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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 1, 2020

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

This issue contains the latest listing of Senators,
Officers of the Senate and the Ministry.

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THE SENATE

Thursday, October 1, 2020

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

HYBRID SENATE SITTINGS—COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, for the past six months, the Senate has worked collaboratively in the best interests of Canadians to ensure that urgent legislation has moved forward to support millions in need. I truly believe that the collaboration in this chamber has helped save lives in its expeditious passage of crucial emergency bills.

Because of the federal nature of Parliament, many senators face impossible choices in terms of balancing health and safety, ensuring compliance with provincial regulations and discharging Senate duties. It is no longer viable to expect that all senators regularly criss-cross this country during the second wave of the pandemic when it becomes possible to do things differently.

Moving forward, I believe that the implementation of a hybrid approach will best serve Canadians. Much progress has already been achieved by the Senate Administration to make hybrid sittings operational as soon as possible this fall, and we are grateful for all their hard work in these very challenging times.

In this spirit, after sharing a comprehensive draft motion with Senate leaders and facilitators on Tuesday, I commit here to tabling a motion for hybrid sittings in the Senate before we rise this week. We'll be giving notice of such a motion tomorrow.

Once again, I am pleased to move forward in collaboration with all senators in order to further adapt to the circumstances of the ongoing pandemic and to responsibly plan the Senate's future operations.

I want to thank all my leadership colleagues and indeed all senators for their collaboration in moving this plan forward for the good of the institution.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

JOYCE ECHAQUAN

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: Her name was Joyce Echaquan and she had seven children. Her name was Joyce Echaquan and she was 37 years old. She was an Atikamekw woman from Manawan, Quebec.

She died Monday at a hospital in Joliette soon after being berated with a torrent of unimaginably shocking and offensive racial slurs by a nurse and possibly other caregivers.

It was Joyce Echaquan herself who live-streamed the swearing and insults on Facebook as she called for help. The video is horrifying. How could anyone treat another human being, a very sick woman, like that?

Quebecers have been reeling since Monday. They are outraged. The recording has been widely circulated and it does not lie. A vigil and other gatherings have been held in memory of Joyce Echaquan and people have started to speak up. This is not the first time that a member of the Atikamekw community has reported being mistreated at the Joliette hospital.

Quebec premier François Legault described this incident as racist and unacceptable. He announced that the nurse in question has been fired. Three investigations are under way.

However, this is far from an unfortunate, isolated incident. A year ago, the Viens commission found that prejudice toward Indigenous peoples in Quebec remains widespread in the interaction between caregivers and patients. This report was based on the testimony of members of First Nations and Inuit communities.

Did people believe them? Did people think the complaints were exaggerated, and after all, aren't Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike at times the victims of mistreatment within our health care system? Perhaps, because the Viens report certainly did not get nearly as much attention as the insults hurled at Joyce Echaquan, insults that leave no room for doubt about the caregiver's contempt for her Indigenous patient.

I don't dare repeat this rude, degrading and demeaning invective, but Joyce Echaquan's name must be repeated to give her back her identity, her dignity and her humanity.

The live-streamed dehumanization of Joyce Echaquan is, in my opinion, an illustration of systemic racism. It is time that the Government of Quebec recognized it, since it is important to name things to be able to change them.

Will the outrage sparked throughout Quebec by this live-streamed abuse subside as quickly as it spread? That would be unfortunate.

One hopes that the unanimous condemnation of such odious treatment will bring about a tipping point in collective consciousness, as the murder of George Floyd did in the United States. I also hope this means we will get serious about tackling the systemic racism that is poisoning my society, like many others. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1410)

[English]

STEPS TO STOP THE SILENCE

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable colleagues, I rise today to draw attention to the mental health crisis communities across Canada are facing. Unlike the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health crisis is not a new threat. In fact, in any given year one in five Canadians will personally experience a mental health problem or illness.

On September 5 of this year, my friend Neil Dunsmore, Ward 4 Councillor in Centre Wellington, began his Steps to Stop the Silence walk from the township office in Elora in my home community of Wellington County to Parliament Hill in support of mental health awareness. I joined Neil when he left the municipality on September 5 and started his journey.

Over 23 days Neil made the 531-kilometre journey to Parliament Hill to bring attention to the services and supports available to those living with mental illnesses, as well as to highlight the need for open and ongoing discourse regarding this critical issue. Along the way, he engaged in two suicide interventions where two lives were saved.

Last Sunday, September 27, 2020, I joined Neil again, this time in Ottawa, for the last leg of his walk, which coincided with the Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day. In Centre Wellington alone, three officers have died by suicide in the last five years. Across Canada, police and peace officers suffer from mental illnesses, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder, as a result of their emotionally and physically strenuous roles.

The Steps to Stop the Silence campaign is working to end the stigma surrounding mental illness and encouraging those in need to ask for assistance when they need it.

Neil's walk also raised over \$16,000 for the Cody Shepperd Project, an organization that supports families affected by mental health challenges and suicide in my community. Cody was a gifted athlete at Centre Wellington District High School. After struggling with depression and anxiety, Cody died by suicide at just 20 years of age on October 20, 2017. Cody's parents created the project in memory of their son to stop the silence around mental health struggles.

Today I would like to thank my friend Neil for bringing attention to this ongoing crisis. It is clear that these illnesses do not discriminate, whether you are a young athlete, like Cody; an active police officer, like Josh de Bock, of whom I've spoken before; a farmer; an agricultural producer; or a health care worker providing care to COVID patients. Mental health challenges affect people of all ages, education, income levels and cultures.

Honourable colleagues, it is time to stop the silence. As a community and as a country, and even more so as human beings, we have a responsibility to one another. For too long, too many of our family members, friends and colleagues have sat and suffered in silence. As Neil said, this walk was just the first step in a long journey to ending the stigma. I look forward to

continuing to support his important work and that of the Cody Shepperd Project, and I hope you will join me in encouraging those facing mental health challenges to seek assistance across our respective provinces and communities.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

CANADIAN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER ALLIANCE SUMMIT

Hon. Jim Munson: Colleagues, I often speak about autism in the spring for events connected to World Autism Awareness Day on April 2. But like so many other things this year, the sixth Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance Summit, or CASDA summit, was postponed until this fall and will take place online.

I'm hoping you can join us on Monday and Tuesday, October 5 and 6, by registering at www.casda.ca/leadership-summit.

Although we all miss face-to-face interactions and meeting in the same place, I'm optimistic that hosting the CASDA summit online means it will reach more people this year. Many more Canadians will have the opportunity to participate and share their experiences with autism without having to travel or even leave home. Going online also offers each of you and every Canadian the chance to attend the summit virtually to meet and learn from autism advocates firsthand.

This year's CASDA summit will host presentations and networking rooms on topics of autism that may be familiar to you, like early diagnosis and treatment interventions, or how outcomes for children with autism differ between provinces, and, of course, the absolute need for a national autism strategy in this country.

We will also have the chance to learn about the contributions and advances people with autism are making in the Canadian workforce and get insights from leaders who are creating positive changes in their communities and neighbourhoods.

This is your chance to learn directly from experts in the field, many of whom live with autism.

In a world where the majority of people are all trying to fit in, each year the CASDA summit makes me appreciate the uniqueness each of us has to offer and reminds me how valuable different viewpoints are to our daily discussions and in policy-making.

If diversity is our strength in this country, then it must start with inclusion. Inclusion comes from respect, listening, participation and action toward common goals. The CASDA summit is where inclusion starts for the autism community in Canada.

I hope you will be able to join the CASDA summit for a day, an hour, or even just 10 minutes so that you can meet Canadians living with autism and learn from them — instead of me, for a change — and to hear from them about why Canadians need a national autism strategy right now.

In this Senate, we have champions. We have Senator Boehm, we have Senator Bernard, Senator Housakos, and many of you who have inquired about autism, because in each of our communities we do know somebody who has autism.

I want to say, since I have a few minutes, that I appeal directly to Minister Qualtrough and Minister Hajdu. You have the mandate letters in front of you. You pledged to pass a national autism strategy — to get it done. Let's do it together. After all, we're all in this together. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, national awareness days provide us with an opportunity to celebrate a specific community, call attention to an important cause or share information about a subject of public interest.

Today, on National Seniors Day, I find it difficult to celebrate. Instead, I stand before you with my head bowed in sorrow and regret at the thought of the events that transpired in our long-term care homes at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's National Seniors Day is unlike any other. Over the last few months, we have heard gruesome evidence detailing the ways in which some of our seniors have suffered. A report released by the Canadian Armed Forces on May 14, 2020, painted a grim picture of the state of our long-term care system. In five long-term care homes, they observed cockroach infestations, rotten food and abuse by ill-trained staff.

According to a report released by the International Long-Term Care Policy Network, 85% of all COVID-related deaths in Canada — that's 6,236 out of a total of 7,326 deaths — were residents in long-term care settings.

These are the same seniors we are meant to celebrate on a day like today — the ones who fought for our country and helped build it. Each year, we commemorate National Seniors Day by pledging to make the lives of seniors safer and more meaningful. We make promises to improve their financial situations, invest in their health care, adapt their infrastructure and commit to their social inclusion in our society. And yet, the pandemic has shown us how simple it is to make promises but also how easy it is to forget to carry through on them.

I rise today to offer this statement, realizing that my words are woefully inadequate, yet, in the hope that as parliamentarians we will find the strength to finally act and institute policies that will change the status quo.

We cannot genuinely celebrate the lives and contributions of our seniors without first admitting to our collective national failures.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

JOYCE ECHAQUAN

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie: Honourable senators, I'd like to begin by offering my sincere condolences to Joyce's seven children, to her husband, to the Echaquan family, and the entire Atikamekw community in Manawan.

Joyce's death is a tragedy. She went to the hospital in Joliette Thursday because of stomach pain. She died Monday, tied to a stretcher, after being subjected to a torrent of insults hurled by nurses who were supposed to be caring for her.

• (1420)

You would never expect to see such behaviour in a hospital, a place of compassion and mutual respect. In Quebec, it is widely agreed that this incident was unacceptable. When are we going to root out these stubborn prejudices, which have such a powerful impact on a person's behaviour that they will betray their professional duties? It is imperative that we speak out. Each of us has a duty to speak up whenever such incidents happen. Let's stamp out systemic racism. All too often, racism starts at home and gets reinforced at school. Then it spreads through our workplaces and permeates social media.

As you know, weeding out racism is gruelling work. It takes constant attention and sustained action to keep prejudices from sprouting up again.

How many victims must there be before a government reacts and acknowledges that systemic racism exists? That is the question being asked by Paul-Émile Ottawa, the chief of the Atikamekw community of Manawan. No one should ever be treated the way Joyce was. There is no question that racism, which leads to dehumanization, contributed to Joyce's death.

The members of Doctors Without Borders, an organization you are no doubt familiar with, have also witnessed daily discrimination against patients they were caring for.

I will close by sharing the conclusion from journalist Isabelle Hachey's column in *La Presse*. She wrote:

Let's hope that the seven-minute, twelve-second video will be as loud a wake-up call for Quebecers as the eight minutes and forty-six seconds it took for African-American George Floyd to asphyxiate under a white police officer's knee in Minneapolis.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

THE LATE ENOOKIE UQIJUAQSI ADAMIE

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Honourable senators, I rise to pay tribute to Enookie Uqijuaqsi Adamie, who died September 5, 2020, in Iqaluit at the age of 109. Enookie was born on an island called Inuksulik, which lies in what is now the shipping channel in Frobisher Bay, at a time before formal records were kept.

His age was calculated working with the Anglican Church and based on oral history of an event in 1921 where a younger 6-year-old cousin walked from Amajuaq Lake to Iqaluit when Enookie was 10.

Enookie was widely respected as a hunter who had a consummate knowledge of the land and ways of animals in the South Baffin. Priceless traditional knowledge.

He was a contributor of traditional place names for mapping locations all around Frobisher Bay and South Baffin all the way to Clyde River. These maps have been critical in search and rescue for Inuit hunters, since many place names have not been labelled in official maps.

I was associated with an amazing on the land program for young Inuit offenders, which was run out of Enookie's outpost camp at Mingutuq in the 1980s. Many of the young men who participated in that program were second or third generation victims of inter-generational trauma from their parents having been away at residential school. The camp was a phenomenal success. It made a dramatic difference to their lives, restoring their self-esteem and connections to their heritage. The young men learned by accompanying Enookie and his brothers.

He taught the young men amazing skills, such as how to hunt a walrus with just a harpoon — an amazing feat that requires throwing the harpoon in just the right place so that a walrus plunging into the water from an ice floe will impale itself on the hunter's harpoon.

Their outpost camp was self-sufficient without much in the way of government support. They mined valuable carving stone and harvested Arctic char for eager markets in Iqaluit. They took polar bear hunters from all over the world on hunts supported by dog teams, a significant source of revenue.

They existed without the usual amenities and supports of town life. But Enookie worked with the government to establish a correspondence learning program for the kids at the camp. One of those young kids, the late Leetia Nowdluk, became a valuable long-time employee in my Senate office here in Ottawa. Another is a senior staffer in executive offices of the Government of Nunavut.

Those years down at the camp were what kept Enookie going. In 1987, he had a cancerous brain tumour the size of his fist removed from the back of his head. The doctor gave a prognosis that he would never be able to hunt again. One year after the anniversary of his surgery, the neurosurgeon came to Iqaluit to do a follow-up visit. Enookie gave him a wolf pelt he had harvested in thanks for giving him another life.

Thank you, honourable senators, for joining me in recognizing the life of this beloved Nunavut elder.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COVID-19 RESPONSE MEASURES BILL

CHARTER STATEMENT IN RELATION TO BILL C-4—
DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Charter Statement prepared by the Minister of Justice in relation to Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19.

THE SENATE

RESPONSES TO TWENTY-FIVE ORAL QUESTIONS ASKED
IN THE SENATE DURING THE FIRST SESSION OF
THE FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT TABLED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, responses to 25 oral questions asked in the Senate during the First Session of the Forty-third Parliament.

[English]

COVID-19 RESPONSE MEASURES BILL

MOTION TO PLACE BILL ON ORDERS OF THE DAY FOR SECOND
READING LATER THIS DAY ADOPTED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-12, I move:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate of September 30, 2020, concerning the date for consideration at second reading of Bill C-4, the bill be instead taken into consideration at second reading later this day.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*Translation*]

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, October 27, 2020, at 2 p.m.

[*English*]

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION PERTAINING TO MINIMUMS FOR GOVERNMENT BILLS

Hon. Scott Tannas: 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:

1. except as provided in this order, the question not be put on the motion for third reading of a government bill unless the orders for resuming debate at second and third reading have, together, been called at least three times, in addition to the sittings at which the motions for second and third readings were moved;
2. when a government bill has been read a first time, and before a motion is moved to set the date for second reading, the Leader of the Government in the Senate or the Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate may, without notice, move that the bill be deemed an urgent matter, and that the provisions of paragraph 1 of this order not apply to proceedings on the bill;
3. when a motion has been moved pursuant to paragraph 2 of this order, the following provisions apply:
 - (a) the debate shall only deal with whether the bill should be deemed an urgent matter or not;
 - (b) the debate shall not be adjourned;
 - (c) the debate shall last a maximum of 20 minutes;

(d) no senator shall speak for more than 5 minutes;

(e) no senators shall speak more than once;

(f) the debate shall not be interrupted for any purpose, except for the reading of a message from the Crown or an event announced in such a message;

(g) the debate may continue beyond the ordinary time of adjournment, if necessary, until the conclusion of the debate and consequential business;

(h) the time taken in debate and for any vote shall not count as part of Routine Proceedings;

(i) no amendment or other motion shall be received, except a motion that a certain senator be now heard or do now speak;

(j) when debate concludes or the time for debate expires, the Speaker shall put the question; and

(k) any standing vote requested shall not be deferred, and the bells shall ring for only 15 minutes.

• (1430)

HUMAN RIGHTS

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY FORCED AND COERCED STERILIZATION OF PERSONS

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 5-3, on behalf of the Honourable Senator Frum, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, she will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on the forced and coerced sterilization of persons in Canada, particularly related to Indigenous women, when and if the committee is formed; and

That the committee submit its final report on this study to the Senate no later than December 30, 2021.

THE SENATE

MOTION TO AMEND THE *RULES OF THE SENATE* ADOPTED

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-6(1)(a), I move:

That the *Rules of the Senate* be amended:

1. by:

- (a) deleting the word “and” at the end of rule 12-3(2)(e) in the English version; and
- (b) replacing the period at the end of rule 12-3(2)(f) by the following:

“; and

(g) the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, three Senators and two external members.”;

2. by adding the words “, the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight,” after the words “Conflict of Interest for Senators” to rule 12-3(3);

3. by adding the following new rule 12-3(4):

Restriction on membership

12-3. (4) No Senator shall be a member of both the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight.”;

4. by replacing the portion of rule 12-5 before paragraph (a) by the following:

“**12-5.** Changes in the membership of a committee, except for the ex officio members and members of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators and the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, may be made by notice filed with the Clerk, who shall have the notice recorded in the *Journals of the Senate*. The notice shall be signed by:”;

5. by replacing rule 12-6 with the following:

“Quorum of standing committees

12-6. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2) and elsewhere in these Rules, the quorum of a standing committee shall be four of its members.

EXCEPTION

Rule 12-27(2): Quorum of committee

Audit and Oversight

12-6. (2) The quorum of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight shall be two Senators and one external member, except in the case of the organization meeting, for which the quorum shall be three Senators.”;

6. by:

(a) deleting the word “and” at the end of rule 12-7(15) in the English version; and

(b) replacing the period at the end of rule 12-7(16) by the following:

“; and

Audit and Oversight

12-7. (17) the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, which, for the purposes of integrity, independence, transparency and accountability, shall be authorized, on its own initiative, to:

(a) retain the services of and oversee the external auditors and internal auditors;

(b) supervise the Senate’s internal and external audits;

(c) report to the Senate regarding the internal and external audits, including audit reports and other matters;

(d) review the Senate Administration’s action plans to ensure:

(i) that they adequately address the recommendations and findings arising from internal and external audits, and

(ii) that they are effectively implemented;

(e) review the Senate’s Quarterly Financial Reports and the audited Financial Statements, and report them to the Senate; and

(f) report at least annually with observations and recommendations to the Senate.”;

7. by adding the following new rule 12-9(3):

“Audit and Oversight — access to information

12-9. (3) The Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight may review the in camera proceedings of other Senate committees, including any transcripts of meetings, as they relate to the mandate of the Audit and Oversight Committee.”;

8. by replacing rule 12-13 with the following:

“Organization meeting

12-13. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), once the Senate has agreed to the membership of a committee, the Clerk of the Senate shall, as soon as practicable, call an organization meeting of the committee at which it shall elect a chair.

Audit and Oversight — organization meeting

12-13. (2) In the case of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, the Clerk of the Senate shall, as soon as practicable after the Senate has agreed to the Senators to serve on the committee, call an organization meeting of the committee at which it shall elect a chair, without the external members having been nominated.

Chair of Audit and Oversight

12-13. (3) The chair of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight shall be a Senator who is not a member of the recognized party or recognized parliamentary group to which the chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration belongs.

Audit and Oversight — nomination of external members

12-13. (4) After electing its chair and deputy chair, the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight shall adopt a report to the Senate nominating two external members for the committee. A former Senator or former member of the House of Commons is not eligible for nomination as an external member. This report must be agreed to by all three Senators who are members of the committee. The report shall include recommendations on remuneration and permissible expenses for the external members, which shall be paid from Senate funds once the report is adopted by the Senate. A similar process shall be followed if a vacancy arises in the position of external member over the course of the session.”;

9. by replacing rule 12-14 with the following:

“Participation of non-members

12-14. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2) and elsewhere in these Rules, a Senator who is not a member of a committee may attend and participate in its deliberations, but shall not vote.

EXCEPTIONS

Rule 12-28(2): Participation of non-members

Rule 15-7(2): Restrictions if declaration of interest

Rule 16-3(6): Speaking at conferences

Audit and Oversight

12-14. (2) Senators who are not members of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight shall not attend or participate in its meetings, unless they are appearing as witnesses.”;

10. by replacing the portion of rule 12-16(1) before paragraph (a) by the following:

“**12-16.** (1) Except as provided in subsections (2) and (3) and elsewhere in these Rules, a committee may meet in camera only for the purpose of discussing.”;

11. by renumbering current rule 12-16(2) as 12-16(3), and by adding the following new rule 12-16(2):

“Audit and Oversight — in camera

12-16. (2) The Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight shall meet in camera whenever it deals with the in camera proceedings of another committee.”;

12. by replacing the portion of rule 12-18(2) before paragraph (a) by the following:

“**12-18.** (2) Except as provided in subsection (3) and elsewhere in these Rules, a Senate committee may meet when the Senate is adjourned.”;

13. by adding the following new rule 12-18(3):

“Audit and Oversight

12-18. (3) The Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight may meet during any adjournment of the Senate.”;

14. by renumbering current rule 12-20(2) to (4) as 12-20(3) to (5), and by adding the following new rule 12-20(2):

“Vote in Audit and Oversight Committee

12-20. (2) The external members of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight may participate in all proceedings of the committee, but shall not vote on any motion put to the committee.”;

15. by replacing rule 12-22(1) by the following:

“Majority conclusions

12-22. (1) Except as provided in subsection (7), a report of a Senate committee shall contain the conclusions agreed to by majority.”;

16. by replacing rule 12-22(2) by the following:

“Presentation or tabling

12-22. (2) Except as provided in subsection (8) and elsewhere in these Rules, a committee report shall be presented or tabled in the Senate by the chair or by a Senator designated by the chair.

EXCEPTION

Rule 12-31: Report deposited with the Clerk”;

17. by adding the following new rules 12-22(7) and (8):

“Reports of Audit and Oversight Committee — content

12-22. (7) Any member of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, including an external member, shall have the right to include individual observations and dissenting opinions in any report of the committee if the member so wishes.

Audit and Oversight — report deposited with the Clerk

12-22. (8) A report of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight may be deposited with the Clerk at any time the Senate stands adjourned, and the report shall be deemed to have been presented or tabled in the Senate.”;

18. by replacing the opening paragraph of the definition of “Committee” in Appendix I, starting with the words “A body of Senators, Members of the House of Commons or both,” by the following:

“A body of Senators, Members of the House of Commons, members of both houses, or others, appointed by one or both of the two houses to consider such matters as may be referred to it or that it may be empowered to examine, including bills. A Senate committee is, except in the case of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, one composed solely of Senators (as opposed to a joint committee — see below). (*Comité*)”; and

19. by updating all cross references in the Rules, including the lists of exceptions, accordingly.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

• (1440)

Senator Wells: Honourable senators, thank you for giving leave to this motion. It would have been regrettable if you hadn’t. I would like to make a few comments to accompany this important moment in the Senate of Canada.

In June 2015 the Auditor General made a number of recommendations in his report on Senate expenses. I note this because many of my honourable colleagues were not here at the time and therefore don’t have the benefit of that experience.

Colleagues, while the AG was tasked by order to look at all expenditures of the Senate, he chose to look at a mere 12% of expenditures, which represented senators’ offices and travel expenses. The creation of this audit and oversight committee corrects this.

In 2015 the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates was tasked with addressing this and the result is this product we have here today. I chaired that subcommittee of CIBA, but the credit for that work belongs to those members who contributed at the time. I thank Senator Jaffer, who was my co-chair, and Senators Campbell, Cordy, Saint-Germain, Tannas and our former colleague Senator Tkachuk for their wisdom and foresight. Of course I must also recognize the efforts of the leadership of all Senate caucuses and groups, as well as Senator Dean, who helped bring us here today.

[Senator Wells]

The essence of this committee is to ensure that all Senate expenditures have oversight, not simply senators’ office and travel expenditures. Considerable work has been done in the last 10 years, including updating and modernizing procedures, rules and practices that are designed to make clear the responsibilities of those who expend public money and provide transparency in that transaction.

We will break new ground in having non-senators sitting as members. To respect the division of the rights of senators and lay members, there will be a clear separation between the two, but be assured that all voices will be heard.

This is a modern institution and one of the founding institutions of our country. Canadians have valid expectations and we must meet those expectations. It has been a long road to get to this point and the Canadian Senate will be a world leader with this structure in place. I’m pleased to be a small part of this effort and look forward to continuing to make this institution all it aims to be.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

The Hon. the Speaker: Are honourable senators ready for the question?

Hon. Senators: Yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

SENATE’S SELF-GOVERNANCE

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to parliamentary privilege, the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators* and options for increasing accountability, transparency and fairness in the context of the Senate’s unique self-governance.

[Translation]

MOMS STOP THE HARM

OPIOID CRISIS A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY— PETITION TABLED

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table a petition from Moms Stop the Harm calling on the government to declare the opioid crisis a public health emergency.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

SUPPORT FOR SECTOR

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): My question is again for the government leader in the Senate. The old saying goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. In 2015, the Liberal government's Speech from the Throne contained no mention of Canada's agricultural sector.

Last week's Speech from the Throne once again contained almost nothing to address the serious concerns facing our farmers; nothing about the trade wars impacting the ability of our farmers to get their product to market; nothing about badly needed changes to the business risk management programs; no priority given to agricultural research; no carbon exemption for our farmers; no acknowledgement of the critical role the sector plays in our society.

Senator Gold, farmers cannot shut down their operations and walk away from their responsibility for six weeks, like the Liberal government just did with Parliament. Where is the support for our grain growers, our chicken farmers, our pork and beef producers and many more?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator, for the question. The Canadian government is not only aware, but knows how important the agricultural sector is, and the agri-food industry as a key driver in Canada for jobs, economic prosperity and growth. The Canadian government has been providing support in an ongoing way to this sector and especially so during the difficult circumstances through which the sector is going, including though not limited to the pandemic crisis.

Indeed, this government has been involved in supporting Canadian farmers, producers and exporters in a number of ways and let me list just but a few. The Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the \$3-billion federal-provincial-territorial agreement for strengthening the agriculture and agri-food sector,

and funding for the suite of business mixed management programs of which I've made mention in earlier Question Periods, in the previous session of the Parliament.

I would add as well the \$1.26-billion Strategic Innovation Fund, \$70 million invested in the area of agricultural science and \$2 billion in rural infrastructure, which is an important part of supporting this important sector in our economy.

FINANCE

SUPPORT FOR ENERGY SECTOR

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, Canada's energy sector was also ignored in the Throne Speech, despite the fact that over 23,000 energy workers lost their jobs in the second quarter of 2020.

• (1450)

In March, the former finance minister was here in this chamber and promised to help the sector, and it would be coming in days. Now, months later, Senator Gold, the government brought forward a useless financing program for all large employers and next to nothing specifically for our energy sector.

Leader, how do you justify a throne speech that contained no concern and no help for Western Canadian oil and gas workers, real people with real jobs in our energy sector right now?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you again for the question, for pointing out the importance of this sector for the Canadian economy and also for the lives of individuals, families and communities in many of our provinces and territories.

I think senators will recognize the challenge that the sector has faced from forces that are far beyond any government's control, such as falling demand and falling oil prices. That said, as I've stated on many occasions in the course of Question Periods in the previous session, there have been a number of actions taken by this government to provide support, and I'll focus on the oil and gas businesses both large and small across the country.

I could perhaps begin with the creation of many jobs through the remediation of inactive and abandoned wells. That's a program that has seen tens of thousands of applications in Alberta and Saskatchewan. I would add as well the 75% wage subsidy that has kept thousands working in many sectors, including the energy sector.

