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Wednesday, November 6, 2024

The Honourable PIERRETTE RINGUETTE,
Speaker pro tempore

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, November 6, 2024

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN ISLAMIC HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, on behalf of Senators Ataullahjan, Al Zaibak, Gerba and Yussuff, I am pleased to remind you that October marked Canadian Islamic History Month.

In an increasingly polarized world, it is crucial to recognize and celebrate the history and contributions of our Muslim communities across Canada. It is also essential that we continue to combat Islamophobia, racism and hate in all their forms.

With roots in over 50 countries around the world, Muslims in Canada represent a rich diversity of racialized and ethnocultural groups. More than 1.8 million Muslims call Canada home, comprising nearly 5% of our country's population.

The core tenets of Islam are rooted in peace, sanctity, benevolence and generosity. Extremist and fundamentalist ideologies that seek to co-opt the name of the religion for destructive purposes tarnish these principles that most Muslims hold dear and aspire to uphold.

We take immense pride in the heritage and substantial contributions that our community has made to Canada's cultural and societal fabric. Within this very chamber, Senators Ataullahjan, Gerba, Al Zaibak and Yussuff exemplify these contributions through their dedication and impactful interventions. Contributions from our Muslim communities span the sciences, entrepreneurship, humanities, the labour movement, human rights, sports, academia and many other fields that continue to enrich Canadian society.

Colleagues, this year's themes for Canadian Islamic History Month are *sabr* and *shukr*. *Sabr* and *shukr* are principles that can help guide us through life's challenges. *Sabr* reflects patience, perseverance and persistence, which are essential to accomplishing goals, overcoming obstacles and handling setbacks. *Shukr*, on the other hand, reflects gratitude that allows one to recognize one's blessings and can take the form of words, feelings or behaviours. Every day we find ways to face challenges — both small and large — with a combination of *sabr* and *shukr*.

Through education and the sharing of positive stories, all Canadians can grow, connect and foster a pluralistic society, sustaining our shared commitment to a just and prosperous nation.

Thank you, *sabr*, *shukr*.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR ELECTIONS

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, today I am pleased to present Chapter 84 of "Telling Our Story."

The world is abuzz today about yesterday's election in the United States and what type of election it turned out to be. These conversations always cause me to think back to my own personal experiences with election campaigns, which include having my name on three municipal ballots, four provincial ballots and three federal ones. While from time to time there were events that caused my campaigns to go sideways, they pale in comparison to some others in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

My first story took place in the town of Burin in 1873, when a candidate named James Winter found himself confronted by a drunken mob. It was nomination day, and the mob demanded to know Winter's stance on a confederation with Canada. Winter replied that he would only support a confederation if the majority of people backed it through a referendum. That answer was not good enough for the angry mob, so they continuously called him out as a traitor. To stop him from being nominated, they hustled him into the Burin courthouse and straight into a jail cell. Fearing Winter's supporters would arrive and set him free, the mob forced Winter into a boat and sailed him 19 kilometres away to the town of Beau Bois, where he was once again held under lock and key.

Now, if a political candidate was confronted by an angry mob today, tossed in a cell, taken to another town and locked up again, they might consider dropping out of the race. But, just like Donald Trump, none of that deterred our James Winter. Winter managed to escape later that night and walked the 19 kilometres back to Burin. Earlier that day, before the mob arrived and locked him up, Winter had submitted his nomination papers to the town's returning officer, and by the time Winter returned home he had won the election.

Friends, that was not the end of the story. James Winter definitely had the last laugh. He went on to become the tenth pre-Confederation Premier of Newfoundland, and the town of Winterton was named in his honour. For any of you who may be contemplating offering yourselves as a candidate in the upcoming federal election campaign, the lesson here is to make sure you get your nomination papers submitted early.

Then there is the story of the 1893 election in Newfoundland. The entire election campaign was marred by mudslinging, dirty tricks and candidates hurling personal insults. Many of you think that that only happens here in Ottawa or down in the United States.

When the votes were counted on election night in 1893, the Liberal Party had secured a large majority of the seats. The defeated Conservatives accused most of the Liberal caucus of cheating by promising prospective supporters government jobs for their votes. I was shocked to read that something like buying votes could happen in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The 1893 election results were challenged in court, and the ensuing courtroom drama dragged on for months and months. In the end, the accused Liberals were all found guilty, booted from their freshly won seats and barred from running for office again.

But the Conservatives were not able to savour the victory for long. When the by-elections were called to replace those who had been voted out, the Liberals were returned to power with precisely the same number of seats they had held the night before. As our former premier Joey Smallwood used to say, “The only bad publicity is no publicity.”

