for farmers, the share of expenditures devoted to heating fuel represents less than 1% of Canadian farms' operating expenses. To be very specific, it represented 0.9% of the expenses in 2019, 0.8% in 2020, including the carbon tax, and the same in 2021.

It is true that there's a disparity depending on the type of farm. We're talking about 4% to 5% on average for greenhouse produce and 0.4% for Prince Edward Island potatoes or oilseeds and grains. That's why the government provided for an exemption from the carbon tax on 80% of natural gas and propane, by volume, used by greenhouse operators to reduce their costs, which are from 4% to 5%, with the taxed portion being approximately 1% or less.

In short, farmers who use greenhouses pay the carbon tax on only 20% of their use to take into account their unique situation. Of course, we must not forget that those farmers get refundable tax credits under Bill C-8, which was passed two years ago.

It's also important to bear in mind that the carbon price is not tied to fossil fuel prices. The price on pollution is based solely on the amount of dioxin produced. Whether gas costs 10 cents or 90 cents per cubic metre, the per-tonne pollution price associated with using it in a given fiscal year will remain the same.

We've heard a lot about poultry producers, the biggest consumers of natural gas for barn heating. As it happens, the majority of poultry producers are in Ontario. Moreover, all the poultry producers in both Quebec and Ontario operate under supply management that allows or guarantees them a certain income regardless of their costs and expenses. All the lobbyists you've seen didn't mention that either. Some lobbyists told us that all Canadian farmers support Bill C-234, but I met with representatives of the National Farmers Union who told me they're against Bill C-234. Nobody talks about that, though. They're even included in the numbers that Agriculture Carbon Alliance uses to tell you how many farmers support the bill. That's another lie, by the way.

I met with representatives from about 20 associations and asked them questions. I am sharing the case of this Ontario turkey farmer who was good enough to send me his figures, including his production figures, volume of natural gas used per kilogram of meat and the pollution price paid since 2020.

Although this producer's pollution price rose from \$15,000 to \$27,000 between 2020 and 2023, this year, he paid \$37,000 less than the previous year for his natural gas.

In fact, the price of gas dropped from 32 cents per cubic metre in October 2022 to 15 cents in October 2023. Have you seen the price of chicken go down in your grocery store?

[English]

To summarize, this large producer and many others have seen the cost of natural gas decrease substantially in 2023, and they end up saving over \$10,000 to \$20,000 before any refundable tax credit that will further improve their position.

The cost of energy for poultry producers cannot justify an increase in the price of chicken that we consume.

If the price of chicken and other supply-managed products, such as milk and eggs, went up this year, it is not because of the cost of natural gas, with or without carbon pricing.

• (2020)

Of the 20 or more organizations I met with, either with or without their lobbyists — although many are very powerful, resourceful and have money to do research — none were able to provide me with figures on the rebates received by their members in 2022, just last year. They didn't know. I was told, "Well, the numbers we have are not enough to meet the price of carbon."

However, when I asked about the price of gas, they couldn't answer. When I asked them, "Well, you can deduct the carbon tax from your expenses, can't you?" They said, "Oh, yes." But when I asked, "How much does it cost after the rebate and after the deduction for taxes?" none were able to provide an answer. Yet they are all paid lobbyists, earning hundreds of thousands of dollars and sending you all these flyers and leaflets with pictures and nice colours. Try to find the numbers in these leaflets. You won't find any.

The only thing they say is it's going to cost farmers \$1 billion — and that's in small print at the bottom of the page — between now and 2030. Not this year, though, because this year it's costing the farmers \$73 million, not \$1 billion. They prefer to hide that.

The current rebate mechanism enables the return of the proceeds of the tax on carbon collected in the province to the farmers of that province. As you know by now, maybe, this means that \$100 million was returned to farmers in 2021-22 and \$120 million was returned to farmers in 2022-23. It's even more than what was collected because, at the time, taxes were collected before the rebate came into play so there was some money accumulated; this year is a good year.

If these rebates need to be more precisely targeted, as was suggested at the Agriculture Committee in its carefully drafted observations — which some people thought it was wise to scrap — this could be done in a better way and we could return more to those that are using more energy than some that have converted and are no longer using energy.

The fourth false premise of Bill C-234 is that significant efficiencies are not available in grain drying with current technology. We know this premise is untrue from the Agriculture Committee's study. Even MP Ben Lobb, the sponsor of the bill in the House of Commons, said before our committee, "Yes, there are more efficient dryers."

Professor Chandra Singh from Lethbridge College indicated the reduction of 30% on average is achievable in grain drying with more efficient equipment. Ian Boxall — to whom our friends on the other side refer all the time — President of the Board of Directors of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, indicated that he bought a new grain dryer last year to replace his 1974 model, achieving substantial savings in energy costs. When I asked him about 30%, he said a bit less.

The website of a company called Flaman Agriculture — with 11 locations in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba — advertised the NECO grain dryer:

The AGI NECO Mixed Flow Grain Dryer is one of the most efficient dryers on the market, maximizing the test weight of dried grain and lowering your energy bill. . . . NECO Grain Dryers . . . have unequalled energy efficiency—saving up to 20–30% on fuel costs.

Finally, even the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for the Province of Ontario also refers to new dryers as representing a reduction of 30% of volume of natural gas required, with even higher savings possible by reclaiming heat from dryer exhaust air — reducing costs up to 40%.

Honourable senators, the premise that efficiencies are unavailable for farmers for grain drying — and thus that the price signal to incentivize emissions reduction is therefore pointless and punitive — is plainly false. I repeat, plainly false.

It is true that the purchase price of a dryer can be expensive, for example, \$150,000 — that was quoted by Senator Batters — plus installation costs. I will concede that. But Senator Batters did not say that it is an amortized cost. It's equipment that can be depreciated over years, for example, 10 years. That allows the price to be deducted against your net income. And I'm not speaking here about the programs that exist in many provinces to finance and assist farmers that want to buy this equipment, including federal programs that are so popular that they are running out of money. One other observation of our committee was that the government should substantially increase these programs because the farmers want to have this equipment. They want to embrace the change, but they need a little push from these programs.

Moreover, if Bill C-234 were to be adopted, we have learned in committee that it will have a perverse outcome on grain drying markets in Ontario and elsewhere in other provinces. Since the carbon tax will continue to apply to commercial grain dryers, in Ontario, more than 60% of the producers of grains are using these commercial dryers to dry their grains. They will not have access to the bill, but the 30% or 40% who have their own on-farm dryers will have access to it.

Senator Wells said that's fine. You should all buy on-farm dryers. That will be the answer. Then they will all get the rebate. Well, before the committee, it was said that the commercial dryers are more efficient than the individual, smaller on-farm dryers. What is being proposed as a climate change policy is that we have more dryers that are less efficient on farms than those used by commercial dryers, plus we are dislocating a business which is quite important in Ontario and in some Western provinces.

Let's now speak of the heating of farm buildings. Senators, compared to grain drying, alternatives and efficiencies are already available. In fact, alternatives for efficiencies in barn heating and cooling include better insulation, in-floor heating, geothermal heat pumps, air source heat pumps, energy efficient ventilation fans, biomass heating, solar walls, LED lighting, more natural lighting, light-coloured heat-reflective paints and so forth. We're familiar with some of those options for homes and other buildings located in Canada.

The House of Commons' sponsor of Bill C-234, MP Lobb, who was present today to see our vote, confirmed this point in committee. He said:

. . . If you look at the heating of barns, it's moving lockstep with the innovations that are heating a home, a commercial building or an industrial building — because it only makes financial sense.

Tom Green from the David Suzuki Foundation said:

There are ever more examples of farms that are reducing their fossil fuel consumption and improving energy efficiency. For instance, a poultry farm in Linden, Alberta, has a 175-kilowatt rooftop system. . . .

They sell energy, from time to time, to the electricity distributor.

[Senator Dalphond]

Mr. Green continued:

. . . In another case, a poultry barn built with a high efficiency thermal envelope reduced energy consumption by 83% per ton of eggs.

This situation is the reason why I moved an amendment at the committee to exclude barn heating and cooling from the exemptions of Bill C-234 rather than to legislate on a false premise. This amendment was declined at the House of Commons Agriculture and Agri-Food Committee with a vote of 6 to 5. However, the Senate Agriculture Committee adopted it with a vote of seven to six, with one abstention, who was the GRO representative.

• (2030)

I will again propose this amendment today.

This amendment will maintain the financial incentive to reduce emissions from raising livestock in barns by investing in alternative or efficient barn heating or cooling, an option available right now. In the bigger picture, this amendment will also discourage other sectors from seeking to exempt their economic activities that involve heating buildings, such as meat-processing plants, fruit warehouses, food distribution centres and so on, most likely through other private members' bills. When it was said in committee that they were asking for an amendment to also cover the commercial dryer operations, some senators said, "No, no. Let's wait. Let's pass the bill without amendment. We will have another bill later to cover that." So we know that if this exemption is granted, we will have people knocking on the door the week after.