And the government will continue to rely upon, with gratitude, the hard-working men and women in our oil and gas sector as Canada moves forward into recovery from the pandemic and we work towards reaching our goals for the future.

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION PRESIDENCY

GENDER PARITY

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My question to you, leader, is following up on yesterday's exchange of questions and answers you had with our colleague Senator Ataullahjan. I'm a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. As well, I have served on the executive. So I have, over my time of involvement, observed the kind of leadership role that senators do take on these associations. I know Senator Dawson has been part of the executive and certainly Senator Ataullahjan has taken that lead.

Knowing the incredible commitment that she has to the IPU, yesterday, as our main point of contact between this chamber and the PMO, you had promised to make inquiries with the government on this issue, and it's a very timely one. So I was just wondering if you had had a chance to have any feedback that you would you be able to share with us at this time.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The short answer is no. As at least some of you in the chamber — certainly the leadership — know, yesterday was a day that was rather full of other issues. I have not had a chance to make inquiries, but as promised, I undertake to do so.

Senator Martin: Yes, Senator Gold. I know the 24 hours you have had, and it is certainly a pressure-sensitive time.

I want to quote again what you said: "This government is committed to promoting diversity and gender parity." Supporting Senator Ataullahjan's presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Union would put those very nice words into positive action and show what it truly means for your government when you say that the government is committed to the promotion of diversity and gender parity.

So leader, I know you would agree that our colleague Senator Ataullahjan's presence at the helm of the Inter-Parliamentary Union would be beneficial for Canada on the international stage. When you speak to the Prime Minister, would you also convey these sentiments of support that we have in the chamber that if a senator were to take the helm what an honour it would be, and the work that senators have done over many decades on these associations?

Senator Gold: It will be with great pleasure. Thank you.

FINANCE

INVESTMENT IN OIL AND GAS COMPANIES

Hon. Rosa Galvez: My question is to the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, a disturbing report published last month by Cynthia A. Williams, the Osler Chair in Business Law, and an exposé in *The Globe and Mail* this week create deep concerns about the Canada Pension Plan's investment in high-risk, high-carbon oil and gas companies. The investment includes ownership of a struggling Devon-based fracking

company that drills wells next to schools and houses and made inappropriate political donations to oil and gas lobby groups to influence state elections in Colorado.

In another case, the CPPIB spent almost \$1.3 billion to buy natural gas interests off the coast of Ireland only to see the Irish government ban new oil and gas licences for exploring and production just shortly after. The report raises serious questions about whether the board overseeing CPP Investments' approach on climate change is consistent with its fiduciary obligations.

The expert panel of sustainable finance mandated by the federal government issued its report in June 2019 in which they recommended that the government: "Clarify the scope of fiduciary duty in the context of climate change."

More than a year has passed and the government has still not acted on this recommendation. Senator Gold, is it acceptable to the government that our national pension fund keeps undermining our international commitments, but most importantly, is putting our retirement security at risk?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator, for the question and for bringing this matter to my attention as the Government Representative in the Senate. I will make some inquiries and report.

Senator Galvez: Senator Gold, when will the government provide the needed clarity for Canadians where they are legally obliged to address climate risk in order to truly act in our best interests?

Senator Gold: Again, senator, thank you for the question. It's an important one and not an uncomplicated one, and again I do not have the answer to provide today. I certainly will make inquiries.

TRAGEDY IN NOVA SCOTIA

PUBLIC INQUIRY

Hon. Stan Kutcher: My question is on behalf of Senators Mary Coyle, Colin Deacon and myself to the government leader in the Senate. On April 18 and 19 of this year, a rampaging gunman murdered 22 people in our home province of Nova Scotia. Arising from that event there has been a plethora of questions on how this could have happened and the way the situation was managed, or not, by responsible authorities. Sadly, these questions go unanswered to this day.

On July 23, the federal and provincial governments announced a joint review of this tragedy. An outpouring of opposition from Nova Scotians and beyond marked this inadequate response. This included the families and friends of the deceased, civil society and parliamentarians. Thirty-seven senators from coast to coast to coast called on the governments to do the right thing and move speedily with a public inquiry.

To their credit, the government listened and changed course. An inquiry was announced on July 28.

It has now been over 130 days since the massacre and over two months since the public inquiry was announced, and nothing has happened.

Senator Gold, my colleagues and I are asking you, on behalf of the people of our province: Will you please tell the people of Nova Scotia and the members of this chamber when the parameters of the public inquiry will be made public and when it will begin, and can you please tell us why it has taken so long to do the right thing and answer the legitimate concerns of the people of Nova Scotia?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, thank you for raising this issue and thank you for the work that you and other senators have done over many months now to encourage the government to launch a full inquiry into this tragedy. The government knows that Canadians, families and members in your province deserve answers to how such a tragedy could occur. Through the full public inquiry, which will include the authority to compel evidence to order the production of documents, the fact of this event and this tragedy will be fully examined and all facts and evidence will be made public.

I've been advised that the government is finalizing the terms of reference and the appointment of the third commissioner, and this will be announced in the near future. As well, Public Safety Minister Blair continues to work with his counterpart in Nova Scotia and this government is committed to learning the lessons of this tragedy and to work to prevent them from happening again.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Scott Tannas: Leader, thank you for your help with respect to the hybrid sessions. We look forward to seeing the motion in due course.

• (1500)

I want to ask a question with respect to the motion that Senator Gagné put forward regarding adjournment until October 27. What level of assurance can you give us that we would not be called back for something before then? We've heard media stories that there may be something imminent — not that any of us are going to book a vacation over the next while. What is your best read on October 27 as a date that we will be able to stick to?

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

As leaders, we engage in regular meetings, the details of which remain in confidence. I've shared with leaders my best understanding of what the legislative agenda of this government will be in the weeks to come and whether we expect to receive legislation that would require immediate action, as has often been required over this period of the pandemic.

To the best of my understanding, I'm advised there will not be emergency-type legislation that will require us to return within the period to which you refer. That's the best I can do at this juncture.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

VOLUNTEER PRESIDING OFFICIALS

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, this question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate and is with regard to volunteer presiding officers of Canadian citizenship ceremonies.

New Canadians, as we all know, make significant contributions to the fabric of Canadian society, the economy, health and culture — such as those of Yisa Akinbolaji. Citizenship ceremonies are memorable and moving.

The honour to be invited to serve Canada as a citizenship ceremony presiding officer is, I understand, accorded only to members of the Order of Canada or recipients of the honour of the Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, presented personally by Her Majesty the Queen.

Leader, why, unlike other federal boards, do these volunteers not receive honoraria or per diems? Their commitment is like those of other federal boards. One Manitoba presiding officer alone has, since 2012, presided over 500 ceremonies and sworn in approximately 35,000 citizens. This year, to the end of August, this individual held 70 ceremonies: 5 in-person pre-COVID and 65 virtual ceremonies. The time, talent and commitment for each of these are significant.

I must say that, although presiding officers do not receive an honorarium, I'm pleased First Nations elders are paid for performing an opening prayer. Why are presiding officials of Canadian citizenship ceremonies not considered in the same light as members of federal boards? When will the government address this discrepancy and provide honoraria for presiding citizenship officers?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator, and thank you for the advance notice of this question.

The government understands and knows that volunteer presiding officials play an important role in citizenship ceremonies by taking on the ceremonial responsibilities of a citizenship judge. This includes providing opening remarks, administering the oath of citizenship and handing out citizenship certificates. Of course, it does not include any administrative or judicial responsibilities, as such.

I've been advised, as well, that the volunteer presiding officials are supported by staff from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and are provided comprehensive training as well as pre-written scripts they may adapt according to their own preferences.

While there is no payment for presiding at a citizenship ceremony, the department does reimburse volunteer presiding officials for certain preapproved travel expenses directly associated with the ceremony, if applicable.

[English]

[Translation]

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LAND

LAND DECONTAMINATION ORDER

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

Leader, on June 17, 2020, I asked you a question about the dry-waste management site operating in Kanessatake, in the Oka region, which has had violations.

In June, I informed you that the municipalities of Oka, Saint-Placide and Mirabel had asked the federal government in March 2020 to ensure the restoration of federal land currently occupied by G&R Recyclage, which is illegally operating a waste management centre there.

Quebec's ministry of environment and the fight against climate change recently revoked the company's authorization to operate on the site. On July 9, my assistant communicated with your office to follow up on this file. He received the following answer from your office, and I quote: "Thank you for your calls and your email. We are still looking into the issue."

Leader, since I asked this question on June 17, what steps have you taken to inquire about the issue in order to answer my questions?

In addition, this environmental disaster on federal land has been going on since March. Residents in the area are rightly concerned, so what does the government plan to do?

Third, because the company currently operating on the site says, "I am not on Quebec land, I am on Mohawk land, and I assert my right to occupy this land," can we get a copy of the lease between the band council and the company operating on the site, because the land belongs to the federal government?

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

Unfortunately, my answer will disappoint you. I'm sorry, but I haven't received any more information. However, I'll follow up and get answers to your questions, and I'll get back to you as soon as possible.

[Senator Gold]

HEALTH

TESTING FOR COVID-19

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. On Wednesday in the other place, the Prime Minister stated that Canada would be receiving the recently purchased COVID-19 point-of-care rapid test "in the coming weeks."

In addition to the 7.9 million tests, the government's agreement with Abbott Laboratories also includes the purchase of 3,800 devices that perform the tests.

Leader, I wonder if you could tell us how these tests and the devices will be distributed across Canada. Will they be provided to provinces and territories on a per capita basis, or will there be priority for regions experiencing a higher growth in the number of cases in recent days? As well, will there be specific allotments of tests and devices set aside for First Nations communities?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank you for your question. It's an important one, because how quickly and where the tests are made available makes all the difference *sur le terrain* and to the well-being of Canadians.

I don't have the answers to your questions. I'll make every endeavour to get those answers to you as quickly as possible.

Senator Seidman: On the subject of tests, Abbott Laboratories told the media on Wednesday that they are currently "producing more than two million a month to meet current global demand."

Senator Gold, does your government know if Canada is Abbott Laboratories' only customer for ID NOW rapid tests? I suspect that is not the case. How long will it take the Government of Canada to receive its entire purchase of 7.9 million tests? Is there a minimum number of tests per week that Canada will expect to receive from Abbott Laboratories?

Senator Gold: Again, I don't know the answer; we'll endeavour to find it. As all senators will appreciate, Senator Seidman first and foremost among them, we are in a global competition for all kinds of medical equipment, whether that be drugs, testing and the like. I think this government has been active in the international market in this area, as it has in vaccines and others, but we are one of many seeking the same kinds of testing for our citizens.

I'll endeavour to get the answers as quickly as possible.

• (1510)

JUSTICE

SYSTEMIC RACISM

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, this question comes from many Canadians this week. I thank Senator Boyer for requesting I pose it to the Government Representative in the Senate in her absence.

Systemic racism continues to plague Canada's health care system, costing the lives of too many Indigenous peoples. Brian Sinclair, Ina Matawapit, Tyson McKay and others died because their symptoms were not taken seriously or were mismanaged by health care professionals.

There is ample evidence to suggest that Canada's health care system fails to adequately serve Indigenous populations because of systemic and individual acts of racism.

As Senators Miville-Dechéne and Mégie shared with us earlier today, Joyce Echaquan was a 37-year-old Atikamekw woman and a mother of seven. She suffered from heart problems for which she sought the help of the Joliette hospital. As she lay dying, desperately calling for help, she started recording a video which was live streamed on Facebook. The video recorded racial and misogynist taunts and slurs made by hospital staff. One of the nurses opined that Joyce would be better off dead.

This case explicitly demonstrates that racism exists in the Canadian health care system that means too many Indigenous peoples are treated as if they do not belong or as if they are a problem and undeserving of medical treatment.

While a full investigation of Joyce's death is under way, there is no doubt that racism in the health care system continues to harm and kill Indigenous peoples throughout this country.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission called for the federal government to acknowledge the current state of Indigenous health in Canada and establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government committed to working toward implementing these Calls to Action. The government has also pledged to address systemic racism.

So our question for the Government Representative is: What concrete actions, such as national guidelines and standards linked to health transfer dollars, has the federal government taken to address the crisis of systemic anti-Indigenous racism in Canada's health care system?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. There's no one question and no one answer that could even begin to address the challenges and the tragedies and the deficiencies in our treatment of Indigenous peoples and in the health care system.

Allow me to at least begin on behalf of the government to express my condolences to the family of Joyce Echaquan and the people of Manawan during this terrible time.

Systemic racism in our health care system is a national problem and a national tragedy. The government acknowledges the reality that our institutions continue to fail Indigenous peoples in this regard.

The Government of Canada supports the decision of the Government of Quebec to act swiftly on this inquest. There has to be a timely and transparent investigation to provide answers on this traumatic event.

Beyond that — and you asked questions more broadly, and I've mentioned in the chamber before and I won't shuffle through my papers to read numbers at you — the government has invested and continues to invest large sums of money in partnership with Indigenous communities to try to close the gap between the services available to Indigenous communities and those available to those who are more fortunate to have access to better.

If I can step out of my role for one second, I know the community of Manawan. I've worked with the students in the local school there on issues of systemic racism they were experiencing with their counterparts in the Joliette school. I've seen how they have risen in dignity and in pride through work that we've done in another life, in an organization I was privileged to chair called l'ENSEMBLE pour le respect de la diversité.

So our Indigenous communities are resilient. They're strong. They need and deserve our help. This government is committed to doing what it can to help.

Senator Pate: Thank you very much, Government Representative. Joliette, as you know, is also the location of a federal penitentiary for women where those with mental health issues have been illegally and forcibly injected, as was confirmed during the inquest into the death of Ashley Smith. Additionally, last month, Indigenous women's representation rose to a whopping 44% in federal penitentiaries.

What concrete actions are the federal government taking to also address anti-Indigenous racism in our federal penitentiary system?

Senator Gold: I also know that penitentiary in Joliette from another chapter in my life —

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh.

Senator Gold: — as a member of the Parole Board of Canada, having been appointed by the previous government, to show my eucumenical aspirations, if not reputation.

Once again, this government recognizes and acknowledges that systemic racism has infected our legal institutions and our penal institutions and has taken a number of concrete steps, Senator Pate, as you know, and you've been instrumental in keeping these on the top of the agenda, and hats off to you.

This includes changing our laws so that our sentencing provisions better reflect the reality of Indigenous life and the challenges they face that bring them far too often into the system and result in them being incarcerated under circumstances where other Canadians might escape that. The overrepresentation cries out for action and the government is committed to continue to work on this. It is a serious and fundamentally important problem.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator McPhedran, you have 45 seconds for a question and answer.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

SPONSORSHIP APPLICATIONS

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: This question is to the Government Representative in the Senate and it is on behalf of Senator Mobina Jaffer.

As we are all aware, COVID has had an immense impact on every Canadian as well as all people who inhabit our world. Thankfully, one system of support many of us have been able to rely upon are spouses, partners and family, but they're experiencing similar pain and difficulties.

Unfortunately, there are some Canadians who do not have access to these critical supports, as they are forced to be apart from their loved ones. This is because they are waiting for our Canadian government to process their sponsorship applications so they can once again be reunited.

Senator Gold, what is currently being done to recognize the needs of these Canadians and to ensure the immediate processing of their sponsorship applications?

The Hon. the Speaker: I'm sorry, Senator Gold, but the time for Question Period has expired. May I suggest that you respond by way of delayed answer.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED DURING FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT— DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the second report of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, entitled *Consideration of an inquiry report of the Senate Ethics Officer*, presented in the Senate on June 18, 2020, during the First Session of the Forty-third Parliament.

Hon. Scott Tannas moved the adoption of the report.

He said: I have just some brief comments.

[Senator Gold]

Honourable senators, this report was presented to the Senate during the first session of the Forty-third Parliament on June 22. At that time, my colleague Senator Patterson explained in his speech the findings of the committee and the recommendation that was included in the report. I don't feel the need to repeat them again now.

This report could not be debated in depth because of prorogation of Parliament, so I move that it be adopted in order to begin the due process. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 12-30(2), a decision cannot be taken on this report, as yet. Debate on the report, unless some other senator wishes to adjourn the matter, will be deemed adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate.

Is that agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Pursuant to rule 12-30(2), further debate on the motion was adjourned until the next sitting.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-13(3), I would like to inform the Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate will address the items in the following order: Motion No. 4, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

THE SENATE

MOTION TO RESOLVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO CONSIDER SUBJECT MATTER OF BILL C-4 ADOPTED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of September 30, 2020, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provisions of the Rules or usual practice:

1. the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole at the start of Orders of the Day on Thursday, October 1, 2020, or immediately after the adoption of this motion, whichever comes later, to consider the subject matter of Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19;
2. the Committee of the Whole on the subject matter of Bill C-4, receive the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P., Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P., Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, each accompanied by one official;

3. the Committee of the Whole on the subject matter of Bill C-4 rise no later than 125 minutes after it begins;
4. the witnesses' introductory remarks last a maximum total of five minutes; and
5. if a senator does not use the entire period of 10 minutes for debate provided under rule 12-32(3)(d), including the responses of the witnesses, that senator may yield the balance of time to another senator.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1520)

COVID-19 RESPONSE MEASURES BILL

CONSIDERATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On the Order:

The Senate in Committee of the Whole in order to receive the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P., Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P., Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, accompanied by their officials, respecting the subject matter of Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended and put into Committee of the Whole, the Honourable Pierrette Ringuette in the chair.)

The Chair: Honourable senators, the Senate is resolved into a Committee of the Whole on the subject matter of Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19.

Honourable senators, in a Committee of the Whole senators shall address the chair but need not stand. Under the Rules the speaking time is 10 minutes, including questions and answers, but, as ordered, if a senator does not use all of his or her time, the balance can be yielded to another senator. The committee will receive the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, and I would now invite them to enter, accompanied by their officials.

(Pursuant to the Order of the Senate, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, the Honourable Carla Qualtrough and their officials were escorted to seats in the Senate chamber.)

The Chair: Ministers, welcome to the Senate. I would ask you to introduce your officials and to make your opening remarks.

[Translation]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P., Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion: Honourable senators, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19. Before I begin, I want to acknowledge that we are gathered here on unceded Algonquin land.

[English]

I'm joined today, of course, by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Chrystia Freeland. We are joined by officials, Heather Sheehy, Associate Deputy Minister, Employment and Social Development Canada; and Nick Leswick, Associate Deputy Minister, Economic and Fiscal Policy Branch, Finance Canada.

It's a pleasure to be here with you all. I also want to thank Senator Dean for sponsoring this bill.

Honourable senators, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic our priority has been to support workers and their families. We created a Canada Emergency Response Benefit and a Canada Emergency Student Benefit to help workers in Canada through difficult times. We also created thousands of jobs and training opportunities for young people, and ensured that the non-profit sector received support so that organizations could continue to help their communities.

To provide certainty and continuity, we've extended the CERB by an additional four weeks, from 24 to 28 weeks. While many Canadians have returned to the labour market, we know we need to continue to be vigilant and nimble in our efforts to support people as we continue to work together to stop the spread of this virus.

There's no denying that the pandemic has highlighted the tremendous need for a modernized Employment Insurance program in Canada.

[Translation]

However, employment insurance, despite the imminent need for reform, is in fact the best tool at our disposal and exceeds any new system that might be hastily thrown together during a pandemic. That is why, in August, our government announced temporary changes to the EI system that will allow more Canadians to have access to it when the CERB ends. These changes that have already been made through regulation will help millions of Canadians meet the eligibility criteria in three ways.

[English]

For Canadians who still can't qualify for EI, we are proposing to introduce a suite of three new benefits, via the legislation we have before us today. The Canada recovery benefit will support workers who have stopped working or had their income reduced by at least 50% due to COVID-19, and are not eligible for EI. It will provide eligible Canadians with \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks, between September 27, 2020, and September 25, 2021. Workers must be actively looking for work, and just like the EI

system, the new benefit will allow people to earn income from employment and self-employment while still receiving the benefit.

The second benefit is the Canada recovery sickness benefit. It will provide \$500 per week for up to two weeks if workers are ill, are susceptible to becoming ill or must self-isolate for reasons related to COVID-19.

Finally, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit will provide \$500 per week per household, for up to 26 weeks, for a worker who cannot work for more than 50% of the time because they have to care for a loved one due to school, daycare or day program closure.

[Translation]

The benefit would also be offered to workers who have to stay home because the person they have to take care of is sick or considered high risk by a health professional, or because their usual caregiver is not available because of COVID-19.

[English]

In order to ensure that federally regulated employees have access to job protective leave, the proposed amendments in part 2 of this legislation to the Canada Labour Code ensure access for these employees to the Canada recovery sickness and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit. This legislation also extends the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act. This act has made it possible for the federal government to help millions of Canadians and businesses get through this crisis through various emergency support programs like the CERB. A failure to extend the legislation could disrupt these payments with very harmful consequences for people's lives, families and businesses.

This bill outlines an investment of \$1.5 billion, for example, to the provinces and territories to support on-the-ground training services for Canadians. We all need to stay vigilant and keep up the efforts we've been doing to support workers and help stop the spread of COVID-19. I know it's not easy, but we are all in this together.

Thank you, honourable senators. The Deputy Prime Minister and I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Senator Plett: Thank you to both ministers for being here. Welcome.

My first question will be for the Finance Minister, Minister Freeland. Let me start off by congratulating you on your new role as Finance Minister and the confidence that the Prime Minister obviously has put in you.

Minister Freeland, in 2015, the Liberal Party's election platform included a promise that a Liberal government would not use prorogation to avoid difficult political circumstances. On August 18, our Prime Minister, Prime Minister Trudeau, broke that promise and shut down Parliament to stop committees investigating the WE scandal, which is also the reason why you

are here before us today instead of your predecessor, Bill Morneau. Now we have a bill before us, Bill C-4, which could have easily fit into the government's agenda prior to prorogation, and is different from Bill C-2, which we received just last week.

Minister, can you tell this chamber when officials began to work on the original bill, Bill C-2, and also if the Prime Minister truly consulted with all the opposition leaders prior to his Speech from the Throne, of which Bill C-2 was a product? Why did the bill have to be revised to take into account a demand from the NDP for sick leave? Were these theatrics part of the Trudeau's government roll-out plan all along?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P., Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance: Thank you very much, senator, for the question. I would like to start my first comments here, before you all, just with one reflection that I had on Tuesday night, and indeed in the early hours of Wednesday morning when I was in the other place voting. It was actually a remarkably collegial, even friendly and convivial atmosphere. We joked across the aisle, and ultimately there was unanimous support for the bill.

• (1530)

That same night, as I'm sure everyone here is aware, there was an important debate happening in another country close to us. I will answer, I promise, senator. We are here for two hours. I just really —

Senator Plett: I only have 10 minutes. I want an answer.

Ms. Freeland: I understand. I would like to make a comment about Canadian democracy, senator, if I may. I'm about to finish.

What I reflected about then on that night was we have a democracy that works, and I was very grateful to everyone who was a part of that, and I'm grateful to all of you. In this time of really unprecedented crisis — the greatest crisis since the Second World War — I think it is worth all of us taking a moment to reflect on the extent to which our country has been able to come together across the whole country, setting aside partisanship to fight the coronavirus. I know everyone in this house is part of that, and I'm grateful. It is not inevitable. It's possible to get this wrong. So thank you very much.

Now, senator, to your specific question —

Senator Plett: One and a half minutes I would expect to be added to that.

Ms. Freeland: I would be happy to answer your questions for an extra one and a half minutes, if the senators so desire.

Let me get to your questions. I'm afraid I disagree with some of the — I was going to say assumptions but, rather — assertions embedded in your question, senator.

The prorogation was a very appropriate response to entirely changed circumstances in our country and in the world. As the Prime Minister said, the Throne Speech that our government put forward immediately after the election was put forward in entirely different circumstances. Today we are facing a global

pandemic which the entire world is responding to and which has caused an economic crisis that can only be compared to the Great Depression.

It is entirely appropriate, and indeed I would say democratically essential, for our government to have come forward to Canadians, to MPs and to senators with our plan to fight this crisis, and that is what we have done in the Throne Speech, and this is what, more specifically, we have put forward in the measures we are asking senators to weigh in on today.

I will make one further point. You mentioned sick leave specifically, senator. Our government has been clear for many months that we support two weeks of paid sick leave for all Canadians. I would like to thank Premier Horgan. Your own Premier Pallister has been very supportive, as has Premier Sandy Silver of the Yukon. Paid sick leave is essential at all times, and essential today more than ever, because if people cannot stay home when they are sick, if people have to choose between staying home and not buying groceries, they will go to work when they are unwell and we will not be able to fight the coronavirus. That is something our government is profoundly committed to and I'm glad we've been supported in the House.

Senator Plett: Six minutes for one question, like your predecessor. Obviously, I have more questions for you, but I won't get the answers so I'll go to Minister Qualtrough and see if she will be a little more succinct with her answers.

Minister Qualtrough, my question concerns a young woman in Winnipeg whose situation was recently brought to my attention by her mother. Kristen was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis at a very young age. She has done all she can to continue to work while dealing with a very debilitating disease. She receives a disability amount from the government which has not changed in years. Three recent job opportunities were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When she applied for the CERB, she was told she did not qualify. I have provided Minister Vandal's office with my correspondence with Kristen's mother, and I expect him to provide me a response.

But minister, your government knowingly approved thousands of fraudulent claims. The Prime Minister said, "Let's just get them out the door and we'll collect it back later." Yet this young woman could not get emergency support from her government. Why is that and what will you do, minister, to help Kristen?

Ms. Qualtrough: Thank you, honourable senator, for the question. The CERB was intended for individuals who had lost work and lost their jobs because of COVID specifically as an income replacement mechanism. It was restricted to workers. That was a policy choice we made. The group we had decided intentionally to focus on was workers.

I don't know enough about the fact pattern to give you more information in terms of other supports for this particular individual, but I'm happy to work with Minister Vandal to get you a fulsome response.

Given what you've said, she would not be eligible for CERB because she didn't lose a job. However, we tried to embed in the new recovery benefits a reduced income aspect so you don't need to have lost a job but you have to have had reduced income.

Again, I don't know her personal circumstances, but I'm happy to work with Minister Vandal on an answer for you.

Senator Plett: Minister Freeland, I'm going to try one more time.

The NDP has said it will prop up your government. CBC has called them your junior partner for the next three years. So two parties who each garnered fewer votes than the Conservatives in the last election are running the show. You are basically held hostage to the NDP's demands. This is similar to the tail wagging the dog.

Can you tell us how much the sick leave promise will cost Canadians? Could you also tell us the cost of buying off the NDP with just 24 seats out of 338 in the House of Commons? What will it cost Canadians over the next three years?

Ms. Freeland: Thank you for the question, senator. I am unaware of being a hostage. I am also unaware of being either a dog or a dog's tail.

What I will say about our government and how we are governing at a time of a global pandemic when we hold a minority of the seats in Parliament is we always seek to put forward measures that will find support in the House.

As I said, I was delighted in the early hours of Wednesday morning that our measures received unanimous support from the Conservatives, the Bloc, the NDP and the Greens. I think that was a true show of national unity. I've already addressed the question of sick leave.

The Chair: We will proceed to another 10 minutes.

Senator Pate: Thank you. Welcome to both of you. Congratulations on your new position, Deputy Prime Minister, and thank you to both of you for all the work you've been doing throughout this time, but also prior to that.

