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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about the ongoing war in Darfur. It started nearly 20 years ago, and suffering still ensues upon citizens, particularly women and girls.

Sadly, the conflict in Darfur is one of many conflicts we have seen over the past 20 years, including in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and now the conflict in Ukraine. Every day we see the sad eyes of women and children staring at us through our screens.

There is nothing worse than a war. Lives are changed forever. Every conflict, no matter where in the world it takes place, erodes the fabric of all our societies.

In 2002, as a senator, I was appointed as Canada's special envoy to the Sudanese peace process by former Prime Minister Chrétien. Sadly, in 2003, fighting erupted in Darfur, Sudan. Canada was the first to intervene.

When I arrived in El Fasher, women crowded the UN plane and profusely thanked me. I was confused by what I saw. For shelter, they only had pieces of plastic, and they had very little food, yet they thanked me. They told me that Canada had provided funds to UNICEF, which allowed schooling for their children so they could have hope for the future.

I went to the Nyala refugee camp, and I asked why they had decided to send their daughters to collect firewood and not their sons. The mothers looked me straight in the eye and said, "If we send our boys, the militia will kill them. If we send our girls we risk them being raped, but they will not be killed."

I later saw a few young girls with a wheelbarrow. Inside the wheelbarrow was a young girl. The young girl had been raped by eight militiamen. She was beaten and covered in blood. It looked like every bone in her body had been broken. I will never forget the look in the girl's eyes — her pain, her sadness, her fear. Her tears may have dried, but her fear and pain will never be forgotten. I will never forget her.

Honourable senators, I know we want to do everything in our power to ensure that other girls do not continue to suffer a similar fate. As Canadians, we must stand by the people of Darfur, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine. We have the opportunity as parliamentarians and as Canadians to be there for all people in their times of need.

Canadians are champions for human rights, and I have confidence that we will stand up for all vulnerable people around the world.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: Honourable senators, today I want to bring to your attention the National Assembly of Quebec's recent passage of Bill 24, which will give Quebec parole board judges and wardens of provincial correctional facilities the power to require offenders convicted of intimate partner violence to wear an electronic bracelet while on parole.

I applaud this new bill, which establishes Quebec as a leader in the fight against intimate partner violence in Canada and makes it the seventh jurisdiction in the world to adopt this type of electronic monitoring program. It should be noted that 26 U.S. states have been using this type of monitoring with violent men for years. An electronic bracelet is becoming the tool of choice to break the unhealthy and repetitive cycle of intimate partner violence. It sets up a security perimeter between a partner or ex-partner and his victim. If the former does not obey the perimeter, both the police and the victim receive a security alert. There are two benefits to this approach: It prevents homicides and proves non-compliance with conditions.

Honourable colleagues, as I've said many times in this chamber, intimate partner violence is a tragedy that affects thousands of women in Canada, and the record number of femicides that have been committed in recent years makes Canada one of the countries most affected by this scourge. Despite the Statistics Canada reports produced annually on domestic violence, despite reports from the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability and despite the first-hand accounts from victims that we regularly read in the media, why is it so difficult for our government and for this Parliament to propose and adopt this modern and technically effective measure, namely the electronic monitoring device, to prevent these murders?

It is high time we took concrete action, as Quebec has done, to protect these women and children who must flee their homes, quit their jobs and hide in shelters to escape death. As parliamentarians, we have a duty and a moral and collective responsibility to our fellow citizens to do something to stop the attempted murders that occur every day in Canada, and the murders that occur every other day.

• (1410)

With electronic bracelets, femicide in Canada could be cut in half. That is why I have asked the Senate to refer my Bill S-205 to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in order to save as many lives as possible.

In the time it took me to deliver this message, one woman was killed in Canada.

Thank you.

[*English*]

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

NUSA DUA DECLARATION

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, last week the Inter-Parliamentary Union held its 144th Assembly in Nusa Dua, Indonesia, bringing together 110 national parliaments under the theme "Getting to zero: Mobilizing parliaments to act on climate change."

In a unified voice, the IPU adopted the Nusa Dua Declaration recognizing the urgent need to address the climate crisis. It outlined the national actions parliaments need to take to implement the Paris Agreement, including accelerating the transition to clean energy, ensuring the inclusion of marginalized members of society, and enhancing global cooperation for joint climate solutions.

I quote Mr. Duarte Pacheco, member of Parliament for Portugal and President of the IPU:

> The time to act is now. Time is running out. Scientists and researchers from all over the world have documented what has been described as an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership. This 144th Assembly must mobilize all parliamentarians. We must lead by example and take resolute action before it is too late. Fellow parliamentarians, let us not fail our citizens and the young generation, who have placed their trust in us!

Colleagues, I echo this call to you. How can we hear the unified voices of scientists, citizens and true leaders across the world warning us of imminent and irreversible catastrophes and do little, or worse, put barriers to effective and necessary climate action to protect our people — Canadians?

In this Senate, there are important initiatives that address the climate crisis and the Senate's very own carbon footprint. I encourage you all to join the IPU of which you are, I'm sure, a member and join fellow parliamentarians across the world in not only advocating but implementing real climate actions through these and many other initiatives.

Canadians are begging Parliament to be a vessel for action, to become true leaders and to lead by example.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

THE HONOURABLE SALMA ATAULLAHJAN

Hon. Victor Oh: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize and congratulate my colleague and dear friend Senator Salma Ataullahjan who received one of Pakistan's most prestigious civic awards, the Sitara-e-Pakistan. Recipients of this award are recognized for their contributions to Pakistan's society and culture as well as the promotion of world peace.

Senator Ataullahjan worked with polio programs, refugees and female parliamentarians. She also travelled when floods ravaged her own province. Canada was part of the recovery program.

Senator Ataullahjan was awarded the Sitara-e-Pakistan award on August 14, 2020, but due to the pandemic was unable to travel to Pakistan in person to receive this prestigious award on Pakistan Resolution Day.

