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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

POLITICAL HISTORY OF BLACK CANADIANS

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, today it is my honour to talk about an important aspect of Canadian history — Black Canadian political history.

To date, close to 100 Black Canadians have held public office across Canada. I will mention just a few.

I will start with William Peyton Hubbard, the first Black Canadian elected to public office in 1894, who served as alderman and deputy mayor of Toronto City Council.

Since then, in the federal Parliament, Lincoln Alexander has been a Progressive Conservative MP and minister.

Howard McCurdy has been a New Democratic Party MP and sought the leadership of his party.

Jean Augustine has been a Liberal MP and minister.

Frank Baylis and Emmanuel Dubourg have been Liberal MPs from Quebec.

Marci Ien and Ahmed Hussen serve in the current Liberal cabinet.

[*Translation*]

At the provincial level, Tony Ince served as a Liberal minister in Nova Scotia and Maka Kotto served as an MNA and a minister for the Parti Québécois and as a Bloc Québécois MP before that. Today, Lionel Carmant is serving as an MNA and minister in the Coalition Avenir Québec government. Dominique Anglade served as an MNA, deputy premier of Quebec and the leader of the Quebec Liberal Party.

[*English*]

In Ontario, Zanana Akande was an MPP and minister in the NDP government, and Alvin Curling was a Speaker in the legislature.

In Manitoba, today, Uzoma Asagwara is an MLA and deputy premier in the NDP government.

In Alberta, Kaycee Madu was a United Conservative MLA and deputy premier.

In B.C., Rosemary Brown served as an MLA from the NDP and also sought the leadership of her party at the federal level. Emery Barnes served as Speaker in the legislature of that province.

Municipally, I will point to just a few elected members.

Sharmarke Dubow is a city councillor in Victoria, B.C.; Jibs Abitoye in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta; and Jamaal Myers at Toronto City Hall. Martine Musau Muele, who is a city councillor, is also City Council Chair at Montreal City Council. Lindell Smith is a councillor in Halifax.

I will mention former senators, including senator Anne Cools and Progressive Conservative senator Don Oliver. Of course, currently, we have senators Wanda Thomas Bernard, Sharon Burey, Amina Gerba, Marie-Françoise Mégie, Rosemary Moodie, Paulette Senior and Bernadette Clement, who has served as Mayor of Cornwall.

Honourable senators, this is part of Canadian history. These are colleagues and Canadians who have served Canadians well. Canada is stronger for their service. Thank you.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Upton D. Allen and Dr. Melanie Kirby-Allen. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Burey.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

DR. UPTON ALLEN DR. MELANIE KIRBY-ALLEN

Hon. Sharon Burey: Honourable senators, I wish you a happy Black History Month.

[*English*]

Welcome to Black History Month. Welcome to Canadian history, for it is when we throw off the shackles of caste and class that we can liberate our minds and experience, as Canadians, the totality of Canadian history — what it means to be Canadian; what it means to truly unleash the potential and promise of this great country.

This year's theme for Black History Month is "Black Excellence: A Heritage to Celebrate; a Future to Build." Today, I want to shine a light on Black Canadian scientists.

It is my great pleasure to introduce you to the remarkable contributions of two individuals whose tireless efforts have been instrumental in improving the health and well-being of children in Canada and beyond.

Dr. Upton Allen is a recipient of the Order of Ontario; a Jamaican Canadian; a professor of pediatrics at the University of Toronto; Head of the Division of Infectious Diseases at The Hospital for Sick Children, known as SickKids; and the Bastable Potts Chair in Infectious Diseases Research.

Dr. Allen's major research focus has been in the field of Epstein-Barr virus-related disorders in transplant patients. His work on viral genetic diversity and its impact on outcomes has led to a deeper understanding of these disorders.

His current research interests include addressing host genetic susceptibility to COVID-19.

He showed crucial provincial and national leadership in addressing health inequities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and was an especially sober and trusted voice in explaining COVID -19 and vaccines to Black and marginalized communities.

Equally impactful is Vincentian-born Canadian Dr. Melanie Kirby-Allen, professor in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Toronto, a pediatric hematologist and oncologist and co-director of the Hemoglobinopathy Program at SickKids.

She has contributed substantially to advocacy groups such as the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario and currently serves on the Governance Board.

She has received numerous awards and honours, including the MSA Citizenship Award from SickKids.

Yes, dear colleagues, you guessed it: These two accomplished and distinguished individuals are also married to each other. Among other initiatives, they have both been integral to the SickKids-Caribbean Initiative, which builds capacity for care in pediatric cancer and blood disorders across the Caribbean.

In closing, as we celebrate Black History Month — and, yes, Canadian history — let us not only recognize their achievements but also acknowledge the broader importance of diversity in shaping the landscape of medical research and healthcare, which will lead to better outcomes for all of us.