Through CERB and other measures, the government has worked to provide flexible income supports to Canadians and evolve the support when it heard that Canadians were falling through the cracks of our economic safety net. The legislation that we're considering today still contains gaps and seems to reinforce stigmatizing notions of who is deserving and who is undeserving of assistance, particularly the poor.

It is premised on Canadians having had jobs and annual earnings of over \$5,000. There are many reasons why Canadians may not meet such requirements, as I'm sure you both are well aware: having lost a job without EI prior to the pandemic; having started a new business; having pre-COVID care obligations for loved ones; having an undiagnosed disability; being unable to afford the transportation, child care or clothing to look for work; being unable to work; and being unable to afford to lose the health care benefits provided through social assistance programs. Those are some of the examples, but there are more.

The government has committed to ensuring assistance for those most economically disadvantaged who are still falling through the cracks of the COVID-19 economic supports. Given the significant support for a guaranteed livable income that has been provided by Canadians throughout the country, and given that the government has committed to moving on a number of these areas, I have two questions before I yield to my colleague, Senator Miville-Dechêne.

• (1540)

Has the government received assurances from the provinces and territories that those on social assistance who are able to qualify for any part of this bill's economic supports will not have their social assistance payments clawed back, and is there a plan to look at guaranteed livable income moving forward, and what can senators do to assist in that plan if it exists?

Ms. Qualltrough: Thank you, senator, for the important question. It's a tricky conversation to have with the provinces in terms of the type of benefit and whether they will or will not claw it back from provincial social assistance payments. I've been moderately successful with CERB, but not wholly successful, and it frustrates me to no end. The provinces have chosen to claw back despite requests by myself and my colleagues, with our counterparts. We've engaged; we're still having those conversations. We're trying to explain these extraordinary times require not-so-tough behaviour on their part — that's really unfair — but I couldn't guarantee you, in all honesty, that provinces will not engage in that same behaviour with these benefits, but we're working very hard. We've had some provinces already come out and say they won't, like B.C., my own. I wish I could tell you we have gotten every province and territory on board but we haven't.

Regarding the GBI, or livable income piece, this in no way precludes that conversation from happening. We are focused right now on emergency measures for workers, but there are important conversations that must be had around identified gaps in our social services, and we hope that this prompts those important conversations. I'm happy that you would — we'll call upon you for your help.

Senator Pate: I yield to Senator Miville-Dechêne.

[*Translation*]

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Welcome to the Senate, ministers. I will ask you a very concrete question. Many young people I know have asked me about the difference between this new recovery benefit and the CERB. In fact, people see no difference. I have three questions about this. First, will you ask those who apply for this new benefit to provide proof that they have been looking for work? Second, what does the phrase "have not declined a reasonable offer to work" mean? As you know, it could be interpreted in many ways. Must a dancer or artist become a clerk or salesperson? All work has value, but what is meant by "reasonable"? Lastly, as in the case of the CERB, will students who work part-time be able to apply for this new recovery benefit?

[Senator Pate]

Ms. Qualltrough: Thank you very much. These are important questions. We have done our best to ensure that the economic recovery benefit program is the same as the employment insurance program. Naturally, the EI system is much more sophisticated. However, under the CERB, we did not ask applicants to look for work, that they be available for work, or that they not have refused a reasonable offer to work.

We included these criteria in the legislation and the attestation, but, honestly, it remains a benefit by attestation. Of course, at first we ask questions. However, the individual who answers these questions understands that from time to time we will verify the answers. For example, if you say that you are looking for work, you might receive a telephone call in a week's time and be asked what jobs you applied for.

In short, we are doing our best. This program is much more robust than the CERB and is very similar to employment insurance, but it is not as complete as EI because of the limitations of the program, which is very new.

[*English*]

In terms of the part-time worker, if you have lost your job or your income has been reduced by 50% — whatever that income was — yes, you will be eligible for this benefit. Students cannot have undue restrictions on their availability to work. If they are studying full time, the expectation is that that is a significant undue restriction on their availability to work. So again, this is where the attestation comes in and people look at the reasonableness of the particular situation.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: "A reasonable offer." This is something that I was not able to explain to some young people I know. What does this consist of? Is it in your field of expertise? Is it something that pops up in your neighbourhood? What is it?

Ms. Qualltrough: Pardon me, senator. The parallel term in the EI system is "just cause." You cannot have refused a job offer without just cause. You cannot avoid looking for work without just cause. We found that quite restrictive, so we took a slightly broader approach of reasonableness that attempts to get at the individual circumstances of the person. What is reasonable for you might be slightly different from what is reasonable for me. It is a subjective criteria, and there is no jurisprudence on what is reasonable. But by putting in the four criteria that you have to be looking for a job, that you can't have undue restrictions on your availability, and that you have to accept a job offer, we box in reasonableness, because somebody can look at it, and one would have to justify not having done so. It was our best attempt to individualize the responses that people made.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Thank you very much for your response, and I yield my time to the next ISG senator.

The Chair: No. Not enough time.

Senator Downe: Thank you, ministers. I want to thank you and your Liberal colleagues. You have done an outstanding job facing the worst health care crisis in 100 years and the worst financial problem since the end of the Second World War. You deserve our credit for the work you have done on behalf of Canadians through these difficult times. I know it has not been unanimous. The opposition parties have done their job and duty, and the media have occupied their responsibility and have pointed out the mistakes that were made. I'm sure those mistakes are taken into consideration as you go forward.

My first question pertains to a concern I heard on Prince Edward Island about the announcement made June 5 about the disability tax credit. I've heard from many seniors who quickly received the Old Age Security top-up — from couples who told me they did not actually need the money. They were taking it but they didn't really need it. I've never heard that comment from those receiving the disability benefit. They have not received it yet. They're wondering what the delay is and how this bill before us today will address that on an ongoing basis.

Ms. Qualtrough: That particular supplement is not at all contemplated in the legislation before you. It was part of previous legislation. I'm proud of our government's intentional thought around the disability lens in our decision-making in response to the pandemic. What I'm not proud of is the systemic gaps that our attempts to deliver directly to citizens with disabilities have revealed.

If you want to get money directly to seniors, the federal government can do that because you have OAS and we have GIS. If you want to get money directly to families, the federal government can do that because we have the Canada child benefit. We have no equivalent for the population of our citizens with disabilities, and it's unacceptable. It has taken an enormous amount of time to call lists from different departments and to design a system to pull people out. Disability policy has been driven historically in this country by tax policy.

All that to say the payment is coming in the coming weeks, finally, for over a million people. It is unacceptable that it has taken this long, and because of our commitment in the Speech from the Throne, I'm happy to say it shouldn't happen again.

Senator Downe: Thank you, minister. I'll pass that on to the Islanders who have asked me about that.

Ms. Qualtrough: By the end of the month, senator, I promise you.

Senator Downe: If not, I will give them your direct number.

Ms. Qualtrough: Please do.

Senator Downe: My next question is for the Minister of Finance. This significant effort to help Canadians over these difficult times is greatly appreciated in Prince Edward Island, where we have been impacted — particularly our tourism industry but also the export industry. Little things that sometimes you don't think about, but we export a lot of frozen french fries. Restaurants are closed. That production continues but the sales are not there.

• (1550)

My question for the Minister of Finance is the repaying of all this cost. As you know — and you are new to your job and may not know — there has been an ongoing problem with overseas tax evasion and the fairness of the system. We are not in the position in this country where the leader of the country paid \$750 in taxes last year, but we don't want to undermine the credibility of the tax system by having some paying their full share and others not.

For years I've talked about the Canada Revenue Agency doing an outstanding job on domestic tax collection. They do a terrible job, in my opinion, on overseas tax evasion: Canadians hiding money overseas. We have had case after case of this. I just want to highlight the Panama Papers, which happened over four years ago. We had over 600 Canadians with money in the bank in Panama. Other countries have collected from their citizens who had \$1.2 billion in the same bank: Germany, \$182 million; Australia, \$93 million; and Iceland, with a population of 300,000, \$25 million.

This money is critical to pay for what you want to do for Canadians. It's critical that we all pay our fair share. We all hear "We're all in this together." This is a way to prove we're all in this together. Those other countries collected \$1.2 billion. Canada has not collected a cent after four years.

Minister, how is that justifiable, let alone sustainable?

Ms. Freeland: Thank you very much, senator, for the really important question, and I can't resist saying I'm very aware of the problem for potato farmers. It's one of the unexpected consequences of coronavirus, and I think we need to take care of them.

On the question of tax and tax evasion, you make a very important point. We are confronting, I think with admirable unity, a crisis unprecedented since the Second World War, and I think we're doing a pretty good job as a country in confronting it together. But it is also the case that the economic impact is very uneven and, sadly, it is the most vulnerable and poorest people in our country who are bearing the heaviest burden of the coronavirus.

You're also quite right that it is costing a lot of money to fight the virus. I guess as finance minister I would say this, but I believe it is particularly incumbent upon us to be very careful to ensure that we are spending intentionally and that everyone is paying their fair share. I think that's what Canadians expect. I have already had a conversation with Minister LeBouthillier about tax evasion and tax havens, and I think there is more work to do.

As you are aware, in the Throne Speech we did speak about taxing internet giants. I think that is an area of unfairness to Canadian companies in particular. We spoke about something that was a platform commitment, which is a tax on stock options for executives at mature companies. But I think tax evasion, including foreign tax havens, definitely needs to be a part of our approach. I thank you for raising the question.

Senator Downe: Thank you, minister. The problem with the Canada Revenue Agency — and the media have asked me for years if I looked at these files. They always want to push me: is it corruption? Is there something there? And I've always resisted that because you don't want to get involved in conspiracy theories. But I must admit that when I see what's happening year after year, I'm leaning toward thinking that there's a serious problem there.

It was 14 years ago when this first came on the Canadian radar. There was one bank in Liechtenstein where 106 Canadians had \$100 million in assets.

Now, the CRA worked very hard on that, and they identified money owing. They collected very little of the money owing, and nobody was ever charged or convicted. The CRA's justification, according to the Auditor General, was they didn't know how this worked; this taught them how it worked. But that's not the case at all, because after that Liechtenstein situation we had a case in Switzerland with 900-and-some Canadians, and we had the Paradise Papers and the Panama Papers I referred to. This continues time after time after time. The government gave \$1 billion to the CRA to help them. We find out that it goes for reorganization, for regularly scheduled salary increases. It doesn't go where it's needed.

As times get tougher, it's going to be very difficult to keep the sense that we're all in this together if we're not. So I ask you to give whatever assistance, in your senior position as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, to the CRA to solve these ongoing problems so Canadians can take comfort that we really are all in this together. Thank you, minister.

Ms. Freeland: Message received, senator, and I agree with you. I do want to address, if I may, a couple of points in defence of the CRA.

Senators, if you support these measures, you will be supporting \$90 million to support the CRA in the call centres that are so essential because they're delivering so much of the support right now, and \$61 million for further funding because of what they're doing on COVID.

You heard already from Minister Qualtrough that this crisis has exposed some gaps that have been in our systems for a long time, such as our ability to deliver support to people with disabilities. I think something else the crisis has revealed to our government is how robust the CRA systems are when it comes to delivering support quickly to Canadians. I would like to thank the CRA and the people who work there for how quickly they were able to deliver support in the spring when people really needed it. That in no way negates your key point, with which I agree, and we do have to do better.

Senator Downe: I totally agree with what the CRA is. I have always said they do an excellent job on domestic taxes, but there's a problem with overseas tax collection. I hope you address that. Thank you.

The Chair: Time will be shared between Senator Bovey and Senator Munson.

Senator Bovey: Welcome, ministers. It's wonderful to see you here and to be here with you. The arts and artists in this country, as you know, have sustained us all through these really difficult times, despite the devastation that they have faced as a result of COVID. They are very grateful for the support they received through the wage subsidy and through CERB, but they know, and we know, their recovery will be long, perhaps years. Some disciplines are facing the loss of an entire generation of artists, given those who are leaving and the problems with training.

The continuing wage subsidy and recovery benefit are really much-needed lifelines for artists, arts workers, gig workers, solo artists and organizations. But the arts are approaching "a cliff edge," as one arts administrator said to me yesterday. Their concern is qualifying. Calculating loss of revenue against last year's revenues was clear, but now if they have to provide a further equivalent loss, it's impossible because they're at rock bottom. They're not selling tickets. They have lost corporate support. They've lost donations. Fundraising has been cancelled, yet their overhead expenses are going up.

They've made it very clear to me that it's critical that the level of support remains at 75% for the wage subsidy. My question is: Will it? Can you confirm that the sector will be consulted regarding the establishment of criteria and that the eligibility criteria will reflect the reality of their situation?

Ms. Freeland: Thank you very much, senator, for the question. I very much agree with your core point. The crisis has affected different sectors in the economy very differently. My dad is a canola farmer, and coronavirus hasn't really hurt canola farmers that much, at least not in the Peace Country. The same with forestry. Manufacturing has come back very strongly, and congratulations to our manufacturers. But other sectors like tourism, hospitality and cultural sectors have inevitably been hit harder. I think now is the moment when we have to start looking in a more targeted way at the harder-hit sectors.

When it comes to the cultural sector and the wage subsidy, we announced in the Throne Speech, as I'm sure you are aware, that the wage subsidy will now continue until the summer. That does mean the previously planned step-down is something that we need to look at. We need to look at how to calibrate it, given the fact that the program will be running longer. We are hard at work at that. It's a very big and complicated program and we want to find ways to target the support more effectively. I can't share with you details on exactly how we're going to do it, but your point is well made and duly noted.

• (1600)

I can promise, of course, that we will consult with the cultural and other sectors as we do that work. I would draw your attention to the schedule before you, for which we are seeking your support. There are two specific line items to support the cultural sector: \$17 million to support affected cultural heritage and sports organizations, and \$50 million for the audio-visual industry, which, in particular, has been facing some problems getting the insurance they need in order to continue working.

Senator Bovey: I'll cede my time to my colleague, but I just want to remind you that some of our major artists have lost career advancement, and Canada has lost a big step on the international stage because of the intransigence of some of our organizations.

Senator Munson: Minister of Finance, in terms of collegiality, back in 1972 to 1974, Parliament worked kind of well in those days. I actually covered that a long time ago. Good social benefits happened at that time because of common sense.

I like Bill C-4, and I like the idea of benefits for jobless workers and the underemployed. I certainly support Bill C-4 very much. I like the tone of the Speech from the Throne.

This question is to Minister Qualtrough. I still worry about those who can't ever find work or can't find much work. Those are people with autism or intellectual disabilities. The rates indicate that 70 to 80% of them can't find a job.

Minister Qualtrough, you know that the CASDA summit is coming up next week. The Speech from the Throne spoke about the disability benefit and the disability inclusion plan — they are all there. Part of that, to me, is a national autism strategy.

I only have about 10 months left in this place, if you count every day. I don't want to leave; I like it so much. But I need to know, minister, is a national autism strategy still on the table with you and with Health Minister Hajdu?

Ms. Qualtrough: Honourable senator, I can assure you 100% that it still is. Absolutely. I don't know how much more elaboration you want, but I'm happy to have coffee and explain to you our thinking on the strategy. I can assure everyone in this place that the autism strategy will be front and centre for both the Health Minister and me. We would have been further under way on this — it's in both our mandate letters — had COVID not consumed our lives, because it's a very important thing.

Senator Munson: That's the best news I've heard today. It's nice to smile, hear good news and commitment and move on with it.

This question was asked by another senator before, but I need to get total clarification on a part of the disability inclusion plan. It seems only yesterday that Bill C-20 acknowledged gaps at the Canada Revenue Agency in the Disability Tax Credit program. We've had studies in the Senate headed by Senator Chantal Petitclerc dealing with those gaps and eligibility in the Disability Tax Credit as a delivery mechanism for what you say is \$600 that will come this month.

To what extent will the disability inclusion plan reform the Disability Tax Credit program?

Ms. Qualtrough: Thank you, senator, for the question. Again, I don't want to take up too much time, but, boy, could I.

Senator Munson: You can.

Ms. Qualtrough: We announced, in the Speech from the Throne, three elements of this disability inclusion plan. I would say it was a historic day for the disability movement in this country. One is a disability benefit which, like the GIS, will be a monthly income supplement for working-age Canadians with disabilities.

The second one is a national employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities, recognizing that it's the largest barrier to inclusion faced, and it's the number-one ground for discrimination complaints with the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

The third, although somewhat geeky and technical, is a complete overhaul of how the Government of Canada considers eligibility for disability-related programs and services. This means taking eligibility out of the tax system. This means a modern, functional understanding of disability. It is long overdue and it will be a lot of work, but it will change the way the government looks at our citizens with disabilities, 110%.

Senator Munson: I appreciate those answers very much, and I will throw it back to Senator Bovey for the last two minutes.

Senator Bovey: Minister, I will go back to the arts, not surprisingly. We know there have been massive layoffs in the arts and culture sector, despite the really wonderful measures of the government, Canada Council and Heritage Canada. I applaud their flexibility.

Many of these layoffs, however, are no longer temporary. I'm devastated by the number of, I'm going to say, young people — they're younger than me — who have been working in a field for 15, 20, 25 years and are now without work permanently. I'm wondering, with the wage subsidy extended, can these people be hired back by the organizations that have had to let them go out of fear of the subsidy? Would they then be qualified for the wage subsidy, having been hired back by the organization?

Ms. Freeland: Yes, absolutely. One reason for extending the wage subsidy through the summer is to give organizations and businesses the confidence that it's going to be there.

I hope, senator, that they will do precisely as you suggest and hire back people in anticipation of our getting rid of the coronavirus and knowing that they're going to have the support to keep people on in this transition period.

Senator Bovey: They say they are afraid to.

Ms. Freeland: Tell them the subsidy is there until the summer, so it's safe.

[*Translation*]

Senator Carignan: My question is for the finance minister and has to do with the amount of the deficit.

A few days ago, the Parliamentary Budget Officer submitted a report that forecast a deficit of \$328 billion, not including the announcements made in the Speech from the Throne.

Minister Morneau, meanwhile, had estimated the deficit at \$343 billion, but according to the calculations of experts, which take into account the legislation announced in the Speech from the Throne, the amount of the deficit will vary between \$416 billion and \$443 billion, depending on the expert.

My question is as follows. What will Canada's deficit be for 2020-21 taking into account the legislation announced in the Speech from the Throne?

Ms. Freeland: Thank you for the question, senator. You provided an excellent summary of what Minister Morneau said in July's economic update and of the new projections released this week by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. These are important and useful numbers for us.

With regard to the government's new projections, in the throne speech, we promised to publish an update on Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan this fall. This update will describe the government's economic and financial situation, provide financial projections and establish new Speech from the Throne implementation measures.

I won't make any projections today since, as you know, the situation is very fluid with the second wave of COVID-19 and the decisions being made by the provinces, particularly Quebec and Ontario, to flatten the coronavirus curve. These decisions will most certainly have an impact.

I won't make any projections today, but in the Speech from the Throne, we promised to provide an economic update.

Senator Carignan: Except now is the time when we're trying to enact legislation that involves spending. Taking into account the measures announced to date, how many billions of dollars are we talking about?

• (1610)

Ms. Freeland: I can give specific dollar amounts for the measures we are proposing today. With the new programs Minister Qualtrough is proposing, it will cost \$24 billion. Changes to employment insurance will cost \$10.2 billion and, according to the timeline in the bill, all the measures listed will cost \$17 billion.

[Ms. Freeland]

Senator Carignan: So that's an additional \$51 billion or so for the current measures. If I add that to what your former colleague, Minister Morneau, presented in July, when he was talking about \$343 billion, that adds up to a deficit of about \$400 billion for this year?

Ms. Freeland: I need to clarify something. For the measures we are talking about today, the measures we are asking you to adopt, we are talking about \$41 billion. For the sake of openness and transparency, I added the \$10.2 billion we believe changes to employment insurance will cost, but that amount is not included in Bill C-4, which you will be voting on today.

Senator Carignan: So, all told, this adds \$50 billion to Mr. Morneau's total, which was \$343 billion?

Ms. Freeland: As I said, for today, we are talking about \$41 billion, and let me repeat that I will not make any deficit projections today. That would not be prudent. I am the Minister of Finance, and I know that every word I say has an effect on the market for Canada.

Senator Carignan: Not to worry, the markets are closed at this hour.

Ms. Freeland: Let me be clear; I want to be very specific and accurate.

Senator Carignan: I understand, but back in July, Minister Morneau had projected \$343 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's figure is \$328 billion. However, with the additional measures you're announcing, we're talking about \$400 billion. I'm sure you spoke with Minister Morneau after he left. Did he leave you a note on his desk, suggesting you tell the Prime Minister to calm down, because we're going to surpass \$400 billion? Did you have any discussions with him about that?

Ms. Freeland: Minister Morneau was an excellent colleague and I spoke with him often, or actually, I still speak with him often, especially in the last few weeks. However, you're asking about something that is very important to Canadians, something that I'm very concerned about and has to do with our country's fiscal situation. Perhaps I can reassure you somewhat by quoting the rating agency DBRS Morningstar, which has reaffirmed that our AAA credit rating is one of the best of any country in the world. Canadians need to understand that we are leaders.

Senator Carignan: Speaking of mandate letters, finance minister Bill Morneau's letter mandated him to continue to build confidence in Canada's economy by preserving our AAA credit rating. Does your mandate letter include the same?

Ms. Freeland: The Prime Minister is in the process of writing the mandate letters for all of the new ministers. We shall see.

Senator Carignan: So, this could be suggested to him.

Ms. Freeland: I will pass along your suggestion. If you want, I can cite what DBRS Morningstar wrote about the financial situation. DBRS Morningstar views the overall fiscal response positively, as the stimulus has been timely in delivery, temporary in design, and sufficient in size given the scale of the shock.

Senator Carignan: There was another Liberal premier in Quebec who said he wanted to have both hands on the wheel to stay on track. Prime Minister Trudeau seems to have his hands on the wheel, but he also has his foot on the gas and the pedal is stuck. He seems to have forgotten about brakes. When Mr. Morneau was finance minister, did he try to remind the Prime Minister that he can use the brake every once in a while? Will you tell him to pump the brakes and tell him that going full-speed ahead will not necessarily put Canada on the right track? When I was younger, I liked to ride bumper cars, and I would hit the gas and tear all over the place. That wasn't a big deal, but he is the Prime Minister of Canada.

Ms. Freeland: As I already said, I grew up on a farm and my father was a farmer. I started driving a truck when I was 12. I understand the importance of brakes and the accelerator. We have to manage both pedals to drive properly. As far as spending is concerned, I would like to say three things, if I may — No, I may not?

The Chair: Perhaps later.

[English]

Senator Boniface: Welcome, ministers. I appreciate you being here and speaking on this bill. I will be asking questions on behalf of Senator Sinclair, who is not able to be here.

The first question is to the Deputy Prime Minister:

Minister, in the Speech from the Throne, we saw a shift from the government's 2019 commitments to eliminate long-term boil water advisories on reserves by 2021. The new language was noncommittal in terms of a timeline.

Minister, it would be no exaggeration to say that Indigenous people have been living in a state of emergency in this country for a long time, with their health and well-being treated with less importance by the government and with their legal rights suppressed. When we see the resources, expediency and willpower the government brought to the COVID response when non-Indigenous peoples' well-being is at risk, why aren't we seeing that commitment and those results on basic human rights for our Indigenous people?

Ms. Freeland: Thank you very much for the question. I do think all Canadians appreciate that it is a real outrage that there are some Canadians who don't have safe drinking water where they live. That is why the commitment to end boil water advisories is so important for our government and for our country.

I hope people will understand that the very particular situation with the coronavirus has created some obstacles to acting. The coronavirus is a terrible reason for those obstacles, but the reason it had an impact on our action on boil water advisories is a good one because what we have seen with Indigenous leadership in this country during the coronavirus crisis has actually been magnificent. Indigenous leaders across the country on reserves acted really quickly and took tough measures to close entry to

reserves to people who didn't live there. I think it's obvious why that would have an impact on work on the reserves, and that is regrettable, but the action itself is admirable and commendable.

I do want to take an opportunity for the whole country to appreciate how fantastically well Indigenous leaders and Indigenous people across the country, particularly on reserves, have responded to the coronavirus crisis. They've actually done better than non-Indigenous leadership. The result is that the coronavirus has been very effectively contained by Indigenous people acting themselves to protect themselves in their communities.

• (1620)

This is by no means inevitable. You can contrast what has happened on reserves in Canada, for example, with the very tragic experience of the Navajo Nation.

I agree with you on the boil water advisory. We need to act, but I think we spend, quite rightly, a lot of time talking about the tragedies, the discrimination and the systemic racism Indigenous people face in Canada, and the events in Joliette this week should make us do that even more.

But I think it's equally important to take a moment sometimes to observe for the whole country the way that Indigenous leadership has stepped up in this crisis. I have been really admiring.

Senator Boniface: Thank you.

The second question would be for Minister Qualtrough. Minister, this question is specific to some Indigenous individuals' and families' financial contexts. This bill provides for three major benefit programs: the recovery benefit, the recovery sickness benefit and the recovery caregiving benefit.

To be eligible for these benefits, recipients must have had, for a 12-month period, income of at least \$5,000. First, can you please confirm that Indigenous individuals would be eligible for these benefits if they had received at least that amount of tax-exempt income on a reserve? Second, in applying for the benefits, how can individuals in this situation be sure that such referenced income will continue to be understood by government as tax exempt? It's a question on behalf of Senator Sinclair.

Ms. Qualtrough: Thank you, senator, for the question on behalf of Senator Sinclair.

The answer to your first question, as I understand it, is yes, but I would like to confirm that really important point with Heather, our legislative guru.

Heather Sheehy, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment and Social Development Canada: Thank you, senator. The definition of income in Bill C-4 is identified in clause 8(3). It is the amount that would be identified as net income other than the CRB on the CRA forms. That is the definition that's in the bill.

I would need to get back to the house on the specifics in terms of Indigenous income on reserve.

Ms. Qualtrough: One of the flexibilities in the bill as currently written is for us to make regulatory amendments to broaden the definition of income. So if it's not there, and perhaps it should be, then we can add it.

Senator Boniface: Minister Qualtrough, will the Government of Canada be communicating with Indigenous communities in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways to ensure that individuals and families are receiving the necessary information to access these benefits? Can you share any plans in that regard?

Ms. Qualtrough: Thank you, senator. We have been working very closely in my department with the Minister of Indigenous Services and his team to ensure that information is shared in appropriate and respectful ways. I can't give you more details other than that, unless Heather can, but I can certainly get you that information.

Senator Seidman: Thank you, Minister Freeland and Minister Qualtrough, for being with us today. I appreciate it.

My first question is for Minister Freeland. As you know, COVID-19 has exposed serious issues with how we support our seniors in long-term care. We know this is a Canada-wide problem.

Back in May, the Prime Minister said that the federal government would work with the provinces to ensure long-term care facilities are properly supported, whether that's through "national standards" or "extra funding." The Prime Minister also said that conversations about how we treat our seniors in Canada are necessary and will happen at the appropriate time.

Minister, this matter is urgent, as I'm sure you well recognize. More than 80% of Canada's COVID-19-related deaths have been in long-term care facilities. That is double the OECD average.

Minister, can you tell us when the Prime Minister believes the appropriate time is for these conversations? Also, what mechanisms are in place at the federal level to track outbreaks and deaths in long-term care facilities?