On the morning of March 23 of this year, Senator Ravalia and I proudly joined her at the High Commission of Pakistan in Ottawa for the award ceremony. It was an honour to attend and recognize Senator Ataullahjan for her significant contributions toward international diplomacy, natural disaster relief, humanitarian aid and the promotion of Canada-Pakistan relations.

Colleagues, please join me in congratulating Senator Ataullahjan for her noteworthy impacts on South Asia.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Diane Bellemare, Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, presented the following report:

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

The Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament has the honour to present its

FIRST REPORT

Pursuant to rule 12-7(2)(a), your committee recommends that the *Rules of the Senate* be amended:

1. **by renumbering current rules 2-4(1) to 2-4(3) as rules 2-4(5) to 2-4(7), and by adding the following new rules 2-4(1) to 2-4(4):**

"Election of the Speaker *pro tempore*

2-4. (1) At the beginning of the first session of each parliament, and at any subsequent time during the course of sessions of that parliament that the position becomes vacant, the Speaker *pro tempore* shall be elected by secret ballot, provided that if more than two senators stand for election, the election will be conducted by ranked ballot.

Process of election

2-4. (2) Within the first five sitting days of a parliament, and subsequently within the first five sitting days of a vacancy arising in the position of Speaker *pro tempore* during the course of the parliament, the Speaker shall, after consulting with the Leader of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, and the leader or facilitator of any other recognized party or recognized parliamentary group, inform the Senate of the process for senators to become candidates and for the conduct of the election.

Term of office of Speaker *pro tempore*

2-4. (3) Once the Speaker *pro tempore* has been elected by the Senate, they shall serve for the duration of the session.

Subsequent sessions

2-4. (4) At the beginning of any subsequent session in the same parliament, if a sitting senator held the position of Speaker *pro tempore* at the time of prorogation of the previous session, a motion to again name that senator as Speaker *pro tempore* will be deemed moved, seconded and adopted, without debate or vote, immediately after the Speaker reports the Speech from the Throne and any consequential business arising from the Speech.";

2. by deleting rule 12-2(1) and by renumbering current rules 12-2(2) to 12-2(6) accordingly; and

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

Your committee also notes that any system established under these new rules should ensure that the secrecy of all senators' ballots, as provided for in new rule 2-4(1), is fully respected.

Respectfully submitted,

DIANE BELLEMARE

Chair

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator Bellemare, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[*English*]

NATIONAL RIBBON SKIRT DAY BILL

SECOND REPORT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Brian Francis, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, presented the following report:

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples has the honour to present its

SECOND REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-219, An Act respecting a National Ribbon Skirt Day, has, in obedience to the order of reference of Thursday, December 9, 2021, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment but with certain observations, which are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

BRIAN FRANCIS

Chair

(*For text of observations, see today's* Journals of the Senate*, p. 390-1.*)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator McCallum, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

• (1420)

CANADA-EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

FIRST PART, 2022 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, JANUARY 24-28, 2022—REPORT TABLED

Hon. David M. Wells (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning the First Part of the 2022 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, held by video conference, from January 24 to 28, 2022.

QUESTION PERIOD

FINANCE

ALCOHOL EXCISE TAX

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate.

In 2017, the Trudeau government imposed an annual automatic escalator tax on beer, wine and spirits, allowing the government to increase its tax year after year without proper parliamentary scrutiny or ministerial accountability. At the time, the Department of Finance official admitted to the Senate National Finance Committee that the Trudeau government didn't estimate the impact of the new tax, saying the change was ". . . too small to have an impact."

An answer to a question on the Senate Order Paper shows that during its first three years, this tax brought in a revenue of over $5.5 billion, including over $1.8 billion in 2019-20 alone, government leader.

The next increase to this tax is set to occur Friday, April 1, and that's no April Fool's joke. Will your government scrap this tax, government leader?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. I don't know the answer to that, but I suppose we'll know next week. If I have an answer before then, I will certainly report back.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, the annual increase of the alcohol escalator tax is tied to the Consumer Price Index and, as Canadians are aware, the rate of inflation has gone through the roof over the past year. In February, inflation went up 5.7% year over year, and it stands at the highest rate in over 30 years in this country.

Grape growers, hop producers, grain farmers, vineyards, brewing companies, craft distillers, bars and restaurants and the entire tourism and hospitality industry have all struggled over the last two years, suffering during this existential crisis. How does increasing the alcohol escalator tax on April 1 help these people survive and remain competitive in these tough circumstances? How does it help Canadians who keep having to pay more and more to try to survive? Who does this help besides the high tax-and-spend NDP-Liberal coalition?

Senator Gold: The taxes we pay as Canadians benefit us all collectively. They made it possible, amongst other things, for the government — with the support of all parties, both in this place and in the other place — to have assisted Canadians over the last two years through the most difficult times, including those in the hospitality sector and others you mentioned.

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

FEDERAL COURT OF APPEAL DECISION ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Senator Gold, in January, the Federal Court of Appeal made a historic decision by supporting francophones in British Columbia in restoring the full force of Part VII of the Official Languages Act. However, the government does not support this ruling and is calling for a stay of the decision. In fact, the Liberal government wants to take francophones to court to challenge the decision. This ruling on Part VII affects all francophone minority communities in Canada.

Why is this government planning to turn its back on francophones instead of supporting them in this historic win?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question underscoring the importance of the Official Languages Act.

With respect, esteemed colleague, this does not mean that we are abandoning francophones outside Quebec or even those in Quebec. The main point to note here is that this Federal Court of Appeal decision can potentially affect the modernization of the Official Languages Act. It is to be expected that the government would reflect on its position in light of this ruling.