Exemptions should be limited to very exceptional cases and not a way to "axe the tax" one step at a time.

I now turn to false argument number six about what will happen if senators dare to amend Bill C-234. On November 1, in the *National Post*, they quoted Senator Wells saying:

Because the government controls the pace and placement of bills, it would just die a slow, lonely death —

— I like the poetry —

— especially after the steps we saw late last week in carving out exemptions on home heating fuel.

This is unfortunately inaccurate. If the Senate amends Bill C-234, a message will be sent to the other place to acquaint the MPs of this amendment. The message will enter automatically on the House of Commons' order of precedence for private members' business. This is a much more fair, timely and transparent system than we have in the Senate when dealing with private bills — especially when some people don't like them — with regularly scheduled debates and votes on the list of a maximum of 30 items — private bills, motions or messages from the Senate. If this bill were to be returned to the other place tonight, it would become item 25 on the list of items that are waiting to be debated at the regular scheduled time.

Moreover, MPs can always trade an item off the list with somebody lower on the list to expedite debate. On the current order of precedence, eight Conservative items are between number 1 and number 25, including several Conservative Senate public bills, with no limit in the amount of trading that can be done. Maybe one of the private Senate bills could wait to have this ever-important bill to move ahead.

Accordingly, this bill, if sent back to the other place, will move, and the government will have nothing to say about it because it's not a government bill. But they said at the same time, "Don't do that" — why? They said that there is multi-party support in the other place for the bill, so if they have it back, they will react so swiftly and they will reaffirm their support for that bill, unless we fear that maybe the support is evaporating.

Maybe the senator lied. We have been told:

"Support that because it's coming from the House of Commons. It's the will of the elected people. They have done their job, so just put the rubber stamp on it."

Of course, when such a debate will happen in the other place, amendments could be made. They could accept the amendment of the Senate. They could refuse it, and we will defer, as we do, when we get back the message, because this is the way it goes between unelected and elected houses.

To illustrate, in 2017, the Senate amended a private bill, Bill C-224, known as the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act. That bill was previously unanimously adopted by the other place. The bill was also especially urgent because it proposed measures designed to save lives in case of overdose. Indeed, it has saved lives since its adoption.

The Senate amended the bill to expand the scope of immunity if you call 9-1-1 in order to save more lives. The other place welcomed the Senate amendment and voted to support the amendment within one month. This chamber did not consider an amendment with lives at stake to be an undue risk. If we can do it when the lives of people are at stake, we can do it when we speak about exemptions on natural gas or propane to heat a barn.

Furthermore, I am intrigued by what we have been urged to do so fast because it was representing the overwhelming majority of the House. I know there is a motion pending before the House today, debated today and it will be voted upon tomorrow. Maybe we'll find out that the kind of multi-party wide support is evaporating, or maybe not. We will deal with the bill if they are still supportive of it, and we will get it fast. And don't worry: Nobody is drying grain anymore. The season is over.

Colleagues, the seventh false claim is that this bill will not weaken Canada's carbon pricing framework and our plan for climate action. At the first meeting of the Agriculture Committee, Senator Wells, the sponsor, said:

I want to be clear: The essence of Bill C-234 is not to challenge the validity of the carbon tax as a whole. Climate change is an undeniable reality, and remedial measures are crucial in our fight against it, but it's our duty to ensure that these measures are applied fairly. The proposed amendments to the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, as

encapsulated in Bill C-234, are not sweeping changes, and they don't challenge the concept of the tax. They are targeted and they are narrow

By the way, the concept of the tax is a price on carbon.

Colleagues, I find that statement surprising. As said on the website of the Conservative Party, this bill is a vanguard effort to axe the tax. And it won't have an impact on the price of food; that's the agenda.

So let's not sugar-coat the bill and say:

No, no. We are for climate change. Yes, we will do something, but not this. We'll just remove that group.

The next group will be following, knocking on the door the week after, as I said.

Incidentally, even if that bill were to be adopted, which I don't suggest to do now — but to return to the House of Commons — I'm anxious to see the impact on your grocery bill when you go for groceries next month.

The last falsity is about the need to leave more money with farmers to incentivize them to invest in a greener economy. According to that argument, the rising price from carbon is not a financial incentive, while the lack of one will be. Quite frankly, I fail to understand the point, unless all the economists in the world, or at least the majority of them, are wrong.

Finally, this brings me to the fairness argument that is in the mind of many of us, as it should be. As we all know, since the report of the AGFO committee, three important events have happened. First, on October 26, the Prime Minister announced a three-year exemption of the price on carbon for home heating oil. Like Senator Simons, I was rather puzzled by this announcement. After some research, I now do understand that at current prices, it can cost four times more to generate the same amount of heat with oil as with natural gas — that the price of oil has increased significantly over the last few years, contrary to the price of gas that went down. Finally, this expensive source of energy is mostly used by low-income households, not only in Atlantic Canada, but mostly in Ontario and Quebec, if you look at the numbers.

As Senator Ringuette exposed earlier today, this exemption is not targeted at one region; it's not targeting a group of people that are using a product that went up through the roof over the years. It's not efficient. It's not generating enough power compared to gas, and the time has come to replace that with heat pumps and other sources of energy. The government is moving in that direction. Was it necessary to give a three-year exemption on top? To me, it looks like a faux pas, but it should not be an excuse to throw away the baby with the bathwater.

• (2040)

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Second, since the report, the government has repeatedly said that since the announcement there would be no further exemptions to the price on carbon. It has also reaffirmed its strong commitment to the policy of a price on carbon and to doing whatever is necessary to meet Canada's undertaking under the Paris Agreement. I know that many here, like me, believe that these are necessary steps in the fight against the climate crisis.

Third, on November 6, the House of Commons defeated a Conservative motion calling for an exemption for all home heating fuel. Why should we now adopt a bill that provides an exemption for heating all kinds of barns and farm buildings, including those farmers operating in supply management systems that guarantee them a good income, while refusing a similar exemption for all home heating? It's a good question, I think. Maybe cows are more valuable than humans.

Furthermore, can we adopt a bill that proposes exemptions for heating all kinds of farm buildings for a minimum of eight years, while the exemption for home heating oil is limited to three years? Tell me: Where is the logic?

Considered in isolation or together with recent developments, Bill C-234 remains a bad bill resting on many false premises. In my view, Parliament should not legislate on a false premise or many false premises. Passing this bill in its current form will amount to us being scared to fulfill our constitutional role.

This private bill is not a case where we should abdicate our responsibility, especially toward a private bill, in the face of pressure campaigns and even threats. Senators, as always, we should do the right thing. In this case, it means returning this bill to the other place to let elected MPs from the three opposition parties that made its adoption possible, despite the contrary view of the government, to act together and to tell us exactly how they see it and how they want to manage the things to be coherent. Why should the grain farmers get eight years for their buildings and some people three years to heat their home?

Again, before I move the amendment, I will end by quoting MP Lobb when he spoke about the heating of barns. He said:

If you look at the heating of barns, it's moving lockstep with the innovations that are heating a home, a commercial building or an industrial building — because it only makes financial sense.

There is no rationale for providing an exemption for heating farms and other farm buildings.

Therefore, with this amendment, let us legislate based on facts. Let us draw a line against axing the tax. We will improve Bill C-234 and invite all MPs, including Liberals and ministers, to put in place a coherent approach instead of poking holes in an important part of our climate plan.

[Senator Dalphond]

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Therefore, honourable senators, in amendment, I move:

That Bill C-234 be not now read a third time, but that it be amended,

(a) in clause 1,

(i) on page 1, by replacing lines 4 to 15 with the following:

“1 (1) Paragraph (c) of the definition *eligible farming machinery* in section 3 of the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* is replaced by the”,

(ii) on page 2, by deleting lines 1 to 10;

(b) in clause 2, on page 2, by replacing line 22 with the following:

“2 (1) Subsections 1(2.1) and (5) come”.

It will be easier to read on a piece of paper but will look as technical as what I just said, but this is the translation in legislative terms of what I have said.

It means creating a carve-out in that bill to remove heating and cooling of barns and other farm buildings because it makes no sense and because human lives are not exempted, except in the very limited case of home heating oil, and therefore the logic is not there. If we are ready to legislate on false premises and in an illogical way because we fear the pressure from farmers, because we fear the threats from people, I say we will then abdicate our responsibility, and this Senate will not be the new Senate. It will be back to the old days, when nobody cared about the Senate.

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Dalphond, the time for debate has expired. Are you prepared to take questions?

[*English*]

Senator Dalphond: I would have thought that after 45 minutes everybody had enough of me. If you want five more minutes, I am willing to ask for it.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

An Hon. Senator: No.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, first of all, let me start off by saying I'm not sure what grain farmers are doing in downtown Montreal, but in Western Canada they are still drying their grain. I'm not sure where Senator Dalphond gets this that the drying season is over. The drying season is far from over in my province of Manitoba, in Saskatchewan, Alberta and, I'm sure, Ontario.