Ms. Freeland: Thank you for that really important question.

I agree with you, and I would hazard to say it is a truth universally acknowledged that one of the things coronavirus has exposed is neglect of our elders. I'm not ashamed to say that when I read the report from the Canadian Armed Forces I cried. It was terrible. I called my dad up and I told him I would take care of him.

So it cannot continue. It's complicated, as I think everyone here knows, because this is an area of provincial responsibility, but I know that the provinces — the premiers — they share that anguish too. They are very committed to working with us, as we are with them, for this not to happen again.

The Speech from the Throne did make that commitment to work on national standards for long-term care facilities, and we believe that's necessary. In the Safe Restart Agreement with the

provinces, the federal government agreed to give \$19 billion to the provinces for their restart after the spring. That includes \$13 billion for health care and coronavirus-related efforts, PPE, testing and tracing and money for the health care system, so that's some support as well.

As you are very aware, in the crisis the Canadian Armed Forces were there. I think all of us need to be grateful to them. The support that we committed to in the Throne Speech for personal support workers, I think, is also a very important element. It's essential that we pay the people who take care of our seniors well and train them well and that they not need to work three different jobs to support themselves. That increases the risk.

I agree that you have identified an important problem. I'm not going to promise a solution tomorrow because that's not credible and wouldn't be true. But I do believe there is extreme collective goodwill in Canada to work on this, and we are.

Senator Seidman: How am I doing in my five minutes?

The Chair: You still have a minute and a quarter.

Senator Seidman: Good. Thank you.

If could I just ask the second part of that question, if you might have the answer, minister: What mechanisms are in place at the federal level to track outbreaks and deaths in long-term care facilities?

Ms. Freeland: We have, I would say, increasingly good data-sharing with the provinces. It's work done directly by the provinces. But we're sharing information certainly much more effectively than at the beginning of the crisis. I certainly get reports on that, as do other people in government.

Another important factor is the work that the Red Cross is doing in long-term care facilities, which gives us a further line of sight into what is happening.

I won't say the tracking is perfect. It's a lot better than it was at the beginning. I think we're getting better at sharing information with each other — all of us — because we've learned that that helps the response.

Senator Martin: Thank you to both ministers for being here. Before my first question to Minister Freeland, you mentioned forestry as being one of those sectors that's recovering. I want to say that I was listening very carefully — I'm from British Columbia — and the forestry sector was largely overlooked in the Speech from the Throne. There were promises to plant trees and that it would play a role in the fight against climate change. But I know that in the second quarter of this year, they've lost 6,000 jobs. I just wanted to say on behalf of British Columbians and others who are impacted that that is sort of the stat that I'm working with.

The other preoccupation of mine is small businesses. I know you appreciate what Canadians do, but my understanding is that for small businesses, especially the small mom-and-pop businesses, the \$40,000 CEBA loans had not been accessible to them if they had personal accounts.

There was a whole summer of inaction after it was announced by Minister Ng that you were working as quickly as possible. It's my understanding that that is not yet available. I'm asking, on behalf of these very small, hard-working families because one day can make the difference for them. It's been many months. Would you tell us when these businesses will be able to apply for the CEBA when they have personal accounts?

• (1630)

Ms. Freeland: I will say one quick thing on forestry, because, with the softwood lumber negotiations when I was trade minister, forestry is something I have taken an interest in and worked on very hard. I'm sure you're aware, senator, lumber prices are at extreme historic high levels right now. Because we did not agree to quotas when it comes to sales of Canadian lumber to the United States, Canadian forestry is able to take advantage of those record high prices. I just really admire and am grateful to all the amazing people who work in Canada's softwood lumber industry.

That's just a comment on forestry. There are other issues with the supply being limited, beetles and so on, but our forestry industry is astonishing. Prices are truly astonishing right now, and I'm glad they're selling a lot into the U.S. market.

On small business, and CEBA in particular, I will say two things. Minister Ng and I are aware of the personal account issue. It is proving to be quite complex to have small businesses get loans through personal accounts, but that is something we are committed to making possible. We are working through that with the financial institutions through which the loans happen.

I agree with you: Every day is a painful day for a small business, but I can say through you to small businesses across the country that we are working on it. We are committed to getting there.

I would also say, as was said in the Speech from the Throne, we are committed to doing more on CEBA. The crisis continues. We are in a second wave. Our small businesses need support to get through it, and we'll have more to say about that.

Senator Martin: Thank you, minister.

Minister Qualtrough, it's been since July 3 that your government announced the cancellation of its contracts with WE Charity's real estate holding company, a shell company to administer hundreds of millions of taxpayers' money through the Canada Student Service Grant. The last update on the emergency spending that your government provided before shutting down Parliament stated that, following the termination of the delivery agreement with WE Charity, ESDC is considering alternate delivery mechanisms.

I'm curious about the alternate delivery mechanisms — if that has been determined, and if not, what is the plan forward — why not?

Ms. Qualtrough: Thank you, senator, for the important question.

Our government has made the decision not to proceed with the Canada Student Service Grant program. Again, as announced in the Speech from the Throne, we are investing significantly in our youth employment and skills strategy, attempting to deal with the requests to continue to invest significantly in our young people. I'll remind you that we had a \$9-billion youth package as part of our emergency response. This was a big chunk of that; this was \$1 billion of it.

The Chair: The time is up. We have to move to the next block of 10 minutes.

[*Translation*]

Senator Moncion: Ministers, thank you for being here.

Potentially \$1.5 billion could be granted to the provinces in support of professional training programs to help facilitate the economic recovery. What conditions will the federal government impose on the use of those funds? What accountability will be required? Have you budgeted for funding to be given to francophone institutions?

Ms. Qualtrough: Thank you for the question. We decided to use existing contracts with the provinces and territories, or workforce development agreements and labour market development agreements.

Every time I meet with the other employment ministries across the country, they ask for more money for training. We all understand that training will be a pillar in all our efforts to restart the economy.

Distribution of this \$1.5 billion will be done through a previously established formula in these contracts with the provinces and territories. That was the mechanism that helped get this money quickly to the provinces and territories. The criteria of these contracts will not change, but this will allow us to give more money to boost training efforts.

I do not have an answer to your question about training in French, but I could get back to you on that later.

Senator Moncion: Thank you. I will ask my second question in English. It is a supplementary question to Senator Miville-Dechéne's question.

[*English*]

You talked about the test being subjective. How will you ensure the racist, sexist and ableist interpretations that have been revealed during this pandemic in the health, education, economic and legal systems overall do not mean too many continue to be left out or judged undeserving?

Ms. Qualtrough: It's such an important question. We have put a GBA+ lens on all of our COVID emergency response measures. We did a GBA+ analysis. We have looked at all of our measures through a disability-inclusion lens as well.

The best I can offer you is how sensitive we are and how robust our systems have become in doing these analyses. Yes, reasonableness is a subjective, individual criterion, so it will be incumbent upon us to ensure, when that is tested, that we continue to put the same amount of rigour in our analysis.

[Translation]

Senator Moncion: My next question concerns the amount of \$1.7 billion earmarked for businesses. How will the monies under this program get to businesses that were not eligible for existing programs, especially small businesses and cooperatives?

Ms. Freeland: Are you referring to the Canada Emergency Business Account? Which program?

[English]

Senator Moncion: The \$1.7 billion that is in the actual — in Bill C-4, allocated to support businesses. How will these funds be allocated?

[Translation]

Ms. Freeland: That depends on the line you are referring to.

[English]

Do you mean the alternate support for businesses?

[Translation]

Are you referring to the amount of \$74 million?

[English]

Senator Moncion: Regardless of the amount, how is this money going to be getting to enterprises or —

Ms. Freeland: It depends on the program. There are a number of different programs. If you are talking about the \$74-million alternative support for businesses unable to access other emergency measures, it's specified there that some of that goes through RDAs. We have found the RDAs to be really useful in getting money to some of the businesses that, for whatever reason, aren't reached by other programs. So that's one part of it.

Another is through the Community Futures Network of Canada. Another is through Futurpreneur Canada. Another is through the Innovation Assistance Program.

[Translation]

Senator Petitclerc: Thank you very much, ministers, for being here with us today.

[English]

My questions are for Minister Qualtrough. Not surprisingly, I had questions and concerns about Canadians living with disabilities. Also not surprisingly, Senator Munson asked those questions already, so thank you Senator Munson for the questions. Thank you, minister, for the commitments that you made and the answers. I'm looking forward to seeing it come to reality.

I do have a question on behalf of my colleague, Senator Frances Lankin, Ontario.

• (1640)

The question is as follows:

Minister Qualtrough, Part 2 of Bill C-4 amends the Canada Labour Code, amending the reasons for which an employee is entitled to take leave related to COVID-19. However, to gain the protections in this part of the Canada Labour Code, a worker must have a status as an employee. Gig workers or other independent contractors are not formally recognized as employees and do not enjoy the protection of these statutes.

The Minister of Labour has amended to explore issues relating to the gig economy and how gig workers are protected under the Canada Labour Code, and reference was also made to gig workers in the Speech from the Throne.

How are employees defined in the context of this bill? Will gig workers, typically defined as contractors, be excluded from this and not have access to these new forms of leave, or does the government have other mechanisms or programs in place for gig workers?

Ms. Qualtrough: Excellent question. Thank you.

It's no real secret that one of the things the COVID-19 pandemic revealed was gaps in our Employment Insurance system and the way we support workers in times of income loss. Gig workers are a glaring example of that. There is a lot going on right now around the definition of "gig worker" and whether gig workers should be legally defined as employees. If it walks like a duck, talks like a duck, looks like a duck, it's a duck, no matter what you call it. That's going on right now. Gig workers absolutely have access to these benefits. They were one of the primary drivers for us taking the CERB out of the EI stream to begin with so we could cover everybody. They will continue to be covered through the CRB.

With respect to Canada Labour Code protections, my understanding is that because they're not, they won't have their job protected if they take these leaves. We're working on that. As you said, the Minister of Labour is working really hard to redefine "employee" in a more modern way to reflect how people work, but they absolutely have access to the benefit, all three of them.

Senator Wallin: My first question is for Minister Freeland. With Bill C-13, your government gave itself the power to spend without oversight or parliamentary approval on any funding related to the ongoing pandemic. Canadians saw what this lack of oversight in transparency meant. There were cases of CERB fraud. Many people were left without access to much-needed funds because their voices or interests were not echoed here in Parliament and, of course, the WE scandal, as someone mentioned.

In this bill, you appear to be asking to change the law to allow for only spending on these new benefits, the CRB, the recovery sickness benefit, the recovery caregiving benefit. Does this mean your government intends to forfeit its right, as spelled out in Bill C-13, to spend without oversight? Was that just an oversight or have you kept the right, through warrants or other mechanisms, to be able to spend without scrutiny?

Ms. Freeland: We were quite deliberate in putting together Bill C-4 to be very clear with senators and MPs on which authorities we are seeking, so let me just lay that out right now. The PHENCPA, as we call it, provides authority to make payments from the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the itemized measures and amounts listed in the schedule to Bill C-4, and it is also a time-limited authority to December 31. Parliamentary approval would need to be sought for any increase in funds beyond what is laid out or for any extension in authorities beyond December 31.

Bill C-4 is only about emergency spending for the next three months. It has no effect on the regular appropriations process.

Senator Wallin: So only in the benefits as laid out?

Ms. Freeland: Yes. We were deliberate and careful about laying out the schedule and then laying out the new three benefits that Minister Qualtrough has been speaking about.

Senator Wallin: My second question is for Minister Qualtrough and it concerns the self-employed workers who may have already collected CERB and may have done some other work on the side in the last six months to make ends meet. I'm thinking particularly of part-time workers, seasonal workers, the mom and pop business owners — like a husband and wife who run a business — hairdressers, Uber drivers and gig workers. Did the CERB they collected count toward the \$38,000 they are allowed to earn?

My second point is that \$500 a week is \$26,000 annually, so how did you decide on the \$38,000? The third point is that if you are only clawed back any over-earnings at the rate of 50 cents on the dollar, are you not creating an incentive for some to work the system, earn more than \$38,000 and then pay it back with 50-cent dollars; not those in need, but those who may be working the system?

Ms. Qualtrough: Thank you, senator, for those questions. We came up with the \$38,000 as follows: \$24,000 is the average annual income of a self-employed individual. Then if you add the maximum somebody can get on the CERB, which was \$14,000, that's how we came up with the \$38,000.

We would have loved to have a sophisticated working long-claim model like we had in EI where every two weeks we could check people's income and verify that. We just weren't able systemically to do that, so we came up with an annual income, which was \$38,000, meaning that if you basically have to earn above \$51,000 to have every single dollar of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit clawed back; it's \$38,000 plus \$13,000. It will happen over two tax years just by the nature of the 26 weeks and we're at the end of 2020. The expectation is that people will know what they earned and they will know if they're going to hit the threshold or not, or have hit the threshold, and will decide — again, it's by attestation whether or not to apply —

The Chair: Excuse me, minister. Now Senator Dalphond, you have five minutes.

Ms. Qualtrough: You guys have to ask me before Chrystia.

Senator Dalphond: I understand from a written question I asked of the department earlier this week that the excess costs for increasing the EI benefits to a minimum of \$500 is approximately \$2.2 billion.

Minister Freeland, I understand from your answer that overall, you estimate the adjustments made to the EI system will cost about \$10.2 billion, and I also understand that the government has committed to freeze the rates for employers and employees for the next two years. So will that \$10 billion be coming from the excess in the Employment Insurance funds or is that going to come from a subsidy from the federal government to the Employment Insurance fund?

Ms. Freeland: That's a very good question. We have made no change to the way EI is funded. When this comes to the freezing of the premiums, I hope everyone will agree now is not a time to be imposing additional taxes on employers, particularly not a tax that would effectively be a disincentive to hiring new people. That's why we did it, but we haven't changed the way the system operates.

Senator Dalphond: Where is the \$10 billion coming from?

Ms. Freeland: EI operates as an automatic stabilizer, so EI is inevitably more expensive during times of an economic downturn and less expensive when the economy is strong because fewer people need to claim, and that is what we're going to be experiencing now.

Senator Dalphond: It will be spread over time.

Ms. Freeland: The funding for the EI system is unchanged.

• (1650)

Senator Dalphond: I see. So it's contrary to the U.S. model where Congress passed a special bill to transfer money to the unemployment system in order to help the states provide support for self-employed people and those who are sick, for example.

Ms. Freeland: You're quite right, senator, that when it comes to the EI portion of the benefits the funding model is entirely unchanged. Where there is additional funding, it's for the three new benefits that Minister Qualtrough outlined, and our estimate is that they will cost \$24 billion. We have, of course, provided significant funding to the provinces: the \$19 billion Safe Restart Agreement and \$2 billion for the restart of schools.

Senator Dalphond: CERB and other benefits were paid without source deductions, and now I understand that these new benefits will be taxed at source. What's the reasoning behind that? Is it to facilitate recovery, or is it to treat it like unemployment benefits?

Ms. Qualtrough: It was the second answer. So we wanted to parallel the EI system, and again we tried to create as much equity as we could, which is why we have raised the minimum EI amount to a \$500 a week too. EI is taxed at source, so we felt it prudent to do the same. The CRA will take a flat 10% off someone's \$500 a week. Again, we don't have the sophisticated system to tell you exactly what somebody's income was at that moment, how much it should be, but there will be a tax deduction at the source.

Also, these benefits have now been going on for long enough that we want to make sure people aren't put in a more vulnerable position come next tax season where they have a massive tax bill because we didn't collect it at the source.

The Chair: Forty-five seconds.

Senator Dalphond: Then I give it up. Thank you.

The Chair: Next 10 minutes will be shared by Senator Bellemare and Senator Loffreda: 5 minutes each.

[Translation]

Senator Bellemare: I am very pleased to have a chance to ask you some questions today. Thank you both for being here. I'd like to continue in the same vein as Senator Dalphond. Although we didn't confer, we seem to have similar questions.

Given that nothing is mentioned in Bill C-4, it is clear that EI is expected to retain the same funding levels. Let me dig a little deeper. For 50 years, from 1941 to 1991, the federal government was an important funding partner in the EI system. Between 1971 and 1991, the federal government was responsible for EI expenditures when the unemployment rate was higher than 4%. Today employers and employees fund all EI expenditures. These are very regressive contributions for workers, especially for small businesses. The Chief Actuary told us in August that the EI account, which is normally around \$20 billion, would grow to \$60 billion in 2020 because of its anticipated spending, not counting the additional \$10.2 billion.

Do you believe, since history has shown us as much, that the federal government could be an important funding partner in the EI system? Do you foresee that being the case under permanent reforms to EI?

Ms. Freeland: That is an important and I would say a key question. I will be specific. Today, we are not proposing changes to the employment insurance system. I want to be very clear with all senators. That is not what we are proposing. We are not changing the system today.

However, as you and Minister Qualtrough stated, I believe that the COVID-19 crisis has shown Canadians that the EI system is an excellent system. It is robust and complex and reflects the complexity of the economy, but it was created for our usual economy and not the current economy. For that reason, we added support measures for workers, as Minister Qualtrough mentioned.

As Minister Qualtrough said, COVID-19 has made us realize that we must reflect on whether our employment insurance system is appropriate for the 21st century. That is an important question. We must think hard about that and conduct the necessary consultations. It is as though we were on a long flight, the COVID-19 flight. Making changes to the aircraft's systems mid-flight is not the right approach. However, we see today that it will be important and necessary to give some thought to that.

Senator Bellemare: I have a question for Ms. Qualtrough about public employment services. With regard to eligibility criteria, I see that you rely a great deal on random tests administered by the Canada Revenue Agency. Very soon, we will need recovery measures and incentives so that Canadians are more active on the job market and we will have to transition from passive to active measures. We will need public services to help people find jobs and we will have to work with the provinces. Have you examined the possibility of working more closely with provincial public services?

The Chair: Minister, I'm sorry, but five minutes are up.

Ms. Qualtrough: Yes.

[English]

Senator Loffreda: My question is for Minister Freeland. Congratulations once again, and thank you, minister, for being with us here today.

I know the provisions in Bill C-4 will be welcomed by many Canadians, and I certainly appreciate the need to support and invest in people during these times. Many Canadians work within a budgetary framework, and the government's willingness to provide fiscal projections this fall is a wise choice. It's comforting to see that, as you mentioned previously, the costs have been outlined: you have costs for the various programs and a budget plan with clear targets that outline these costs. This is very important.

Has your government set a maximum debt-to-GDP target to attain? I mean, there are a lot of moving parts at this point. It would be comforting to see an upper limit to say that this is the upper limit on the debt-to-GDP that we don't want to surpass. We need a cap.

This is important because it would comfort us. It would give us direction, and at this point I think direction is important for the investors, for bond-rating agencies, and it's important to see that our expenditures are being well monitored and managed while waiting for fall fiscal projections.

I appreciate the fact that, as I have said previously, we are building the tracks as the train is speeding along but a sense of direction will make sure the train doesn't fall off the tracks as we are building them. I feel confident that you have the situation under control, but I'd like to know if there is a maximum level where, given all these moving parts, you will say there is a limit we won't surpass on the debt-to-GDP.

Ms. Freeland: I'm going to turn around and face you, senator, while answering, so I don't have to show you my back while speaking to you.

Senator, I'll offer an answer in two parts. The first one is that you are quite right that, even as we confront this unprecedented crisis, we need to do it in a way that is thoughtful and prudent. I actually think that at a time when we are spending — because of this unprecedented crisis — unprecedented amounts of money, we need to be more careful rather than less. That is why, as I said in response to an earlier question, all of us should take note of what DBRS Morningstar said a few weeks ago when they confirmed Canada's triple-A rating: "DBRS Morningstar views the overall fiscal response positively, as the stimulus has been timely in delivery, temporary in design, and sufficient in size given the scale of the shock."

• (1700)

That is not the government speaking. You referred to the ratings agencies; that's one of them.

When it comes to spending, it's worth appreciating that not all spending is created equal. Today we need to think about our spending in two categories.

The first category is the spending to fight the coronavirus: the spending on vaccines, the spending on testing and tracing, and the spending to support Canadians as governments impose restrictive measures on the economy to fight the coronavirus. We are already seeing, as the second wave mounts in Quebec and in Ontario and in B.C., additional restrictive measures imposed.

Canadians need to have economic support to get through those restrictions. The reality is that none of us can predict exactly what the course of the virus will be. We cannot know for certain how great that support will need to be, nor can we know for certain what the cost will be for PPE, for vaccines and so forth. What I think is really important in that fight against coronavirus is for our government, and indeed all of us, to say to Canadians that Canada went into this crisis with the fiscal firepower to fight

the virus. Our measures so far are working. We have seen over the summer a strong economic rebound because of those measures to support Canadians.

It's really important for Canadians to know the support to fight the virus is going to continue to be there. We cannot say to Canadians that you need to have new restrictions if we're not going to support —

The Chair: Minister, we have to move on to the next 10 minutes.

Senator Ngo: Thank you, ministers, for coming. I would like to continue to question along the lines of Senator Carignan. The PBO put the deficit at 328.5, the government projected 343.2; not accounting the recent NDP-sponsored additions. According to Fitch Ratings, and incorporating this rather ambitious addition, it projected the deficit tag at \$380 billion. Last Friday, two days after the Throne Speech, it issued a statement, warning that we could face a credit downgrade if the Liberal government continues in their failure to: "... set clear post-pandemic fiscal anchors and reduce the federal deficit to sustainable levels after the public health crisis"

The simple calculations of the projected \$380-billion deficit for the fiscal year amounts to \$10,000 in debt burden for every Canadian. Considering the government was projecting a deficit until 2040, long before the pandemic, I dare not imagine the magnitude of those deficits now. Are we talking about a century?

My question to you, minister, is will the government promise fiscal year updates in order to shed light on just how much this additional measure will cost, what the debt burden is for Canadians, and just how many decades, if not centuries, will it take Canada to balance the budget?

Ms. Freeland: Again, many questions contained in there. I'll try to answer a few of them.

We committed in the Speech from the Throne to release an update to Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan in the fall, and we committed that the update will outline the government's economic and fiscal position. It will provide fiscal projections and set out new measures to implement the Throne Speech.

When it comes to spending — relevant to your question and the second part of my answer to the senator — when it comes to fighting the coronavirus, it is essential for us to say to Canadians and to assure Canadians, as Mario Draghi did in the EU after the 2008 crisis, that we will do whatever it takes to support you.

Canadians are worried now, with the second wave. Some Canadians in the country are subject to new restrictions. They need to know that we're going to support them in doing what is right to protect our health. That is going to lead to the best economic outcome for all of us.

The second thing I want to say, senator, is that is one type of spending — the fighting coronavirus spending. There is another type of spending, which is new permanent spending programs. When it comes to that type of spending, a very different approach needs to be taken. When it comes to new permanent spending programs, I think it's very important for our government — for any government — to apply the same kind of prudence, rigour and careful thought on sustainability that I would say is the Canadian way.

Senator Ngo: When do you think Canadians can expect an actual budget to be tabled?

Ms. Freeland: The Throne Speech was clear, and I tried to be as well, on what we intend to do in the fall.

Senator Ngo: Thank you.

My second question: Back in May, the National Research Council partnered with CanSino, a Chinese firm that has ties with the Chinese People's Liberation Army, to develop a vaccine. In August, that multimillion-dollar vaccine deal, which was created with Canadian tech, collapsed because China's communist regime blocked the shipment of vaccines to Canada. Those vaccines would have been the first to be approved for testing in human trials in Canada. Unfortunately, it's always the case when you are dealing with the communist regime. Minister, did the deal with the CCP, which fell through, make us fall behind other countries in securing vaccines?

Ms. Freeland: Absolutely not.

Senator Smith: My question is for Minister Qualtrough. I thank both ministers for being here. We all recognize the importance of what the government has done to help Canadians.

My question is concerning hospitality. The restaurant sector has been hard hit, and as we know, they are probably one of the hardest hit sectors. The second version of the CEWS was meant to provide additional support but is failing to achieve some of its goals. It initially did some good, but it's very complex. Moreover, it's becoming evident that Canada is moving into or is already in our second wave. In Quebec, of course, as of today, there are more restrictions in terms of restaurant closures.

Given the dire situation that many small businesses in the restaurant and hospitality sectors are already in, how will the government support these businesses? Should stringent public health measures be reimposed? The problem with restaurants is that many of them work on a volume basis; if you don't sell booze, you don't make money. For those who are just selling food, you have to have volume, and with people not out in the streets you're not getting the volume. When you put the \$48,000 up to help people out, it's great, but all it does is extend the speed at which they're going to go bankrupt.

Knowing what we know about the fragility of restaurant businesses, what can we do that's reasonable? You don't want to keep sinking money into a situation if the ship is sinking, but at the same time you have 800,000 Canadians working in this industry. What can we do? There seems to be more problems that are going to get bigger in this particular sector.

Ms. Freeland: That's a question for me, senator, I'm afraid. I agree with your point. I agree that the hospitality sector is particularly affected, and I agree that going into the second wave, which is happening in many parts of the country, the horrible paradox of the coronavirus is that to fight the virus we have to intentionally choose to shut down some economic activity.

Senator Smith: Right.

Ms. Freeland: I believe that the right economic policy, and also the right health policy, is to give those workers and businesses the support they need to do the right thing.

• (1710)

So here's what we are proposing. As we said in the Throne Speech, the wage subsidy will be extended to the summer. I can't give you details on how exactly that's going to work yet, but Nick Leswick from Finance is with me. I can assure you Finance officials are burning the midnight oil working that out.

There was also something very important, which I think was perhaps not sufficiently noticed in the Throne Speech. It was a commitment to provide additional specific support to businesses that face new lockdown restrictions, kind of a safety net to get them through. We meant it when we said that in the Throne Speech. That's something we're working on right now. It's something I have spoken about specifically with the provinces of Quebec and Ontario because they have already imposed some additional restrictions. It's tricky to do, but I think that it can and must be done, and we will do it.

Senator Smith: Thank you.

The Chair: You still have a minute.

Senator Smith: I don't want to pontificate and say anything other than on the point that has been raised three or four times about how far you go. My way of thinking is always that you have to go and help and support people, but there has to be an economic balance or a fiscal anchor somewhere that you can start to share with Canadians without giving your hand up.

You have to be very adept in talking to Canadians about how far you are going to go, but you have to give them some sense of what the end game is in terms of how far you can go. I know it's early, but I hope that this planning process is going on so that you're not only well prepared, but Canadians can be well prepared to accept and know that it's going to be the right direction.

The Chair: Senator Smith has managed to use that one minute.

Senator Anderson: My question is on behalf of my colleague Senator Boyer, Ontario. It's an open question to whoever can provide a fulsome response.

My question is about the government's distinction-based approach to Indigenous services. The government stated during the Speech from the Throne that it must work toward implementing the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final's report. The report "calls for the federal government to recognize, respect, and address the distinct health needs of the Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples."

In order to do this, the government must address the needs of urban Indigenous populations. It is well documented that over 50% of all Indigenous people live in an urban community. Distinction-based funding does not include Indigenous people living in the city.

How will Indigenous skills and employment training programs be designed to help Indigenous-based populations find employment if these are distinctions-based?

Second, will additional funds and approaches be included to serve this population?