Senator Poirier: Senator Gold, not only does the federal government want to take francophones to court, it also wants to stay last January's ruling. Francophones should thank Justice Noël for protecting part of what they have gained by refusing the application for a stay. That is another example of a government talking a good game but not following through when it is time to act.

Bill C-13 provides for the adoption of several regulations. Regardless of whether the government appeals the ruling, how will francophones trust that the government will act in good faith?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. We are impatiently awaiting Bill C-13 here in the Senate, as it represents a big step forward for all those living in minority communities, both francophones outside Quebec and anglophones in Quebec. We are also eagerly awaiting the extensive study we will no doubt have here, in the Senate. All issues and questions will be examined at that point.

Hon. René Cormier: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I'm following up on the questions that Senator Poirier asked, and I thank her for her commitment to official languages.

Senator Gold, much like Liane Roy, the President of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, I was stunned to learn that the federal government plans to appeal the Federal Court of Appeal's January 28, 2022,

decision in *Canada (Commissioner of Official Languages) v. Canada (Employment and Social Development)* to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Raymond Théberge, the Commissioner of Official Languages, called the Federal Court of Appeal's decision a historic one because it fundamentally restored, and I quote:

> . . . the full force of Part VII of the *Official Languages Act* and made it possible to effectively enhance the vitality of the English and French linguistic minorities in Canada and to support their ongoing development.

However, as Senator Poirier pointed out, on Friday, Minister Lametti confirmed that the government did not agree with some of the aspects of the Federal Court of Appeal ruling, while reaffirming his commitment to strengthening the Official Languages Act through Bill C-13.

Could you clarify things for everyone here and for official language minority communities by listing the aspects of the Federal Court of Appeal's decision that are problematic for the Government of Canada?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question, esteemed colleague.

As you know, the government has considered the impact of this decision on its major modernization of the Official Languages Act. This practice is consistent with the government's legislative power.

I have been told that the Minister of Justice is aware of the decision the Federal Court of Appeal handed down on Friday and that he is taking the time to review it in order to determine next steps.

• (1430)

Senator Cormier: Thank you for your answer, Senator Gold, even though I am not sure I understand it.

Isn't it true that appealing the Federal Court of Appeal decision to the Supreme Court of Canada could have a very negative impact on the development and vitality of British Columbia's francophone community, which has not had any employment services centres for francophones in the past 11 years, and on other minority linguistic communities, and interfere with the legislative process for Bill C-13?

How does the government intend to reassure communities and parliamentarians when this decision clearly points to a lack of cooperation between the minister responsible for the Official Languages Act, the justice minister and the employment and workforce development minister? I apologize for my impatience.

Senator Gold: I understand your passion and your commitment. I cannot comment on the issue of the ministers' cooperation. However, I can say that the Government of Canada is firmly committed to promoting and protecting the official languages. The government is well aware that the positive measures at stake in this issue are essential to the vitality of our francophone minority communities.

I have been given the assurance that the government remains committed to the reform that will modernize the Official Languages Act and its instruments, including the regulations that will follow up on the consultations the minister plans to hold as quickly as possible, once the legislation receives, we hope, Royal Assent.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BUDGET FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, lately, a lot of attention has been given to the NATO countries' commitment to allocate 2% of their GDP to defence spending. However, no one seems to be talking about our humanitarian commitment to the UN to allocate 0.7% of our gross national income to official development assistance.

In 1968, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development proposed that donor countries set an objective to contribute 1% of gross national income for the humanitarian component and 2% of GDP for the defence component.

In 2020, Canada reached 46% of its development assistance objective and 71% of its defence objective.

Given that far too many civilians continue to be, by far, the first casualties in armed conflicts, should Canada not increase its assistance or even seek to achieve parity between its humanitarian and defence spending?

If not, could the government at least fulfill its existing development assistance commitments?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The government is committed to make our assistance more effective to yield the best results possible for the poorest and most vulnerable, all while mobilizing additional funding for sustainable development.

Esteemed colleagues, Canada is the eighth-largest donor in the world, and the government is committed to investing more in international development.

In Budget 2021, the Government of Canada announced over $1 billion in additional and renewed funding for international assistance, including $375 million to address COVID-19.

Since 2020, Canada has allocated more than $2.7 billion to international assistance, including nearly $1 billion in new resources. Canada's ratio of official development assistance to gross national income increased by 8%, reaching its highest level in nearly a decade.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

ACCEPTANCE OF UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie: Thank you, Senator Gold. The point of my first question was that, with more money allocated to development assistance, we could afford to go and get most of the civilians fleeing the war. Ottawa has agreed to extend emergency stays for Ukrainians fleeing war to three years and to make it easier for them to work in Canada.

Through the efforts of the African Canadian Association of Ottawa, more than 1,200 students are now in a position to continue their studies. According to Boulou Ebanda de B'béri, a professor and special advisor on anti-racism and inclusive excellence at the University of Ottawa, the biggest challenge is getting Immigration Canada to accept them. He has written to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to ensure that Black students from Ukraine can benefit from the expedited programs introduced for Ukrainians.

Does the government plan to grant that request?

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

I am told that the government is currently working on the details of those programs, including the eligibility criteria for residents of Ukraine, in addition to Ukrainian passport holders.

[*English*]

HEALTH

PROOF OF VACCINATION—INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Hon. Jane Cordy: Senator Gold, last week I received your response — or I guess it was the minister's response — to my questions from November 25 and December 15 regarding clarification on vaccine status and travelling internationally. We know, and it was reiterated in your response to my questions, that the Government of Canada adjusted its travel health notice from a level 3 to a level 2, meaning the government will no longer recommend that Canadians avoid travel for non-essential purposes.

As government recommendations are lifting and we're now moving into warmer weather, Canadians are beginning to make travel arrangements again. However, the same concerns and uncertainty I raised in my previous questions exist regarding vaccination status and the types of vaccinations, specifically mixed vaccinations, which will be accepted in other jurisdictions.