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 members of Team Whitbread, which is representing Alberta in the Canadian U-18 Curling Championships, including Faith Thomas, Hayley Adams, Anna Bakos and Abby Whitbread. They are accompanied by their families. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Plett.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1410)

EMERGENCIES ACT

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, in January of 2022, the nation was hurting. For two years, COVID had been wreaking havoc on our health, our economy, our relationships and our mental well-being. It was a very difficult time. In the midst of all of it, Canadians were understanding and endured patiently. They complied with lockdowns, followed social distancing requirements and learned more than they ever wanted to know about personal protective equipment, or PPE, as well as pandemics and novel viruses. But when the federal government decided to mandate vaccination for the truckers who haul loads across the United States border, and then threatened to do the same for truckers who crossed provincial borders, the pot boiled over. Demonstrations and rallies popped up across the country, as truckers and citizens gathered to express their opposition to government overreach and the unnecessary escalation of prohibitions for the unvaccinated, with the largest protest taking place right here outside of our doors in Ottawa.

Two and a half weeks after the first trucks arrived in Ottawa, the government had not met once with the organizers of the protest. They had not acknowledged their concerns, nor had they even attempted to initiate any communication with them. Instead, they ridiculed their concerns and invoked the Emergencies Act. Rather than listening, they brought out the biggest hammer they could find to silence the voices.

On February 23, 2022, this chamber was called upon to pass a motion approving the government's use of the Emergencies Act. I stood in this place and said the following:

This government, the Trudeau government, failed to make its case for the use of the Emergencies Act. Furthermore, the measures it adopted are not reasonable, not proportionate and not necessary.

Twenty-three months later — on January 23, 2024 — the Federal Court echoed this very position, with Justice Mosley stating:

I have concluded that the decision to issue the Proclamation [of the Emergencies Act] does not bear the hallmarks of reasonableness — justification, transparency and intelligibility — and was not justified . . .

Colleagues, the Emergencies Act should never have been invoked. The decision to do so was not reasonable, not proportionate and not necessary. From the very beginning, it was a breach of the Charter rights of Canadians, and an attack on the principles which undergird our democracy. The Federal Court's decision stands as a reminder to all of us that the freedoms of every Canadian should not just be tolerated, but should also be celebrated and protected for all. Thank you.

[Translation]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of representatives of Nature Canada and participants of the Women for Nature initiative. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Galvez.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

NATURE CANADA

WOMEN FOR NATURE

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, I am proud to rise today to commemorate the eighty-fifth anniversary of Nature Canada and the tenth anniversary of the Women for Nature program. I was introduced to them by our colleague Diane Griffin.

It was in 1930 when Reginald Whittemore founded the *Canadian Nature* magazine which would later become the Audubon Society of Canada in 1948, the Canadian Nature Federation in 1971 and eventually Nature Canada in 2004. This makes it one of the oldest national nature conservation charities in Canada. Since its inception, it has been at the forefront of environmental advocacy in Canada, and has spearheaded countless initiatives and programs to help protect Canada's natural habitats, namely the Women for Nature program.

This program is the collaborative voices of Canadian women of influence who chose to demonstrate their passion for nature and pass on their values to others to drive change. It also helps fund women-led nature conservation projects across the country.

I am proud to be the Honorary Chair of the Women for Nature program, and to welcome so many successful and passionate women here at the Senate today. The work that they do is essential to ensure a healthy and thriving environment, to keep a safe climate and to bring nature back to our and future generations' lives.

We all know that the planet is going through rapid changes because of human activity. Every year, we see a concerning increase in global temperature, which is accompanied by destructive and unaffordable extreme weather events. Canada's wildlife and natural ecosystems are increasingly vulnerable and fragile, and some of them are disappearing entirely. Species are currently going extinct tens to hundreds of times faster than the natural background rate.

Reflect on this: Canada's wildfires burned over 10 million hectares only last year. We need all efforts and support to not only halt nature and ecosystem degradation, but to reverse it.

Colleagues, I invite you to join me this evening at 6 p.m. in the Senators' Lounge to meet some of these great women leaders who aim to protect Canada's natural ecosystems. We'll also have a special guest appearance: Come and see Céleste, the great horned owl.

Please join me in celebrating the exceptional work of Nature Canada and the Women for Nature program. Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

DECRIMINALIZATION OF DRUGS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today — as a concerned B.C. senator — on the one-year anniversary of the Liberal-NDP government's decriminalization of dangerous drugs. This reckless experiment has resulted in drug overdose deaths in B.C. hitting a record high of 2,511 — almost 7 a day. Drugs are now the leading cause of death in B.C., causing more fatalities than crime, accidents and disease combined.

Despite the 300% increase in drug overdose deaths in the province, the B.C. NDP government has contracted the British Columbia Centre on Substance Use to enable clinicians to prescribe dangerous fentanyl to minors under the guise of "safe supply." As if that wasn't disturbing enough, no informed consent is required from parents before children are supplied with these drugs.

While some provinces set a minimum age — typically between 14 years old and 16 years old — for when minors can make such decisions, British Columbia has no minimum age, and relies instead on a fluid idea of capability.

Fentanyl is 100 times more potent than morphine and heroin, and a dose of as little as 3 milligrams can be fatal. Yet, it has been approved for distribution to minors with precious few safeguards.

Senator Plett: Shame.

Senator Martin: According to findings at the University of British Columbia and the B.C. coroner's office, drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death among B.C. youth aged 10 to 18 years old.

In a June 19 report, the B.C. Coroners Service stated that the number of drug overdose deaths among youth increased notably since 2016, and the introduction of the opioid fentanyl to the unregulated drug supply has been the main driver.