Ms. Qualtrough: Thank you for your really important question. We have an Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program, ISET, which has met with a lot of success in some ways and has faced some serious — I wouldn't say challenges — wake-up calls in terms of how we interact with different communities. We are working on improving that program to deliver both on reserves through distinctions-based, but also to Indigenous urban youth, which is a particular interest of mine, being mindful and respectful of everything I've learned around there not being the community support in an urban environment as there may be in other environments.

Again, we're working on that. We have a commitment in the Speech from the Throne to make the biggest investment in the history of our country in training. We will absolutely be investing quite significantly in Indigenous training to the best of our ability and working, of course, with my colleague Minister Miller on walking that path together respectfully.

Senator Anderson: *Quyanainni.*

I yield the balance of my time.

Senator McPhedran: Thank you Minister Freeland, Minister Qualtrough and your officials for being so present with us today. Your public service is appreciated by millions of Canadians, including many of us in this chamber.

Once my one question to each of you has been answered, I intend to yield my balance to Senator Kutcher for Senator Moodie.

Minister Freeland, CERB recipients who apply to the Canada Revenue Agency will have to start the EI application process from scratch, as we know. Is the government expecting those who applied for CERB through the CRA to live without any income for six to eight weeks? Does the government have a plan in place to help them bridge the gap between CERB and EI?

Tragically, this is happening at exactly the time when the extraordinarily wealthy banks in this country are dropping hammers of debt on already debt-loaded Canadians by stopping many of the temporary deferrals of mortgage and credit card debt that's weighing down millions of Canadians. Let's be clear: these are only deferrals. They're coming back on stream with compound penalties piled on to much of the credit card debt, for example.

Ministers, some Canadians — especially the elderly, poor Canadians — have been using their credit cards to pay for medicine and other essentials. Back in April, your predecessor, Minister Freeland, and Prime Minister Trudeau, both spoke blunt words on how the banks, especially the big six, needed to be doing more. But the big six have not stepped up. Forgiveness of debt does not seem to be in their lexicon beyond bland words of assurance from their executives on websites of the banks and the Canadian Bankers Association, words that lead debtors to long waits online and on the phone, then far too often only to be told, if they actually reach a live person or get a personalized response, "Sorry, they don't qualify."

Isn't it time for Canada's wealthy financial institutions, especially the big six, to step up and genuinely give some relief to heavily indebted Canadians in this time of crisis? Yes, I know we need the strong banks. Senator Loffreda and I have had this conversation over and over again. But can't banks afford to step up? Look at their profit levels during the pandemic.

Will we be able to see from you stronger measures and corporate responsibility directed at our rich banks in defence of Canadians loaded with debt exacerbated by this crisis?

Ms. Freeland: Minister Qualtrough, you go ahead because there was a CERB-EI thing there.

Ms. Qualtrough: I was going to ask Heather to give the numbers. We've been very aware of the need to minimize, if not eliminate, the transition between CERB and EI, particularly for new applicants because the vast majority of EI-CERB recipients have automatically been transferred and Service Canada is working with those who haven't.

I'm actually not as worried — I'm always worried — about that group. Heather shared with me some very hopeful numbers in our briefing. I'd ask her to share those numbers.

Ms. Sheehy: Thank you for the question. Senator, just to give you some dates — it may be too much — September 29 would be the earliest date that someone could have received their last CERB payment delivered by EI. They would be eligible starting on October 11. They would be eligible for the two weeks prior to October 11.

The first EI payments then, under post-CERB, would go out as soon as October 14. It's estimated that 80% of those clients will receive their benefit within three days of becoming eligible.

What I heard as of this afternoon — the latest numbers — is that of those applications that we have received since Sunday, when the new application period opened, 83.4% have already been processed since they were received.

I would also mention some dates with respect to the proposed Bill C-4. If Bill C-4 receives Royal Assent, the first applications would start on Monday, October 5. CRA would be delivering those benefits, and they have indicated that they anticipate most people will receive their benefits within three to five business days if they are on direct deposit; quite quickly after that October 5 go-live date. That would be for the caregiving and sickness benefit because they are delivered on one-week increments, whereas the recovery benefit is on a two-week increment, and it would open on October 12.

• (1720)

Ms. Freeland: The point about the mortgage deferrals is a really important one. It's something that we are going to be watching very closely.

If I were to summarize the core theme of Bill C-4 and of our entire discussion today, it is our government's commitment to supporting Canadians through this crisis. We've done a lot, we know there's more to do and we need your help to do it.

I do agree with you that everyone has to do their part in Canada, including those who have the most means. We're going to be watching closely, and I'll leave it there.

Senator McPhedran: Minister Freeland, how do you feel about what the banks have done so far? Have they responded to the Prime Minister and your predecessor and the words they spoke in April? I have to say, I see no evidence of it.

Ms. Freeland: Senator, in your remarks, you spoke about the importance of having strong financial institutions in a country. That's right. Particularly at a time of financial stress, which this is, that systemic importance is something that I am very aware of.

When it comes to the Canadian financial system in particular, as a financial journalist in New York in 2008, I was very aware of the way in which Canadian financial institutions and our banking system coped with the 2008 financial crisis much better than financial institutions in the U.S., in the U.K. and other G7 countries. That was a strength that helped us all. So I am mindful of that, and I'm glad you made that comment.

The Chair: Honourable senators, the committee has been sitting for 125 minutes. In conformity with the order of the Senate, I am obliged to interrupt proceedings so that the committee can report to the Senate.

Ministers, on behalf of all senators, thank you for joining us today to assist us with our work on the bill. I would also like to thank your officials.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Honourable senators, is it agreed that the Committee rises and I report to the Senate that the witnesses have been heard?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the sitting of the Senate is resumed.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, the Committee of the Whole, authorized by the Senate to examine the subject matter of Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19, reports that it has heard from the said witnesses.

POINT OF ORDER—SPEAKER'S RULING RESERVED

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise on a point of order. I do it somewhat reluctantly. I don't take any pleasure in it, and quite frankly, I don't expect any action to be taken on the point of order that I'm raising, but I think we deserve to at least get this on the record.

Colleagues, Your Honour, we spend a great deal of time as leaders negotiating a number of things, including Committees of the Whole. We do a lot of arm-twisting, and we're actually quite possessive of the amount of time that we want to have, each of us, on Committee of the Whole. We do horse trading, and we get ministers in here, and we agree on a certain amount of time.

In the past, we have agreed that ministers would make five-minute opening statements so we could have the full two hours or the full hour and a half, whatever it is that we would agree to, which in today's case was 125 minutes, with 5 minutes for opening statements, and the ministers, I suppose, could decide who was going to make them or whether they would combine them like we do in many cases; we combine a few senators and they can share their time. As the Leader of the Opposition, I have typically been the first person to ask questions, and I'm being given an amount of time.

Today, Your Honour, when I started off asking Minister Freeland a question, she took over two minutes of my question time — not in a statement ahead of time but in the 10 minutes that I was allotted — talking about something that was entirely unrelated. As a matter of fact, she admitted it was unrelated.

She said:

Thank you very much, senator, for the question. I would like to start my first comments here, before you all, just with one reflection that I had Tuesday night and, indeed in the early hours of Wednesday morning when I was in the other place voting. It was actually a remarkably collegial, even friendly and convivial atmosphere. We joked across the aisle, and ultimately there was unanimous support for the bill.

That same night, as I am sure everyone here is aware, there was an important debate happening in another country close to us.

• (1730)

She wanted to make a comment, and she said, “I would like to make a comment about Canadian democracy, senator, if I may. I’m about to finish.”

She went on to say, “I will answer, I promise, senator. We are here for two hours.

She was here for two hours. I didn’t have two hours. I had 10 minutes. She took over 20% of my time to toot her own horn. It had nothing to do with my question.

Your Honour and colleagues, we in this group represent, in my opinion, about 6 million Canadians who voted for us and who have the right to answers. When I’m asking a question here, I’m asking a question on behalf of those 6 million Canadians.

My questions were directly related to the bill. My question was: Why was Bill C-2 changed to Bill C-4? What was the problem with Bill C-2? I still don’t know because I didn’t get an answer.

I had a supplementary question: Can you tell us about the sick leave promise that you negotiated with the NDP? What did that cost Canadians? Again, no answer.

So I guess, Your Honour and Leader of the Government, I am asking that in the future, when we have a Committee of the Whole and we have ministers come in here on our invitation and we ask them questions, they are not here on their own time; they’re here on our time and we have a negotiated agreement. When Senator Ringuette does not cut them off when they go on about their own agenda and then does not allow us the amount of time that they take away from us, that is not the way to conduct business as a Committee of the Whole.

So I want it on record at least, Your Honour. We want to cooperate. I think the other leaders would say that we have had great cooperation in deciding how many minutes we each get. Overall, Senator Ringuette has done a good job of giving everybody the same amount of time, but she will have to put the hammer down on ministers who want to talk about what they want to talk about. They are here to talk to us about bills that we are expected to pass and, again, are expected to pass in a real hurry. We on this side agreed that we would give leave so that this could be done in three days, rather than four. We have been cooperating. That is not cooperation that we are getting from the government.

I’m asking here on the record that, in the future, when we have ministers in here, they answer our questions. They make their statements ahead of time but, once the questioning has started — and if other senators want to give them whatever time they want to talk about their own ideas, that’s fine. But I think, for the best part, the Conservative caucus wants to have answers to the questions that we are posing on behalf of Canadians. Thank you, Your Honour.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

The Hon. the Speaker: Are there any other senators who wish to join the debate?

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, I would simply say I do not believe this meets the test for a point of order. I don’t hear any rules being violated. I appreciate that Senator Plett is upset and he feels his questions were not answered. He has taken quite a few minutes now to tell us why he’s upset about that. If other senators were also to take time now to complain that their questions were not answered, we would spend the next hour, probably, hearing the complaints. This does not rise to the standard of a point of order. While he makes some fair points about asking ministers to spend their time appropriately, this should not be considered as something that is worthy of your consideration as a point of order.

I would also add that on the fairness of distribution of questions, there are many issues that can be discussed here, including the fact, of course, that the Independent Senators Group had far more members who had questions who were unable to put their questions to the minister because of the distribution of questions that was agreed upon. This is not the time to open that up, but there are many issues around fairness that could be discussed. It is not really appropriate, as a point of order, for us to deal with them in that manner. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I will take the matter under advisement.

SECOND READING

Hon. Tony Dean moved second reading of Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today as the Senate sponsor of Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19. I’m hopeful that you have already exhausted all of your very good questions and I look forward to the balance of time here being as collegial as that described by the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister when she joined us today.

Fighting COVID-19 remains a national priority. Canada is still very much in a pandemic and it remains a very grave threat. This key piece of legislation, as you know, is vital to the government’s ongoing economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic and would help ensure that Canadians continue to have the supports they need to weather the storm.

Before us is a bill proposing an estimated \$41 billion in measures: \$24 billion in recovery benefits for Canadians and \$17 billion in extended COVID relief funding.

Colleagues, behind the numbers are real people who haven’t been able to work to support themselves and their families due to COVID-19. This is why the government created the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, or CERB, during a time in the pandemic when public health authorities were telling people to stay home in order to flatten the curve and keep Canadians safe.

On August 20, the government announced it would transition CERB recipients to a simplified Employment Insurance, or EI, program to provide income support to those who remain unable to work. In addition, being on EI will allow workers, while on claim, to access training and work-sharing, all of which will help connect people to the workforce and provide incentives to work.

In addition, the government is introducing a new suite of temporary recovery benefits to further support workers. Before I discuss those, I want to spend a few moments going over the government's recent changes to EI.

The new temporary measures announced in August will help people meet eligibility requirements for EI in three ways. The first is helping people to meet eligibility requirements by setting a national unemployment rate of 13.1% for all EI economic regions. This provides a uniform requirement of 420 hours required for people to qualify for Employment Insurance. This adjustment will also provide a minimum entitlement of 26 weeks of regular benefits. In EI regions where the unemployment rate is higher than 13.1%, that region will use the higher rate.

Second, the government is providing all EI claimants with a one-time credit of insurable hours. The government is crediting 300 hours for regular benefit claimants and 480 hours for special benefits claimants. This means that Canadians can qualify for EI with as few as 120 insurable hours. Furthermore, the hours credit is available for one year and is retroactive to March 15, 2020.

Third, the government set a minimum benefit rate of \$500 a week for regular EI benefits and \$300 a week for extended parental benefits.

In addition, as we've heard from the ministers today, the government is freezing the EI premium for two years at the 2020 rate. This will ensure that employees and employers do not have to pay increased EI premiums in a time of economic uncertainty, and it will help support job creation as the economy recovers.

As outlined in the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion has the authority to make temporary changes to the EI program to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EI changes I just discussed were implemented using that authority.

• (1740)

However, even with these changes, some Canadians will still be ineligible for EI. In addition, some workers will need continued support if they're sick or if they need time off to care for a loved one. That is why we're here today debating this important legislation. The bill before us would create three new benefits: the Canada Recovery Benefit, the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit, and the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit. There is an urgent need for these additional supports to assist Canadians who otherwise would experience serious challenges. These new benefits are intended to ensure Canadians are supported in the next phase of the government's response to COVID-19, and to complement the recent changes in the EI program.

First, the Canada Recovery Benefit. This will help those who stopped working due to COVID-19 or had their income reduced by at least 50%, and who are not eligible for EI. This also includes Canadians who are self-employed or working in the gig economy. The benefit will provide eligible Canadians with \$500 a week for up to 26 weeks, which is consistent with the EI program.

Similar to EI, the Canada Recovery Benefit is designed to incentivize work. One facet of this incentivization includes claimants being allowed to earn employment and/or self-employment income while receiving the benefit. In addition, workers would apply after every two-week period for which they are seeking income support, and attest that they continue to meet the benefit's requirements. This means that, similar to EI, individuals who claim the Canada Recovery Benefit would have to attest that they haven't quit or turned down reasonable employment, and are seeking work or are prepared to return to work as soon as it is reasonable to do so.

Finally, applicants who have a net income greater than \$38,000 in 2020 or 2021 under the new rising limits would be required to pay 50 cents of benefit for every dollar earned above the threshold, up to the full amount of the Canada Recovery Benefit received. The government arrived at \$38,000 by adding \$24,000, as the average income a self-employed individual, with a maximum CERB allowance of \$14,000.

This balances the need for income support while incentivizing work and ensures we continue to target Canadians who need the support the most.

Second, the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit: The new Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit will prevent workers from having to choose between protecting their health and paying their bills. The Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit will provide \$500 per week for up to two weeks to eligible workers who are unable to work at least 50% of their normal workweek because: one, they contracted COVID-19 or may have contracted COVID-19; two, they have underlying conditions, are undergoing treatments, or have contracted other sicknesses that would make them more susceptible to COVID-19; or three, they isolated themselves on the advice of their employer, a medical practitioner, a nurse practitioner, a person in authority, or a government or public health authority, for reasons related to COVID-19.

Workers may be eligible if they do not have access to sick leave through their employer or have exhausted their paid sick leave. However, workers can't claim this benefit and receive other paid sick leave for the same benefit period. Workers would apply after the one-week period in which they are seeking income support, and attest that they continue to meet the benefit's requirements. In addition, workers are not required to have a medical certificate to qualify for the benefit.

This new benefit would fulfill the government's commitment as part of the Safe Restart Agreement with provinces and territories, to provide up to two weeks of sick leave to all Canadians in the context of COVID-19.

Colleagues, this benefit is vital to the safe recovery of our economy. We have to ensure that workers do not go to work if they have COVID-19 or are at a high risk of contracting the virus. Workers without access to paid sick leave should not have to choose between paying the bills and protecting their health and their loved ones.

Third, the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit. While schools, daycares, and daycare program facilities are working to safely reopen according to public health guidelines, closure can and will happen. This is where the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit would apply. It would provide \$500 per week, per household, for up to 26 weeks, for an eligible worker who needs to take unpaid leave to care for a loved one due to a school, daycare or day program closure. To be clear, this benefit can be shared by members of the same household, but two people in the same household cannot claim the benefit at the same time to stack the benefit.

In order to be eligible for the benefit, the applicant would need to be unable to work for at least 50% of their normally scheduled workweek because: they must take care of a child who is under the age of 12, or family member with a disability, or a dependent who requires supervised care because they contracted or might have contracted COVID-19; their school, daycare, daycare program, or care facility is closed or operates under an alternative schedule due to COVID-19; they cannot attend the same facilities under the advice of a medical professional; or the caregiver who usually provides care is not available for reasons related to COVID-19.

Workers should not have to choose between paying the bills and caring for a family member, and this bill will allow for that support.

If passed, the eligibility requirement for all three recovery benefits would run from September 27, 2020 to September 25, 2021. In addition, all three benefits are taxable and taxes will be deductible at source.

I'd now like to move to the integrity measures in the proposed legislation. The legislation also sets out provisions to support the administration of the new benefits. Unlike the CERB, which had the integrity measures built in at the back end, the new recovery benefits will have robust upfront verification measures. Applicants will experience different upfront and downstream validation checkpoints to ensure they are only receiving the benefits to which they are entitled. In addition, the legislation before us contains penalties for violations and offences to deter fraudulent activity and to promote compliance.

Under this bill, a person commits a violation if they apply for a recovery benefit and knowingly make a representation that is false or misleading, or receive a recovery benefit knowing that they are not eligible to receive.

With regard to offences that are the most serious violations in a tier of three, a person commits an offence if they knowingly use a false identity or another person's identity, if they counsel a person to apply for the benefit with the intent to steal all or a substantial part of that person's benefit — as we have seen evidence of — or knowingly makes three or more representations that are false or misleading, if the total amount of the benefits that were or would have been paid is at least \$5,000.

Honourable senators, the government has been clear from the beginning that no one who has made an honest mistake will be punished. In addition, the legislation is clear that if someone mistakenly believed that his or her representation was true, they would not have committed a violation or offence due to this error.

Let's move quickly to changes to the Canada Labour Code. In order to ensure that federally regulated employees have access to a job-protected leave, the government is moving forward with amendments to the Canada Labour Code, so these employees can access the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit and the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit. These amendments also create a regulation-making power that would allow the government to suspend or modify the requirement to provide a medical certificate to access certain entitlements under part 3 of the code. The existing waiver of the requirement for employees to provide medical certificates when accessing medical leave, compassionate care leave, and leave related to critical illnesses was repealed on September 30. This regulation-making authority would allow the government to reintroduce the waiver if it is deemed necessary to reduce strain on the health care system and make it easier for employees to access the job-protected leave they need.

The government's intent with these amendments is to assure Canadians that their jobs are protected if they need to stay home and keep themselves and other Canadians safe.

Finally and briefly, let's look at the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act extension. Part 3 of this extension also extends the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act through to the end of this year.

• (1750)

It requires the concurrence of the Ministers of Finance and Health. The section includes 45 line item measures adding up to \$17 billion. Most of the items are top ups such as regional COVID relief and recovery funding. Some items are new, such as skills and training. All the items found in the schedule of the bill in the last pages.

The act made it possible for the government to help millions of Canadians and hundreds of thousands of Canadian businesses get through this crisis through various emergency support programs. A failure to further the legislation could disrupt these payments with harmful consequences for people's lives, families and businesses. Since March 15, almost 9 million people have received the CERB, helping millions of Canadians and their families to avoid catastrophic income loss while at the same time helping to keep our economy afloat. Today, Canada is still very much in a crisis. It is estimated that the number of Canadians who still require some income support is in the millions.

In addition, by extending the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act, the government will be able to extend funding for important measures in its fight against COVID-19, including the purchase of personal protective equipment to help keep our essential workers safe and safely restart our economy, medical research to increase our knowledge of the virus and inform our response, and the future purchase of vaccines and other treatments.

Combined, these measures will make our economy more resilient and create a safe bridge to help Canadians span the gap between the complete lockdown of last spring and a cautious, safe reopening of the economy this fall and winter.

In conclusion, colleagues, the bill we have before us has a balanced and nuanced approach to dealing with what may be the worst health and economic crisis of our generation. The pandemic has changed many things, including the way we interact in this chamber, but it will not last forever. Canadians are resilient. We will overcome these challenging times and we're going to do that together. By supporting this bill, all of us in this chamber can make sure we are looking out for Canadians. We have here the opportunity to work together to build a stronger, more resilient Canada. Colleagues, I encourage you all to join me in supporting the passing of Bill C-4. Thank you.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Your Honour, I have a couple of questions for Senator Dean.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Dean, would you like to take a couple of questions?

Senator Dean: Of course.

Senator Martin: Senator, you're right. Because we had the ministers prior to the start of this debate, they did answer quite a few of our questions, but there are still some questions that remain. As critic, I thought it would be important for me to ask you some of the questions that are quite specific since you are the sponsor of this bill.

Would you explain to me clause 41 of the bill that allows the government to spend under this act until March 31, 2024, when the programs end in 2021? I found the date of March 31, 2024, not so much alarming, but it caught my attention. I was curious as to that date included in clause 41 of this bill.

Senator Dean: Let me just find the appropriate clause.

Senator Martin: Part 4, I believe.

Senator Dean: Yes, it absolutely is correct. You are looking at clause 41 and the reference to "the Minister, may, until March 31, 2024." Thank you for the question. It's a really good one. I've inquired with departmental officials extensively through the course of my preparations, but I'm afraid I am unable to answer this.

I can only assume that there will be run-on costs associated with this bill that will require payment out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, but I'm afraid I can't provide a better answer than that. I wish you had been able to ask that one to officials while they were here.

[Senator Dean]

Senator Martin: I was making my own inquiries as well, but one of the answers I received from an assistant in the leader's office that was working with me talked about how the CRA is responsible for potentially retrieving, trying to recoup certain payments that were either erroneously sent, or there could be overpayments, there could be some fraudulent activity, that it will require some time. I don't know if that is entirely accurate. You had requested such clarity on this, but the date alone made me pause. Why do we have 2024 in this bill?

Senator Dean: Senator Martin, you jogged my memory. There is another clause of the bill — and I will point it out to you later on — that provides the CRA with, I believe, either 60 or 72 months in which to recoup monies that were found to be inappropriately received by recipients of programs in this bill. That's where the congruence would be that would take it to 2024.

Senator Martin: Right. It seems like a long time away, but with the complexity of these files, I'm curious as to the success of CRA in recouping whatever they need to. Will the activities go beyond this date or is this the end date of when certain spending would end?

Senator Dean: It seems to be fairly definitive given that such a precise date is provided. I'm assuming that is the case, yes.

Senator Martin: Yes. I know we're going to be getting to third reading tomorrow and the conclusion of this, so I wish that you and I both had some final definitive responses to this. I'm just going to trust that what we're looking at are the spendings in this bill. Now you said \$41 billion, but the minister had given us some numbers and Senator Carignan calculated as \$51 billion. I thought the minister had given three numbers in her response to Senator Carignan and I was doing the math very quickly, and it was \$51 billion, but perhaps you can clarify that amount.

Senator Dean: The number that I have been provided by officials is the one that I provided to you in this statement, and that was the cost of these three programs together with the \$17 billion that are outlined in the final pages of this bill.

The Hon. the Speaker: On debate, Senator Martin?

Senator Martin: I have one more question, Your Honour. I know we have a long list of speakers —

The Hon. the Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt you, Senator Martin, but under rule 3-3(1) I'm required at 6 p.m. to leave the chair until 8 p.m. unless it is agreed we not see the clock.

Is it agreed, honourable senators, that we not see the clock?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Martin: Thank you for your clarification. It is 41 and the \$17 billion plus 41 — actually, the numbers don't add up on my list, but I will go back to it myself.

My final question, senator, is in the COVID-19 Response Measures Act, there is a definition of “family” and it says:

... a person, includes anyone whom the person considers to be like a close relative or who considers the person to be like a close relative.

Would you explain why the government chose to use this very broad definition of family?

• (1800)

Senator Dean: I can only assume that in the context of modern families there are a range of close relationships, familial and non-familial relationships. The purpose of this, practically, is if within a household there is a caregiver or an alternative caregiver and that even if it's a paid one, for an outsider from that family, and that caregiver is unable to continue providing that care, I might well have to take time away from work to provide the care to my child or to an adult in that house who requires care.

I think it's within the context of a household. The intent here is that if I need help as a parent because my kid is home from school, I can access the benefit. If there's another person in the household who normally takes care of those kids, close family or not, and they are affected by COVID and I have to take time off work, I still have access to that benefit.

That's a plain, common sense reading of what the language is trying to get at.

Senator Martin: I have a very brief speech. I hope with the time I took up in questions, in essence, the shorter speech does make up for it.

The Hon. the Speaker: On debate, senator?

Senator Martin: Yes, on debate.

On principle, absolutely, this is a bill that we need to look at very carefully, and Canadians deserve the support at this time from their government, especially the small businesses that I often rise and talk about. It's such an important bill for them. As I said, there are still some questions for me, and I hope that the government will work very expeditiously to meet those gaps as well.

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-4, an Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19. Once again, as we begin this very important debate, I want to take a moment to recognize and acknowledge the strength, resilience and genuine kindness of Canadians across our nation. These past months have been very difficult for so many Canadians, families and businesses. To all of the health care and front-line workers, we thank all of them for their steadfast courage on the front lines and for continuing to keep Canadians safe.

To Canadians who are suffering with mental illness, loss of loved ones, loss of employment or businesses and who are raising families and loved ones during these times of uncertainty, I hope that what we are talking about and the care with which we are trying to do our work as parliamentarians in this chamber will give them some assurance that this too shall pass and together we will persevere as a country.

I was speaking to a veteran of the Korean War on Sunday. He's 90 years old. He turned 90 in June of this year. He had a fall, he has recovered and is still able to manage taking a walk around his neighbourhood. He was telling me how many times people stop him on his walk to just offer help. He said it is people of all ages.

It's just a reminder of the faith in humanity that is restored when we hear of such touching examples. And to Bill Newton, the veteran, on this National Seniors Day, I recognize him and all of the seniors who have made such sacrifices for us to be here today.

I will keep the rest of my remarks brief at second reading, as I will be speaking more about the substance of the bill at third reading. I wish to also acknowledge our colleague Senator Dean as sponsor of this bill.

Colleagues, we've known this legislation was coming for quite a while. At the end of July, the government announced its intent to move everyone beyond CERB and over to the EI program. They also said that for those who still won't have access to EI, like contract workers, the government would be creating a transition benefit that is similar to EI along with a sickness and caregivers benefit. This has been in the works for quite some time.

Almost a month later, on August 20, the government announced some of the details of these programs, and we learned that they would be called the Canada Recovery Benefit, Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit and Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit.

But it was five weeks later before the first piece of enabling legislation would be presented in Parliament on September 24. The initial Bill C-2 was tabled in the House of Commons and then almost immediately after that a new version, Bill C-4, was required, again showing that this government is trying to rush through legislation and their agenda.

Debate on the bill only began on Monday in the House of Commons. Today is Thursday. The following day it cleared second reading, Committee of the Whole and the third reading all in a day. With more than three times the number of elected members in the House, I can't help but wonder what potentially was overlooked or compromised for the government to have rammed through this legislation in a single day.

The government had months to work on this bill, but now they expect Parliament to rush it through in a matter of days, largely due to the unnecessary prorogation of Parliament at the Prime Minister's choosing.

Honourable colleagues, I don't know about you, but that really troubles me.

I am repeatedly left with the impression that the Prime Minister thinks Canada's Parliament — the House and the Senate — is his personal giant rubber-stamping machine rather than chambers of debate, consideration and sober second thought. It is regrettable that we do not have time to properly study and potentially amend this bill if it's needed, which we have done effectively through our thorough committee work.