I completely understand, as stated in your response or the response of the minister from last week, that every country has the sovereign right to decide their own entry restrictions and border measures. However, in the same response, I was given a rather vague answer that, "Canada has successfully engaged other countries to recognize Canadians who have received mixed vaccine schedules as being fully vaccinated."

Senator Gold, with which countries have Canada successfully engaged to recognize mixed vaccinations? Will the Government of Canada make this information readily available to the public?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you. That's a fair question. I don't know which countries have been engaged nor which engagements have been successful nor, frankly, whether or not that list will be published, updated or both. I will make inquiries, and I hope to get you an answer as quickly as I can.

Senator Cordy: Thank you, Senator Gold. I will quote another sentence or two from the response that I received:

> The Government of Canada respects the sovereign right of other countries to decide their travel restrictions and border measures and will continue to monitor the situation and provide updated travel advice to Canadians.

We all acknowledge that every country has their responsibility and the right to make their own decisions. It's easy to just tell Canadians to contact the country of destination, but Canadians look to their own government first to find that information. If I were travelling, I would go to the Government of Canada website before I would go to the website of the country to which I am travelling.

If the government is telling us that they have successfully negotiated with other countries, then they should be able to share this information with the public.

My question of you is, would you remind the government that travel information and vaccine requirements must be easy to understand for Canadians and the information must be easily accessible on the Canadian website?

Senator Gold: I will certainly do so. Thank you.

PRIVY COUNCIL

POLICY ON HIRING MEDICALLY RELEASED VETERANS

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Senator Gold, as you're aware, a number of years ago, the Government of Canada implemented a policy of priority hiring in the federal public service for qualified medically released veterans. These are men and women who were injured during the course of their service in the Canadian Armed Forces and who, because of those injuries, could no longer remain in military service.

A problem arose with this program. Except for National Defence and Veterans Affairs, very few federal government departments were hiring these qualified veterans.

• (1440)

Veterans groups wanted to know if the situation was improving, and if more departments were hiring those qualified veterans so those veterans could continue to support themselves and their families. But the written question I submitted on their

behalf has been on the Order Paper for over two years with no answer. Could Senator Gold advise when they might get an answer to their inquiry?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you. At the risk of triggering another round of enthusiastic response, I will certainly inquire, senator, and endeavour to get you an answer as quickly as I can.

Senator Downe: Thank you very much for that, Senator Gold but, given that the government has said publicly, "information should be open by default," what would you advise I tell these veteran groups about the government's failure to disclose any information to a written question that has been on the Senate Order Paper since February 2020?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. Senator Downe, you are someone who has been diligently prosecuting this issue, and we expect you to continue to do so.

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: Senator Gold, on March 15 in Pointe-aux-Trembles, a 10-year-old girl was violently assaulted by a man with mental health issues. The girl was leaving school when the man threw her to the ground and started punching and kicking her. She is still in hospital suffering from severe shock.

Every night in Montreal, two out of three emergency response calls involve people with mental illness. I have spent the last 20 years working to ensure that these people are neither incarcerated nor hospitalized, but cared for in the community thanks to adequate funding.

For example, in 2008, the Conservative government created the At Home/Chez Soi program, which produced very good results. In 2019, the Trudeau government established a similar program solely for the homeless. Since 2015, what programs and funding has Justin Trudeau's government set up to help people with mental health issues roaming the streets in Canada's big cities?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. I do not have any details right now, but I will look into it and get back to you with an answer.

I would like to add that the government of Canada is working with provincial and territorial governments and providing funding for mental health, which it will continue to do.

Senator Boisvenu: You know that the pandemic has exacerbated mental health issues. Nine million Canadians will suffer from mental health issues over the course of their lives. In 2017, close to 5.5 million Canadians received mental health services, and, in 2020, this number reached 6 million.

Does the Government of Canada plan to bring back programs such as At Home/Chez Soi, which helped reduce re-incarceration rates among people suffering from mental health issues by 90% and which funded itself through savings resulting from this reduction? Will the government commit to bringing back this program, which delivered very good results?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question and for highlighting the importance of this issue, which you clearly described.

As I stated, the government will continue to work with the provinces and territories, which have exclusive jurisdiction over these issues, and it will continue to fund and implement the programs required to support and care for people with mental health issues.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT

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

Leader, the Harper government decided to proceed with the procurement of the F-35 fighter jets nearly 12 years ago now, but the current Prime Minister — and who knows whether to call him Liberal or NDP — said he would not buy those fighter jets. He told Canadians that the aircraft did not work and were a long way from ever working.

Yesterday the Liberal or NDP Prime Minister finally announced his intention to commit not to a purchase, but to a negotiation with Lockheed Martin to procure the F-35s. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the German government took immediate action to boost its defence budget and purchase F-35 fighters for its air force.

Other countries did the same. The British, the Americans, the Belgians, the Norwegians, the Italians, the Japanese, the Poles and the Danes all did just that. Once again, our Prime Minister did not make a decision to purchase them, but rather to negotiate to purchase them.

Leader, with war raging in Europe for over a month now, why can't your government admit that it made a mistake by halting the purchase, by waiting 12 years before starting to negotiate the purchase of the F-35s? Canada is increasingly becoming the butt of jokes that I hate, saying that we don't have armed forces, we have unarmed forces.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The Government of Canada is pleased to have reached this stage. For the benefit of those who have not followed the story of the F-35s closely, you forgot to mention that when the decision was made in 2010 by the minority government led by Stephen Harper, it was done without a call for tenders. Then there was a motion of non-confidence in Parliament for that government's lack of transparency on this issue, even following the election of a majority government; the project was dropped.

The Government of Canada brought in an open and transparent process, and a recommendation was made to pursue discussions with Lockheed Martin. I believe that today, we have an appropriate and transparent process for ensuring that our soldiers will have the necessary tools not only to protect our sovereignty here and in the North, but also to contribute to defending the interests of democratic countries around the world.