Then there was the story of the 1971 provincial election that was so close that several districts had to have recounts. The results were once again challenged in court, because after the deputy returning officer in the small community of Sally’s Cove counted the ballots she accidentally threw them in the woodstove. But to hear the details of that exciting political drama in Newfoundland, you will need to stay tuned for Chapter 85.

[*Translation*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Deveau family and Mr. and Mrs. Doucet of Chéticamp, Nova Scotia. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Aucoin.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CHÉTICAMP, NOVA SCOTIA

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Honourable senators, as you heard, today I have the great pleasure of welcoming to the Senate Claudie and Lorette Deveau, their son Pierre, and Réal and Charelle Doucet, who are visiting from my hometown of Chéticamp in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

• (1410)

After being deported from Grand-Pré and other areas in 1755, Acadians were scattered around the world.

In 1785, 14 families from among the Acadian survivors were given the first land grant of 7,000 acres in Chéticamp. They had finally found a safe haven where they could settle and build a village.

Today, my village is made up of about 2,500 residents who still speak French. In my case, after going to school and working elsewhere for 12 years, the lure of my family, our traditional songs and our straight talk reeled me back in and I returned to my homeland.

The fact that Chéticamp is still a francophone community today shows the resilience of its citizens, including my guests today. Chéticamp is sandwiched between the English-speaking Scottish villages of Inverness to the south and Pleasant Bay to the

north, and I remember sitting in my guests’ kitchen trying to figure out how to counter an angry tide against the creation of an Acadian school, when, up until that point, education had been offered in English only.

Chéticamp is known the world over for its hooked rugs, which are made with a crochet-type hook.

Did senators know that this art is directly related to the inventor of the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell? In 1924, an artist from New York who visited the Bell family in Baddeck, Nova Scotia, discovered the talent of the women in Chéticamp.

In the years that followed, she returned to the region to purchase hooked rugs, which she would resell in New York. Today some of these masterpieces adorn the walls of places like Rideau Hall, the Vatican, the White House and, of course, Chéticamp. You are all welcome to stop by my office in East Block to see one my mother made.

Annie-Rose Deveau, a true rug “hooker,” and mother and grandmother to my guests, was a researcher for a book later published on the history of hooked rugs in Chéticamp. She also taught the art with her husband for many years.

As a final point, a number of artists from Chéticamp have earned national and international recognition. Last week, Robert Deveaux and his band were nominated for a Félix award in the traditional album of the year category. Congratulations, Robert. That’s quite an honour.

I would like to close by inviting you to visit us in Chéticamp. You’ll be charmed by the beauty of the landscape, but above all, by the warm and unparalleled Acadian welcome.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Brian Bronfman and Amal Elsana, soon-to-be recipients of the King’s Coronation Medal. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Gold.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of a group of health care professionals and volunteers. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Mégie.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE LATE HERBY MOREAU

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie: Honourable senators, I rise today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to TV host and cultural journalist Herby Moreau.

Last Sunday night, while Quebecers were busy watching the ADISQ Gala, we learned that Mr. Moreau, nicknamed the “prince of the red carpet,” had passed away.

Writing for *La Presse*, Hugo Dumas revealed that Mr. Moreau had been battling myeloma, a form of blood cancer, for the past four years.

At age 56, like a comet crossing the sky, this star chaser has left a lasting mark on Quebec culture and on the many international stars he interviewed.

In his 2014 book entitled *Glamour et faux pas*, available on the Herby.tv website, he revealed the secret to his success with the big stars: Herby Moreau always strived to make them shine in all their glory, rather than burn bridges by gossipmongering. He never stooped to the level of greedy paparazzi.

The words of wisdom he shared in the ending to his book are a lesson for us all: To move forward into the future, we need to know how to look backwards into the past.

As we celebrate Canada’s National Francophone Immigration Week, I would like to point out that Herby Moreau was born in Haiti in 1968 and arrived here in Canada when he was five years old. During the 25 years that he spent travelling across Quebec and internationally, he not only made a deep impression on people behind the screen, but he also served as a positive role model for all viewers of African descent watching popular programs.

My condolences to the family. *Mèsi pou heritaj ou kitè pour nou!* Rest in peace, Mr. Moreau.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[English]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Friba Rezayee, the Executive Director and founder of the non-profit organization Women Leaders of Tomorrow. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator MacDonald.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

WOMEN LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Honourable senators, Friba Rezayee is an Afghan-Canadian who is the CEO and founder of the non-profit organization Women Leaders of Tomorrow. One of their initiatives is to provide full scholarships for deserving and ambitious young women who want to pursue higher education in Canada when this education is otherwise denied to them in their countries of origin.