As a mother and former educator of young minds, I am deeply concerned about the path that Canada is travelling on. I fear for the safety of our children and youth and the future of our communities as its government is actively facilitating the consumption of dangerous drugs for vulnerable Canadians, including youth.

Conservatives will not give up on Canadians suffering from addiction. Recovery from addiction is possible.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

THE LATE HONOURABLE ED BROADBENT, P.C., C.C.

Hon. Frances Lankin: Honourable senators, I appreciate this opportunity to rise today and to speak in tribute to a man whom I hold dear in my heart, Ed Broadbent. When I think of Ed Broadbent, I think of the words that Claudette Commanda spoke at his celebration of life. She talked about his commitment and dedication: “to people and for people, to community and country.”

That is true, and I would add “to humankind of the world” to that, as his work over the years ventured beyond our borders and his impact as well.

Ed was a statesman, and I feel compelled to say that I am bitterly and personally upset that some in our chamber refused to allow the respect for observing a minute of silence. It hurts my heart deeply, but I have done that, and I will do it again, and I know many others of you will too.

• (1420)

Ed was someone who I looked up to as a young community and trade union activist. Over the years, at different times, he was a mentor to me. There is an old folk song that is very dear to my heart. I used a documentary about the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers in the Triangle Shirtwaist factory, where hundreds of women were killed in a fire at the turn of the last century. The song is called “Pass It On,” and it speaks to Ed’s belief that we have to reach out to young people and that we have to trust them to lead the struggles of the future. That’s a critical part of our role as elders. There are a few of you here who aren’t elders, but most of us are. Ed believed that we should help and guide, but even more, he believed that we had to empower and inspire.

The folk song, as said, is called “Pass It On.” It was sung in the documentary by Judy Collins, and the words of half of the chorus go:

Freedom, freedom is a hard-won thing
You’ve got to work for it, fight for it
Day and night for it
And every generation’s got to win it again.

We surely see that in today’s world. Some of us, as we retire, may fade away into the world of ceremonial appearances, and some are tired after years of toil for change from whatever perspective we come. Ed wasn’t tired of the fight. He focused on engaging the next generation, and his legacy is broad, not the least of which was the establishment of the Broadbent Institute. His mission was to bring a fairer, more just, more equitable world for all.

He had some opinions, and some of them were about the Senate of Canada. He was a very significant critic, and when I was first appointed here, I spoke about reform on a panel. He was there, in the back of the room. I wondered what my old mentor was thinking now that I said yes. At the end, he said to me, “I don’t know, Frances, the only thing I can wish is that you hadn’t made it all sound so reasonable.” We laughed.

The song says, “. . . every generation’s got to win it again,” and I want to stress that. I will miss you, Ed. The New Democratic Party will miss you. Canada will miss you. Your inspiration and teachings will be forever with us. Rest in peace. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO RESOLVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO CONSIDER SUBJECT MATTER OF BILL C-62

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, previous order or usual practice, on Wednesday, February 14, 2024:

1. the sitting be suspended at the time the Senate would normally adjourn or once the Senate has completed the consideration of items on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* for the day, whichever comes earlier;
2. at 6 p.m., the sitting resume, and the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the subject matter of Bill C-62, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), No. 2;
3. the Committee of the Whole on the subject matter of Bill C-62 receive the Honourable Mark Holland, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health, and the Honourable Arif Virani, P.C., M.P., Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, each accompanied by two officials;
4. the Committee of the Whole on the subject matter of Bill C-62 rise no later than 130 minutes after it begins;
5. the witnesses’ introductory remarks each last a maximum total of five minutes;
6. if a senator does not use the entire period of 10 minutes for debate provided under rule 12-31(3)(d), including the responses of the witnesses, that senator may yield the balance of time to another senator;

7. rule 3-3(1) be suspended and no motion to adjourn the sitting be received before the Committee of the Whole has reported; and
8. once the Committee of the Whole has reported, the Senate adjourn.

**FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION
BILL, 2023**

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE NATIONAL FINANCE
COMMITTEE TO STUDY SUBJECT MATTER

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

That, in accordance with rule 10-11(1), the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine the subject matter of Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, introduced in the House of Commons on November 30, 2023, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate.

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at 2 p.m.

QUESTION PERIOD

PUBLIC SAFETY

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, last night, CTV Ottawa had an interview with a man in Gatineau who had his truck stolen from his home one night in January. Two weeks later, through the use of Apple AirTags, he tracked down his own truck to — where else — the Port of Montreal.

This man called the police. They told him they couldn't help, because his truck is inside the port. They told him the port authorities might not do anything about it. The Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, later confirmed to CTV that they can only intercept a stolen vehicle with the help of police when they know the specific container that the car is in.

Leader, will your government fire the inefficient and expensive consultants at the CBSA and instead adopt a common-sense plan to add officers and container scanners to secure our ports and return stolen vehicles to their owners?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator, for the question and for the somewhat belated interest in this issue once the government announced that it was tackling this with dispatch. As I mentioned in the chamber yesterday, the government has organized a meeting with all relevant stakeholders and parties to address this important and growing problem.