Senator Carignan: Leader, seven years later, with a so-called transparent process, we end up with the same procurement, but seven years behind and with a substantial increase in cost and a utilization deficit to the point where we are forced to buy used F-18s from Australia, which were no longer good enough for the Australians. We had to repair and fix those to be able to use them.

In light of the response you have given us, can you tell us why the government is continuing to negotiate with Lockheed Martin and not just putting in an order to try to salvage the situation and minimize the damage that has been done by your government?

Senator Gold: Once again, I thank my colleague for his question. As I said, the government brought in an open and transparent process that is appropriate in this context, and this process has stages. We are at a specific stage now and will see this process through.

• (1450)

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

UNITED NATIONS TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, my question is a follow-up to a previous question on whether Canada will continue to refuse the standing invitation to send observers to the first meeting of states parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the TPNW, that is being hosted by Austria in June of this year. Senator Gold, last week Canada's ambassador to the UN in New York, Bob Rae, wrote about Putin's war against Ukraine, noting that there is a:

> . . . more critical veto, and that is the possession of the means of mass destruction by a limited number of countries that affects how things actually work in the "real world".

He continues to say:

> The end of nuclear hegemony created a deadlock more profound than a raise of the hand at the Security Council, and it is that fact that lies at the heart of the current challenge in how to deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression.

Senator Gold, would you please follow up with the government and ask if Canada will join other NATO countries, including Norway, in sending observers to the Vienna first meeting of states parties to this treaty?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. I have made inquiries, but I will certainly follow up and hope to get an answer soon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable Senators, pursuant to the order adopted December 7, 2021, I would like to inform the Senate that Question Period with the Honourable Marco E. L. Mendicino, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety, will take place on Wednesday, March 30, 2022, at the later of the end of Routine Proceedings or 2:30 p.m.

[*Translation*]

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 5, 2021-22

SECOND READING

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) moved second reading of Bill C-15, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

She said: Honourable senators, I have the pleasure of rising today to introduce the appropriation bill for the Supplementary Estimates (C).

I will share my thoughts when I speak to this bill at third reading.

[*English*]

In the meantime, I would like to thank the members of the National Finance Committee for their important work in reviewing the 2021-22 Supplementary Estimates (C).

[*Translation*]

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator Gagné, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 1, 2022-23

SECOND READING

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate) moved second reading of Bill C-16, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

She said: Honourable senators, I have the pleasure of introducing Appropriation Bill No. 1, 2022-23, the government's interim supply bill.

[*English*]

I will speak at length on this bill at third reading.

Hon. Denise Batters: Thank you, Senator Gagné. I would have asked you this question on the last bill too, but it zipped by a bit too quickly. How much money is involved with these supply bills, Bill C-15 and Bill C-16?

Senator Gagné: Let me go back to my notes. I wasn't expecting any questions at this point in time.

I don't have all those numbers at the top of my head. Supplementary Estimates (C) includes $13.2 billion for 70 organizations in voted dollars, and $3.9 billion for statutory spending. That was supplementary estimates.

For interim supply, the Main Estimates provided information for $397.6 billion in proposed spending for 126 organizations, including $190.3 billion in voted expenditures and $207.3 billion in statutory expenses.

Through this interim supply bill, we're seeking Parliament's approval for $75.5 billion in budgetary expenditures.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator Gagné, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO EXTEND HYBRID SITTINGS TO APRIL 30, 2022—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of March 24, 2022, moved:

> That the provisions of the order of November 25, 2021, concerning hybrid sittings of the Senate and committees, and other matters, be extended to the end of the day on April 30, 2022;
>
> That the Senate commit to the consideration of a transition back to in-person sittings as soon as practicable in light of relevant factors, including public health guidelines, and the safety and well-being of all parliamentary personnel; and
>
> That any further extension of this order be taken only after consultation with the leaders and facilitators of all recognized parties and parliamentary groups.

(On motion of Senator Wells, debate adjourned.)

DECLARATION ON THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF ARTISTS AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION IN CANADA BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Bovey, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy, for the second reading of Bill S-208, An Act respecting the Declaration on the Essential Role of Artists and Creative Expression in Canada.

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak as critic on Bill S-208, An Act respecting the Declaration on the Essential Role of Artists and Creative Expression in Canada. I would like to begin by commending Senator Bovey on introducing such a comprehensive and ambitious bill.

As some of you may know, I enjoy painting in my spare time. It's a hobby that I cherish, as it is a creative outlet that brings me much-needed serenity in this very chaotic time.

• (1500)

In our current economy, with rising prices and Canadian families struggling to make ends meet, I cannot help but worry about Canadian creative minds. How can our artists flourish when it seems we have been merely surviving for the past two years? Senator Bovey's office has met with over 600 artists across the country to better grasp their realities. Youth focus groups revealed that young Canadians do not see the arts as a viable future and have turned away from traditional means of funding their work.

Traditionally, artists often rely on gig work and grants to get by. This means that a classically trained violinist, for example, who has been honing their craft since the age of four with great sacrifices and completed a degree in music at a reputable university, would normally divide their time between performing with a local professional orchestra, teaching privately during the week, performing with their ensemble and performing at weddings on the weekend. That's if they are lucky. The work-life balance is non-existent, to say the least, and many work a collection of minimum-wage jobs to make ends meet. They may also spend months applying for grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, but return on the time invested is never assured. Needless to say, many change career paths along the way.

Those who do not have the privilege of a formal education are often disregarded as the arts, like many other areas of our society, have their gatekeepers who seek to promote excellence. This reminds me of the struggle of naive artists — known for rejecting or lacking conventional expertise in the depiction of real objects — who may lack formal, acknowledged methods.