In his July announcement, the Prime Minister promised that, "No one will be left behind," but this legislation does not appear to achieve that goal. After having their jobs taken away and their businesses closed, many Canadians are very concerned about whether they will qualify for assistance or not, whether they will be able to return to work or not, whether they will be able to pay their next rent payment or not and whether they will make it through the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic or not.

The repeated requests of business owners to see some of the other programs revamped in order to be more effective have been repeatedly ignored. The result is that many businesses are teetering on the precipice of extinction right now. The Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance has come to an end, and promises for an extended CEBA loan and CEWS programs may take a long time to be implemented. In fact, businesses using personal banking accounts are still unable to access the loan and, as expressed by Minister Freeland, that it is complex.

If businesses do not make it, more Canadians will lose their jobs and their livelihoods, and no government program will be able to make up for that.

I agree that these emergency benefits are needed right now as people are forced to navigate circumstances that are beyond their control. But those benefits should be carefully examined, not rushed through Parliament after the government has had months to prepare.

I appreciate Ministers Qualtrough and Freeland for appearing before Committee of the Whole today. However, there are still questions left unanswered as to how this government will ensure that the most vulnerable Canadians are supported through this pandemic and how small businesses are supported during these very challenging times to help our economic recovery sooner than later.

Honourable senators, as I said, I will speak in more detail at third reading. I will listen carefully to other statements that will be part of this debate as well as what we will be doing at third reading. Thank you.

• (1810)

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I am pleased to be in the Senate Chamber to speak to Bill C-4. The last few months have been challenging for everyone, and I appreciate being here in person today. Zoom and Microsoft Teams work, and we're fortunate to have such technology in 2020, but I have to tell you that there have been many days when I feel like I've been "Zoomed out." I'm sure many of you have felt the same way. Anyway, all that to say I'm really pleased to be here in person and to see all of you here today and this week.

Over the past six months, as Canadians, we have faced many challenges as a nation: a devastating pandemic that has claimed the lives of nearly 10,000 Canadians. We've had overwhelming job losses, extended lockdowns and a broken economy.

As Senator Kutcher said earlier, in my province we also had 22 people lose their lives in a tragic and senseless shooting spree, and we've had the sorrow of the crash of the CH-148 Cyclone helicopter based in Nova Scotia, when six Canadian Armed Forces members were killed. Hopefully, this is a once-in-a-lifetime period.

Honourable senators, with all of that said, it was right and fair that the federal government shoulder some of the burden for Canadians during these trying times. We've seen the government bring forward extraordinary supports to assist those who are hardest hit. The legislation before us today, Bill C-4, builds on that good work.

I don't intend to speak to everything laid out in the bill. The sponsor, Senator Dean, has already done an excellent job earlier today of outlining what the bill entails, but I do have some comments in specific areas.

The new Canada recovery benefit, which will run until September 25 of next year, provides a replacement to the now-expired Canada Emergency Response Benefit, the \$2,000 per month payment that helped Canadians who lost their jobs at the height of the first wave.

The assistance provided in the new benefit is vital for those Canadians still impacted by unemployment. I do have one concern with the recovery benefit, as I did with CERB. This benefit is taxable and it's not taxed at source. When a person normally receives a paycheque, their income tax has already been deducted, and the net pay they receive is usually the amount of money that they keep. This is not the case with CERB, and it won't be the case now. A person who has received either benefit will be required to claim it as income and then, depending on their annual income, may have to pay taxes on it.

I worry about Canadians just getting back on their feet being faced with a hefty bill from Canada Revenue Agency next April. I trust that the government is thinking about that and will use a common-sense approach.

The Canada recovery sickness benefit will provide for \$500 per week for a maximum of two weeks for those who become sick or who need to self-isolate due to contact with a COVID-19 positive case or because of increased susceptibility to the virus. This is good news. No one should be penalized for becoming ill or for doing their part to keep others safe.

We know that provincial sick leave provisions, both paid and unpaid, differ widely across the country. Most provinces and territories do not provide for any paid sick leave at all, but the vast majority do provide for unpaid sick leave with a varying number of days allowed.

The problem, however, remains with these sick leave allowances. While the federal government will pay up to two weeks, which is a positive step, most provinces don't allow for a person to take that many days off while guaranteeing their job. So without buy-in from the provinces and from employers, there is no assurance that a person taking the full two weeks won't lose their job over it.

I leave it to the federal government to work with their provincial and territorial counterparts, as well as stakeholders, to plot the best way forward for everyone. I hope these discussions will begin as soon as Bill C-4 receives Royal Assent.

I also think it is important to note that the changes to the sick leave and caregiving leave sections of the Canada Labour Code, while welcome, apply only to federally regulated employees. Federal public servants, parliamentary staff and those in the federally regulated private sector, like banks, airlines and telecommunications, can take advantage of up to two weeks of paid sick leave and up to 26 weeks of paid caregiving leave without the worry of losing their jobs.

But they make up only 8% of working Canadians. The vast majority, millions of them, are covered by provincial jurisdiction. This includes our many workers who have been deemed essential workers during the pandemic, working in places like grocery stores or gas stations, or, as somebody mentioned earlier, in long-term care homes. Unfortunately, most of these workers are without access to any sick leave at all. We must keep them in mind.

We know that many parents are having to keep their children at home because their child has a runny nose or a sore throat. It doesn't take very long for those days to add up.

Finally, senators, I would like to say a few words about the process that led to this piece of legislation. Time and again, governments of all stripes come to us with bills at the eleventh hour — this is not new in 2020 — urging senators to pass their legislation without delay and suggesting our sober second thought is not really required this time. My good friend and colleague Senator Mercer has a drawer full of speeches in which he laments this never ending practice going back to when he first came to the Senate. I'm sure many of you have heard those speeches.

I know the government is facing a deadline, but I am pleased that in this chamber we are studying this bill with due diligence and efficiency, and I certainly support its swift passage. Canadians need support at this time. I am pleased that the federal government is doing this key work, ensuring that Canadians from coast to coast are equipped with the tools to weather the pandemic.

In my home province of Nova Scotia, our provincial government has also played its part in keeping residents safe. We have fared better than most in keeping the number of cases low in our Atlantic bubble. I'm hopeful that this continues and that the number of cases begins to drop not only in the Atlantic bubble but across the country.

But we must remain vigilant, honourable senators. This ordeal is not over, and we have seen that in the past few weeks. We saw numbers dropping and dropping, and suddenly, over the past few weeks, they have skyrocketed in some parts of our country. There is a long road ahead, and we must work together to ensure that our country and all Canadians emerge from this crisis on the best possible footing. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Honourable senators, I would like to start by thanking Senator Dean for his work in promoting this very important legislation. Normally this is the part of my speech where I would rail against government rushing legislation through, but Senator Tannas and others are working on that. It's not unique to this government; it has been going on for a number of years.

As we face the second wave of COVID-19, the regions across Canada are facing different impacts. Atlantic Canada, particularly Prince Edward Island, has very low infection rates, but the economic impact has been profound.

Concentrated government action to preserve the health and well-being of Canadians must remain the highest priority. Canadians should not have to choose between staying safe and maintaining the necessary requirements for life.

This bill, like the measures that preceded it, seeks to keep Canadians financially sound until such time as we can all emerge from under the shadow of this pandemic and set our minds to recovery and rebuilding. In doing so, this would not only speed the economic recovery when it comes, but also, by not forcing Canadians into risky unemployment, it will also help keep infection numbers down so that the economic recovery may happen sooner.

• (1820)

Obviously, since March 12, my attentions, since I haven't been able to come to Ottawa, have been focused on my home province. So far, Prince Edward Island has been very fortunate. Through the efforts of our public health officials and the hard work of our health care workers across the island, we have suffered very few cases of the coronavirus. To date, no one has actually been hospitalized, let alone died, fortunately.

However, as elsewhere, the overall impact has been difficult to bear. In July, our restaurant sector suffered the greatest loss of revenue in the country. The fact that restaurants continent-wide were closed meant fewer customers for agricultural exports. As I mentioned earlier, frozen french fries exports have fallen dramatically, impacting our agricultural industry.

Our unemployment rate in August was the third highest in the country, and for a province as heavily dependent on tourism as Prince Edward Island is, this past season was nothing short of devastating. Normally, Prince Edward Island, with a population roughly of 150,000 people, receives 1.5 million visitors and most of those come during the summer. For some reason, we have very few visitors in February and March. It may be weather-related;

I'm not sure — beaches aren't open. But it does have a negative impact when that condensed tourism season disappears in one year.

All of this is to say that the measures proposed in this bill are not only necessary but welcomed by Prince Edward Islanders.

Prince Edward Islanders have the lowest weekly wage of any province in the country, so the \$500-a-week Canada recovery benefit would amount to just over half of the P.E.I. average wages, compared to just under 45% of the national average. The fact the CERB has been continuing in the form of CRB, combined with the changes to the Employment Insurance eligibility previously announced, means that Islanders, who, because of the work in tourism, the hospitality sector and agriculture, received fewer or perhaps no hours of work this last summer, now qualify for this benefit.

The Canada recovery caregiver benefit will be of value to Islanders who, while still having a job, must take time off to care for a child or other dependent relatives for reasons related to the pandemic.

These measures, combined with the two-week paid sick leave for those who have to self-isolate because of COVID-19, will provide an invaluable safety net for Prince Edward Islanders and Canadians as we struggle through this second wave.

Of course, no measure is perfect. That is especially the case with emergency legislation. What is desirable and what is necessary must compete with what is possible. So it is with the measures contained in the legislation before us. For example, the 26-week duration of the Canada recovery benefit and the Canada recovery caregiver benefit may seem appropriate now, but just as it's difficult to remember what this country was like half a year ago, it is hard to imagine that all of this will be over half a year from now.

So much of this is beyond our control, such as when a vaccine becomes available. While our own conduct will help determine the length and severity of the second wave, the evidence so far has not been very positive. More assistance will likely be needed, especially for sectors like tourism and farming, especially given that even at the best of times, neither season is anywhere near under way by April.

Similarly, while the \$500 per week amount of the benefits is welcome assistance for those in need, it is a taxable benefit, and rather than those taxes being deducted at source, recipients will be facing a significant — in some cases — tax bill next season — actually, around the time the benefits are now scheduled to end.

By just about any criteria, \$500 a week is a very small amount — slightly lower than the weekly paycheque of someone making the Prince Edward Island minimum wage of \$12.85 per hour and well below the poverty line for the province. So no one is getting rich on this program, but it is keeping people going forward.

Still, it is intended as a survival measure, and we welcome that as such.

[Senator Downe]

Colleagues, the wartime analogies have been overdone, but we may have passed what Churchill described as the end of the beginning. Although hopefully a vaccine, improved treatment and more and more closely followed preventive measures will help us eventually defeat the coronavirus, that day, unfortunately, is a long way off.

The measures contained in this bill are not perfect, but they are needed and they do for now. We cannot let perfect be the enemy of the good, not that anyone expects perfection out of the year 2020.

I will be voting in favour of this bill, and I want to thank Senator Dean.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about a specific aspect of the bill that shows just how much our country understands what it means to care for family members.

[*English*]

I'm speaking specifically about the Canada recovery caregiver benefit, which provides a weekly benefit of \$500 for up to 26 weeks for parents and guardians who have to take time off to care for a child under the age of 12 if that child has to be home for reasons related to COVID-19 or if that child's regular caregiver, be that a nanny, a day-home provider, a grandparent or a parent, is unable to look after the child for COVID-19-related reasons.

While the bill is imperfect, we should acknowledge what a striking step this is in recognizing the complexity of modern family life for Canadians today and in recognizing the balances that need to be struck in the midst of this punishing pandemic.

All around my province of Alberta, there are parents agonizing over the decision of whether it is safe for their children to return to the classroom or to daycare, or whether it would be better for them to learn at home. For other families, though, there really is no choice, because they have a child with a chronic illness that makes them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

The Canada recovery caregiver benefit should make it possible for many of those parents or guardians to stay home to care for younger children, whether their kid is quarantined at home for a couple of weeks, their school or daycare has to close temporarily because of a COVID outbreak or a return to school could put that child's life at real risk.

In the past, the expectation in a crisis such as this was that a parent — and let's be honest, in most cases, we are talking about a mother — would have to quit their job or take unpaid leave to stay home with kids. And this isn't some hypothetical; it's a dilemma parents are facing across the country right now. Just this morning, one of my staff called me to say that her 10-year-old son had been instructed to quarantine for 14 days because he'd been in close contact with someone in his grade 5 classroom right here in Ottawa who has now tested positive for COVID-19.

Luckily, my staffer has been doing a fantastic job working from home to take care of me while she takes care of her son, but not everyone in Canada has a job that gives them that kind of flexibility or the option of working from home. That's why this legislation is particularly needed, and needed now, as so many parents grapple with similar situations.

I'm grateful this legislation recognizes that in 2020, it's neither fair nor economically wise to compel women to step out of the workforce without a path to return. This legislation recognizes that we can be parents and workers at the same time. In a moment when everything feels out-of-kilter, as if we're teetering on the edge, this legislation goes some way to helping parents to balance their family lives and their professional lives, which is always a tricky task, and never more so than right now.

Importantly, the legislation also recognizes the role of other family caregivers. Suppose you need to take time off because your adult child who has a developmental disability cannot live at his group home because it has been shut down by COVID. Suppose your parent or your spouse has Alzheimer's and can't go to their usual day program because of a coronavirus outbreak.

This legislation also allows people who are caring for vulnerable family members to take some time off work, with a government backstop of \$500 a week. It is an important recognition that so many Canadians are struggling to care for the dependent adults in their lives in this time of unprecedented pandemic and need a little extra flexibility to do so.

• (1830)

In a moment when families of all kinds and configurations are coping with the extraordinary medical, economic and logistical challenges of COVID-19, I think we can be proud as Canadians to see so many of our leaders putting aside partisanship and reacting creatively to help our families through this crisis. I think it is heartening that this bill received unanimous consent in the other place before coming here.

This is a moment of clear-eyed recognition that says we can't just expect the women of Canada to sacrifice themselves to do the unpaid caregiving, to shoulder the brunt of the burden coronavirus has placed on our communities.

It is a recognition that family caregiving is labour, and labour of value, and a recognition that people should be able to step away from the workforce temporarily without leaving their families financially bereft. The Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit is, if you will allow me a moment of melodrama, a profoundly feminist piece of legislation, and at the same time one that places family values squarely in the heart of feminism. As a working mother myself and as someone who has spent much of the last few years juggling parenthood, career and eldercare, I think this is an extraordinarily important symbol and signal. There are those out there who like us to believe that feminism and family values are antithetical. As this bill demonstrates, they are instead inextricably intertwined.

I'm also pleased to see that these rules don't require someone to stop work altogether. You can also apply for this benefit if you're working half as much as you used to do, if for example, you've cut your hours or switched from full-time to half-time work. It isn't just a benefit for those who draw salaries. It is available to the self-employed, entrepreneurs, contractors and gig workers too. That is also important because it recognizes that in 2020 work doesn't look the way it did in 1950.

[*Translation*]

The COVID-19 pandemic has given us an opportunity to take stock and realize just how important family is and how much we rely on the love and care of our loved ones. These are difficult and painful times. Rarely have we ever felt so vulnerable and rarely have we needed our family members so much. I am still grieving the loss of my own mother, who passed away last month.

She did not die from COVID-19, but from complications related to a chronic medical condition that was exacerbated by the lockdown. COVID-19 has claimed many lives, but not all victims are included in official death counts. Still, there might be a silver lining to the disease: At least it is helping us see how much we need to rely on our family and good friends to get through this difficult time. It is teaching us the value of love.

[*English*]

Is the Canada Recovery Benefit a perfect solution? No. No, it isn't. Some might argue, with good reason, that the cut-off age is somewhat arbitrary. This policy helps you out if your kid is 8, or 9, or 10, or 11, but not if they're 12 or 13, and yet how many 12-year-olds can be left at home alone if they have COVID-19, or can be left unsupervised to attend Grade 6 or 7 classes online?

Some might argue, and fair enough, that 26 weeks of benefits, while generous on its face, might not be enough to get a family through a year without school or daycare. Some might argue — and this is true — that not every family has someone who can take time off to look after a parent with dementia or a child with special needs.

If we had world enough and time, I'm sure we might have crafted a more perfect program. Frankly, I too would have liked more time for the Senate to analyze and weigh this legislation, but I also know that Canadian families of all shapes and sizes are waiting for the relief the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit will bring.

There remain some important questions we need to ask about the way in which all the various elements of this bill might be implemented. The bill requires Canadians to apply for a range of benefits, but the very stresses and limitations of COVID-19 which make this bill necessary can also be impediments to many people who may need to complete an application. It's vitally important that we ensure that we have the supports in place to guide people through the application system, particularly people who may not be fluent in English or French, who may have literacy barriers of one kind or another, or who may not have easy access to the internet to apply online.

We need to ensure, too, that there is a transparent and straightforward appeal process, so that someone who has been turned down for benefits can be assured of a fair and efficient hearing should they wish to challenge that decision.

Of course, it is important to protect the integrity of the program and to have the necessary safeguards in place to prevent abuse. That said, we also need to understand that in a time of medical or financial or family crisis, many people may not have the wherewithal to navigate a complicated application system. The Government of Canada and the workers who delivered our first round of COVID-19 relief plans deserve our praise and our thanks for the remarkably efficient way they rolled out those earlier benefits. I hope they will build on their successes and learn from their failures as well, to make the benefits provided in this bill as fair and accessible as possible.

Yes, there are those, even in my home province, who might scoff that relief benefits such as these just allow people to sit around eating Cheezies and watching cartoons. Will there be a handful of people who might try to game the system? Undoubtedly; such is human nature. But when future historians look back at the way Canadians have risen to this occasion, and the way people from across the country and political spectrum have pitched in to help neighbours in need, in practical and inventive ways, I think we'll all have reason to feel justifiably proud. Because this crisis has also shown us human nature and Canadian society at their very best. *Merci, thank you and hiy hiy.*

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Honourable senators, I want to state from the outset that Bill C-4 will not receive unanimous support here as it did in the other place because I am going to vote against it. Let me tell you why.

The government's objective is certainly commendable and I recognize that there are thousands of Canadians who will need this aid.

However, I'm completely turned off by the Liberal government's approach and I can no longer be a puppet who is forced to go along with things because we're in an emergency situation.

[Senator Simons]

After seven months of this pandemic, there is no more emergency. In my opinion and that of many observers, all there is is incompetence.

We have witnessed this government's incompetence on many occasions. I believe that the provisions contained in Bill C-4 are unacceptable, particularly after six weeks of unwarranted vacation resulting from the Prime Minister's decision to prorogue Parliament to avoid scrutiny over the ethical scandals that are the Liberals' trademark.

Bill C-4 does nothing but replace the Canada Emergency Response Benefit or CERB with the Canada Recovery Benefit or CRB, a name designed to mislead Canadians because, to be honest, this bill doesn't really contain any meaningful economic recovery measures.

Is this Liberal government really in a position to create a real economic recovery plan, when it hasn't yet been able to come up with a plan to save our airline industry, which, I should point out, accounts for several thousand jobs, while other major countries have already come to the rescue of their airlines? This government is just as incompetent when it comes to agriculture and international trade.

Let's take a closer look at things. The CRB is the same amount of money a week, with a last-minute boost to buy the NDP's vote. It is the same cheque, the same problematic eligibility criteria that give access to people who don't qualify. The program makes it just as easy for people to defraud the system and receive benefits.

The CRB is basically just another 26 weeks of CERB.

The current government continues to manage the country like a kid in a candy store, regardless of the time that has passed since the pandemic began and regardless of the criticism from politicians and economists on the management of these assistance programs. I know this isn't in the Liberals' DNA, but they still need to show a little discipline in managing the assistance programs.

• (1840)

Our businesses need workers. The Canada Recovery Benefit, like the CERB, provides help to people who can refuse to return to the labour market without any serious justification with regard to their eligibility for this benefit.

This is unbelievable from a government that had all the time it needed — all the time it needed, indeed — to set serious criteria to avoid abuse and fraud.

Before I conclude, I want to repeat this to avoid being attacked by the Liberals who are often capable of cutting corners on policy. The provisions of Bill C-4 are quite acceptable to Canadians who truly need it. However, we're now in October and the state of emergency had been lifted when this bill was drafted.

We're not required here or in the other place to act quickly or to overlook the flaws in this bill, and we certainly don't have to sanction the Liberal government's incompetence. As senators, we have a duty to review the government's bills. Today, we cannot seriously claim that we did that with Bill C-4.

Unfortunately, this government treats senators as though they were its lackeys. I am not. Out of principle, I will refuse to support this bill. Thank you.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: As a senator from Manitoba, I recognize that I live on Treaty I territories, the traditional territories of the Anishinabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene and Métis Nation homeland and we are gathered here today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

[English]

Honourable colleagues, I rise today to call for action to address this nation's failure to support youth adequately during this pandemic. We know that the proposed Canada recovery benefits act before us today is part of a broader scheme to support Canada's economic recovery in response to COVID-19, yet this reintroduced legislation still fails to acknowledge and support a broad sector of our population who do not have prior or recent involvement within the labour force.

For all three new benefits introduced, the applicant must have earned an income of at least \$5,000 in the previous year, or the 12-month period preceding the date of their application. Alternatively, to be eligible for EI — Employment Insurance — individuals would need to have been employed for at least 120 insurable hours in the past 52 weeks, among other requirements. Both EI and the three new proposed benefits remain inaccessible to a range of individuals without prior recent work experience, including migrant workers, recent immigrants, individuals who have been unemployed long term, including people living with disabilities, recent graduates who have not worked in the past year because they had to focus on their education, as well as youth who have never been employed and current students who lack recent work experience within the past year.

Now I ask:

Do we move Canada forward, or let people be left behind?
Do we come out of this stronger, or paper over the cracks that the crisis has exposed?

If these words from the Throne Speech are any indication, it is clear that we cannot allow young people to slip through the cracks yet again. Youth are well aware of the impact the pandemic has had on their employment prospects. Many young people do not feel as though they are being heard when it comes to their needs for employment. The omission of many young people from benefits available to other workers during a pandemic devalues their contribution to the labour force, but it also thwarts realizing their full potential — a loss to our country and our democracy.

Statistics Canada recently alerted us to the NEET generation: not in education, employment or training. Indigenous youth and people without high school diplomas are overrepresented among

young people who were not in education, employment or training. These NEET youth are at risk of lower incomes and social exclusion not just now, not just during this pandemic, but perhaps for their lifetimes. This exclusion is intensified because so many of these NEET youth are also excluded from the recovery benefits. We must not forget about young parents and how children impact a woman's participation in the labour market. Caregiving responsibilities overwhelmingly fall to women. Extending the caregiver benefits to youth ensures that young women do not have to decide between leaving their careers at a critical time in order to care for children if schools close or to care for an ill family member.

While employment levels have increased since the initial drop resulting from the lockdown, the most recent Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey from August stated that the most affected and those who remain the furthest away from their pre-pandemic employment levels are youth when compared to the employment rates for other age groups.

Youth are starting to enter the labour force. Whether it is youth entering the labour force for the first time or students re-entering the labour force after graduating, these young people, students and recent graduates remain unable to access the current EI benefits of the new support benefits under this bill. This places significant additional pressures on youth, students and recent graduates to go to work perhaps while sick or with underlying conditions, making them susceptible to COVID-19 because if they stay home, they will not receive a benefit to replace their lost income. This pressure is increased for youth who are racialized and live in lower-income neighbourhoods, which are already disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Why are youth, students and recent graduates left with the burden to decide between personal or public health and financial security? The burden is one the rest of the population is relieved from with the prospect of eligibility for the proposed recovery benefits or EI. The exclusion of youth, students and recent graduates from significant economic recovery benefits comes at a time when we are entering — indeed, we are in the midst of it now — the second wave of this pandemic. With individuals aged 20 to 29 accounting for the most confirmed cases of COVID-19, youth, students and recent graduates need to be assured that they will also be able to pay their bills should they be required to self-isolate or care for a family member or child who cannot attend school.

We need to look closely at this situation. We must not overlook the youth who work in our restaurants, our retail stores and our grocery stores who often have no choice. Youth work in the industries that are hit the hardest by shutdowns, including the food industry, accommodation and retail. A recovery plan needs to extend protections to youth that are geared to youth and their particular realities. The government has acknowledged that young Canadians are our future. Since the pandemic, increased funding to programs like Youth Employment and Skills Strategy and Canada Summer Jobs have focused on creating opportunities to bring and keep youth in the workforce, but as of August 2020, just weeks ago, job seekers were more likely to be young people. For the youth, students and recent graduates who are ineligible for EI, the continued ineligibility for Bill C-4's proposed recovery benefits in the workforce, particularly for vulnerable

youth with conditions making them susceptible to COVID-19 or with young children with the uncertainty regarding school closures, this is particularly serious.

• (1850)

The exclusion of students from COVID-19 measures is not new. The initial Canada Emergency Response Benefit suffered from this same exclusion. The later-introduced Canada Emergency Student Benefit provided support to students. As support has ended, students are expected to join the workforce without the protections provided to many other workers eligible for EI or for the three new recovery benefits.

We have a chance now to get this right the first time. We cannot leave our youth, students and recent graduates behind before they even enter the workforce. As was highlighted in the Throne Speech, this is not the time for austerity. Doing whatever it takes to support people through the pandemic must be proactive. It must include youth, students and recent graduates as they work towards building a better future. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, I also rise today to speak to Bill C-4. These recovery benefits are of real importance for all Canadians but, you won't be surprised to hear me say, especially for those in the arts, those employed by organizations and those who are self-employed.

[*Translation*]

The business and arts communities welcomed the wage subsidy extension announced in the throne speech because it is crucially important to them.

The Canada Recovery Benefit replaces certain aspects of the CERB, which gave those who weren't eligible for EI access to ongoing support. It is especially essential to those who work in the creative sector and for people with disabilities. The opportunity to collect benefits for an additional 26 weeks is just as much a lifesaver for individual artists as the extended wage subsidy is for organizations. I cannot overemphasize how essential these provisions are.

I have already talked to this chamber about the important and integral role the arts play in all aspects of society. I will not reiterate that today except to say that, if our arts and artists go down, society will be worse off as a result.

[*English*]

It will come as no surprise to any of you that much of my work since the March 2020 lockdown has been and continues to be with and for Canada's art and culture sector, individual artists and art organizations. Indeed, just this week I have had meetings with arts leaders regarding the bill and the Throne Speech. The devastation COVID-19 has wreaked on the arts sector has been horrific and I fear this sector will be one of the last to recover and parts of it may not recover at all.

Canadian creators and organizations need the help of this legislation. For the past six months, our theatres, concert venues, museums and festivals of all disciplines were all naturally forced to close.

[Senator McPhedran]

Every Canadian has felt the fear of this pandemic, and I want to extend my sincere condolences to all those in this chamber and across Canada who have lost loved ones and friends. My concern is also for those who have suffered and are currently suffering from this disease. There is no question COVID-19 has substantially affected our families, our daily lives and our work. But we hope those impacts are temporary.

But when will you feel comfortable returning to your seat in the theatre or concert hall? How will performing arts survive without ticket sales or corporate support which is falling across the not-for-profit sphere? How will museums and galleries fare without tourists and school tours?

The arts are a truly vulnerable part of our not-for-profit sector. Many individuals are self-employed, some are or have been on various sorts of short- and long-term contracts and others in staff positions, though often paid well below comparable levels in other fields.