Senator Dalphond also said that this is a vanguard attempt to axe the tax. Now if that were so, then I wonder why the Green Party, the NDP and the Bloc supported this bill in the other place. I don't think Senator Dalphond would accuse the Green Party of wanting to axe the tax. So this is across party lines.

I'm going to be very brief. Senator Dalphond also talked about how farmers are so efficient they are now using NECO grain dryers, and he is correct. What Senator Dalphond didn't say is that NECO grain dryers use propane to heat. I'm not sure why if a farmer is becoming more efficient and using 30% less energy, we wouldn't say, hallelujah, that's a great thing, and he is going to need less of an exemption because he is using less? We should cheer them on, not try to penalize them.

So I really am a little baffled at his arguments. But most of all, colleagues, how many votes do we need to take on the same issue before Senator Dalphond says, "Maybe they want this"? We voted on this very same amendment. I'm sure if I would use that as a point of order, Senator Dalphond might find a comma that is different in his than it was in the other, so I won't raise a point of order on that, Your Honour, although I firmly believe that an argument could be made for a point of order that this very same amendment was dealt with in this chamber.

• (2050)

Senator Dalphond moved this amendment in committee, and then we voted on the committee report that had that amendment in it. This chamber decided to reject that amendment by rejecting the committee report. I don't know how we could be any clearer than that.

When that wasn't good enough, Senator Dalphond, I'm sure, had some input in deciding the next amendment that we voted on earlier this evening. Again, that amendment was rejected by us in this chamber. Democratically, we rejected that amendment. Now Senator Dalphond is putting forward another amendment that is exactly the same, and I hear there is a third amendment waiting in the wings.

Colleagues, how often? Farmers from coast to coast to coast are pleading with us. Even if grain dryers are more efficient, Senator Dalphond, there are people who are heating, and that season is starting now, not ending. Even though you already falsely said we're not drying grain anymore, the heating season is starting now. This is when those farmers are going to have their cause.

This isn't farmers in one part of Canada. This isn't just farmers in Atlantic Canada or in Western Canada. Quebec farmers, even though they have the cap-and-trade system in Quebec, are pleading for us to treat everybody fairly, reject amendments and pass Bill C-234. That is in Senator Dalphond's own province, but somehow Senator Dalphond knows better than all the farmers in

his own province. These are dairy farmers, hog farmers, grain farmers and vegetable growers. They all want us to pass Bill C-234 unamended.

Colleagues, this is again an amendment that, I repeat, I believe is very close to warranting a point of order, but I won't do that. I will count on senators to do what they did earlier today and show Senator Dalphond again that the majority of senators want this passed, and they want it passed unamended. Twice we voted on that, colleagues.

I know the government is anxious, and I know they are working hard, even though they never get involved in private members' bills, unless it comes to one they don't like. Colleagues, let's reject this. Let's move on. Let's give Canadian farmers what they need. Let's give them some certainty so they know they will be able to dry their grain and heat their barns. They will get more efficient grain dryers, Senator Dalphond. If they are available, trust me, they will get them. It's a benefit to them as well as it is to the rest of the country. They are not trying to operate inefficiently; they are trying to operate as efficiently as is physically possible.

Colleagues, please, I encourage you to reject this amendment and support farmers from every region of this country. Support farmers — vote against this amendment. This is a delay tactic. That is absolutely all it is, a delay tactic like we have never seen before. Colleagues, vote against this amendment. With that, I would like to call the question.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Plett, Senator Ringuette has a question. Will you accept a question?

Senator Plett: No.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on Senator Dalphond's amendment to Bill C-234. Actually, as you can see, my pile of research is getting higher and higher.

For me, this amendment represents a compromise to moving this bill forward and accepting a certain time frame for grain farmers to purchase cleaner technology — grain dryers — that is now available in the marketplace. In fact, for many years, the Department of Agriculture has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to help grain farmers purchase such energy-efficient dryers.

I will also say that this bill is not an issue of fairness for farmers, since I have already proven to you via the PBO — Parliamentary Budget Officer — report that with the current exemption of 97% for diesel and gas, the net average cost to farmers per year, per farm, is \$806, and that's the average for the next seven years. What you get is the current pricing on propane and natural gas, including the 90% rebate. Read the PBO report. Stop taking for granted this one issue of everyone who is in favour of this bill saying that it's a billion dollars. It is not. Read the PBO report.

The current carbon pricing scheme is the most generous of all carbon schemes, more generous than carbon pricing for individuals — consumers — and more generous than the private scheme for any other economic sector in this country.

This bill is not about fairness for farmers. After the events we witnessed during our break week, I reaffirm that this is a Trojan Horse for those who want to axe the tax. During our break week, while I was doing research, I was constantly on the phone with our regional potato farmers objectively explaining the current 97% exemption for diesel and gas and the 90% rebate for farmers. Most of them did not know about this rebate because New Brunswick has been on the federal program only since July 1.

I also objectively informed them about Bill C-234, which would remove carbon pricing on propane and natural gas, including that it would eventually and very shortly, colleagues — let's be realistic — also remove any rebate, since the rebate is based on 90% of the proceeds. It will remove the rebates that the farmers receive. That's the other half of the story you have not heard.

It was very clear after analyzing their cost spreadsheet that the current scheme is financially better for them. At the same time, they express how much climate change is continuously affecting their operations. They see the long-term cost benefit of reducing emissions. Being as down-to-earth as they are in my area, they want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. They do not want to be the biggest outlier on carbon pricing compared to any other business. They are proud farmers. They also do not want to be the political scapegoat of the partisan rhetoric we're hearing now.

By the way, these are the same family farmers who, during the drought in the West a few decades ago, even though they were poor farmers, sent trainloads of free potatoes to our Western Canadians. They believe, like on most issues, that we are all in this together.

I did not tell them yet about the double-talk of the lobbyists who they are paying for to lobby on this bill. It's their hard-earned money, and there is double-talk at the same time. Even Senator Plett has confirmed that. Farm organizations and beef organizations were in his office saying, "You need to support this bill, but please, do not help the supply management farmers of Canada." I have some of those in my area, and they will know about this.

• (2100)

During these conversations, they informed me that climate change requires them to increase the amount of fertilizer they need and that fertilizer costs have drastically increased because of the embargo on Russia. These cost elements were never discussed in Agriculture Committee meetings.

I must admit that it was quite a revelation to me, so I did some research, although I could not find the cost increase for fertilizer due to our Russian embargo, which is probably much higher than what we're talking about today. I did find, though, a study issued this October about Saskatchewan farmers' emissions that indicates the following in the last 20 years: Greenhouse gas, or

GHG, emissions from Saskatchewan agriculture and production of agricultural inputs are steadily rising. Emissions have doubled. The tonnage — and that's where the real cost is — of nitrogen fertilizer applied annually has quadrupled in Saskatchewan. So I can imagine that the cost has quadrupled accordingly but not because of carbon pricing.

Going back to the cost increase for fertilizer caused by the embargo on Russia, this is a measure that we all applauded in this chamber and in the other place. We applauded the embargo on Russia because of the war they are waging in Ukraine. In fact, when we were at the other place to hear President Zelenskyy, a senator dressed in her Ukrainian outfit sitting next to me clapped quite a lot louder than me, and honestly it warmed my heart.

It seems that support, though, has cooled down, and quite a lot. I wonder how last week some managed to turn their backs on Ukraine with 109 Conservative MPs voting against the Ukraine-Canada trade agreement based on this phobia of carbon pricing. It's a phobia. It's nothing else. Honourable senators, Ukraine has had carbon pricing since 2011, more than a decade before us. In fact, it was that same year that the Harper government withdrew Canada from the Kyoto Protocol. The leader of the time described it as a socialist scheme. We were the only country in the world to repudiate the Kyoto Protocol.

Contrary to the lessons we should have learned from our past mistake on this issue, some senators who were here then and are still here now have almost the same arguments but disguised in slightly different packaging.

The package in front of us is an accessory, the continuous arguments of doing nothing. The bill unamended is exactly that — doing nothing — even though our farming sector is the fifth-largest Canadian emitter of greenhouse gases.

An important unintended consequence of this bill is that by its removal of 100% of carbon pricing, it will have disastrous implications regarding trade agreements. The consequence of this bill is greater than meets the eye. Canada is a trading nation. We do not live in isolation. The entire world is waging war against emissions, and so are the countries that we have and want to have trade agreements with. All future and current Canada trade agreements will include, whether we like it or not, provisions with regard to sectorial emissions reductions.

We will not be able to bypass emissions reductions in trade negotiations. Canada is the fifth-largest exporter of food products: 50% of our beef, 70% of soybeans, 70% of pork, 75% of wheat, 90% of our canola, and the list goes on. How do you think our farmers will fare in any future trade agreements for their products without any emission pricing, given a competitive world? Do you honestly believe our trading partners, who all have carbon pricing, will not consider your proposed 100% exemption for farmers?