With regard to your question about the ports, without repeating what I said yesterday, there are specific operations that are in place and will be put in place, but for obvious security reasons, that will not be disclosed in terms of details. There are a significant number of officers in place at the Port of Montreal to address this situation, and more information will be shared once the government has concluded its discussions with stakeholders.

Senator Plett: If you gave us an acceptable answer, we would stop asking the questions. I hope the news coverage will help this man get his truck back, but his is just one story. After eight years of this Trudeau government, car thefts are up 300% in Toronto and 100% in Ottawa and Montreal.

Yes, leader, yesterday you said your summit will bring together key players from all sectors, including those who are responsible for borders and ports. Who do you think is responsible for federal ports, leader? Who do you think is responsible for the CBSA and the RCMP? It is your government, leader — the Trudeau government. Why not use some common sense and act?

• (1430)

Senator Gold: I guess that the holidays haven't dulled your attraction to easy slogans.

Of course the Government of Canada is responsible for the ports and the CBSA, and it's doing what it can within its area of jurisdiction. But the governments of the provinces and territories are responsible for policing, their highways and many other aspects that feed into this growing crime that this government is committed to addressing.

[Translation]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: Honourable senators, it is with deep regret that I ask my last question in the Senate. The lucky winner who gets to answer it is Senator Gold.

A few weeks ago, there was a Liberal cabinet meeting in Montreal. At the same time, TVA aired a report on the scourge of auto theft on the show “J.E.” It is common knowledge that your government has not done anything to deal with the growing number of car thefts in Canada since 2015.

Twenty-four hours after that story aired, not one but five ministers in your government held an urgent press conference to announce a national summit on auto theft.

My question is this: Auto theft has gone up by 50% in Canada since the Liberals took office. Sadly, the number of abused women who have been murdered has increased by 60% in eight years, but there has been no news coverage about that and no minister has gone public to announce any kind of action.

Senator Gold, when will your government announce a summit on the women whose lives were stolen in Canada?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. On a more personal note, I am going to miss you, dear colleague, for many reasons, including our friendship.

The Government of Canada will continue to work on ensuring that victims of crime and their families receive better protection and guidance. Tragically — but also fortunately, thanks to you and your efforts — this issue definitely remains a government priority.

There is no need for a summit on a problem that is clearly understood and that resonates not only with the Government of Canada and its ministers, but also with their counterparts in other provinces. The government will continue to do its part to address this very important issue.

Senator Boisvenu: Senator Gold, your answer is much the same as the answers that you’ve always given me. You say that your government is doing a lot for victims when in fact, it has done nothing for victims since 2015.

For eight years, your government has taken no action on the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, including action to improve it. Senator Gold, when five cabinet ministers in your government spontaneously announce that they will be holding a summit on stolen cars — I repeat my question: When are you going to hold a summit on stolen lives in Canada?

Senator Gold: Once again, thank you for your question. I would be very pleased, dear colleague, to continue this conversation outside this chamber. Maybe in the next chapter of your life, we can pick up this conversation and see what improvements can be made.

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK

Hon. Tony Loffreda: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, nice to see you and all our colleagues this week. I wish us all a good and productive year in the Senate. I would like to discuss the content of the *Legislative Review of the Canada Infrastructure Bank Act 2017-2022 Report*. This report was published in June 2023. The review concluded that “. . . the core policy rationale underlying its creation remains sound, and its enabling legislation functions well. . . .”

However, the review did identify seven opportunities to ensure the continued success of the bank in such areas as better public engagement, greater alignment with partners and a stronger governance structure.

What, if anything, is the federal government considering in order to respond to these key findings? Should we expect any legislative proposals to amend the act?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and your good wishes, senator.

The government is always looking for ways to improve service delivery and their programs. I can assure you that the government is considering the recommendations of the report very seriously.

While I can’t comment on any potential future legislation, it is worth noting that the review itself concluded that no legislative amendments were necessary and that the bank remains well positioned to advance a range of projects across its priority sectors.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer.

As you know, it was announced last month that the chair of the board was leaving her role at the bank. Since then, a member of the board was appointed as interim chair. According to the legislation, an interim chair is not authorized to act as a chairperson for a period of more than 180 days without the approval of the Governor-in-Council. Senator Gold, can you commit that the government will appoint a permanent chair within the next six months?

Senator Gold: As you know, Governor-in-Council appointments are made through an open, transparent and merit-based process on an ongoing basis. I understand that the process takes into account current and forecasted vacancies as well as currently held positions so that the integrity of the operation can be maintained.

[Translation]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COST OF FOOD

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Clearly, the minister of the economy, François-Philippe Champagne, has failed in his crusade to force the big grocery retailers to reduce prices.

Last week, the renowned food researcher Sylvain Charlebois said that accusations of profiteering by the major grocery chains are unfounded and it is time to put the debate to rest. Nevertheless, Minister Champagne continues to threaten them.

Correct me if I'm wrong, leader, but for months now, Minister Champagne has done nothing more than wage a diversion campaign on the issue of food prices to distract Canadians from what's really driving prices up, namely the Trudeau government's bad economic decisions.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The answer is no. The government continues to work to ensure that the cost of living, especially in the grocery sector, is resolved for the benefit of all Canadian consumers. That's why the government has proposed amendments to the Competition Act, to give more powers to the Competition Bureau. Furthermore, I'm told that the government sent a letter to the Commissioner of Competition to express the government's disappointment that the major grocery chains have not cooperated as we would've liked for the benefit of Canadians.