Organizations live year-to-year, and some only project-to-project. Those with endowment funds are seeing their earnings dissipate with the current markets and there are restrictions on the monies they're allowed to use.

I have talked with and heard from and been in touch with more than a hundred artists as well as directors of arts organizations and leaders of various sector associations and met on several occasions with PACT, the comedy artists, various musician groups and cross-disciplinary representatives within regions across the country. Without exception, all indicated their appreciation for the relief through CERB and the wage subsidy and the flexibility of Canada Council for the Arts and Canadian Heritage coming to the fore with assistance.

But everyone I have spoken with is fearful of the potential layoffs — some say of more than 60% of their staff — that are forthcoming. I am well aware that permanent layoffs already have been made in many aspects of the arts in addition to temporary layoffs. These include designers, fundraisers, artists and behind-the-scenes workers.

[*Translation*]

I want to point out that, over the past few months, artists have kept supporting us with their creativity, initiatives and generosity. Consider the amazing gift artists gave us after the horrific incidents that took place in Nova Scotia this summer. The concerns that have been raised and are being raised again today fall into three categories: short-, medium- and long-term. Everyone is affected.

[English]

Immediate crisis management and cash flow in organizations continue to be particularly serious, especially over these last months. It's at this time of year that ticket sales are an essential part of the cash flow for healthy institutions, and they haven't been selling tickets.

Some organizations have not been eligible for Canada Council or Canadian Heritage support and that has hurt small regional historic homes, sites and museums — the lifeblood of us understanding our history.

I have been truly impressed with the creative initiatives which have been implemented already and those planned for the future, though uncertainty of recovery does raise more fears and questions than it does answers. Many organizations have developed new ways of connecting with audiences, and that's encouraging, but one does fear for long-term sustainability. Not until people are able to go back to theatres, concert halls and in larger groups to galleries and museums will the recovery begin.

I hate to tell you this, but for the arts, that is now not being projected by some on the optimistic side until 2022. For most, they're projecting it in 2023, when they hope tourism will recover. I must underline that tourism is a critical ingredient for the arts, just as the arts are for society as a whole. Artists have lost work. Many have lost their career advancement and many are leaving the sector altogether.

Isn't it sad to see dancers at the peak of their career leaving because they can't practise their art form and they don't know that they'll be in shape or have the flexibility to perform when we can get back to the theatres? And let's look at the training for young dancers. That's stopped.

At first, for instance, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School continued teaching virtually with a videographer and a teacher in the studio working at more than the two-metre distance, but when the province of Manitoba had to close buildings, the program could not continue. The concern is if that goes on for too long, we will lose the next generation of dancers because the students in the professional program have to keep at it so they don't lose flexibility and muscle.

So are we on the edge of losing a generation in this art form for which Canada has been held in such high international regard?

I've said many times that the artists are the working poor of Canada, with the largest percentage of those who live below the poverty line. Colleagues, that was in the good times. You can imagine it now in the bad times.

Festivals and craft fairs this summer didn't happen, and I'm really interested in the number of calls I've had from craft artists who — believe it or not — earn their whole year's revenue in the few months of summer fairs, so they have no revenue right now.

• (1900)

So where are we really at? I feel the situation in the recovery of COVID will worsen for the arts before it improves, particularly, as I said, for the performing arts. However, I applaud the artists whose generosity has helped sustain all of us.

How many digital performances, exhibitions, gallery tours and concerts have you listened to or watched? How many of those artists got any money for letting us watch it? Very few, and that disturbs me.

We all know the very real role the arts have played for Canadians during the pandemic, with the Black Lives Matter movement and with the murders in Nova Scotia earlier this summer. Artists singly and together have found a way to reach us, to heal us and to divert our attention and give hope and, while much of that has been unpaid, I hope this bill will help compensate them.

I'm also concerned about mental health. I can't tell you the number of calls I've had at midnight, one o'clock in the morning, two o'clock in the morning from artists who are absolutely destitute and on the edge. I want to thank Senator Kutcher for speaking with me early in the COVID pandemic when I was asking for help, what do I say next?

For organizations being forced to cease their programming, I can tell you that for some of them that was half their 2019-20 season and now they're losing half of this season. They've had to return ticket sales when they've had no cash flow. Fortunately, 60% of people across the country have agreed to take tax receipts instead of their money back. But they've paid their licensing fees for the programs they couldn't give us, they've built the sets, they've paid the artists and advertising. They don't know how long these closures will last or if they will ever be able to mount their programs. I'm now monitoring the number of organizations, colleagues, that may have to fold despite the inspirational virtual programming across the country.

What are the real questions? One of the big questions is re-engaging audiences. How are we going to do it? Will people even be comfortable to go to larger gatherings and theatres, concert halls, museums and galleries? The question is also being asked about how many arts, heritage and cultural organizations, as I said, will survive and where will they be? And will the larger ones be there to help the smaller ones? I could go on, but I'm going to stop.

Art empowers, art is the ability to change society and art is the ability to question and heal an artist's vision. But to do that, it needs the support of this legislation. Let's let the arts sector assist Canada's post-pandemic recovery by supporting this legislation so that artists can support Canadians and help us have the mental health we need to carry through.

Colleagues, you know my family mantra is we're all better off when we're all better off. With this legislation, we can help Canada be better off. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Jim Munson: Senator Bovey, I want to thank you so much for that question this evening because what you're talking about is quite personal; within all our communities, I think we have friends, relatives or even our own sons and daughters who are part of the performing arts. It's 7:05 p.m. tonight, and I never thought I'd ask this question, but my own son, Claude Munson, has a band and he's singing tonight. He just started to sing five minutes ago. He's over at the Queen Street Fare here, where they're going to have social distancing; 35 people will be there on Eventbrite, \$10 for each person.

I think he would be very embarrassed that I'm asking this question tonight, but he has been asked to give some of the money to the Mission here in Ottawa and then he can maybe keep 100 bucks for himself.

I told him I'm not sure I can make it, but my heart is with every song that he sings; sing for those who cannot sing. And he just replied saying, "No worries, papa, thank you," with a big heart.

You've said what you've had to say. Is there hope for artists like him, who is 32 years of age, and what he can do? He has had an album out, he has done what he has to do. He's part of thousands of others who are just like him, and his friends want to sing, but who do they sing for?

Senator Bovey: Senator, there's always hope. If any part of our society has hope, it's our creators, it's our artists, it's those who give of the soul as they define the soul of who we are, who our regions are and who our nation is, what our nation is.

They will continue to create. They will continue to write, to compose, to perform, just as they have in the past darkest moments of the world's civilization. I do have hope, but I want us to help that hope. And when you take a look at what artists receive in the good times, I think we just expect them to be there all the time.

I'm saying now we shouldn't have those expectations. We need to help them help the rest of us. And it's not fun to receive a call at two o'clock in the morning from an artist who is thinking about taking his life because a gallery is closed and he hasn't been able to sell a painting.

Hon. Peter Harder: Honourable senators, this is the seventh COVID emergency bill that we've discussed since March, and it's the seventh opportunity I've had to make some comments. In considering those bills, we've received, in rather extraordinary circumstances, the bills from the House of Commons which, in a minority Parliament dealing with an emergency crisis means that, by definition, more than one group in the other place has supported the bills that we have. And quite unusually today, we are dealing with a unanimous bill and I regret the unanimity of the elected chamber will not be celebrated in this chamber. I

would urge that people consider and even reconsider support for this necessary additional measure to confront the circumstances that Canadians are facing day to day.

I also want to pause and take a moment to reflect on what the Senate's role should be in dealing with emergency legislation that comes from the House of Commons in trying times where it's not easy to amend or otherwise improve, as we say, the various measures. It occurs to me that we should at least begin to think about what is the post-COVID context for public policy?

I want to begin by thanking Senator Dean for sponsoring this bill, all the colleagues who have spoken about the legislation and the ministers who came today and who I thought very effectively provided us the context and additional information for us to feel comfortable doing what we are in the process of doing.

I want to make three points, essentially, because I do believe that the COVID measures, both the ones today and the six earlier bills, have been necessary. However, we have to begin to determine how to distribute the burdens of these debts over time and how to fairly apportion the responsibility across sectors and groups in Canada in the years ahead.

We had a pre-COVID challenge in many areas of our economic agenda, and if you look at where the growth was coming from, we've had a rather tepid export of the energy sector compared to earlier years, which by the way gave us that margin in our current account surplus that we all trumpeted. We need to reflect on where is the growth going to come from.

Where we will we get the growth? I would commend for your edification a paper that was produced by David Dodge and distributed by the Public Policy Forum two weeks ago entitled: Two Mountains to Climb: Canada's Twin Deficits and How to Scale Them.

• (1910)

In the paper, former Governor Dodge or Deputy Dodge, whatever you want to call him, said that there are five key priorities we must get right to raise the annual growth rate of potential GDP to well above the present trajectory of 1.8% in the pre-COVID period. He says it will involve a combined effort by governments, businesses and households.

Here are the five points he'd like to make:

One: Enhance digitization of production of goods and especially services.

Two: Extend the life of a cleaner resource sector and facilitate a higher value-added composition.

Three: Maximize participation and adaptation of labour force.

Four: Enhance effectiveness and efficiency of public services.

Five: Restore confidence in fiscal stability.

I'm not going to take the time tonight to give you my view on each of those five important questions, but I want to at least put on the table that these are the questions that should guide our Senate committee work when we come back and are able to have more normal Senate consideration.

Let's try to shape what the other place begins to think of when they have the time and the circumstances to do that. Then we truly have added value to the conversation, rather than just deal quickly with bills that come here, and necessarily quickly. I'm not complaining about that. But our value would surely come from beginning to ask these questions and explore the range of answers before the other place or, indeed, one government comes to a point of view on these issues.

For example, Senator Deacon has talked about the digitization of the finance sector and the service sector. Maybe we should be talking more broadly about what the gig economy means for Canada and how we might accelerate, comparable to other countries, our participation therein.

Surely, the intensity of the debate we had at the last Parliament on the energy sector in terms of the reforms — which I supported, as you know — on environmental assessment, we should have the equal intensity on how we restore that Canadian advantage in our current account of the value of our energy exports. How do we take advantage of the resource sector, particularly lumber, which has had a phenomenal recent few months, as well as the agricultural sector? How do we balance the need for those markets, with all of the other issues that we have a lot of interest in, in terms of our foreign policy considerations and our trade? If we're not going to sell our resource sectors to all of the world that wants them, we're going to deny ourselves some of the growth that we need.

Certainly, the adaptation of the labour force to lifelong learning is something Senator Bellemare has, amongst other senators I know, given a lot of attention to. How do we improve the skills development of the Canadian work force? Maybe there's a piece there that we can do.

In terms of effectiveness of public services, I think there's a lot that people in this chamber can add.

I wanted to make that point as my first. Where are we going to get our growth from? How is the Senate going to contribute to that conversation with Canadians and provide a menu that's available to our political leadership and broader federal-provincial leadership to explore this issue?

The second point I want to make is the fifth point by David Dodge, actually, on the deficit. The question I ask is: What should our fiscal anchor be? I think it's actually not fair to simply ask the government: What's your fiscal anchor? We should be talking about what the considerations are as we approach the need for a new fiscal anchor. It is far too easy to say, "Well, it's a balanced budget." No, it's not, actually. That would be very imprudent and would bring us back into a recession that nobody would want. Certainly it's not going to be an ever-diminishing debt-to-GDP ratio. That's gone.

I would begin a few remarks by simply quoting from the PBO's report of earlier this week, which is, again, a document worth reading. He says we now have a better idea of the costs involved in Canada's fight against COVID-19, but the document is only what he describes as a hazy view into the future. There's no projection of future spending, and there's no fiscal anchor for government spending in his report. That's not his job. But it is a legislator's job, I would argue.

The PBO's report states that the deficit is on track to hit \$328.5 billion this year, a number that is slightly lower than former Minister of Finance Morneau's recent economic snapshot. The reason for this discrepancy is that the PBO is more optimistic regarding the strength of Canada's revenues, and you saw that in the last two monthly reports of both exports and revenues.

The PBO's projected deficit amounts to 15% of GDP, the largest number in 50 years of making this calculation. The budget deficit is projected to fall to \$73.8 billion next year and continue to fall after that, with deficits averaging in the \$40 billion range or slightly higher, perhaps.

These numbers are based on three assumptions, and they are worth keeping in mind: one, that the public health measures that have been put in place will continue for the next 12 to 18 months; two, that COVID support measures are withdrawn as scheduled — that's a big if that depends on the first, doesn't it? — and three is that monetary policy — that is, interest rates — remain basically as they are now, which is low.

The PBO projects real GDP will return to pre-crisis levels by early 2021. However, it is noted that the oil price shock and COVID-19 will have a permanent impact on Canada's economy, going back to my earlier comments about the current account deficit from our energy sector.

The federal debt-to-GDP ratio will peak at 48.3% in 2022-23, up from 18.3%, where it was in 2019, so 30 percentage points higher. The predicted ratio will rise and then decline in the medium term. This is due to the expiry, we should hope, of measures that we have voted for in the last seven bills before us.

It should be noted that the PBO's report of last week doesn't take into account the SFT measures. We had some discussion about that with the minister today.

My point in saying this is that we need to figure out what we would recommend or what options are available to good public policy as to what a fiscal anchor should be. I would suggest that we might wish to again consider what David Dodge has to say on that measure.

He would recommend that the government taper its deficit spending and borrowing needs in deliberate steps over the next two to three years, with the objective of bringing deficits down to 1% of GDP, or \$20 billion; move from using debt to GDP as its sole fiscal anchor to adopting one based on debt servicing costs; and that the government therefore tie future borrowing expenditure and revenue plans to the rock of sustainable debt service costs not to exceed 10% of annual government revenues.

I think that's a rather innovative suggestion from former Governor Dodge. It would be one that would merit, in my view, Senate consideration to host some discussion amongst experts to give guidance to what a fiscal anchor should be. Because if we are just having the rhetorical "we will govern and balance the budget within the next Parliament," we're not having a serious conversation.

• (1920)

How do we have sustainable and healthy public programs that also come with the discipline of a fiscal anchor and the ability to distinguish between musts and wishes? That's my second point.

My third and final point is to underscore that we're a federation. I was delighted to see that Minister Freeland began her remarks, in response to Senator Plett's question, by noting the cooperation between the levels of government on the measures that Canadians have seen.

If we are a federation, I think there's a special obligation on this chamber, which claims to be the representative of the regions, to think through the implication on good Canadian public policy in a post-pandemic period, of having that discussion of what is the role of provinces and what is in the domain of the federal government.

Many of the measures that the government has taken have actually been in the provincial jurisdiction. Much of the criticism of what the government hasn't done is in the provincial jurisdiction, including waiting times for necessary testing.

I don't think, frankly, that we as parliamentarians have helped Canadians understand how federalism works in Canada, in terms of who should be accountable for what.

I think we might want to think through what contribution we can make to a better understanding of federalism in a post-COVID period.

The Hon. the Speaker: Sorry, Senator Harder, but your time has expired. Are you asking for five more minutes?

Senator Harder: Five? Three.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Harder: I just want to briefly suggest that you might want to take a look at a book that recently came out by Bill Macdonald. I don't know if you know him. He's no longer eligible for appointment to this chamber, but he's a wonderful public intellect. He has just published a book, *Might Nature Be Canadian?* He's got some post-COVID advice for us as to how we would benefit from an economic conference parallel to the Confederation of Tomorrow Conference that Robarts and Pépin did how many years ago, and that we have a conversation, outside the political parameters of a federal-provincial meeting, to discuss the matters of best programming and best collective public policy thinking in the constraints and the opportunities that the COVID brings us.

[Senator Harder]

Colleagues, I leave you with those three points. But I think it's one way the Senate, rather than simply dealing with bills that come to us, can help shape the context of, frankly, the very significant and hard work of restoring Canada to a post-COVID world in which we can build better — yes — but in a fiscally responsible fashion.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

The Hon. the Speaker: Question.

Hon. Marty Deacon: Honourable senators, there are a number of things that I think we're probably all thinking about, if we have this response and we have a recovery, and I think when we started to talk about it in the spring, that maybe we'd be looking at a recovery conversation; having our committees back up and going, particularly in finance and social affairs. I would suggest that we're still responding, and still responding with our seventh emergency bill.

You've talked about anchor, Senator Harder, and you talked almost like a filter. There were five areas of consideration that I'm sure we'll be able to read later.

As I said, we're all at the next steps: How do we do better together? How is our time best spent on looking at this fiscal prudence and sustainability?

Do you see the suggestions you've made this evening as urgent, to start moving toward them in the next while? Do you see it actually even impacting some committee structure?

Senator Harder: That's for the Senate as a whole to determine. I'm not one for having motions in the Senate directing committees to their work. We've had enough of those in the last day.

Maybe if we could have an inspired conversation, we would find ways of how every committee could take a piece of this and hopefully provide a Senate that can contribute to a broader public debate on these issues, without coming to a conclusion.

I think our contribution can be putting forth a broader menu that can lead to a more intelligent conversation with Canadians.

Senator M. Deacon: Thank you.

Senator Downe: I'm not sure if Senator Harder has time left.

The Hon. the Speaker: He has one minute and twenty seconds.

Senator Downe: I'll be quick. I totally agree with almost everything you said. I circulated David Dodge's article to everybody in our group and suggested if you read one thing this year — of course, everybody is reading a lot of things — you read that. It's extremely important and, as you know, coming from David Dodge, extremely well done. I urge all colleagues to take the opportunity to read it.

I also considered what we could do as a group that's a little different on a forward-looking basis. As part of my research — you mentioned a couple of things and I'll mention something you may want to look at — I discovered, and this was, to me, quite amazing, that in 1941 the cabinet set up a reconstruction committee for activities after the war.

Colleagues, in 1941, it wasn't sure we were going to win the war, let alone events after the war. That committee reported in 1943 about what should be done. The report is extremely detailed. It's online, obviously. It's extremely important for this type of forward-looking thinking that Peter Harder talked about, the cabinet did in 1941 and David Dodge talked about; that we prepare. I see we're running out of time, so Senator Harder, I hope you have a chance to read that. That would be my question to you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Your time has expired.

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable colleagues, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fallout of decades of evisceration of health care, economic and social services, not to mention the multiplier and devastatingly intersecting impact of systemic racism and other sex- and disability-based inequality.

COVID-19 revealed that the safeguards Canadians believed they had are not so much a safety net but more of a flimsy web, replete with chasms, not merely cracks, and requiring hopeful recipients to navigate tightropes of conditions and administrative requirements liable to ensnare people in poverty and crisis, instead of supporting them to rebound.

COVID-19 quickly exposed the ineffectiveness of our Employment Insurance system. Prior to the pandemic, it supported only 38% of unemployed men and 33% of unemployed women, and particularly failed those in low-paid, precarious jobs with few, if any, benefits. This is often essential, yet prejudicially precarious employment where women, Black and Indigenous peoples have long been overrepresented.

It is striking and notable that not one person — no one — even tried to suggest that provincial and territorial social assistance would be a feasible policy response to COVID-19 job losses. This indicates how broken those systems are, where, by design, benefits are woefully inadequate and where people are first required to meet stringent and too often arbitrary requirements, including first liquidating and thereby losing their home, car, if they have a car, and other assets that most of us rely on to work or find work and to care for our families.

For those who do secure access to benefits, the amounts are too low to live on, let alone to allow people a fair chance to try to climb out of poverty.

Who among us can imagine surviving in Toronto on \$390 per month for housing and \$343 for other costs? That is the impossible feat expected of Canadians on social assistance every day. Worse still, accepting even a bag of groceries from a friend or a family member could result in part of your social assistance payment being clawed back.

Failures to report even gifts can put recipients at risk of criminalization. It is an impossible system that forces too many to risk being criminalized for choosing not to watch their kids go hungry. Who among us could actually consider that a viable choice?

• (1930)

Through measures like the CERB and subsequent additional patches such as those found in Bill C-4, the government has worked not only to implement income supports in a time of crisis, but also to evolve them as it became clear that Canadians were still falling through the cracks. I applaud and acknowledge the government's efforts, while simultaneously urging further evolution. The gaps that persist in this bill risk leaving behind those most in need, including those on social assistance. Canadians need and are calling for a guaranteed livable income: a benefit that could be universally accessible — not given to every single person, but accessible to those in need.

The CERB and the income support measures in Bill C-4 require people to have annual earnings of at least \$5,000. Because it is intended to focus supports only on those who held paying jobs prior to the pandemic, this condition creates two problems.

First, it has the unintuitive consequence of turning away those with the least income, the fewest resources and the greatest need, whether they had jobs or not, during a pandemic that creates particular risks for those who are economically marginalized. It is no accident that many of the neighbourhoods in Canada hardest hit by COVID-19 are low-income and predominantly racialized — especially Black — residents. This is systemic racism intersecting and overlapping with economic marginalization. Women in particular were more likely to be impoverished before the pandemic and are more likely to face economic burdens and health risks as a result of COVID-19.

Those on social assistance who have been able to qualify for CERB are too often not actually able to benefit. As Minister Qualtrough discussed during today's Committee of the Whole, despite commendable efforts by the federal government to urge otherwise, people in most provinces and in the territory of Nunavut risk losing access to social assistance benefits by accepting CERB. CERB payments are being clawed back by provincial and territorial governments.

The same seems to be true for these new Bill C-4 benefits. The transition away from the CERB to Bill C-4 also means that about three quarters of a million CERB recipients will receive no further federal support. About 25% of CERB recipients will be worse off than they were under CERB. Most especially, this includes women and low-wage, part-time workers making less than \$1,000 per month but who have not lost at least half their hours as required by Bill C-4.

The second problem with the insistence on trying to distinguish between those with and without paid jobs is that it reflects long-standing and harmful stereotypes about those who are deserving and those who are undeserving of support and compassion.

With the onset of the pandemic Canadians, whose financial situations seemed relatively secure, saw how one can work hard in this country and yet still easily fall into poverty. Prior to COVID-19, 53% of Canadians — the majority — were living paycheque to paycheque, just a couple of bad weeks away from financial crisis. This is not simply, as one harmful stereotype would suggest, that people are not budgeting well enough. Not when rent for even a one-bedroom apartment is unaffordable on a minimum wage job in most Canadian cities. Not when half of those under the poverty line are working, often as essential workers during this pandemic, but not earning enough to get by.

Systemic racism and sexism can also be a barrier to work. The organization Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change notes that in Ontario racialized men are 24% more likely and, even worse, racialized women are 43% more likely than non-racialized men to be unemployed. Black and Indigenous peoples remain overrepresented in Canada's least-secure, low-wage jobs. Studies demonstrate that employers routinely discriminate against job applicants with equivalent experience to others but with so-called African-, Asian- or Muslim-sounding names or with addresses in certain neighbourhoods.

There are many reasons why Canadians may not be earning \$5,000 per year in income, from having lost a job without EI prior to the pandemic, to having started a new business, to having pre-COVID care obligations for children, elderly or disabled loved ones, to having an undiagnosed disability themselves, to being unable to afford transportation, child care or clothing to look for work, to being unable to afford to lose the pharmacare benefits provided through social assistance programs. The list goes on and on.

Drawing lines between those with paid work and those without in the manner that Bill C-4 does distracts from the underlying reality that in a wealthy and human-rights-promoting country like ours, everyone should be entitled to dignity and no one should be put at risk due to lack of access to basic needs. During this pandemic and beyond, keeping people out of poverty and out of health and economic crises benefits all of us by delivering healthier, safer, more just and resilient communities.

COVID-19 has provided a very stark and concrete example of how intertwined health and economic well-being are for Canadians. Health care experts, including the Canadian Medical Association, have long since recognized income as a primary social determinant of health and have consequently advocated measures like guaranteed livable income.

The idea that well-being should not depend on income alone is a notion that should encourage us to be bold as we imagine policies that will deliver better futures for all Canadians post

pandemic. Like parliamentarians in another minority government more than 50 years ago, we can, and I suggest we should, commit to the kind of vision that birthed Medicare and changed Canada forever and for the better.

Let's remind ourselves that at the time, Medicare was not an obvious way forward. Those who were opposed were scathingly critical. This reality notwithstanding, once implemented and once Canadians experienced the benefits of universally accessible health care, not one successive government, regardless of political stripe, has been game to try to repeal it.

Today, most Canadians, as underscored by the recent B.C. Supreme Court decision, are loath to accept the notion that health care is a commodity and access is the privilege of the rich. What a legacy it could be for this government to develop guaranteed livable income, mental health, dental, pharma and child care initiatives that could benefit current and future generations.

I know we will work together toward a Canada where we all can be secure: That come another crisis, or the continuation of this one, whether a global pandemic or individual job loss or illness, universally accessible income support will be available in times of need quickly, without arbitrary conditions, to meet basic needs and provide the space, opportunity and flexibility to create a vital and effective pathway for people to rebound out of poverty.

Bill C-4 has gaps. It will leave too many of those most in need to still fall through the cracks. We must remedy and redress the inequality of access to economic and health measures and address discrimination based on class, race, sex, ability and geography, exposed both by who is most impacted and vulnerable to COVID-19 as well as who is left out of current responses to COVID-19.

The bill is another good increment, but it is not sufficient. Let us accept it as another — but not the last — step. Let's keep working to achieve the lasting and inclusive social, health and economic changes we need and Canadians both demand and deserve. *Meegweich*. Thank you.

Hon. Diane Bellemare: Honourable senators, as I didn't prepare a speech, I want to give you four points I would like to discuss.

• (1940)

I will first speak on why I think Bill C-4 is a great bill and we have to vote for it, but that we will be here in a few months to have another bill like it.

The second point I want to develop is youth, because I have a big concern about our youth.

The third point I want to talk about is why the federal government needs to be a financial partner in EI, Employment Insurance, and develop a social dialogue around it.

And finally, I have some words on the deficit.

[*Translation*]

The first point I want to make is that Bill C-4 is a good bill, but we'll have to revisit it and adopt slightly more targeted measures.

Bill C-4 should not be called a recovery bill; it should be called a transitional bill. Everyone agrees that this bill is a transition between the emergency income support measures, which were necessary, and restarting the economy. For that restart to happen, for productivity to go up and for us to see economic growth, we will need much more targeted measures. We'll have to transform large-scale passive income support measures into more active measures. Canada is following recommendations from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the OECD, and what is the OECD telling us?

The OECD is telling us not to end income support measures. It said so again recently in its 2020 economic outlook. Governments should continue to implement expansionist budgets and fiscal measures to support the economy.

However, the OECD is also saying that these measures will soon have to be refocused to target more specific groups and, most importantly, to invest in people. That means transforming passive measures into active ones, not by ending income support measures but by supporting people as they look for jobs and reskill or upskill. The government has to help people reclassify and train for more in-demand jobs.

We can't put our heads in the sand: The economy will need structural change. As David Dodge said, structural changes within the economy will demand physical investment as well as investment in human beings.

The first point I wanted to make was that Canada is within the sphere of influence of OECD countries. It is very good at pursuing its economic opportunities. I invite you to read the *OECD Economic Outlook*. It compares Canada to countries in the Euro zone and countries like Australia. Canada's policies fall within the average of these countries.

The second point I want to discuss has to do with young people. Senator McPhedran touched on this, but I think it's important to talk about. Bill C-4 will do a lot for women. As the ministers said, a gender-based analysis would likely show an impact, since the pandemic has deeply affected women in the workplace and continues to do so. The flexible measures in Bill C-4 will help women.