There will be retaliation, and it will be real and costly, particularly for the farmers from Quebec and B.C., who will take a double hit in regard to carbon pricing and trade because Canada's trade agreements will not be able to differentiate what is happening on the farms in Quebec and B.C. That situation is not there.

If you do not believe that, honestly, you are dreaming in Technicolor. There is no way our trading partners will accept the exclusion of our entire agriculture economic sector from carbon emission regulation and carbon pricing. I can just imagine the retaliation.

As I said earlier, the current net average carbon pricing for farmers is established at \$806 per farm per year over the next seven years. Future trade agreements without any carbon pricing for our farmers could cost millions, if not billions, of dollars to those farmers. I reiterate that it takes political guts and foresight to put in place in Canada a slate of policies to reduce emissions. So far, no one has had the guts to do that.

The entire world is moving in that direction. As the house of sober second thought, this is the reality we face with this bill. It is not, again, about farm fairness. It is so politically clear to me. Some say that by not acting sooner we have already killed the planet. I am a fighter; you can see. I'm a fighter for what is right, and I will not give up. Individually and collectively, we need to try harder and faster in regard to climate change and emissions.

I have supported this Agriculture Committee report that contained that amendment, and in the spirit of compromise —

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Ringuette, your time has expired.

Senator Ringuette: May I have a few more minutes?

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

An Hon. Senator: No.

[*English*]

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, I would first like to thank Senator Ringuette, Senator Plett and Senator Dalphond for their interventions. It's a reminder of how important third reading debate is because tonight we have heard some new information that should help all of us come to a decision, not just on this amendment but the bill as a whole.

• (2110)

Senator Dalphond, in his closing remarks, admonished us to legislate based on facts. While all of us will have to decide what we believe are the facts, you may agree that we've heard information, from Senators Dalphond and Ringuette in particular, that does not correspond to the avalanche of information that lobby groups have bombarded us with.

Again, it's up to all of us to decide which facts we choose, but I'm so grateful to my colleagues for providing us with some alternative viewpoints.

I am also very grateful for the opportunity to join debate on this amendment because I was not present in the chamber when the report was debated and voted on. I was, of course, part of the Agriculture Committee that developed the report. I voted in favour of the amendment to remove barns from the Bill C-234 exemptions at committee.

I was disappointed to not have had the opportunity to speak to that amendment before the chamber as a whole voted on the report, so I am taking this opportunity tonight.

To those of you who are questioning why we are revisiting an amendment that was rejected along with the committee report, I hope my intervention will offer a fresh perspective and perhaps even change a few minds.

Senator Dalphond's amendment challenges us to reflect on the difference between barns and grain dryers in terms of their ability to respond to a price signal to reduce emissions in energy use. It is based on the supposition that there are more lower emission options for the heating of buildings than there are for grain dryers. This is a correct supposition. Senator Dalphond has already elaborated on it, and it is a powerful argument for removing barns from the Bill C-234 exemption.

The heating and cooling of buildings, including barns, can be improved with lower emissions through better insulation, construction and ventilation technologies, all of which are readily available today.

Emissions can also be reduced by switching, in whole or part, to renewable energy sources where available and by installing heat pumps — yes, heat pumps. I am aware that this humble and rather unattractive appliance, based on a technology that is many decades old, has recently become an icon of culture wars, propagated by those who are skeptical about the science of climate change, hooked on the daily use of fossil fuel or just resistant to change. They have vilified heat pumps as a kind of status imposition that violates their freedom to pollute and/or does not even address their heating and cooling needs.

It reminds me a bit of when hybrid vehicles first appeared 20 years ago. There was a feeling that if you drove a hybrid vehicle, you were trying to make a statement or be cool and maybe were not really sincere. That has, of course, changed since then; however, heat pumps seem to have that kind of image now.

In fact, there are similar culture wars going on in Europe over heat pumps. In Germany, for example, where the government tried to insist on heat pumps as the preferred source of energy for new construction, there was an uproar led by the Alternative für Deutschland, or AfD, the far-right — I won't use the other term, but the far-right party that portrayed this support for heat pumps as a kind of socialist intervention.

Similar debates are taking place in the United States, the U.K. and Poland, typically led, again, by right-wing parties in those countries.

Let me quote from *MIT Technology Review* on the efficacy of heat pumps in cold climates:

The claim that heat pumps don't work well in *really* cold weather is often repeated by fossil-fuel companies, which have a competing product to sell.

There's a kernel of truth here. Heat pumps can be less efficient in extreme cold. As the temperature difference between inside and outside increases, a heat pump has to work harder to gather heat from that outside air. But there are heat pumps operating everywhere, from Alaska to Maine in the United States. In Norway — a cold country, by the way — 60% of buildings are heated with heat pumps.

Colleagues, even if heat pumps are not as efficient in extremely cold temperatures, the economic and the climate-friendly solution is to have a secondary energy source to supplement the heat source.

Let me now quote from a 2022 study by Ferguson and Sager, which has found that cold climate air-source heat pumps generate less greenhouse gas, or GHG, emissions than oil furnaces in all parts of Canada — not just in my corner of the country. These same heat pumps generate less GHG emissions than gas furnaces in B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. The operating costs of cold climate air-source heat pumps are less than electric resistance or oil furnaces for space heating in all parts of Canada.

In regions where natural gas prices are low, the operating costs of cold climate air-source heat pumps are more comparable to the operating cost of a conventional gas furnace. In other words, the case for heat pumps, even in extremely cold temperatures, is very strong.

Senator Dalphond is correct to remind us that barns are different from grain dryers insofar as there are alternative technologies for the heating and cooling of the structures which produce lower emissions.

If we believe in the importance of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act regime and the vital role that carbon pricing plays in incentivizing change, that should be a sufficient reason for us to support this amendment. But, colleagues, it would not be correct to extrapolate from this argument that grain dryers are off the hook. The important point here, in terms of the broader policy logic of GHG pollution pricing, is not that barns have an energy alternative and grain dryers don't and therefore grain dryers should be spared. That fallacy is based on the idea that a carbon price only works when there are technology alternatives available.

Indeed, this is a core argument among advocates of Bill C-234 who say that the lack of alternatives to the use of natural gas for grain drying renders a fuel charge useless on that energy source.

Indeed, much of the debate on Bill C-234 has focused on when we can expect a brand new technology that will allow farmers to stop using natural gas altogether. The lack of a clear answer has been used as an argument to exempt grain drying for at least the next eight years. But this point of view represents a flawed understanding of how carbon pricing works, and we see it repeated over and over again, most recently in the letters from Pulse Canada and from one of our colleagues — who sent an email to all of us this morning.

• (2120)

The effect of a price signal is to incentivize farmers to reduce their use of carbon-intensive fuels using all means possible, including investments in energy efficiency based on the current technologies. The point of the carbon price is to incentivize farmers to move closer to what's called the technology frontier — whatever the prevailing commercial technology or technologies might entail. The price mechanism — the carbon price — does not rely solely on breakthrough technologies that are totally novel, even though price signals will encourage innovation that could bring about such breakthroughs.

Some of you will argue that all grain farmers are already at the technology frontier — but that is not a credible argument. Senator Dalphond has already given some reasons why it's not credible, but let me point to one of the bill's star witnesses at the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, who admitted that he had only recently traded in his 50-year-old grain dryer for a new one, resulting in substantial energy and cost savings. As well, Senator Plett has just told us that the NECO grain dryer will produce large cost and energy savings. This is exactly the point of the price incentive. It is reasonable to expect that other grain drying farmers will factor in a carbon price when they are thinking about replacing their 50-year-old, 40-year-old or 30-year-old grain dryer, and perhaps switching to the NECO model.

If you are still in doubt that there are other energy efficiency measures that farmers can avail themselves of — short of a totally new energy source — consider that the federal government's Agricultural Clean Technology Program is massively oversubscribed by farmers. Most advocates of the bill are also calling for an increase in funding for this program; we heard it at Question Period with Minister Guilbeault last week. To me, that is as clear an admission as one can have about the existence of energy efficiency measures for farmers that are available today.

Some of you will be thinking that farmers already act in their self-interest when it comes to energy efficiency, so a price signal is not necessary. I'm an economist; my own sense is that farmers are not much different from other folks, and that price incentives matter. But let's assume, for the sake of argument, that every barn-owning, grain drying farmer is already maximizing his or her energy savings based on natural gas and propane. Let's also assume that a brand new technology using an alternative energy source appears in eight years, which is what most advocates say will happen. At that time, farmers using natural gas will have the choice of switching to a new technology at considerable cost or paying \$170 per tonne of emissions — up from \$65 per tonne this year. My prediction is that they will choose neither because the adjustment cost will be too sudden and too large, and we will have made that happen. We will have allowed that to happen.