Senator Dagenais: Leader, last Monday, a dozen organic, free-range eggs sold for US\$9.99 in Florida. In Canada, those dozen eggs would cost more than CA\$13. We have never seen that here, but the minister persists in trying to open the door to big American grocery chains so that they can compete with Canadian businesses.

How can we keep taking such comments by the minister seriously, when he may not know that food costs roughly the same in the United States as it does here, except in U.S. dollars, of course?

Senator Gold: I can't comment on relative prices in the United States. It has been too long since I've been there. I can assure this chamber that the government and the minister are working hard every day to address this important issue.

[English]

CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Hon. Marty Klyne: Senator Gold, many Canadians and parliamentarians are fired up and ready to advance the 2024 reconciliation agenda in our great nation of nations. Last year, we made historic progress on a number of fronts: the release of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP, action plan; Bill C-51, the Whitecap Dakota

self-government agreement in Saskatchewan; Bill C-45, which amended the First Nations Fiscal Management Act; and the selection of a site for a residential schools monument on Parliament Hill, which followed the June 2022 dedication of the Saskatchewan Residential School Memorial on the grounds of the Government House in Regina. Senator Gold, what are the government's priorities with respect to advancing reconciliation this year?

• (1440)

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator. It is a very important question. As senators are aware, the government remains firmly committed to reconciliation and implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. It is an imperative for Canada. I'm happy to report — though it is never enough — that 85% of these Calls to Action are complete or very well under way. While there is significant work being done on this front, I would also note that the legislation to establish the national council for reconciliation is almost across the finish line, thanks to the good work and contribution of this chamber.

The government remains committed to implementing all the Calls to Action to advancing reconciliation and always in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Senator Klyne: Senator Gold, one bill that I want to see moved forward in the Senate is Senator Kutcher's Bill S-251 to end the use of corporal punishment on kids, answering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 6. The other place is also considering the same topic with Bill C-273. What is the government's position on the road ahead in answering Call to Action 6?

Senator Gold: As I said, the government is committed to implementing all of the Calls to Action, including, of course, Call to Action 6. My understanding, senator, is that the government is still continuing to explore the best way to respond to that Call to Action to repeal section 43 of the Criminal Code. When the government lands on that, I will inform the chamber.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

MILITARY TECHNOLOGY TO TURKEY

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Gold, last month our government resumed arms exports to Turkey, quietly lifting a ban that had been put into place three years ago after Turkey sent Canadian drone technology to Azerbaijan to be used in the ethnic cleansing of the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh. The fact that we had even sent Turkey that drone technology in the first place was a violation of an existing arms ban resulting from Turkey's invasion of Syria.

Senator Gold, the threat to the Armenian people is alive and well, and probably greater than ever. What has changed from the time that the ban was put into place and now? What steps has President Erdoğan shown that he will not repeat his egregious behaviour as he has so many times? Armenian Canadians are

very worried, and all Canadians are worried about the international rule of law and respect of basic human rights. They are very concerned with this government's decision.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, senator, and for your continued advocacy on behalf of the Armenian people and those, more generally, who are the victims of oppression.

I don't have the details with regard to your question. I understand the concerns. I certainly will raise them with the minister at the earliest opportunity.

Senator Housakos: Senator, it is very important that the Trudeau government understands that capitulation to a dictator, even though it happens to be a NATO member, is not the right thing to do. It happens to be a NATO member that we've seen, time and again, bully us and use his leverage because he is part of NATO to do some of the most egregious things in the Caucasus and other parts of the world. We need assurances that the Trudeau government will start taking steps against tyrants and bullies who do not respect the values that we as a NATO member and our allies respect. Can I have an assurance that the Trudeau government will start doing that?

Senator Gold: Well, you certainly have my assurance, senator, that I will raise it with the minister and appropriate ministers at the first opportunity that I have.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My question for the government leader concerns the Procurement Ombud's report into the ArriveCAN app. The ombud reviewed 41 contracts and found that 17 of them had not been proactively disclosed by the Trudeau government, which means that over 40% of the contracts he reviewed had been hidden.

If this secrecy sounds familiar, leader, it is for good reason. Over the past year, I have asked you many times about the Trudeau government's outsourcing of the Canada Emergency Business Account small business loans program to the Accenture consulting firm for \$208 million. None of those contracts were proactively disclosed. Leader, how many more contracts are being kept hidden from Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. With regard to the first part of your question, the report of the Procurement Ombud contained many recommendations. The government has accepted all of those recommendations and has implemented a management plan in response. Indeed, most recommendations have already been completed or will be completed soon.

With regard to your larger question about contracts, as you will know, having been in government and responsible for these matters, some contracts, depending upon the circumstances, do remain and must remain confidential for reasons of the protection of intellectual property and the like. It is a fact of life in the

procurement process for this government and any other government in order for Canadians to be properly served by those who supply to them.

Senator Martin: With respect to ArriveCAN, taxpayers' money was wasted, transparency was an afterthought and procurement rules were broken. For example, the ombud found the criteria used for awarding a \$25 million contract to GC Strategies in May 2022 favoured that two-person company. Leader, why did the Trudeau government rig the system in favour of GC Strategies?