One such person is a young Afghan woman whose first name is Zakera. I decline to give her full name for her security and that of her family. She was attending Kabul University when the Taliban took over the country and banned university education for women. The Taliban raided her house, looking for any documentation with which to persecute her. She had to hide in a shrine for 12 hours until they left the property.

The Canadian government rejected her visa application. She was heartbroken and despondent, believing that the doors to her education were closing for good. Senator McPhedran brought this issue to my attention. Zakera had received a full scholarship to attend Cape Breton University this fall, and Senator McPhedran asked me if I could help. I said to leave it with me, although I wasn’t sure what, if anything, I could do.

As I was sitting here, pondering what to do, I looked across the way and saw my colleague, friend and fellow Cape Bretoner Senator Cuzner. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line, so I made a beeline for Senator Cuzner. I explained the circumstances to him and asked if he could speak to the minister responsible. Of course, if he were allowed to be a member of the government caucus, it would have been much easier for him to pursue the matter, but he didn’t have the natural access to caucus that Liberal senators used to have. We should always be mindful of unintended consequences, shouldn’t we?

Today, Zakera is a full-time student at Cape Breton University. Senator Cuzner’s intervention with the minister secured the necessary visa. I want to thank Senator Cuzner for his assistance in enabling this young woman to pursue her education. It was also personally satisfying for me to play a small role in rectifying this impasse.

I also commend Senator McPhedran for her unceasing efforts to help these unfortunate souls who need assistance, and I salute Friba Rezayee for the successes of her non-profit organization. I

am so glad you are here today with us in the Senate so we can recognize all the great work you are doing for young women around the world.

Zakera wants the Senate to know that she is now studying with enthusiasm and determination. She thanks us for our help and writes she would not have been able to continue her education if not for the intervention of the Senate.

This is a good example for all senators of how the pursuit of common goals along non-partisan lines should always be top of mind in our deliberations. Thank you.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Elder Calvin White, father of the Honourable Senator White.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CALVIN A. WHITE, C.M., O.N.L.

Hon. Judy A. White: Honourable senators, today I have the profound honour of introducing a man who embodies strength, wisdom and the spirit of our ancestors: Mi'kmaw activist, chief and elder, and my daddy, Calvin White.

A former chief of the Flat Bay Band and president of the Federation of the Newfoundland Indians, he served on many national boards, including the National Indian Brotherhood — which was the precursor to the Assembly of First Nations — the Aboriginal Liberal Commission and the National Council of Welfare.

• (1420)

Dr. Elder White is highly lauded for his long-standing and dedicated work toward achieving recognition for Mi'kmaq on the island of Newfoundland. He recently authored a book titled *One Man's Journey: The Mi'kmaw Revival in Ktaqmkuk*, providing personal insights into his life's work. Among his other distinctions, he was named a human rights champion, received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Memorial University of Newfoundland and he has been appointed to both the Order of Canada and the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

He currently serves as a knowledge keeper on the Assembly of First Nations' Knowledge Keepers Council.

Dad is well-known in our community as the go-to guy, always there to lend a hand to neighbours and to participate in community gatherings, reminding us of the importance of our mutual support, knowledge sharing and connection to the land. But to me, my daddy is my number one fan, my hero, mentor and the heartbeat of our family and the nation that relied upon his courage to stand up when no one else did.

So please join me in welcoming my father, Dr. Elder Calvin White, a remarkable man who carries the spirit of our ancestors and who continues to inspire us all. Thank you, Dad, for guiding me on this journey of life. Your love and teachings are gifts I will cherish forever.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of participants of Take Our Kids to Work Day.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

STUDY ON THE STATUS OF SOIL HEALTH

THIRTEENTH REPORT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY COMMITTEE—GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TABLED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government response to the thirteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, entitled *Critical Ground: Why Soil is Essential to Canada's Economic, Environmental, Human, and Social Health*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 6, 2024.

(Pursuant to rule 12-23(4), this response and the original report are deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.)

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, November 19, 2024, at 2 p.m.

QUESTION PERIOD**PUBLIC SAFETY****PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE**

ANTI-SEMITISM

INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, a senior official in the Prime Minister's own department, the Privy Council Office, told a House committee that he attended two private meetings between NDP and Liberal members of Parliament. They discussed the changes to the Canada Elections Act that they found in Bill C-65 to protect their pensions.