Instead, what they will do is lobby Parliament to extend the exemption, which will be easy to do under the current version of this bill since we defeated the amendment proposed by Senator Moncion. What could have been a gradual adjustment to new technology based on \$15 per tonne yearly increments to the price of emissions has become a massive burden that kicks in on January 1, 2031. You can see how Bill C-234 undermines the logic of pollution pricing, and intensifies political pressure to abandon the regime.

Colleagues, I will return to this idea in my third-reading speech on the main motion. I wanted to speak narrowly on the amendment. Suffice it to say for now that this amendment has great merit. In his closing remarks, Senator Dalphond asked that we draw a line against further erosion of carbon pricing in Canada. I don't want to overdramatize, but that is what we're doing here today. If we vote for the amendment, we will draw a line against further erosion of carbon pricing. I support the amendment, and I hope you will too.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Dalphond's amendment, which was proposed at third reading of Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act. Through this speech, I want to express my support for this amendment and outline the reasons why I am in favour of limiting the scope of the bill.

The purpose of Senator Dalphond's amendment is to maintain the exemptions for grain drying equipment, but to remove the exemptions for heating and cooling livestock buildings. I would like to thank Senator Dalphond for this amendment, which responds to a problematic situation identified during the study of the bill by the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

Keeping an open mind is important at this stage of the debate so that Senator Dalphond's amendment is reviewed objectively. From the outset, I must say that I'm disappointed in how our work has been conducted with respect to Bill C-234. The disinformation and the dissemination of anti-tax rhetoric have polluted public debate on carbon pricing and have inevitably influenced our deliberations. This has made it difficult for parliamentarians to have an objective view of the issues that the creation of new exemptions for farmers present. We have also been under intense pressure to rush through this work, preventing us from doing a thorough and complete review of the bill.

The pricing system is part of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, a plan developed by the provinces and territories following consultations with Indigenous peoples. The complexity and completeness of this framework are such that it should not be dismantled bit by bit through private members' bills.

The current government is committed to a strategy designed to combat greenhouse gases and climate change. It has introduced programs and financial incentives to support these efforts. Carbon pricing is one measure among many. It is not our role to change the priorities of the elected government, whether Liberal or Conservative.

Keep in mind that Canada's agriculture industry is of crucial importance to our country's economy and to the employability of Canadians. This is one of the reasons why the Canadian government invests billions of dollars in this sector, thereby ensuring that it is sustainable and competitive.

Last week, during his speech on my amendment, Senator Deacon gave an excellent speech and presented his reasons for not voting in favour of the amendment and his reasons for voting in favour of the bill. I understand his frustrations and those of other senators, as well as the feeling of powerlessness that often results from making appeals to ministers and officials. It often seems as though there is a failure to listen, and change is slow and difficult in Canada.

Despite this observation, Canada is not strong when it comes to climate change. The Canadian strategy from 2023-28 for the agriculture sector, which comes with a \$3.5-billion envelope over five years, includes five priorities: the first is to strengthen the capacity, growth and competition of the sector; the second is to fight climate change and protect the environment; the third is to advance science, research and innovation; the fourth is to develop markets and competition; the fifth is to improve public trust and resilience.

The Canadian government is investing heavily in research projects to improve crops in Canada and improve the energy efficiency of the tools and equipment used in farm operation, as well as in the technologies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The agriculture industry enjoys significant and ongoing support from the Canadian government, making it a highly supported and subsidized sector.

• (2130)

The modernization of farm operations has evolved significantly over the past 30 years. Take, for example, the dairy industry, which has made unprecedented advances in automation, from feeding the animals to digitizing operations. This transformation brought about increased efficiency for our dairy farmers and a consolidation of operations in a highly competitive market. If you have never visited a dairy farm, I would invite you to do so. It is incredible to see the automation of operations and the digitization of practices in this area.

Let's look at the large acreage agricultural market, which has improved over the years. The rate of return on agricultural land is more than double what it used to be. And what can we say about the technological advances in other sectors, such as animal husbandry, poultry production and egg production?

I will not revisit the carbon tax. Earlier, the senator talked about the arguments and information that were presented here in this chamber and in committee that were not exactly accurate. He did an excellent job of that, and I don't need to go over the various points he raised in his speech. As you can see, I am moving quickly through the pages of my speech, because I don't want to repeat the same things.

So far, climate change has received little attention in our debates. I would like to thank Senator Ringuette for her speech on my amendment, which highlighted alarming data on the human and financial costs of climate change.

These costs have a significant impact on our farmers. You may recall that, in 2021, crops were hit by a "heat dome" and 40% of Western Canada's grain production was wiped out. The Canadian government stepped in to support the sector with a \$1.1-billion contribution.

In 2022, more than \$3.1 billion worth of damage was caused by extreme weather, including the derecho in Ontario and Quebec in May, Hurricane Fiona in the Maritimes in the fall, and the many summer storms, floods and forest fires in Western Canada. It's important to remember that these costs are borne by Canadians, either through ever-increasing insurance premiums or through the taxes we pay.

In my speech, I presented several reasons that reinforce how important it is to narrow the scope of the bill. The Senate's version of the bill must reflect the work done in committee; otherwise, we will be accused of agnotology. Agnotology is the deliberate failure to consider information that would enable us to make a sound and informed decision on the issues presented here.

Meanwhile, there are some people we have not heard from in this chamber, namely, farmers. We talked about costs. I read in a newspaper that I am an "urban senator." Well, this urban senator has walked around barns in rubber boots. I have visited farms and walked through hayfields. I was a lender for 38 years, and some of the balance sheets I had to review during that time were from the agricultural sector.

Farmers are extremely smart business people. They are very knowledgeable. They are business people looking for ways to improve their yields, looking to earn more. Farmers are often rich in assets: land, animals, milk quotas, grain tonnage.

To come back to what Senator Plett said about grain drying, I went up north this weekend. I went home, but I also went up north. What we are seeing in the north is that the snow has arrived and farmers there are finished harvesting and drying grain. However, farmers in other areas are still drying grain. If you take Highway 17 toward Cobden, you will see the grain dryers running at full tilt these days. Farmers are not finished drying their grain yet, but they are almost done, depending on where they are in Canada.

[Senator Moncion]

In summary, the Canadian government is working closely with the country's agricultural industry. What really disappoints me about Bill C-234 is the amount of disinformation that we were given. I don't often rise to speak to bills because I don't always have the expertise required. I am not claiming to be an expert in the agricultural field, but although we may have had turkey for Thanksgiving, we have been fed a lot of bologna here over the past few weeks. I don't like when that's done to Canadian senators or parliamentarians.

To conclude my speech, all I can say is that we are very smart people. We were appointed to the Senate for a reason. We have to work diligently when making decisions as important as these.

I really liked Senator Boisvenu's comment this afternoon when he said that we are proposing simple solutions to complex problems. That is what we have here: extremely simple solutions to extremely complex situations. I urge all senators to be cautious in the decisions they make. Whatever choices we make, we will have to live with them, and they should be environmentally sound in our minds. In my case, I am not comfortable with Bill C-234, and it is out of step with my views on ecology. I will vote in favour of Senator Dalphond's amendment, but I will be voting against this bill. It goes against my principles and values. Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Robert Black: Will the senator take a question?

Senator Moncion: Yes, I will.

Senator Black: Senator, just to be clear, are you quite certain that when snow hits the ground, grain dryers aren't used? Are you quite certain?

Senator Moncion: What I will say is that, depending on what is being harvested — because I have the numbers — some will dry for 21 days and the amount of humidity and all that, I have that information. But no, senator. It's a seasonal activity, and depending on where you are in Canada, once your grain has been dried, according to my knowledge — and I can be corrected — they are put in containers and they wait to be shipped if they are going to market. That drying needs to be done quickly because they don't want the grains or whatever is being dried — and there are four categories — to rot. So it is done, and I understand it's done over a longer period of time. It is seasonal because of the way we harvest here in Canada.

The other thing that I know is that when farmers have their fields, they don't plant the same thing everywhere, so they will start harvesting some products with a longer drying time, and they will work their way through the drying season. It's the same when they put the seed in the ground in the spring. They also slate so that they don't harvest everything at the same time. As I said, they are very smart, and they have the technology that is helping them.

Senator Black: I have to ask a question; I would have to figure that question out. I would ask that you consider talking to organizations that you have recently said you won't talk to and ask them the same question because grain drying takes place from August and September through to December, January and into February. I would ask you to ask that question. Thank you.

Senator Moncion: I agree with you. But the drying season is not the whole year, and it's not every grain farmer.

• (2140)

If I look at the North, for example, I know that their drying season is done because what they harvest is done.

An Hon. Senator: No, it's not.

Senator Moncion: In the North, where I live on the weekend, it is finished for the season.

Hon. Brent Cotter: Thank you, Your Honour. I had not intended to speak at this point in the debate, and I only intend to speak once unless I run out of time.

To make my views clear on this, as I think many of you know, I will not support this amendment, and I will support the bill in its unamended form.

I don't intend to respond to the observations that have been made earlier, except to offer that, myself — having a little bit of pedigree with respect to this issue — I support Canada's climate change agenda implemented equitably and fully support carbon pricing as an essential tool in achieving climate goals.