Senator Gold: Again, I do not accept the premise of your question. I do acknowledge, as we know, that there were real problems. That is why the government has suspended contracts with GC Strategies as well as with others who were found to not live up to the standards we expect in our procurement process. We look forward to the Auditor General's report on this. As I said yesterday, I am sure that this will be a subject that will occupy us in the weeks to come.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Hon. Kim Pate: In 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled that Canada violated Nell Toussaint's rights by denying her essential health care because of her irregular immigration status. Canada has not yet complied with the committee's decision. Still fighting for human rights for herself and others, Ms. Toussaint died in 2023.

Next Monday, February 12, the government will respond to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of Canada, including calls to ensure access to health care without discrimination based on immigration status. What concrete measures is the government taking to ensure access to health care in light of the council's recommendations and the decision of the UN Human Rights Committee in Nell Toussaint's case?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question and for reminding us of the tragic case of Ms. Toussaint.

I'm not in a position to respond to the specifics of your question. The government takes human rights issues very seriously. I undertake to raise this issue with the relevant minister as soon as I can.

Senator Pate: Thank you, Senator Gold. Nell Toussaint is being honoured this month by many because, of course, it is Black History Month. I am hoping that as you are communicating with the government that you can impress upon them that we would love to receive information about the concrete action that the government is taking to ensure access to health care for those struggling to access life-saving care in situations similar to that of Ms. Toussaint.

Senator Gold: I will certainly add that to my conversation with the minister.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

NATIONAL SUMMIT ON COMBATTING AUTO THEFT

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: I was rather taken aback by your answer to Senator Boisvenu's question. You said that there was no need to hold a summit on violence against women. I think that violence against women is the main reason why we're not achieving gender equality. It's an ongoing, difficult problem for which we have been unable to find a clear solution.

Why, at the end of its cabinet meeting, did the Liberal Party decide to hold a summit on sheet metal, which is basically what stolen cars are, rather than on important social issues, such as immigration, housing or violence against women?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, which gives me the opportunity to elaborate. I didn't mean to suggest that the Government of Canada is taking less seriously the problem of violence against women, which has become almost an epidemic. That is simply not the case.

I tried to explain why, given that the government has been working on this issue on a daily basis for a long time, a symbolic summit hasn't been held. I want to emphasize that this wasn't meant to diminish the magnitude of the problem or to compare the two problems.

• (1450)

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Please tell me, senator, what is the point of a summit to combat auto theft? Shouldn't the police just do their job? In any case, these stolen vehicles are usually new and covered by insurance. Surely this problem isn't on the same scale as some of the other social problems we're experiencing.

So, that's my question. I acknowledge your response, but I'm still a little taken aback by the government's choices.

Senator Gold: I understand your disappointment, but as you mentioned, other players outside the federal government are responsible for combatting this auto theft network, including provincial police forces and insurance companies. Basically, this is another issue that requires collaboration amongst various authorities for the first time.

[English]

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

COST OF EVENTS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, by my count, the Trudeau cabinet has held three cabinet retreats. They claim they were focused on making life more affordable for Canadians.

Their three-day cabinet retreat in Vancouver in September cost taxpayers \$275,000, including over \$55,000 in catering and restaurants.

Another three-day affordability retreat in Prince Edward Island in August cost taxpayers at least \$484,000. This includes the Privy Council Office spending over \$52,000 for a banquet. How did they manage to spend \$52,000 on a banquet? I guess it is easy when taxpayers foot the bill.

Leader, Prime Minister Trudeau and his cabinet held their most recent affordability retreat in Montreal in January. How much did that cost the taxpayers?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. I do not know the figures or costs.

Since I attended — none of the banquets — some sessions in my capacity as Government Representative in the Senate, I do know what the government focused on, and what the fruits of that focus are. These are measures to make life easier and more affordable for Canadians during these difficult times: passing legislation to eliminate the GST on new rental construction; strengthening the Competition Act to ensure that the Competition Bureau is empowered to hold grocers accountable and prioritize consumer interest; unlocking \$20 billion in new financing to build 300,000 more apartments per year, to introduce a new mortgage charter to protect homeowners and to launch the new tax-free first home savings account, now helping over half a million Canadians save for their first home. That is what these retreats are for. That is what this government is doing.

Senator Plett: Well, next time you will want to attend the banquet; they must have had great food.

As everyone knows, January's cabinet retreat took place just a few weeks after the Prime Minister enjoyed a free \$84,000 vacation. He has no concept of how Canadian families are struggling to afford their daily lives, no matter how many expensive affordability retreats he convenes. Leader, do you see why Conservatives say that the Prime Minister isn't worth the cost? Is that not obvious even to you, leader?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. The Ethics Commissioner pre-cleared it and has reported subsequent to the issue that there was no violation, given the long-standing personal relationship that the Prime Minister had.

I am not here, and it is not my role, despite your invitations, to engage in partisan back-and-forth about the political optics of what the Prime Minister does or does not do.