When asked if he could provide the committee with documents from those meetings, he said, "My understanding is that the briefing was primarily oral." No documents, no accountability — not worth the cost. This reminds me of the Canada Revenue Agency claiming it had no documents about a decision regarding the Canada Emergency Response Benefit that cost \$8 billion.

How dumb does this NDP-Liberal government think Canadians are? How dumb do you think Canadians are?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I was wondering if there would be a question in there.

I don't think Canadians are dumb; quite the contrary. I have tremendous respect for Canadians and for all people, certainly those who take the time to be interested in the work we do here in this chamber and in public life, more generally, as well as all those who take the time to inform themselves of the issues that affect their communities and this country.

I have no knowledge of those meetings that took place between members of Parliament nor of the subject they discussed. I'm still unclear why you believe this rises to the level of a question, but you have a follow-up, so perhaps you can illuminate me further.

Senator Plett: It's in the media. Do you read the papers, Senator Gold?

Codewords were used when talking about retired Vice-Admiral Mark Norman. There were no documents about problems with the fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft procurement, a \$2.2-billion project. There was a refusal to say why a loan of \$196 million was written off in 2018. I could go on and on, Senator Gold.

What does accountability mean to your government?

Senator Gold: First of all, I do read the papers. Thank you for your interest in my reading habits.

This government has a good track record of working toward greater transparency and accountability, and it will continue to do so.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Gold, I'm sure you are aware of a very ugly scene last night at a well-known synagogue in our hometown of Montreal. A large group of masked terrorists gathered at the synagogue yelling and screaming, "Death to Jews." Some even went so far as to call a worshipper by their full name and say, "Tonight, Jew, you are going to die."

That is anti-Semitic, a direct threat of violence and in violation of at least two sections of the Criminal Code. Yet the police stood by and did nothing. Why? Because they know they have political cover, unfortunately.

Your government waited too long to list Samidoun as a terrorist organization, allowing them to spew their hate on our streets and campuses. The Trudeau government allowed a convicted Jew-killer to come to this country from France to teach at a Canadian university.

You talk about slogans and catchphrases, Senator Gold, but there is no catchphrase emptier than when your government says, "There is no place for hate in Canada." There is a place for hate in this country, and it's because of the Trudeau government.

Senator Gold, when will enough be enough?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Housakos, sincerely, I have long appreciated your friendship to the Jewish community of Montreal and your involvement not only with our community but with many communities. We run into each other regularly, and it's to your credit.

What happened outside the Shaar Hashomayim synagogue, where I was just a few days earlier to honour Irwin Cotler, was grotesque and reprehensible. I will not use those words to describe the link you made between the police force's inaction and your allegations and claim that they somehow did so because they have political cover from this government. The word I'm going to use, and I say it not to you personally but to your words, it's shameful.

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, there are laws in this country and when police refuse to defend them and apply them, it is because they think they don't have the political will to do so.

Senator Gold, a good friend of mine said to me this morning, "As a Jew, we feel there is an utter lack of empathy from the political class for how traumatizing this is." Meanwhile, we have colleagues in this place who met and posed for photos with Francesca Albanese, a raging anti-Semite who came to Canada to meet with the leader of a terrorist group, Samidoun.

Senator Gold, do you endorse that meeting and do you not now understand how our friend from Montreal feels?

Senator Gold: I understand how your friend from Montreal feels. They might very well be a friend of mine, and if they aren't, I certainly know many.

• (1430)

Yesterday, you heard me tell you what the government thinks of Francesca Albanese, and I'm here to answer on behalf of the government: I do not condone her words, her holocaust denial, her anti-Semitism or the like.

That is all I have to say. Thank you.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

PHOENIX PAY SYSTEM

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Senator Gold, the Phoenix pay system was launched in early 2016. We all know about the problems that arose from the system and the devastating impact they had on thousands of our hard-working public servants.

Since its launch, how much additional funding has been required to stabilize the system and address the backlog of pay requests? Further, what is the latest dollar amount in overpayments the government is seeking to recover, and what amount is still outstanding that is owed to public servants?

The pay system was meant to generate annual savings of \$70 million by centralizing pay operations. Instead, mitigating the pay system fiasco has unfortunately resulted in billions of dollars of unplanned expenditures.

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

Here is the information about which I have been informed: To date, \$3.65 billion has been invested in Phoenix. I have also been advised that since the launch of Phoenix, approximately 457,000 employees have been identified as having received either administrative overpayment or true overpayment, totalling \$3.42 billion.

As of August 2024, overpayments were repaid by approximately 337,900 of those employees, representing a total of approximately \$2.89 billion in recovered funds. As of August 2024, approximately 109,100 employees have an outstanding overpayment, representing approximately \$530 million.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer.