I heat my house entirely with heat pumps. I drive an electric car, and all over the top of the roof of my house are solar panels, at some cost. Despite the arguments that Senator Woo might have made, it's not a break-even proposition.

An Hon. Senator: Hear, hear.

Senator Cotter: I want to talk a little bit about agriculture and Prairie farmers, what this bill is about, what it isn't about and a few points that lean towards support for the bill.

I know a bit about agriculture — though not a lot — and I have learned a good deal more serving as a permanent member of the Agriculture and Forestry Committee for a few years, not just during the hearings on the bill and not just during clause by clause. This portion of my remarks is drawn from some personal experience, from some evidence we have heard and from government documents.

Prairie farmers — particularly Saskatchewan farmers — are committed to the environment. I will mention three points on this: commitment, innovation and achievements.

First, I will speak about commitment and a personal story. My father-in-law — now deceased — was a farmer. Every fall in western Saskatchewan, hunters descend on the area enthusiastically to shoot wildlife, in particular, ducks and geese. It's a major flyway. At the end of the hunting season, perhaps around mid-November when the weather was turning cold, my father-in-law would go out, not to hunt geese, but to rescue them.

During hunting season, hunters wound geese. The geese wouldn't be able to fly, and they would be left in small lakes, ponds and dugouts, and as winter approached and ice settled on these lakes and ponds, these geese caught in the ice would freeze to death — a terrible death.

My father-in-law would go out in a small boat with burlap sacks and rescue these not very cooperative geese. He even built a compound where they could be housed and nursed back to health and set free, if possible. At one point, he had two dozen Canada geese in this compound. They weren't particularly friendly, but they were alive and well. This is a commitment to the environment that he did not have to make, and thousands of farmers in the West do this — and probably all over the country.

Innovation. In my province there is a remarkable partnership between the federal and provincial governments, farmers, agriculture producers, innovators, business leaders and universities to advance agriculture in sustainable ways. Senator Klyne talked about one, and I will skip over that example of a magical combination of partners to produce better results for farmers, less burdensome treatments of the soil and returning carbon to the soil.

We have heard dozens of stories at the Agriculture Committee about these practices, which are good practices and benefiting the environment at the same time. They are inspiring. As I say to the Agriculture Committee from time to time about my service on the committee — and they are sick of hearing it — I came to doubt, and stayed to pray.

Here are two pieces of information. First, in the last 30 years or so, there has been a 33% increase in agriculture productivity on the Prairies. That is 33% with no — I repeat, no — increase in greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture. This is the Government of Canada's information, and no other part of the country has produced that kind of achievement or close to it.

Second, carbon dioxide emissions from agriculture production, specifically relevant to Saskatchewan, these numbers are so spectacular that I had to check to make sure I was not making them up or that Premier Scott Moe was not making them up. The source is Dr. Raymond Desjardins, probably the most outstanding agri-scientist in Canada and a lifelong employee of the Government of Canada. Now retired, he is a Member of the Order of Canada and co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate for his work on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Good enough for me; I hope, good enough for you.

In speaking about the achievement in Saskatchewan, this is information the Government of Canada gathered to determine greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the production of various feed crops grown across the country. The measure is the amount of greenhouse gas emissions per hectare of land for each type of crop grown, province by province.

Saskatchewan has 47% to 49% of Canada's arable land, so this is pretty darn significant nationally. For every crop grown in Saskatchewan — and most crops are grown in Saskatchewan to some degree and, in some cases, to a large degree — emissions per hectare are dramatically lower than for any other province, so dramatic it's unbelievable.

For oilseeds, for example, only half the emissions per hectare of the next best province and five times better than the national average. For pulse crops, five times better than the next province. For cereal crops, five times better than the next province and ten times better than the national average. For spring wheat — there is a lot of spring wheat — four times lower than the next best and ten times better than the national average. Even potatoes, for God's sake. These are greenhouse gas miracles probably not replicated anywhere in the world.

These results suggest to me, more importantly, that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and, quite frankly, Mr. Poilievre, who desperately needs a climate strategy — sorry, Your Honour — should be getting themselves out to Saskatchewan to find out how this miracle is being achieved.

Let's come to the bill, and what the bill is about and what it's not about. The political and procedural maneuvering and, sometimes, posturing at the Agriculture Committee and here in our chamber have been a distraction for what this bill is all about and what we should be doing. I urge you not to be distracted by them as we examine the wisdom of this bill. It is not a litmus test for the carbon tax, writ large. Nor is it the thin edge of the wedge or — as lawyers and judges often say — the opening of the flood gates.

We have learned this, quite frankly, recently from recent developments that Senator Dalphond was honourable enough at least to mention.

If we take that view that we should be captured by these large political and controversial approaches, we deny ourselves the opportunity to take our responsibilities seriously when it comes to the public policy analysis of this bill. Setting these distractions aside makes it possible for us to consider the bill on its merits, what it will achieve and what it will cost.

What about the financial implications? Grain drying and farm building heating is a small, though not insignificant, expense to farmers. We have heard that we're talking here about a billion dollars collected over eight years, but as senators pointed out, most of this money is returned in rebates. I think Senator Ringuette's number was 90%.

The issue, though difficult to isolate, is that the return is not delivered consistently to producers, meaning that some farmers get less than they pay — and in some cases quite a bit less — and for these farmers, it's a meaningful cost. According to what we heard at committee, it tends to be the smaller farmers who fall into this category, so it is somewhat tougher for them.

Another important distraction is that the carbon tax on these fuels will drive up grocery costs. This is largely a fallacy. Regardless of what you hear, the cost has to be absorbed by farmers, who with some exceptions, are price takers in the market. They are not able to pass the costs along by charging higher prices for their products.

Try to sell your wheat to Cargill and ask a little bit more for a bushel of wheat because you had to spend a bit more drying it. So for a number of farmers, the cost comes right off the bottom line.

What about the cost to the environment? Agriculture accounts for 73 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions nationally. Heating fuel, according to Government of Canada statistics, represents 1.7% of that or 1.2 megatonnes of greenhouse gas.

Now, some of this heating fuel stuff occurs in backstop provinces, and some is probably heating fuel that is not part of the grain dryer or farm building issue, but let's say it's a megatonne of emissions per year. Now, as senators have said, the carbon tax doesn't eliminate these emissions; it incentivizes changes in behaviour to reduce emissions. How much will that incentive be? It's hard to tell.

• (2150)

The only empirical example I could find is from Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, an organization advocating for carbon pricing. They estimate that after 10 years of a carbon tax on gasoline in British Columbia, gas consumption declined by 7%.

Incentivizing a carbon-based energy reduction in grain drying is a bit trickier, and in farm buildings as well, but let's say that it would happen at that rate or even double. Optimistically, after 10 years of a carbon price incentive, we could expect a 10% or maybe a 20% drop in CO₂ emissions — maybe 0.2 megatonnes.

Let's put this into perspective. Canada's overall goal is to drop GHG emissions by 250 megatonnes by 2050. So this issue is, at most, one thousandth of the issue. We should put it into perspective.

Here is another way of looking at it: The Government of Canada, my government, is planting 2 billion trees this decade — a great incentive, I think. It was to contribute 11 to 12 megatonnes of CO₂ savings towards our target.

How are we doing? So poorly that the Commissioner of the Environment reported late last spring and testified before our committee that we will fall short 7 to 8 megatonnes. That shortfall represents fully 3% or more of our total goal nationally, in every respect, for 2050 — somewhere between 30 and 50 times the issue we're talking about today. I think that if we were really serious about this, we would be talking about the bigger issues in our own backyard. This bill produces a very modest setback to the climate change goal, I would acknowledge, and a modest benefit for farmers.

However, in the context of Canada and agriculture, certain industries — and I think this is one — face greater vulnerabilities than others. Indeed, the exemption provided for farm fuel is a perfect example of that. Since the objective of exempting farm fuel is to enable agriculture production to occur without excessive burdens, this is a minor additional contribution to that.

The government itself has recognized that, going forward, agriculture and agri-food will be one of a small number of pillars of the Canadian economy. A report led by Senator Harder made the same point. Whether we think of agriculture as a line of work for Canadians, as a way of feeding Canadians, as a way of feeding the world or as a way of selling product into the world to generate foreign exchange, the importance of agriculture to the country's future cannot be underestimated. It levels the playing field in relation to our agriculture competitors — in a minor way, I admit — including the United States.

Finally, let me come to what I will call a nation-building perspective. I fear that, in some respects, Bill C-234 has taken on a symbolic meaning well beyond its actual practical effects. I hope I have made that point.

Part of this line of argument seems to engage the urban-rural divide in this country, and to some extent this debate hasn't helped. Part of it is interpreted as political tension regarding the degree to which the Government of Canada respects the interests of the West, and particularly the Prairies — a little ironic, since nearly two thirds of the benefit will go to Ontario. Admittedly, there are tension points in the country, and we should be attentive to trying to address them constructively. It is not a sole compelling reason for supporting Bill C-234 in its original form, but it is a factor.