Today, creative minds have turned to social media to gain visibility and possibly funding from fans or sponsors. Some Canadian creators truly managed to shine online during the worst of the pandemic. This was the case of throat singer Shina Novalinga who uses TikTok to share parts of her life and Indigenous culture, such as throat singing duets with her mother, traditional hair braiding and food. Sadly, social platforms such as YouTube and TikTok may distribute and share users' content without credit or compensation. I believe this is testament to the government failing Canadian artists.

Before the winter break, I spoke on the Afghan crisis and the disappearance of many forms of arts and culture. My heart still aches when I think of musicians who buried their instruments, artists who abandoned their work before fleeing the country, and the persecution that those who remain must endure, simply because they need to express the melodies that are the bedrock of their culture. The videos of the Taliban smashing musical instruments in front of the artists was very difficult to watch.

In Canada, we are fortunate to have freedom of speech, but our society is not built to cherish those who continued to make us laugh during the pandemic, dance in our kitchens or escape into another world when this one was too much to bear. Some workers in the performing arts sector are still scrambling after the last surge in cases caused by the Omicron variant. As Arden R. Ryshpan, the Executive Director of the Canadian Actors' Equity Association, said:

> Just when we thought we were seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, it turns out that the light is an oncoming train.

This has led to a talent drain in the arts, with many relying on part-time jobs or going back to school to retrain. At first glance, Bill S-208 may seem too ambitious or idealistic. But at its core, it simply requires the government to apply an art lens to its operations. We have already spoken on the importance of using Gender-based Analysis Plus to take a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach to our work. In fact, the Government of Canada committed to using GBA+ to advance gender equality in Canada in 1995, but lacks any legislation to enforce its active use in policy-making.

Unlike GBA+, Bill S-208 will make the application of an artistic lens to all legislation mandatory by putting the onus on the Minister of Heritage to develop an action plan to operationalize the declaration in order to recognize the essential role of arts to society, increase access to the arts and events, improve the ability to engage in the arts, improve the ability of artists to benefit from their work while freeing them from cultural appropriation, address disability barriers and encourage investments.

To do so, the Minister of Heritage will be called upon to consult with key stakeholders, including the Ministers of Labour, Crown-Indigenous Relations, Justice and Health, as well as with many other interested organizations and artists. The minister must also convene a conference with stakeholders and ministers in order to develop an action plan.

Bill S-208 is also about governmental accountability and transparency. At the end of each fiscal year, the minister must prepare a report that sets out the implementation of the action plan and the activities undertaken by the department to achieve the objectives of the declaration as set out in the bill. This will ensure a constant evolution of the action plan by identifying its progress and its weaknesses.

I believe Bill S-208 has merit: namely, by inviting ministers to work together, as the government is well known for working in silos. I look forward to the bill being studied at committee to better understand the broad scope assigned to the Minister of Heritage as well as the implementation of the bill.

The "Declaration on the Essential Role of Artists and Creative Expression in Canada" touches on specific issues that will undoubtedly require further study, such as cultural appropriation. I believe this may fast-track the implementation of Article 11 under UNDRIP, and I hope this protection will be awarded to all marginalized Canadian artists. Additionally, I have concerns regarding the constant consultation of artists, as they already face an undervaluation of their work and time. In fact, to this day some patrons continue to offer exposure rather than proper remuneration to emerging artists.

Honourable senators, while we may not all speak the same language, celebrate the same holidays or share similar experiences, the arts transcend these differences. I believe Bill S-208 is important to our collective future. Decisions we make today will affect how we rebuild our country coming out of the pandemic. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Cormier, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Ataullahjan, seconded by the Honourable Senator Boisvenu, for the second reading of Bill S-224, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons).

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Honourable senators, I rise at second reading in support of Bill S-224, which is sponsored by my colleague, Senator Salma Ataullahjan. The senator asked me to be the critic of this bill to amend the Criminal Code regarding trafficking in persons, and I accepted without hesitation.

Human trafficking is a very serious offence in Canada that involves a trafficker who recruits, transports, conceals and threatens violence against a victim, over whom he or she often exercises coercive control for the purpose of exploitation. In 2019, 95% of Canadian trafficking victims were women and girls. Some 71% of cases involved sexual exploitation, but the crime covers any form of forced labour that is similar to slavery.

Human trafficking is a more serious offence than procuring because of the trafficker's behaviour of threatening, coercing or deceiving the victim and abusing his or her power over the victim. Unfortunately, this crime is on the rise, with over 500 cases in 2019, and it is difficult to prove.

Trafficking in persons was added to the Criminal Code as an offence in 2005. A 2018 report from Public Safety Canada summarizes the challenges associated with enforcement. Victims are often reluctant to report their situation, since they tend to believe that the success rate of prosecutions is very low. Prosecutors, for their part, find it difficult to reach the high threshold of evidence required for trafficking cases. The statistics are startling. In 2019, 89% of human trafficking charges resulted in a stay, withdrawal, dismissal or discharge. Less than one in ten charges resulted in a guilty verdict.

• (1510)

Given that this crime was identified only 15 or so years ago, the justice system is still finding it difficult to understand the scope of the trauma felt by the victims, including the fact that some victims develop an attachment to the trafficker. The traumas, the drug addiction and mental health problems affect their memory, which makes their testimony particularly difficult. To survive, the victims might also make up stories, which complicates the search for the truth.

For all these reasons, it is imperative that the trial not rely on the victim's performance during her testimony or her state of mind at the time of the exploitative situations.

For many years, survivor advocacy groups have been criticizing the section of the Criminal Code that Bill S-224 is proposing to change. Why? Because under the current subsection 279.04(1), the Crown must demonstrate that the victim could reasonably expect — given all the circumstances — that her safety would be threatened if she refused to be exploited.

This wording places a heavy burden on survivors, who are not always aware of coercive control mechanisms. This type of control may be exercised without any perceived danger to the victim, who is rather targeted to be humiliated, isolated, exploited or dominated. Moreover, many women do not even realize that they are being trafficked, because in the vast majority of cases the exploiters are friends, acquaintances, or current or past lovers, in other words relationships where emotional blackmail is often present.