Can you provide us with an update on the minister's commitment to Canadians with respect to individuals who erroneously received overpayments? The former Minister of Public Services and Procurement said before our Standing Senate Committee on National Finance that in the longer term, our government is moving forward with legislation that would, under certain conditions, allow employees to repay to any public or private sector employer only the net amount of an overpayment rather than the gross amount. Is this correct?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. I do not have a particular update at this time, but I will certainly bring your question to the attention of the minister.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Senator Gold, in light of Donald Trump's victory last night and the next free trade negotiations with the United States, is the Canadian government thinking about or questioning its support for Bill C-282? Although I am in favour of our supply management system, is it prudent to tie the hands of the negotiators before they even begin the negotiations between Canada and the United States, which promise to be difficult?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank you for the question. The government remains determined to support our supply management system. Canada and the United States are friends, neighbours and allies with deep ties as economic partners and as peoples. I am sure that the Government of Canada will work with President Trump to create more opportunities for prosperity and security for our two nations.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Thank you, Senator Gold. I did want to point out that 70% of our exports go to the United States, which is our biggest market. In 2017, the Trump administration already had our dairy farmers in its sights, calling our trade practices unfair to the Wisconsin dairy industry. In that context, should we take a step back, given the uncertainty?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. This government has worked successfully with both Republican and Democratic administrations, and it will continue to do so. Canadians can rest assured that the government will be pragmatic while protecting their interests.

[English]

FINANCE

BANKING FRAUD

Hon. Colin Deacon: Senator Gold, on October 29, the growing issue of bank-related fraud was examined by Radio-Canada's investigative journalism show "La facture." The show highlighted how current regulations allow banks to treat fraud victims as complicit or negligent without providing any evidence. Today, only 16% of fraud cases are resolved. Currently, our banks arbitrarily decide that the victims are themselves guilty in 84% of cases.

In the U.K., banks have been forced to take responsibility, with the burden of proving fault commonly being placed on banks rather than victims. As a result, the banks invested in stronger fraud prevention systems.

Does the Minister of Finance realize that she is effectively enabling Canadian banks to resist investing in proven fraud prevention technologies, despite our banks being some of the most profitable in the world? What substantial action is she considering to prevent Canadians from becoming victims of fraud?

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

Let me begin by assuring this chamber and Canadians that Canada and the Government of Canada has no tolerance for fraud of the kind you have described. I have been informed that the Financial Consumer Protection Framework, which was introduced in 2022, requires banks to address consumer complaints within 56 days of submission.

Customers who are unsatisfied with the resolution offered by their banks may escalate their complaint to their bank's external complaint body, which will further investigate and make a determination on the merits of those complaints. The federal government is also taking action to ensure that Canadians are protected. This includes designating, as of November 1, 2024, an independent and transparent not-for-profit organization called the Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments as the single external complaints body for Canada's banking sector. This means that Canadians who feel they have been treated unfairly by their banks can access an impartial mediator to help resolve their complaints.

Senator C. Deacon: Thank you. Unfortunately, all these things you talk about are about resolving fraud once it has occurred. Our banks' primary job is to protect our savings. If robbed in the past, they were responsible. Today, it is their customers who are being robbed, mainly due to the banks' outdated processes and digital systems.

Is this government considering measures to reverse the onus of proof, putting banks — rather than victims — in the position of preventing fraud?

Senator Gold: I am not aware of current plans, legislative or otherwise, in that regard. I do note, however, that legislation that is currently before us to enhance our cybersecurity might go some distance toward also providing a new environment or ecosystem, because fraud can take many forms, including cyberattacks, phishing and the like.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CANADA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Yesterday was one of the most consequential elections to take place in the United States. I wish to go further from the question that Senator Miville-Dechéne raised a few minutes ago.

[Senator Deacon (Nova Scotia)]

The major issues between Canada and the U.S. are around trade, defence, global affairs and immigration. Will the government be changing course in any of these areas, and how do you see the government negotiating and discussing these issues with the Trump administration?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): As we know, the Prime Minister has already congratulated President Trump on his election and affirmed that the relationship — indeed, the friendship — between our two countries is longstanding and, if I recall, the envy of the world.

We are friends, allies, neighbours and trading partners, and we are deeply connected in all respects.

The Government of Canada has worked with previous administrations, including the previous Trump administration. It will continue to do so and will organize itself appropriately to deal with the many challenges that we now face.

Senator Cardozo: Thank you, Government Representative.

My supplementary is with regard to the “Team Canada” approach that the government and Canada used in the past, which involved representatives of all parties as well as business, labour and other interests.