The rules were followed. The Prime Minister is entitled to be with his family, especially within the circumstances of which we're all aware. I would think that is sufficient.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CONFLICT IN GAZA STRIP

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Senator Gold, this week, the United Nations appointed Catherine Colonna, France's former foreign affairs minister, to lead an independent review of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, or UNRWA, after accusations by Israel that some staff — since fired — were involved in the horrific attack on Israel on October 7. The independent review begins next week, and an interim report to the Secretary-General will be delivered next month. So far, Israel refuses to share either its evidence or intelligence dossier with the UN. Unlike Canada, France — UNRWA's fourth-biggest donor — has not suspended contributions, and Spain just increased its funding. UNRWA has 13,000 employees providing essential services in Gaza, running schools for 280,000 children and 22 health care centres, as well as food to about 2 million Palestinians. When will Canada follow the compassionate lead of France and Spain?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and for underlining the important humanitarian issues that plague the people of Gaza. This government is very aware of and sensitive to it.

The government's decision to suspend aid to UNRWA was based upon information that it received — credible information — about the implication of far too many UNRWA employees in the atrocities that were inflicted upon innocent Israelis on October 7, 2023.

At the same time, it has not diminished its contributions to assist Palestinians in Gaza. On the contrary, it has simply diverted them to other agencies in which it has confidence that those funds will not be used or diverted into the hands of Hamas — a terrorist organization — which any civilized country should and does condemn.

Senator McPhedran: Following the January 26 ruling of the UN International Court of Justice, calling upon preventive measures in Gaza by state parties to the Genocide Convention, will Canada honour its obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty and halt arms exports to Israeli and Palestinian armed groups?

Senator Gold: The decision of how to support both Canada's ally Israel and the Palestinian people is a matter that the government takes very seriously. I am not aware of any decision by the government to change its practices currently with regard to the issues that you raised.

ANSWERS TO ORDER PAPER QUESTIONS TABLED

FINANCE—CANADA INVESTMENT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 21, dated November 23, 2021, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Canada Investment Development Corporation.

NATIONAL REVENUE—CANADA REVENUE AGENCY CALLS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 32, dated November 23, 2021, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding CRA calls.

NATIONAL REVENUE—CANADA REVENUE AGENCY TAX POLICY

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 165, dated June 2, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding CRA tax policy.

NATIONAL REVENUE—TAX FREE SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 185, dated December 13, 2022, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Tax-Free Savings Accounts.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP—CALL CENTRES

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 192, dated January 31, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

NATIONAL REVENUE—EXCISE DUTY ON ALCOHOL PRODUCTS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 199, dated February 2, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding excise duty on alcohol products.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP—
GLOBAL SKILLS STRATEGY

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 202, dated February 2, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Global Skills Strategy.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP—APPLICATIONS OF
REFUGEE CLAIMANTS WORKING IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 204, dated February 2, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP—
HOUSING OF REFUGEES

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 208, dated February 2, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

EXPORT PROMOTION, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT—INVEST IN CANADA

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 232, dated May 30, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Invest in Canada.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT—OCCUPANCY RATE OF
FEDERAL BUILDINGS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 233, dated June 6, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Carignan, P.C., regarding the occupancy rate of federal buildings.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE—
CLEAN FUEL REGULATIONS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 247, dated September 19, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Clean Fuel Regulations.

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES—
CRITICAL MINERAL STRATEGY

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 249, dated September 19, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Critical Minerals Strategy.

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES—CANADA—GERMANY
HYDROGEN ALLIANCE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 253, dated September 19, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Canada–Germany Hydrogen Alliance.

JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA—
JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 259, dated September 19, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding judicial appointments.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP—
CANADIAN PASSPORTS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 262, dated September 19, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Canadian passports.

JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA—VICTIMS FUND

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 267, dated September 19, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Victims Fund.

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES—ATOMIC ENERGY OF
CANADA LIMITED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 269, dated November 2, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Atomic Energy of Canada Limited.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT—
CANADA LANDS COMPANY

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 273, dated November 2, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Canada Lands Company.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT—
CANADA POST CORPORATION

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 274, dated November 2, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding Canada Post Corporation.

EXPORT PROMOTION, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT—CANADIAN COMMERCIAL CORPORATION

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 280, dated November 2, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Plett, regarding the Canadian Commercial Corporation.

JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA—
AMENDMENTS TO BILL S-12

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) tabled the reply to Question No. 285, dated November 7, 2023, appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* in the name of the Honourable Senator Pate, regarding amendments to Bill S-12.

• (1500)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FOREIGN INFLUENCE REGISTRY AND ACCOUNTABILITY BILL

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 Wells, for the second reading of Bill S-237, An Act to establish the Foreign Influence Registry and to amend the Criminal Code.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15. I am not ready to speak at this time. Therefore, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 4-15(3), I move the adjournment of the debate for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

CRIMINAL CODE INDIAN ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Tannas, seconded by the Honourable Senator Verner, P.C., for the second reading of Bill S-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Indian Act.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

INCOME TAX ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Ratna Omidvar moved second reading of Bill S-279, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (data on registered charities).

(On motion of Senator Omidvar, debate adjourned.)

• (1510)

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON SICKLE CELL DISEASE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Mégie, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cotter, for the second reading of Bill S-280, An Act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease.

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak today at second reading of Bill S-280, An Act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease.