This is not just a matter of opinion. As Senator Ataullahjan already mentioned, the wording of the current section 279.04 of the Criminal Code does not meet the definition of trafficking in persons used in the Palermo Protocol, which constitutes the international reference on the issue. Unlike the current section 279.04, this protocol focuses on the behaviour of the exploiter, not on the victim's perception of danger. The Canadian government ratified this protocol in 2002, and we therefore have an obligation to protect the victims of trafficking.

[*English*]

According to the International Justice and Human Rights Clinic at the University of British Columbia School of Law, asking victims to prove reasonable fear may be a barrier to conviction for human trafficking. The requirements of the human trafficking offence are more onerous than those of other offences of a similar nature. For example, in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, trafficking in persons is also prohibited, but it does not require that an individual believe that their safety would be threatened. This is a more appropriate standard.

The new section proposed by Senator Ataullahjan has the great merit of sticking to the vocabulary of the Palermo Protocol and therefore to focus on the actions of the trafficker and not on the fears of his victim.

That change in language proposed in Bill S-224 is even more necessary because this crime has a disproportionate effect on Indigenous women and girls, who are 10 times more likely to be victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation than non-Indigenous women and girls.

Among the groups I have consulted, other suggestions for changes were proposed. For example, la Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes — a federation of women's shelters in Quebec — suggests adding the idea that the trafficker is trying to take advantage of the victim's state of vulnerability, which is at the heart of the definition of sexual exploitation in the United Nations. The federation would also like the notion of coercive control to appear in the proposed article.

For its part, the Canadian Council for Refugees suggests broadening the definition of what constitutes trafficking by adding the notion of threat in general, and not just the threat of violence, in order to better reflect the reality of the trafficking of migrants or refugees for whom threats of denunciation or deportation are often used the most.

The main priority, however, is for the Senate committee to study first and foremost the significant change to the Criminal Code suggested by Senator Ataullahjan. I strongly believe it is time that we adapt our Criminal Code to the reality of women and girls who are victims of human trafficking. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

INCREASING THE IDENTIFICATION OF CRIMINALS THROUGH THE USE OF DNA BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Claude Carignan moved second reading of Bill S-231, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Criminal Records Act, the National Defence Act and the DNA Identification Act.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today at second reading of Bill S-231, whose short title is Increasing the Identification of Criminals Through the Use of DNA Act.

This is the new version of Bill S-236, which died on the Order Paper when the election was called. I would like to mention that the speech I delivered on June 23, 2021, at second reading of Bill S-236, is helpful to understanding Bill S-231. These two bills are similar and have the same underlying goal.

[*English*]

Bill S-231 will enhance public safety and facilitate the goal of criminal trials to seek the truth. It will allow for faster and more reliable resolution of police investigations and criminal court proceedings through DNA identification.

[*Translation*]

Scientific developments with respect to DNA make it possible to distinguish one person from another with great accuracy. The use of this technology, which is well established in Canada, has increased the accuracy of evidence proving the identity of individuals who have committed crimes. It also has the advantage of preventing judicial errors by exonerating innocent suspects.

To give you an idea of the accuracy of DNA evidence, I will give you an example from the 2015 Quebec Court of Appeal ruling in *R. v. Cartier*. This was a double murder case. The evidence showed that the genetic profile of the accused had been found on the inside of a mask left in a vehicle used by the killers. This evidence established that the likelihood of this profile matching someone other than the accused was about 1 in 300 billion.

Before I outline the provisions of Bill S-231, I will explain the process used by police to establish the identity of an individual from their DNA, in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the bill and the solid privacy protections it incorporates.

The DNA identification process is clearly explained in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's 2020-21 National DNA Data Bank annual report.

This state-run bank has collected and managed hundreds of thousands of DNA profiles since 2000, most of them from crime scenes and convicted offenders. As of December 31, 2021, the bank had 422,067 profiles in its convicted offenders index and 193,053 in its crime scene index.

The DNA Identification Act regulates the operation and maintenance of the data bank, while the Criminal Code sets out under which circumstances an individual can be ordered to provide a DNA sample. These are two of the acts that Bill S-231 seeks to amend.

This bank is extremely important, as the Ontario Court of Appeal said in paragraph 82 of its ruling in *R. v. K.M.*, and I quote:

• (1520)

[*English*]

> The importance of the state objective in enacting the DNA data bank legislative scheme, both as it relates to adults and young offenders, can scarcely be doubted. Indeed, I would describe its worth as inestimable in cases such as where the [National DNA Data Bank] facilitates the apprehension of a serial sexual predator, or the exoneration of a person who has been wrongfully convicted.

[*Translation*]

The data bank contains profiles of both adult and young offenders. This is how it works. Each new DNA profile entered into the data bank is compared against existing profiles. This makes it possible to identify matches between profiles and to identify the perpetrator of a crime. A match is made when DNA profiles from two different crime scenes match or when a DNA profile from a crime scene matches the profile of a convicted offender in the data bank.

When a comparison of profiles in the data bank shows a match, police gain an invaluable lead to help them continue their investigation. In many serious criminal cases, a DNA match can lead to the reopening of an investigation that had been stalled for years.

You should know that there are hundreds of unsolved murders in Canada. The Sûreté du Québec alone has 750 such cases, according to an article by journalist Daniel Renaud published on November 13, 2021. In a 2015 report, the RCMP mentions 204 known and unsolved cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, with 106 homicide cases and 98 missing cases.

However, the actual number could be much higher, according to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Imagine how many families could achieve a sense of justice and work through the grieving process if the murderer were finally identified and tried. That is exactly what this bill will make possible by giving police forces more ways to find matches in the bank.