Do you see Canada stepping up that kind of integration with the United States, and do you see a role for senators in engaging with American counterparts?

• (1440)

Senator Gold: Again, it is somewhat premature to speculate on the different ways in which we, as a country, will engage with our American counterparts, whether in political circles or civil society. The Canada-U.S. parliamentary relationships that many of us are involved with are one way to engage. I have every confidence this government will use all of its resources, including its relationships across this country and other levels of government, to advance, protect and promote Canada's interests.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Leader, the NDP-Liberal government's anti-energy policies and rhetoric have driven much-needed investment and jobs out of our country and sent them elsewhere, including to the United States.

Yesterday you denied that your new emissions cap was a production cap, but energy workers see it for what it is. This arbitrary cap follows in the wake of the unconstitutional, no-more-pipelines Bill C-69 and the Prime Minister's talk of phasing out our oil sands.

Leader, Statistics Canada says that last year alone, Canadians' direct investment in the United States increased by \$63.7 billion. How much will that figure rise because of your new production cap?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Martin, thank you very much. Again, I repeat for the record that it is not a production cap, regardless of what you and others are saying. It is a cap on emissions. The government has confidence in our energy sector to continue its innovative, world-leading effort in reducing the carbon footprint in that industry.

With regard to the rest of your question, the massive, historic investments that were made under the Biden administration to promote a transition to a more sustainable environment have had an enormous and positive impact on the economy of the United States and have attracted the interest — indeed, the envy — of those who would like to see their countries and their industries benefit. I hope that the Canadian future is as bright.

Senator Martin: Energy East, the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, Northern Gateway, the Aspen Oil Sands project, Pacific Northwest LNG, Aurora LNG, West Coast Canada LNG, Keystone XL and the Teck Frontier Oil Sands Mine are some of the major energy projects cancelled in our country over the last nine long years of the Trudeau government. What projects will be added to this list due to your latest anti-energy policy?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I believe Senator Gold has the floor. Thank you.

Senator Gold: Need I remind this chamber that over tremendous political opposition this government built the TransCanada Pipeline, bought it and invested in it so as to provide better access to our western oil at world prices.

It continues to support the transition of our economy to a cleaner and more sustainable one involving, importantly, the ongoing use and development of our fossil fuels, but in a more responsible and technologically sophisticated way.

PUBLIC SAFETY

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Senator Gold, crime has been on the rise since your government came into power. Just last week Statistics Canada reported that human trafficking incidents have increased by an alarming 73% since Trudeau first became Prime Minister. The same report highlighted that the vast majority of victims are women and girls, and one quarter are minors.

Senator Gold, crime has spiralled out of control under this government. What plan does your government have, if any, to combat the human trafficking happening within our borders?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Human trafficking of women, girls, men and others who identify themselves in different ways is one of the most repugnant and horrific abuses of human rights imaginable.

Notwithstanding that we have laws on our books criminalizing this, notwithstanding that we have police forces — whether provincial, municipal or federal — seized with and working hard to identify and prosecute such cases, they continue to plague our society with horrible results.

This government remains committed to continuing the work it does in partnership with the provinces, the territories, police forces and other agencies to combat this unacceptable crime against humanity.

Senator Ataullahjan: Senator Gold, recently one of the Greater Toronto Area mayors specifically asked this government for help to protect international students, especially girls, who are being trafficked. The indiscriminate immigration under this government has led us to this situation. What is your government doing to help those who are more susceptible to being trafficked and exploited?

Senator Gold: Senator, I do not want to assume that I heard you correctly. I do not assume you were saying that the horrible trafficking of women and girls is because of immigrants who have arrived in this country. I do not believe that is what you were saying, so I will not answer in that regard. The government continues to work hard to stop this horrible crime from happening and will continue to do so.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Hon. Paula Simons: To the Government Representative in the Senate, The president-elect of the United States included in his campaign promises a pledge to carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history. He has vowed to deploy the U.S. military and National Guard to round up and deport unauthorized migrants and to deport foreign students who take part in protests.

The last time this man held office, his policies led to tremendous pressures at the Canadian border as people attempted to claim asylum here. Can you tell me what plans the government has to ensure our borders are secure and at the same time to ensure legitimate asylum seekers are able to file claims and are not simply deported to the United States?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I am not in a position, as you would understand, to articulate Canadian plans.

I can say to the chamber — and I think the Prime Minister alluded to it recently — that for some months the government has, as any government in Canada would, been preparing different scenarios in anticipation of the outcome of the election, whatever that might be.