Meanwhile, I'm a bit concerned for young people 15 to 24. Honourable colleagues, people have probably asked you whether this bill is good. As for the income support measures for young people, they are required to work 120 hours to be able to get 26 weeks of income support, with a minimum of \$500 a week. Of course Canadians have questions, but I think that cannot be

avoided for now. We have to continue to invest in income support. We have to immediately start thinking about refocusing income support, especially for young people.

Young people are affected by the pandemic. Let's be honest: On average, the youth unemployment rate is twice as high as the national rate. Right now, that means that the youth unemployment rate is at least 20%. That rate is even higher for Indigenous youth, Black youth, and newcomers. Youth unemployment has a significant long-term impact and that is why we have to address this situation quickly.

In 2013, after suffering for so long from the 2008 financial crisis, the European Union created a program called the Youth Guarantee. The European Union provides funding to OECD member countries to implement this program. The Youth Guarantee is a program that offers, during the four months following the end of formal study or the loss of employment, advice, training and work experience to any young person under the age of 25. This is a way to guarantee that they'll be taken care of.

Canada doesn't have a youth guarantee. It's vitally important that the government engage with the provinces about quickly creating some sort of youth guarantee in the area of public service employment. The pandemic will end one day. We will have treatment and a vaccine, and the economy will recover, but young people who have experienced unemployment could become discouraged and change their lifestyle accordingly. Studies show that it's very difficult to find a job after nine months of unemployment, especially for young people.

We need to take care of our young people. This will require a great deal of cooperation with the provinces. These investments are absolutely necessary. That's what I wanted to say about young people. I'm very concerned about this issue and we need to talk about it more and invite the Government of Canada to invest more in young people.

The third point I wanted to discuss concerns the fact that the federal government must once again become a financial partner in the EI program. I asked a question about this in committee of the whole. Senator Dalphond had concerns similar to mine, which he raised with the minister. I was dismayed to learn that when employment insurance was created in 1949, it was understood that the government would be a partner in this program.

For many years, the federal government contributed up to 20% of the cost of EI. However, in 1971, the rules changed somewhat. The government remained a financial partner, but in the 1970s the rule changed and the federal government contributed to the costs when Canada's unemployment rate rose above 4%. There were times in the 1980s when the federal government contributed up to 42% or 43% of the cost of EI. In 1991, the federal government decided to stop contributing to the program. At present, the program is funded entirely by employer and employee contributions, shared 7/12 and 5/12 respectively.

• (1950)

The costs associated with this program are significant and growing. The Chief Actuary that examined the program before we even read Bill C-4 estimated that the cost of the employment insurance program, which was hovering around \$20 billion in recent years, would increase by \$40 billion in 2020 for a total cost of approximately \$60 billion. The minister told us that the changes to the program set out in Bill C-4 would increase those costs by \$10.2 billion, which brings us to a total cost of nearly \$70 billion.

As we now know, premiums are frozen but the cost of financing will be deferred. It is therefore very important, in the near future, to review the EI program, which may be much bigger than it is now and which may also now cover self-employed workers. That is the third point I wanted to make.

I'd like to say a few words about the deficit. I'm sure you're hearing the same thing, but people are saying that it's unbelievable. They're asking me whether this deficit is dangerous and what we should do.

I don't think we need to be alarmed for the moment. What's more, as the government said, because of the low interest rates, it will be able to pay down the deficit at a reasonable cost.

Last week I attended a conference with monetary policy experts, and no one criticized the relaxing of monetary policy through which central banks provide loans to their government. That is what the OECD recommends in its economic outlook. The OECD recommends that all governments carry on with their fiscal and budgetary policies to both support incomes and foster a policy of monetary easing — quantitative easing, as they say in economic jargon — which means central banks purchase bonds or treasury bills and in some cases private sector assets.

This is an old practice. It is not new. It was abandoned for a while and has recently regained favour.

One day the pandemic will be over and we will have to stop incurring these extraordinary expenses. However, by incurring them we are ensuring that our economy can weather the storm. In fact, the important thing is to do what David Dodge describes in his paper, which is to invest and ensure that the debt-financed spending triggers, as much as possible, private business investment that will translate into investment in human capital.

Therefore, I am not worried. David Dodge, who attended this well-known conference organized by the Max Bell School of Public Policy, likes to talk about a very simple formula that can help us predict whether public debt will or will not decrease relative to the GDP.

The Hon. the Speaker: I'm sorry, Senator, but your time has expired. Are you asking for five more minutes?

Senator Bellemare: Yes, please.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Bellemare: To summarize this simple formula for you, we need to compare the rate of growth of the economy with the government's base rate. When the growth rate of the economy is greater than the real interest rate, the key interest rate, it ensures a reduction in the debt as a percentage of the GDP.

As a result, since all economists are predicting that interest rates are going to remain low, one day, at the end of 2021 or in 2022 perhaps, when growth resumes, the debt will decrease.

I want to close with a word that is something the OECD called for in its document and that is "cooperation." To get through this pandemic, the OECD is encouraging all countries to cooperate. I think that is important. However, in Canada, the word "cooperate" has an even broader meaning: the government must cooperate with other governments, the provincial governments; it must also cooperate with economic stakeholders such as business and labour representatives; finally, parliamentarians must also cooperate with each other, so that we are all heading in the same direction, as Senator Harder suggested.

With that, I thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time, on division.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator Dean, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

(At 7:57 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 9 a.m.)

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable George J. Furey

THE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE IN THE SENATE

The Honourable Marc Gold

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Honourable Donald Neil Plett

FACILITATOR OF THE INDEPENDENT SENATORS GROUP

The Honourable Yuen Pau Woo

THE LEADER OF THE CANADIAN SENATORS GROUP

The Honourable Scott Tannas

THE LEADER OF THE PROGRESSIVE SENATE GROUP

The Honourable Jane Cordy

OFFICERS OF THE SENATE

INTERIM CLERK OF THE SENATE AND CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENTS

Richard Denis

LAW CLERK AND PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL

Philippe Hallée

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD

J. Greg Peters

THE MINISTRY

(In order of precedence)

(October 1, 2020)

The Right Hon. Justin P. J. Trudeau	Prime Minister
The Hon. Chrystia Freeland	Minister of Finance
	Deputy Prime Minister
The Hon. Lawrence MacAulay	Minister of Veterans Affairs
	Associate Minister of National Defence
The Hon. Carolyn Bennett	Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
The Hon. Dominic LeBlanc	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
	President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada
The Hon. Navdeep Bains	Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
The Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos	President of the Treasury Board
The Hon. Marc Garneau	Minister of Transport
The Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau	Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
The Hon. Mélanie Joly	Minister of Economic Development
	Minister of Official Languages
The Hon. Diane Lebouthillier	Minister of National Revenue
The Hon. Catherine McKenna	Minister of Infrastructure and Communities
The Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan	Minister of National Defence
The Hon. Maryam Monsef	Minister of Rural Economic Development
	Minister for Women and Gender Equality
The Hon. Carla Qualtrough	Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
	Minister of Health
The Hon. Patty Hajdu	Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth
The Hon. Bardish Chagger	Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne	Minister of International Development
The Hon. Karina Gould	Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
The Hon. Ahmed Hussen	Minister of Natural Resources
The Hon. Seamus O'Regan	Leader of the Government in the House of Commons
The Hon. Pablo Rodriguez	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
The Hon. Bill Blair	Minister of International Trade
The Hon. Mary Ng	Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion
	Minister of Labour
The Hon. Filomena Tassi	Minister of Environment and Climate Change
The Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson	Minister of Justice
The Hon. David Lametti	Attorney General of Canada
	Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
The Hon. Bernadette Jordan	Minister of Digital Government
The Hon. Joyce Murray	Minister of Public Services and Procurement
The Hon. Anita Anand	Minister of Middle-Class Prosperity
The Hon. Mona Fortier	Associate Minister of Finance
	Minister of Canadian Heritage
The Hon. Steven Guilbeault	Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
The Hon. Marco Mendicino	Minister of Indigenous Services
The Hon. Marc Miller	Minister of Seniors
The Hon. Deb Schulte	Minister of Northern Affairs
The Hon. Dan Vandal	

SENATORS OF CANADA

ACCORDING TO SENIORITY

(October 1, 2020)

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
George J. Furey, <i>Speaker</i>	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.
Jane Cordy	Nova Scotia	Dartmouth, N.S.
Mobina S. B. Jaffer	British Columbia	North Vancouver, B.C.
Pierrette Ringuette	New Brunswick	Edmundston, N.B.
Percy E. Downe	Charlottetown	Charlottetown, P.E.I.
Paul J. Massicotte	De Lanaudière	Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Que.
Terry M. Mercer	Northend Halifax	Caribou River, N.S.
Jim Munson	Ottawa/Rideau Canal	Ottawa, Ont.
Elaine McCoy	Alberta	Calgary, Alta.
Larry W. Campbell	British Columbia	Vancouver, B.C.
Dennis Dawson	Lauzon	Sainte-Foy, Que.
Sandra M. Lovelace Nicholas	New Brunswick	Tobique First Nations, N.B.
Stephen Greene	Halifax - The Citadel	Halifax, N.S.
Michael L. MacDonald	Cape Breton	Dartmouth, N.S.
Michael Duffy	Prince Edward Island	Cavendish, P.E.I.
Percy Mockler	New Brunswick	St. Leonard, N.B.
Pamela Wallin	Saskatchewan	Wadena, Sask.
Yonah Martin	British Columbia	Vancouver, B.C.
Patrick Brazeau	Repentigny	Maniwaki, Que.
Leo Housakos	Wellington	Laval, Que.
Donald Neil Plett	Landmark	Landmark, Man.
Linda Frum	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Claude Carignan, P.C.	Mille Isles	Saint-Eustache, Que.
Carolyn Stewart Olsen	New Brunswick	Sackville, N.B.
Dennis Glen Patterson	Nunavut	Iqaluit, Nunavut
Elizabeth Marshall	Newfoundland and Labrador	Paradise, Nfld. & Lab.
Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu	La Salle	Sherbrooke, Que.
Judith G. Seidman	De la Durantaye	Saint-Raphaël, Que.
Rose-May Poirier	New Brunswick—Saint-Louis-de-Kent	Saint-Louis-de-Kent, N.B.
Salma Ataulhjan	Ontario (Toronto)	Toronto, Ont.
Fabian Manning	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. Bride's, Nfld. & Lab.
Larry W. Smith	Sauvel	Hudson, Que.
Josée Verner, P.C.	Montarville	Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures, Que.
Norman E. Doyle	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.
Jean-Guy Dagenais	Victoria	Blainville, Que.
Vernon White	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.
Thanh Hai Ngo	Ontario	Orleans, Ont.
Diane Bellemare	Alma	Outremont, Que.
Douglas Black	Alberta	Canmore, Alta.
David M. Wells	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.
Lynn Beyak	Ontario	Dryden, Ont.
Victor Oh	Mississauga	Mississauga, Ont.
Denise Batters	Saskatchewan	Regina, Sask.
Scott Tannas	Alberta	High River, Alta.
Peter Harder, P.C.	Ottawa	Manotick, Ont.
Raymonde Gagné	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
Frances Lankin, P.C.	Ontario	Restoule, Ont.
Ratna Omidvar	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Chantal Petitclerc	Grandville	Montreal, Que.
Murray Sinclair	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
Yuen Pau Woo	British Columbia	North Vancouver, B.C.
Patricia Bovey	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
René Cormier	New Brunswick	Caraquet, N.B.
Nancy J. Hartling	New Brunswick	Riverview, N.B.
Kim Pate	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.
Tony Dean	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Diane F. Griffin	Prince Edward Island	Stratford, P.E.I.
Wanda Elaine Thomas Bernard	Nova Scotia (East Preston)	East Preston, N.S.
Sabi Marwah	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
Howard Wetston	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Lucie Moncion	Ontario	North Bay, Ont.
Renée Dupuis	The Laurentides	Sainte-Pétronille, Que.
MariLou McPhedran	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
Gwen Boniface	Ontario	Orillia, Ont.
Eric Forest	Gulf	Rimouski, Que.
Marc Gold	Stadacona	Westmount, Que.
Marie-Françoise Mégie	Rougemont	Montreal, Que.
Raymonde Saint-Germain	De la Vallière	Quebec City, Que.
Dan Christmas	Nova Scotia	Membertou, N.S.
Rosa Galvez	Bedford	Lévis, Que.
David Richards	New Brunswick	Fredericton, N.B.
Mary Coyle	Nova Scotia	Antigonish, N.S.
Mary Jane McCallum	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
Robert Black	Ontario	Centre Wellington, Ont.
Marty Deacon	Waterloo Region	Waterloo, Ont.
Yvonne Boyer	Ontario	Merrickville-Wolford, Ont.
Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia	Newfoundland and Labrador	Twillingate, Nfld. & Lab.
Pierre J. Dalphond	De Lorimier	Montreal, Que.
Donna Dasko	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Colin Deacon	Nova Scotia	Halifax, N.S.
Julie Miville-Dechéne	Inkerman	Mont-Royal, Que.
Bev Busson	British Columbia	North Okanagan Region, B.C.
Marty Klyne	Saskatchewan	White City, Sask.
Patti LaBoucane-Benson	Alberta	Spruce Grove, Alta.
Paula Simons	Alberta	Edmonton, Alta.
Peter M. Boehm	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.
Josée Forest-Niesing	Ontario	Sudbury, Ont.
Brian Francis	Prince Edward Island	Rocky Point, P.E.I.
Margaret Dawn Anderson	Northwest Territories	Yellowknife, N.W.T.
Pat Duncan	Yukon	Whitehorse, Yukon
Rosemary Moodie	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Stan Kutcher	Nova Scotia	Halifax, N.S.
Tony Loffreda	Shawinigan	Montreal, Que.
Judith Keating	New Brunswick	Fredericton, N.B.
Brent Cotter	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon, Sask.

SENATORS OF CANADA

ALPHABETICAL LIST

(October 1, 2020)

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address	Political Affiliation
The Honourable			
Anderson, Margaret Dawn	Northwest Territories	Yellowknife, N.W.T.	Independent Senators Group
Ataullahjan, Salma	Ontario (Toronto)	Toronto, Ont.	Conservative Party of Canada
Batters, Denise	Saskatchewan	Regina, Sask.	Conservative Party of Canada
Bellemare, Diane	Alma	Outremont, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Bernard, Wanda Elaine Thomas	Nova Scotia (East Preston)	East Preston, N.S.	Progressive Senate Group
Beyak, Lynn	Ontario	Dryden, Ont.	Non-affiliated
Black, Douglas	Alberta	Canmore, Alta.	Canadian Senators Group
Black, Robert	Ontario	Centre Wellington, Ont.	Canadian Senators Group
Boehm, Peter M.	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Boisvenu, Pierre-Hugues	La Salle	Sherbrooke, Que.	Conservative Party of Canada
Boniface, Gwen	Ontario	Orillia, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Bovey, Patricia	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Progressive Senate Group
Boyer, Yvonne	Ontario	Merrickville-Wolford, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Brazeau, Patrick	Repentigny	Maniwaki, Que.	Non-affiliated
Busson, Bev	British Columbia	North Okanagan Region, B.C.	Independent Senators Group
Campbell, Larry W.	British Columbia	Vancouver, B.C.	Canadian Senators Group
Carignan, Claude, P.C.	Mille Isles	Saint-Eustache, Que.	Conservative Party of Canada
Christmas, Dan	Nova Scotia	Membertou, N.S.	Independent Senators Group
Cordy, Jane	Nova Scotia	Dartmouth, N.S.	Progressive Senate Group
Cormier, René	New Brunswick	Caracquet, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
Cotter, Brent	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon, Sask.	Independent Senators Group
Coyle, Mary	Nova Scotia	Antigonish, N.S.	Independent Senators Group
Dagenais, Jean-Guy	Victoria	Blainville, Que.	Canadian Senators Group
Dalphond, Pierre J.	De Lorimier	Montreal, Que.	Progressive Senate Group
Dasko, Donna	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Dawson, Dennis	Lauzon	Ste-Foy, Que.	Progressive Senate Group
Deacon, Colin	Nova Scotia	Halifax, N.S.	Independent Senators Group
Deacon, Marty	Waterloo Region	Waterloo, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Dean, Tony	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Downe, Percy E.	Charlottetown	Charlottetown, P.E.I.	Canadian Senators Group
Doyle, Norman E.	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.	Conservative Party of Canada
Duffy, Michael	Prince Edward Island	Cavendish, P.E.I.	Independent Senators Group
Duncan, Pat	Yukon	Whitehorse, Yukon	Independent Senators Group
Dupuis, Renée	The Laurentides	Sainte-Pétronille, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Forest, Éric	Gulf	Rimouski, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Forest-Niesing, Josée	Ontario	Sudbury, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Francis, Brian	Prince Edward Island	Rocky Point, P.E.I.	Progressive Senate Group
Frum, Linda	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Conservative Party of Canada
Furey, George J., <i>Speaker</i>	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.	Non-affiliated
Gagné, Raymonde	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Non-affiliated
Galvez, Rosa	Bedford	Lévis, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Gold, Marc	Stadacona	Westmount, Que.	Non-affiliated
Greene, Stephen	Halifax - The Citadel	Halifax, N.S.	Canadian Senators Group
Griffin, Diane F.	Prince Edward Island	Stratford, P.E.I.	Canadian Senators Group
Harder, Peter, P.C.	Ottawa	Manotick, Ont.	Progressive Senate Group
Hartling, Nancy J.	New Brunswick	Riverview, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
Housakos, Leo	Wellington	Laval, Que.	Conservative Party of Canada
Jaffer, Mobina S. B.	British Columbia	North Vancouver, B.C.	Independent Senators Group
Keating, Judith	New Brunswick	Fredericton, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
Klyne, Marty	Saskatchewan	White City, Sask.	Progressive Senate Group
Kutcher, Stan	Nova Scotia	Halifax, N.S.	Independent Senators Group
LaBoucane-Benson, Patti	Alberta	Spruce Grove, Alta.	Non-affiliated
Lankin, Frances	Ontario	Restoule, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Loffreda, Tony	Shawinigan	Montreal, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Lovelace Nicholas, Sandra M.	New Brunswick	Tobique First Nations, N.B.	Progressive Senate Group
MacDonald, Michael L.	Cape Breton	Dartmouth, N.S.	Conservative Party of Canada
Manning, Fabian	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. Bride's, Nfld. & Lab.	Conservative Party of Canada

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address	Political Affiliation
Marshall, Elizabeth	Newfoundland and Labrador	Paradise, Nfld. & Lab.	Conservative Party of Canada
Martin, Yonah	British Columbia	Vancouver, B.C.	Conservative Party of Canada
Marwah, Sabi	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Massicotte, Paul J.	De Lanaudière	Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Que.	Independent Senators Group
McCallum, Mary Jane	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Independent Senators Group
McCoy, Elaine	Alberta	Calgary, Alta.	Canadian Senators Group
McPhedran, Marilou	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Independent Senators Group
Mégie, Marie-Françoise	Rougemont	Montreal, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Mercer, Terry M.	Northend Halifax	Caribou River, N.S.	Progressive Senate Group
Miville-Dechéne, Julie	Inkerman	Mont-Royal, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Mockler, Percy	New Brunswick	St. Leonard, N.B.	Conservative Party of Canada
Moncion, Lucie	Ontario	North Bay, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Moodie, Rosemary	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Munson, Jim	Ottawa/Rideau Canal	Ottawa, Ont.	Progressive Senate Group
Ngo, Thanh Hai	Ontario	Orleans, Ont.	Conservative Party of Canada
Oh, Victor	Mississauga	Mississauga, Ont.	Conservative Party of Canada
Omidvar, Ratna	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Pate, Kim	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Patterson, Dennis Glen	Nunavut	Iqaluit, Nunavut	Conservative Party of Canada
Petitclerc, Chantal	Grandville	Montreal, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Plett, Donald Neil	Landmark	Landmark, Man.	Conservative Party of Canada
Poirier, Rose-May	New Brunswick—Saint-Louis-de-Kent	Saint-Louis-de-Kent, N.B.	Conservative Party of Canada
Ravalia, Mohamed-Iqbal	Newfoundland and Labrador	Twillingate, Nfld. & Lab.	Independent Senators Group
Richards, David	New Brunswick	Fredericton, N.B.	Canadian Senators Group
Ringuette, Pierrette	New Brunswick	Edmundston, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
Saint-Germain, Raymonde	De la Vallière	Quebec City, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Seidman, Judith G.	De la Durantaye	Saint-Raphaël, Que.	Conservative Party of Canada
Simons, Paula	Alberta	Edmonton, Alta.	Independent Senators Group
Sinclair, Murray	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Independent Senators Group
Smith, Larry W.	Saurel	Hudson, Que.	Conservative Party of Canada
Stewart Olsen, Carolyn	New Brunswick	Sackville, N.B.	Conservative Party of Canada
Tannas, Scott	Alberta	High River, Alta.	Canadian Senators Group
Verner, Josée, P.C.	Montarville	Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures, Que.	Canadian Senators Group
Wallin, Pamela	Saskatchewan	Wadena, Sask.	Canadian Senators Group
Wells, David M.	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.	Conservative Party of Canada
Wetston, Howard	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
White, Vernon	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.	Canadian Senators Group
Woo, Yuen Pau	British Columbia	North Vancouver, B.C.	Independent Senators Group

SENATORS OF CANADA
BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY
(October 1, 2020)

ONTARIO—24

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Jim Munson	Ottawa/Rideau Canal	Ottawa
2 Linda Frum	Ontario	Toronto
3 Salma Ataullahjan	Ontario (Toronto)	Toronto
4 Vernon White	Ontario	Ottawa
5 Thanh Hai Ngo	Ontario	Orleans
6 Lynn Beyak	Ontario	Dryden
7 Victor Oh	Mississauga	Mississauga
8 Peter Harder, P.C.	Ottawa	Manotick
9 Frances Lankin, P.C.	Ontario	Restoule
10 Ratna Omidvar	Ontario	Toronto
11 Kim Pate	Ontario	Ottawa
12 Tony Dean	Ontario	Toronto
13 Sabi Marwah	Ontario	Toronto
14 Howard Wetston	Ontario	Toronto
15 Lucie Moncion	Ontario	North Bay
16 Gwen Boniface	Ontario	Orillia
17 Robert Black	Ontario	Centre Wellington
18 Marty Deacon	Waterloo Region	Waterloo
19 Yvonne Boyer	Ontario	Merrickville-Wolford
20 Donna Dasko	Ontario	Toronto
21 Peter M. Boehm	Ontario	Ottawa
22 Josée Forest-Niesing	Ontario	Sudbury
23 Rosemary Moodie	Ontario	Toronto
24 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .

SENATORS BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY

QUEBEC—24

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Paul J. Massicotte	De Lanaudière	Mont-Saint-Hilaire
2 Dennis Dawson	Lauzon	Ste-Foy
3 Patrick Brazeau	Repentigny	Maniwaki
4 Leo Housakos	Wellington	Laval
5 Claude Carignan, P.C.	Mille Îles	Saint-Eustache
6 Judith G. Seidman	De la Durantaye	Saint-Raphaël
7 Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu	La Salle	Sherbrooke
8 Larry W. Smith	Saurel	Hudson
9 Josée Verner, P.C.	Montarville	Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures
10 Jean-Guy Dagenais	Victoria	Blainville
11 Diane Bellemare	Alma	Outremont
12 Chantal Petitclerc	Grandville	Montreal
13 Renée Dupuis	The Laurentides	Sainte-Pétronille
14 Éric Forest	Gulf	Rimouski
15 Marc Gold	Stadacona	Westmount
16 Marie-Françoise Mégie	Rougemont	Montreal
17 Raymonde Saint-Germain	De la Vallière	Quebec City
18 Rosa Galvez	Bedford	Lévis
19 Pierre J. Dalphond	De Lorimier	Montreal
20 Julie Miville-Dechéne	Inkerman	Mont-Royal
21 Tony Loffreda	Shawinegan	Montreal
22 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .
23 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .
24 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .

SENATORS BY PROVINCE—MARITIME DIVISION

NOVA SCOTIA—10

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Jane Cordy	Nova Scotia	Dartmouth
2 Terry M. Mercer	Northend Halifax	Caribou River
3 Stephen Greene	Halifax - The Citadel	Halifax
4 Michael L. MacDonald	Cape Breton	Dartmouth
5 Wanda Elaine Thomas Bernard	Nova Scotia (East Preston)	East Preston
6 Dan Christmas	Nova Scotia	Membertou
7 Mary Coyle	Nova Scotia	Antigonish
8 Colin Deacon	Nova Scotia	Halifax
9 Stan Kutcher	Nova Scotia	Halifax
10 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .

NEW BRUNSWICK—10

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Pierrette Ringuette	New Brunswick	Edmundston
2 Sandra M. Lovelace Nicholas	New Brunswick	Tobique First Nations
3 Percy Mockler	New Brunswick	St. Leonard
4 Carolyn Stewart Olsen	New Brunswick	Sackville
5 Rose-May Poirier	New Brunswick—Saint-Louis-de-Kent	Saint-Louis-de-Kent
6 René Cormier	New Brunswick	Caraquet
7 Nancy J. Hartling	New Brunswick	Riverview
8 David Richards	New Brunswick	Fredericton
9 Judith Keating	New Brunswick	Fredericton
10 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND—4

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Percy E. Downe	Charlottetown	Charlottetown
2 Michael Duffy	Prince Edward Island	Cavendish
3 Diane F. Griffin	Prince Edward Island	Stratford
4 Brian Francis	Prince Edward Island	Rocky Point

SENATORS BY PROVINCE—WESTERN DIVISION

MANITOBA—6

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Donald Neil Plett	Landmark	Landmark
2 Raymonde Gagné	Manitoba	Winnipeg
3 Murray Sinclair	Manitoba	Winnipeg
4 Patricia Bovey	Manitoba	Winnipeg
5 Marilou McPhedran	Manitoba	Winnipeg
6 Mary Jane McCallum	Manitoba	Winnipeg

BRITISH COLUMBIA—6

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Mobina S. B. Jaffer	British Columbia	North Vancouver
2 Larry W. Campbell	British Columbia	Vancouver
3 Yonah Martin	British Columbia	Vancouver
4 Yuen Pau Woo	British Columbia	North Vancouver
5 Bev Busson	British Columbia	North Okanagan Region
6 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .

SASKATCHEWAN—6

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Pamela Wallin	Saskatchewan	Wadena
2 Denise Batters	Saskatchewan	Regina
3 Marty Klyne	Saskatchewan	White City
4 Brent Cotter	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon
5 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .
6 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .

ALBERTA—6

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Elaine McCoy	Alberta	Calgary
2 Douglas Black	Alberta	Canmore
3 Scott Tannas	Alberta	High River
4 Patti LaBoucane-Benson	Alberta	Spruce Grove
5 Paula Simons	Alberta	Edmonton
6 . . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .

SENATORS BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR—6

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 George J. Furey, <i>Speaker</i>	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's
2 Elizabeth Marshall	Newfoundland and Labrador	Paradise
3 Fabian Manning	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. Bride's
4 Norman E. Doyle	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's
5 David M. Wells	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's
6 Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia	Newfoundland and Labrador	Twillingate

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES—1

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Margaret Dawn Anderson	Northwest Territories	Yellowknife

NUNAVUT—1

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Dennis Glen Patterson	Nunavut	Iqaluit

YUKON—1

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1 Pat Duncan	Yukon	Whitehorse

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