A year or two ago, I quoted a decision in an important case of the Supreme Court of Canada — probably the most important case the court ever decided. In speaking about the very nature of Canada, a unanimous court quoted the following:

A nation is built when the communities that comprise it make commitments to it, when they forego choices and opportunities on behalf of a nation . . . when the communities that comprise it make compromises, when they offer each other guarantees, when they make transfers and perhaps most pointedly, when they receive from others the benefits of national solidarity. The threads of a thousand acts of accommodation are the fabric of a nation. . . .

The accommodation in Bill C-234 is one such thread. Thank you.

Senator Woo: This is the sort of thing where I should lean over to my colleague and ask the question privately, but it's rude to be whispering in class. I would like to ask a question.

Senator Cotter: Certainly.

Senator Woo: Thank you. We can perhaps disagree on the empirics of Bill C-234, but on the question of the thin end of the wedge or the slippery slope argument, I received a letter from your premier not long ago — and perhaps all of you did as well — in which he said, more or less, "You'd better pass this bill." But he said, "Once this is done, I want to eliminate the tax on everything for everyone."

How should we think about that kind of political statement and pressure on this chamber?

Senator Cotter: May I have a moment to respond to that?

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Cotter: I'm a bit surprised that Senator Plett agreed because one of the points I want to make is that my premier is not the only one who is not very happy with the carbon tax. You hear that he and others have a campaign to axe the tax.

I received the same letter. I wrote back to Premier Moe. I didn't put it out in public, but I did explain my position on this question, which is that each of these questions should be decided more or less on their own merits. Quite frankly, I don't buy the idea that the Government of Canada got it right 100%, as if it came fully built out of the head of Zeus. There are adjustments to be made, and one of them was made two weeks ago. Each of these questions is entitled to be considered on its own merits.

We will probably disagree in this chamber about what those merits are. However, that doesn't mean that this, therefore, overwhelmingly endorses the position that my premier or some leaders in the national government make, namely, that this achieves a victory in its opposition to the carbon tax. I don't buy that myself, and I don't agree with it.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Honourable senators, I want to thank my colleagues Senators Dalphond, Plett, Ringuette, Woo, Moncion and Cotter. You have heard me speak in the past about the value of debate. In my short experience in the Senate, those debates have certainly changed my opinion going into a vote.

Tonight and earlier today and this week, we have heard different "facts." I put that in quotes because some argue that they are facts, and some argue that they are not facts. We have heard about grain drying being done, or maybe it's not done. We have heard about some of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's statistics. We have heard references to P.E.I. being a municipality. Grain farmers have access to technologies, but we have also heard that those technologies aren't yet available in an economical way.

We also heard in the past — and I have added my voice — about the issue of food security and about the cost of consumable goods for consumers. Tonight an amendment was placed before us. I have read the amendment during the debate to try to find the relationship of the debate with respect to this specific amendment.

I think there needs to be time for reflection. I therefore move the adjournment of the debate.

(On motion of Senator Quinn, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

**NATIONAL FRAMEWORK
ON SICKLE CELL DISEASE BILL**

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie moved second reading of Bill S-280, An Act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-280, An Act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease.

• (2200)

This has already been discussed in Parliament. In 2011, in the other place, MP Kirsty Duncan tabled Bill C-221, meant to implement a comprehensive national strategy for sickle cell disease and thalassemic disorders.

Unfortunately, that bill never made it past first reading. Building on MP Duncan's commitment, our colleague Senator Cordy introduced Bill S-211 in this chamber, designating June 19 as National Sickle Cell Awareness Day. That bill received Royal Assent in December 2017.

Thank you, Senator Cordy.

[English]

This disease has several names.

[Translation]

In French, it is known as “drépanocytose,” from the Greek word *drepanon*, meaning “sickle” or “crescent.” In English, the name used is “sickle cell disease” or “sickle cell anemia.” All these diverse terms are commonly used, but for the purposes of my speech, I will use the term “sickle cell disease.”

[English]

What exactly is this disease?

[Translation]

To help you understand it, allow me to make a brief foray into the world of medicine. Don't worry, I'll make sure that my remarks don't wear you down too much at this late hour.

This disease has been around since time immemorial. It was described for the first time in medical literature in 1910 by American doctor James Herrick, and its genetic basis was established in 1949 by James Neel.

[English]

It is: enetic, rare, chronic and multisystemic. It affects the quality of life, and it decreases life expectancy. It's a death sentence.

[Translation]

It is a hereditary disease. It can't be caught like a cold. It is passed down by the parents when the child inherits genes from both parents. Roughly 5% of the world's population carries the gene, also called a trait. In some parts of the world, that percentage rises to 25% or more.

With respect to prevalence, the disease affects roughly 6,000 Canadians. Dr. Yves Giguère, director of Quebec's newborn screening program, says it is a rare disease, occurring in one in every 2,000 births in Quebec.

Sickle cell disease is prevalent among persons with ancestors from Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Central and South America, some regions of India and the Mediterranean. According to a study published in 2023 by Jacob Pendergrast and his colleagues at the Toronto General Hospital Research Institute, “The estimated prevalence of patients with sickle cell disease in Ontario [between 2007 and] 2016/17 was 1 in 4200,” and affected patients' need for hospital-based care is substantial.

This is a chronic and multisystemic disease: It is present at birth, it lasts a lifetime and it affects every organ in the body.

Sickle cell disease is a genetic disorder that affects hemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that transports oxygen. Abnormal hemoglobin results in abnormally shaped red blood cells. Red blood cells are usually disc-shaped and flexible, but in people with sickle cell disease they become crescent- or sickle-shaped, thus the name of the disease. These sickle-shaped red blood cells are rigid and can block small blood vessels, a condition known as vaso-occlusion. Normal red blood cells can live up to 120 days, but sickle cells live only for about 20 days, which can cause severe anemia. Every organ in the body can be affected because they all require adequate blood flow. They are not getting the oxygen they need, which is what causes the various symptoms and complications that I am going to tell you about.

The most common clinical symptoms of sickle cell disease are vaso-occlusive crises, which can cause medium-intensity to intolerable chest, bone and joint pain that often requires frequent hospitalization. The person affected can also get infections that can lead to sepsis or death, if they are not treated immediately. That is all I will say about that.

One of the most common complications of sickle cell disease is stroke. One in ten sickle cell disease patients under the age of 20 have a stroke. They also suffer from pulmonary hypertension, which means that they need daily oxygen for the rest of their lives. Another complication is kidney failure, which means the patient will need dialysis and so on.

In terms of reducing life expectancy, the treatment of sickle cell disease has evolved over the years, and life expectancy has improved. In the 1970s, life expectancy was estimated at five to 10 years. These days, many patients who receive appropriate treatment can live into their sixties, which is still markedly shorter than the general population.

This is just an estimate because we don't have the evidence.

Ismaël, a 35-year-old man who expects to live to about 50, said, “I have already lived half my life, if nothing changes.”

[English]

Why talk about sickle cell disease today? It’s unknown, underdiagnosed, lacks research funding and causes premature death.

[Translation]

According to the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada, this disease is the most common of all genetic diseases. Nonetheless, it remains relatively unknown to the public and even to health care professionals. Only the health care teams at specialized centres in Canada’s major cities have professionals who are familiar with the disease and can provide adequate care to patients. This lack of knowledge has many consequences, including the name of the disease. Some francophone families who only know the disease by the French name “drépanocytose” have had a hard time making themselves understood in English-speaking hospital environments.

Even when families use the correct terms, care providers do not always give them the attention they need, blaming everything on parental anxiety. Ignorance of the disease’s manifestations also leads to limited access to appropriate care.

As soon as their children develop a fever, parents are instructed to take them to hospital immediately, as they are at risk of developing life-threatening sepsis. However, it’s not easy to make this clear to the professionals who receive them in the emergency room. Excruciating chest, bone and joint pain cannot always be alleviated by regular painkillers, so the use of narcotics may be required. These adolescents are often labelled as “drug addicts” in the emergency room, and pain treatment is then delayed, with the risk of serious complications. For many of our suffering young patients, inadequate care and stigma is their lot in life.

Along with the physical symptoms, their mental wellness is considerably compromised. Repeated hospitalizations and difficulty holding down steady employment take a heavy toll on patients’ self-esteem. Parents are forced to stand by, powerless, as their child experiences angry outbursts and sadness that can morph into depression.

The emotional challenges lead patients like Mamadou to wonder why they are not normal and why they are always in bed, why their legs and arms hurt so much, why they spend 18 hours a day crying on and off, why they wake up every morning feeling like there is a cloud hanging over their heads and not knowing what is going to happen to them today or tomorrow.

Ismaël says, “It’s hard to plan long term because my life has an all-but-definite expiration date.”