This government has a track record of working with both Democratic and Republican administrations and, indeed, has a track record of working with the United States and for Canadians during the first Trump presidency. I have every confidence that this government is developing appropriate plans and strategies to deal with the uncertain eventualities that will come our way to make sure that Canadian interests — whether it is our borders, our people or our economy — are well protected.

Senator Simons: If we were to reach a point where the United States could truly no longer be considered a safe third country for asylum seekers, what impact would that have on our Safe Third Country Agreement? What protection would we have for refugees seeking asylum here?

Senator Gold: It is a good question, Senator Simons. I'm not willing to speculate, and I am not able to provide any details on that except to say that this is, undoubtedly, one of a rather large set of issues that the government is, should be and will be addressing in its deliberations.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

Hon. Sharon Burey: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate, Senator Gold. I commend the government for its commitment to the National School Food Program, which aims to provide more children across Canada with access to nutritious and culturally relevant meals.

Senator Gold, given that Ontario has yet to join the \$1-billion National School Food Program despite the increase in demand for school nutrition programs and increase in food insecurity, could the government provide an update on the status of negotiations with Ontario?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and for highlighting this very important program to help countless kids every year, save a family of four as much as \$800 a year in groceries and, as importantly, of course, provide nourishment to children who otherwise might not have it.

I understand that the government is continuing its work to sign agreements with all provinces and territories to help them enhance and expand those programs.

To your question, my understanding is that the government is having constructive conversations with Ontario around moving forward with the school food program, and the government hopes to have good news to share soon.

• (1450)

The funding for this program, of course, will be delivered to provinces and territories through bilateral agreements to both expand and enhance the existing school food programs within their respective jurisdictions.

Senator Burey: Thank you, Senator Gold.

I am hearing that we are close to an agreement, for Ontario at least.

How will the government use data-driven oversight to ensure that once Ontario and other provinces join, this funding will adequately address the growing needs of communities across Canada?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. I don't have a specific answer for you. However, I can assure you that the bilateral agreements being discussed and negotiated in this area, as they are in pharmacare and other areas — or at least in the negotiations leading to the agreements; let me be perhaps more careful in my words — are attuned and attentive to the issue of proper oversight and monitoring to ensure that this extra money that is given to provinces to spend in areas of their jurisdiction is nonetheless properly spent for the purposes for which the government has granted it.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY CANADA

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, this morning, a newspaper in Montreal reported about Minister Guilbeault's financial interests in a company linked to the green slush fund. The founder of this company is a former board member of the green slush fund who admitted to approving millions of taxpayers' dollars to four companies in which she had a stake.

She recently described Minister Guilbeault's financial interests in her company as "a kind of performance bonus."

The Montreal newspaper says that the minister's office has refused to give them information about his financial interest. Senator Gold, why is that? If he has nothing to hide, why not come clean with Canadians and reveal his interest?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, I must confess, though I do read the newspapers — and you did not name the paper — I clearly did not read that one. I'm not in a position to answer that. I do not know the facts at all, but I certainly will look into it.

Senator Plett: I wish we could at least be assured that you would get us the answers once you go back to your office and find out.

This green slush fund was absolutely riddled with 186 conflicts of interest. Millions were lost through corruption and waste. It was shut down in disgrace. Yet, I don't see any evidence from the NDP-Liberals that they are trying to get back taxpayers' money. Isn't this report this morning yet another reason why your government should hand over the documents to the police, as ordered?

Senator Gold: The answer is no, Senator Plett. It is inappropriate, as I have said, and as ministers have said, for the documents to which you are referring — the issue should be before a committee where these issues can be properly dealt with. It is unfortunate that in the other place your own proposal was sabotaged by your party for political purposes.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Leader, my question is a follow-up to one I asked last week regarding the terrible mismanagement of Canada's immigration system by the NDP-Liberals.

I previously raised with you a media report which indicated that cabinet ministers attending an affordability retreat in August 2023 were briefed that their government was undercounting the number of people in Canada and underestimating the number of homes needed.

Last year, I asked you about media reports of international students who were homeless, living under a bridge or in cars.

These questions, like so many others that we pose, were just brushed aside. Leader, why didn't your government take any of these warnings seriously?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. Neither I nor this government is brushing aside the legitimate concerns that students or, indeed, Canadians are facing with regard to housing.

It has taken steps to recalibrate our immigration levels in order to take that into account, and in that regard, the minister has been forthcoming and candid. And on housing, the government has made major investments and initiated major programs to increase, accelerate and help encourage the creation of new housing.

I will not repeat what I have said before about how this program has been received by the leader of your party or by caucus members who rather like aspects of the government's program, but this is not a question of the government being indifferent. Quite on the contrary, it is being responsible.