I must begin by thanking the sponsor, Senator Mégie, for introducing this bill and working so hard on behalf of Canadians living with sickle cell disease and their families.

I would also like to thank the Senate's Black Caucus members, who hosted a wonderful event last June here, on Parliament Hill, to celebrate Sickle Cell Awareness Day.

I have been fortunate enough to meet many Canadians living with sickle cell, their families and their caregivers. Many of these families and caregivers have been advocating for what is laid out in Bill S-280.

Many parents have shared with me stories of their experiences raising children with sickle cell disease — the desperation and fears pre-diagnosis, not knowing why their infant children were under such distress and the feeling of helplessness trying to alleviate their children's pain.

Many families felt it was only luck that their children with sickle cell disease were properly diagnosed by a family doctor familiar with the disease and its symptoms, and that they were told how best to treat it. Early diagnosis and treatment plans give the best chance at providing a positive quality of life for many living with sickle cell.

I have heard other stories from families about the difficulties they have faced in getting a proper diagnosis: children in and out of the ER on a regular basis while experiencing severe pain that had not been diagnosed. Doctors and health care professionals who were less knowledgeable about sickle cell disease would be at a loss as to the causes of this pain. In some cases, if the patient was a teenager, I have heard unfortunate stories about them being labelled as addicts just trying to game the system for pain prescriptions in the emergency department. Fortunately, this is starting to change as more and more people are doing research in sickle cell disease.

Awareness of sickle cell has long been a barrier to early proper diagnosis in Canada. Although sickle cell disease is the world's most common human genetic disease, it has been relatively unknown in Canada until recent years. I have told the story before of how, in 1997, the great Jean Augustine was the first parliamentarian to raise the issue of sickle cell disease in either house of Parliament. To highlight how little sickle cell was known, the health minister at the time, Allan Rock, told Jean that he didn't know what sickle cell disease was. To his credit, a week later, he told her that he had gotten a full briefing on the disease.

I am so pleased that awareness of sickle cell has increased significantly over the last number of years. Provincial sickle cell associations, along with the national association, have made great strides in educating communities, health care professionals and legislators. As Senator Mégie has pointed out, many provinces are now performing automatic newborn screening for sickle cell disease and the sickle cell trait. I was pleased that Nova Scotia was the third province to do automatic newborn screening, following Ontario and British Columbia.

I must mention the good work that the sickle cell disease associations across Canada are doing to create positive changes in care for those with sickle cell disease. I have worked with Lanre Tunji-Ajayi, President of the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario, and Biba Tinga, President of the Sickle Cell Disease

Association of Canada. These women and other volunteers have done incredible work as sickle cell advocates. Many of you met Biba at the sickle cell event on Parliament Hill in June. I thank all these volunteers who have made a huge difference in the lives of those with sickle cell disease and their families.

Honourable senators, we have made tremendous progress on making Canadians aware of sickle cell disease. When I first spoke about the issue in the Senate, very few senators had heard of sickle cell. The "friendly" critic for my National Sickle Cell Awareness Day Bill, former senator Carolyn Stewart Olsen, had been a nurse before her political career and knew about the disease and spoke in favour of the bill.

Awareness has provided an important first step, but it is time to move beyond awareness and to expand resources on a national scale and to provide national supports.

Nationally, we have somewhat of a patchwork system in recognizing, diagnosing and treating sickle cell disease. Different provinces and territories have developed different policies when it comes to the disease. For instance, not all provinces and territories perform automatic newborn screenings.

We are lacking proper data on the disease and on those who are carriers of the sickle cell trait. It is hard to move forward without good data. As Senator Mégie mentioned, research funding, particularly in the form of grants, is virtually non-existent for sickle cell.

I was fortunate enough to be invited to tour the largest sickle cell treatment clinic in the country, which is located in the Toronto General Hospital. The IWK Health children's hospital in Halifax has also been a leader in researching and treating sickle cell disease. These are two hospitals, with tremendous staff, that are doing great work.

A problem persists where our larger population centres may be well served, but as you move away from those centres into smaller, more rural areas, Canadians begin to experience more difficulties. Bill S-280 will help to address these limitations.

I am encouraged to see the call for the federal government to take a leadership role in developing a national framework which will provide for the creation of a national research network to advance research, improve data collection and establish a national registry on sickle cell disease; include measures to address the training, education and diagnostic and treatment tool needs of health care professionals relating to sickle cell disease; and set evidence-based national standards for the diagnosis and treatment of sickle cell disease.

I am also happy to see the inclusion of an analysis respecting the implementation of a tax credit for individuals with sickle cell disease and their caregivers.

I have spoken to so many parents who talk to me about the hardships they face as their child, or children, live with sickle cell. Children can miss months of school and be in and out of hospitals for pain treatment. During this time, many parents are unable to work outside the home as they care for their children.

Any financial relief, even the possibility of a tax credit, would help in some small way to support those families through difficult times.

Honourable senators, a national framework is long overdue. Since that first speech in 1997 by the Honourable Jean Augustine in the other place, it has been almost 37 years.

I am fully supportive of Bill S-280, the national framework on sickle cell disease act, moving forward to committee and I look forward to examining the legislation in committee.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

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

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(At 3:19 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

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