• (2210)

Then, a parent speaking from his own experience testified about the devastating effects this disease can have on daily life and family well-being. He said the following:

The hospital has become our second home, which hinders our ability to plan our work schedule, our vacations, in short, to enjoy a certain quality of life.

Some families have to choose a different career path in order to live near centres where health care professionals know the disease.

I will now talk about the lack of research funding.

The Interdisciplinary Centre for Black Health in Ottawa is studying the mental health of patients and their families. Applications for research grants from hemato-oncologists and other specialists in the field keep being turned down by funding agencies. Although sickle cell disease was the first genetic disorder to be identified, advances in treatment have been slow to follow. This is largely due to a lack of research funding.

Many specialists compare sickle cell disease and its associated challenges to other genetic disorders, particularly cystic fibrosis. These two diseases have some similarities. They are both rare, chronic, multisystemic disorders that reduce life expectancy. However, there are major differences between the two when it comes to the funding allocated for research, a registry and therapeutic advances.

The Cystic Fibrosis Canada website shows that scientists receive many research grants, some valued at up to \$100,000 a year. However, the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada website shows that only two small grants are available: two individual grants in the amount of \$20,000 per year for up to two years, and two additional grants in the amount of up to \$5,000 each, also for two years.

When will a research chair be created for sickle cell disease in Canada?

This lack of knowledge about the disease also delayed the development of a diagnosis. The key to diagnosis is universal newborn screening involving a simple heel prick. The test is one of several screens administered to identify other metabolic and genetic diseases already part of the screening program.

Lillie Johnson, a nurse and founder of the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario, had to fight for universal newborn screening before it was introduced in her province in 2006. In November 2009, British Columbia followed suit, along with Nova Scotia in 2014. In November 2013, the screen was partially implemented in Quebec and later extended to include the entire province in 2016. The sheer determination of Wilson Sanon, president of Quebec’s sickle cell disease association, deserves credit for this accomplishment.

Later, several other provinces signed on. Yet, the disease easily meets the eligibility criteria for this diagnostic test. The test can detect the disease within 24 to 48 hours after birth. It is specific and sensitive to the medical condition targeted. Early screening allows care providers to intervene and create an effective treatment plan with the family. When this kind of response starts in the first few months of life, it helps reduce the frequency of hospitalization, prevents complications and improves the quality of life for these children and their families.

After this test was introduced, hematologist Dr. Yves Pastore and his team observed that the cohort of babies diagnosed with sickle cell disease had almost doubled, from 250 cases to 475, at Montreal's Centre hospitalier universitaire Sainte-Justine between 2013 and June 2023. Despite the fact that over 100 years have passed since sickle cell disease was first identified, we're still very far behind when it comes to treatments. We now know that healthy living and certain preventive measures, such as avoiding exposure to extreme temperatures and staying hydrated, can help stave off complications.

In terms of medications, hydroxyurea, a drug first used in the treatment of cancer, has been administered for over 15 years to treat sickle cell disease. It has proven helpful by reducing the frequency and severity of acute pain episodes. Unfortunately, the drug isn't suitable for every patient.

There are other treatment options, such as blood transfusions, apheresis, a complex technique, and bone marrow transplants, which have been available in Quebec since 1980 and are the only cure we know of. According to Dr. Yvette Bonny, a national pioneer in this particular medical intervention, this treatment can't be offered to everyone because of the risk of complications. All of these interventions, combined with monitoring by a multidisciplinary team, help improve patients' quality of life.

Three new drugs have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA. I will spare you their complicated names. The research that went into these drugs showed that two of them reduce the number of vaso-occlusive crises and therefore reduce pain. The third improves hemoglobin levels, which clears the anemia. These drugs have proven to be effective if used alone or in combination with hydroxyurea. That's why it's necessary to explore new paths of innovation for developing drugs adapted to a wider range of affected patients. This really rings true when we hear a grieving mother say, "we bury our children at a very young age. It is unfair and unjustifiable in 2023 in a country like ours."

[English]

Here is why you should care about this framework. It will benefit health care professional awareness; the implementation of a research network; the creation of a national registry; full access to newborn screening; public awareness and needed financial support.

[Translation]

In 1971, President Richard Nixon promised research credits and patient care. The following year, in 1972, he signed a new act into law, the National Sickle Cell Anemia Control Act. In later years, a direct correlation was established between funds allocated by the National Institutes of Health and improvements in the quality and lifespan of patients living with sickle cell disease.

Canada must take action too.

Under this national framework, Bill S-280 will provide a six-point plan.

[Senator Mégie]

First, it will help mobilize medical regulatory bodies, nurses and other health care professions to encourage their members to learn more about sickle cell disease. It will also help enlist their participation in launching concrete initiatives that meet the training needs of health care providers to strengthen their skills. The development of clear guidelines will also help align practices to ensure a holistic, consistent and effective approach. In the words of one person we interviewed, this framework would fill "the gap in knowledge about the disease among some doctors, who often choose to simply treat symptoms rather than tackle the underlying causes."

Second, the framework will provide for the creation of a national research network dedicated to advancing the understanding of sickle cell disease. This is a fundamental part of the framework. For example, the Sickle Cell Association of Canada is actively collaborating with the Canadian Hemoglobinopathy Association to promote research and facilitate data collection. This exemplary partnership demonstrates the importance of close collaboration between organizations, researchers and funders.

COVID-19 was a wonderful example of international collaboration that led to the creation of vaccines that are indispensable today. Some will say it was an emergency. However, it can happen again. There is a recent publication concerning gene therapy. It discusses molecular scissors known as CRISPR-Cas9, which will hopefully lead to a curative treatment. It partially restores normal blood formation and reduces, but does not completely eliminate, complications associated with the disease. It has been approved in the UK and is in the process of being approved by the FDA. Canada could also carve out an enviable place for itself in this rapidly developing field, while contributing to the well-being of its people.

Third, implementing this framework will help establish a national registry aimed at reducing existing disparities in the knowledge, diagnosis and management of sickle cell disease.

• (2220)

Dr. Smita Pakhalé, Chair in Equity and Patient Engagement in Vulnerable Populations, couldn't agree more. In addition, Dr. Giguère says that one of the many advantages of a registry is that it would make it easier to contact people suffering from the disease, in the event of a cure being discovered.

Fourth, implementing this national framework will guarantee equal access to universal newborn screening and sickle cell disease diagnosis across Canada. This would ensure that appropriate care can be administered to all newborns immediately after birth and throughout their life.

Fifth, the framework will serve as a lever supporting national campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of sickle cell disease among the general public, and to better support the well-being of families and caregivers of people living with the disease. These public education efforts by community organizations will reduce the stigmatization of those suffering from the disease and create a supportive, inclusive environment for them and their loved ones.

Sixth, beyond exploring the feasibility of offering a tax credit to the families of people suffering from sickle cell disease, this framework will also look into the possibility of including these individuals in programs for people with disabilities.

This consideration is especially relevant, since many young adults stricken with the disease have a hard time keeping a job due to repeated hospitalizations and the debilitating chronic fatigue caused by the disease.

By integrating all of these aspects, we are seeking to develop a comprehensive framework that takes into account not only medical needs, but also the socio-economic challenges faced by individuals and their families.

Honourable senators, establishing a national framework for sickle cell disease responds to a UNESCO resolution adopted in 2007 and a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2008. These resolutions were adopted unanimously and recognized sickle cell disease as a public health issue.

In light of everything I've just said, it's imperative to support the passage of this bill to fill the gaps that exist in terms of awareness, research and the national registry. In response to these challenges, we need to move Bill S-280 quickly through committee. I encourage you to head to YouTube and watch a 15-minute clip from an upcoming documentary called *Silent Suffering — Sickle cell disease* by Mamoudou Camara, which tells the story of a young man suffering from this disease. My office can send you the link, if you wish. Just as we did with cystic fibrosis, Canada can also show global leadership on all aspects of sickle cell disease.

I would like to thank a few people. I want to thank the specialists, Dr. Auray, Dr. Bonny, Dr. Pakhalé, Dr. Cénat, Dr. Giguère, Dr. Pastore and Dr. Soulières for their insightful

comments. I also want to thank the presidents of the Canadian and Quebec sickle cell disease associations, Ms. Tinga and Mr. Sanon, for the work they do in that capacity and as parents, as well as for their enthusiasm and contagious perseverance in supporting my initiative when I decided to introduce Bill S-280. I want to thank Ms. Mouscardy, Mamoudou and Ismaël, who gave me a glimpse into their home life to help me understand what it is like to be a parent and a young person living with this disease.

It is your turn, honourable senators, to lend your support to Bill S-280 and send it to committee as quickly as possible. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Senator Mégie, for that speech. I'm sure there are many colleagues who will want to enter the debate on this, but, the time being almost 10:30 p.m., I would like to test the will of the Senate by moving the adjournment of the Senate.

Therefore, I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(*At 10:25 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate earlier this day, the Senate adjourned until 2 p.m., tomorrow.*)

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