Senator Martin: In January, the Mayor of Brampton, Ontario, revealed that city officials had found 25 international students living in a single basement apartment. He said that wasn't the first such instance they had discovered. How many similar occurrences is the NDP-Liberal government aware of over the last several years — not just in Brampton, but across Canada?

Senator Gold: The fact that students or anyone should be living in such cramped quarters is unacceptable. I will not play political football. The question could very well be asked of

the Ontario government, which allowed institutions to churn and mislead students into coming here without proper support and without properly understanding what they were getting into. The fact is that the government is seized with this issue and has taken steps to remediate it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY OF CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES BILL

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST REPORT OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER—DEBATE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the consideration of the first report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages (*Subject matter of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts*), tabled in the Senate on November 17, 2022.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I wish to say a few words about Bill C-13.

Before I do, Your Honour, I wish to make a couple of observations about some things that have or have not been happening.

As we know, Senator Downe has, on numerous occasions, been asking the government leader when he would supply some names to the different caucus leaders about the names of supposed parliamentarians who wittingly or unwittingly took part in some of the foreign interference —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Point of order, Senator Downe?

Hon. Percy E. Downe: A point of clarification: I never suggested names; I asked for the unredacted report to be available to the leaders of the four groups in the Senate.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: That was a point of correction.

Senator Plett: I would suggest that it was a point of clarification, and I accept that, Senator Downe. I apologize to you. I was not planning this. As a matter of fact, I wanted to support you. I might do it a little bit less enthusiastically now than I did it a minute ago. Nevertheless, I will still support you, Senator Downe.

I would still suggest that those documents should be shared with us, and I am wondering when that might happen. The other thing I wish to raise is that we know, of course, that Senator Lankin retired from this chamber three weeks ago. Senator Lankin was a member of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP. The Prime Minister has been bragging that he has members of all of the different caucuses as a part of NSICOP. This is his third or fourth opportunity now to appoint a Conservative. That is the one caucus that he does not want to have in there from the Senate.

I am not sure where we go. I would like to suggest that this government clearly cannot organize a two-car parade over in the other place. They have similar problems over here. I wish to give Senator Gold an opportunity to go to his office and make a phone call to the Prime Minister and ask him two questions: When can we have these documents? When will he appoint a member of the Conservative caucus in the Senate to the NSICOP committee?

With one phone call from Senator Gold, we might be able to clarify the matter.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Plett, we are on the issue of a report from the Official Languages Committee.

Maybe we are not on the right item? Could you correct us if we are wrong?

Senator Plett: Let me suggest, Your Honour, that I will ask for this to be done in both official languages.

I know exactly where we are, Your Honour, and clearly, I would appreciate it if Senator Gold obtained the documents for us in both official languages.

• (1500)

Let me just continue, Your Honour, if I could. I would like to give Senator Gold the opportunity to go to his office and make his phone call in either English or French to the Prime Minister in order to ask him to send us the documents in both official languages and ask him to appoint a bilingual Conservative senator to the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, so that we have both official languages represented there. I think that would adhere to Bill C-13; I think it would all be in line with that.

I think Senator Gold could come back tomorrow and give us a report on when all of this would happen.

Therefore, honourable senators, I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Plett, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, that the Senate do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Senators: No.

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: All those in favour of the motion will please say “yea.”

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: In my opinion the “nays” have it.

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I see two senators rising. Do we have agreement on a bell? The vote will be at 4:01 p.m.

Call in the senators.

• (1600)

Motion negated on the following division:

YEAS THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Ataullahjan	Marshall
Aucoin	Martin
Batters	Plett
Boehm	Ravalia
Boniface	Richards
Carignan	Robinson
Dean	Ross
Downe	Seidman
Housakos	Tannas
MacDonald	Wells (<i>Newfoundland and Labrador</i>)
Manning	Woo—22

NAYS THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Arnot	LaBoucane-Benson
Boudreau	Loffreda
Busson	MacAdam
Cardozo	McBean
Cordy	Mégie
Cormier	Moncion
Cuzner	Moreau
Dagenais	Muggli
Dasko	Oudar
Deacon (<i>Ontario</i>)	Pate
Duncan	Petitclerc

Forest
Francis
Gignac
Gold
Harder
Hartling
Kingston
Klyne

Petten
Saint-Germain
Senior
Sorensen
Varone
Youance
Yussuff—37

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THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

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Gerba
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(At 4:07 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on September 21, 2021, the Senate adjourned until 2 p.m., tomorrow.)

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