The bank has actually helped solve thousands of investigations. According to its annual report, the bank found 66,539 matches between a convicted offender and a crime scene, as well as 7,211 matches between two crime scenes. Thousands of associations were made for homicides — over 4,000 in fact — and sexual offences — almost 7,000. These are serious crimes that threaten public and personal safety.

[*English*]

The bank will be even more effective if the Criminal Code were amended to make sure more offences trigger the requirement for convicted persons to provide DNA profiles to the bank, which is what Bill S-231 proposes.

The logic is that when someone is required to provide a DNA sample for a criminal offence, even a lesser offence, that sample may help resolve investigations for more serious offences, whether past or future, that this person has committed.

[*Translation*]

I want to share two statistics from the data bank's annual report to support this. First, simple assault offences resulted in nearly 600 associations to murder cases and nearly 1,400 to sexual assault cases. Second, the offences of failure to appear in court or failure to comply with interim release conditions and other offences set out in section 145 of the Criminal Code resulted in 247 associations to murder or sexual assault cases.

That said, since DNA contains a lot of personal information, the National DNA Data Bank has strict rules about identifying an individual based on their DNA. For example, an individual's profile in the bank is created based on just a fraction of their DNA, which means that the profile does not reveal any medical or physical information about the individual, aside from their biological sex.

To give you some idea of what that means, a DNA fraction in the data bank would be like copying down the first letter from every paragraph in a book. This very long series of letters would be anonymous data that would not reveal the author of the book or its plot. However, this series of letters would represent that book's unique identifier, since a different book would have a completely different series of letters.

Moreover, the way the bank works, its employees do not know the name of the offender whose DNA sample is in the bank, nor do police officers have access to the DNA samples in the bank. In other words, the person's name and their DNA sample are separate from the creation of their genetic profile in the bank.

As the Ontario Court of Appeal indicated in paragraph 46 of *R. v. K.M.*:

> The DNA collection kit contains two parts, one with the DNA sample and the other with the offender's identification information. Both parts of the kit have the same unique barcode number . . . . When the kit arrives at the data bank, the two forms are separated with the sample being retained by the databank and the identification form being sent to the RCMP records unit. From this point on, the processing of the sample at the data bank is anonymous. The donor's identity remains unknown and no personal information is retained or entered into any DNA data base.

In its rulings, the Supreme Court of Canada has provided other examples of privacy protections for individuals who have a DNA sample in the data bank. The court has explained that when there is a match in the data bank between a convicted person and a crime scene, the police cannot access the DNA sample from the data bank and put it into evidence at trial. Instead, they must obtain a new sample from the person, for example by recovering a discarded item containing his or her DNA or by applying to a judge for a warrant to take a bodily sample from that person. The conditions for obtaining such a warrant are quite strict and are set out in section 487.05 of the Criminal Code.

In this context, the court ruled in *R. v. S.A.B.* that taking bodily samples under such a warrant represents a relatively modest violation of bodily integrity.

Similarly, the court ruled in *R. v. Rodgers* that the legal protections associated with the data bank make the loss of privacy for a convicted offender required to provide a DNA sample comparable to the loss of privacy for someone required to provide fingerprints to police upon arrest.

As the data bank's annual report explains, the methods for collecting bodily samples for DNA are not very invasive. There are three types of collection kits designed specifically for the data bank. The first kit, which is used in 98% of cases, collects small droplets of blood using a finger prick. The other two kits collect samples by rubbing the inside of the mouth or taking six to eight hairs.

We can also find another protection for the information stored in the bank in section 487.08 of the Criminal Code and section 11 of the DNA Identification Act. These sections make it a punishable offence for police officers or officials to engage in unauthorized use of information and DNA samples from the bank.

As you can see, the data bank's DNA samples and personal information are well protected. Bill S-231 does not change these important privacy protections. Instead, and most importantly, it seeks to increase the chances of making a match.

To that end, the bill proposes increasing the number of offences that require the court to order the convicted person to provide a DNA sample to the data bank. This provision of the bill received a lot of support from the National DNA Data Bank Advisory Committee.

Accordingly, Bill S-231 seeks to increase the number of criminal offences for which a DNA sample many be taken and to limit it in order to avoid purely summary cases. I therefore ask that you support Bill S-231.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Dagenais, debate adjourned.)

• (1530)

[*English*]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR A GUARANTEED LIVABLE BASIC INCOME BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Pate, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dean, for the second reading of Bill S-233, An Act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income.

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-233, An Act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income. Rather, I rise today to speak to the viral misinformation and disinformation about this bill and to confront some of the near delusional paranoia circulating on social media about it.

For weeks, our Senate email and voice mail boxes have been overwhelmed by thousands of messages from angry, frightened Canadians outraged by Bill S-233, or at least by the lies they have been told about Bill S-233. There are so many desperate letters sent to us by people who have been manipulated and terrified into believing outrageous conspiracy theories. There are letters from people who believe Bill S-233 to be a fascist plot, a communist plot, a Masonic plot, a eugenics plot, a Jewish plot, a plot by the World Economic Forum or the World Health Organization, a sinister scheme orchestrated by — your choice — Klaus Schwab, George Soros or Bill Gates, or the ever-popular *illuminati*. Many believe Bill S-233 to be the first step on the path to one-world government, or the new world order or to a system of state social surveillance, such as the one the Chinese government in Beijing calls "social credit." Others are convinced the bill contains provisions for digital ID or digital currency that will allow the government to track and control us all.

This, my friends, is no accident. I believe there is an organized campaign afoot to spread destructive propaganda about Bill S-233, targeted online fear mongering specifically designed to terrorize frightened seniors and those with disabilities and to scare vulnerable Canadians into believing their pensions and disability benefits are about to disappear. It is a campaign purpose-built to erode public trust, not just in this government but in Canadian democracy itself.

Take this tweet posted on March 11 by Peter Taras, a former Ontario candidate for the People's Party of Canada:

> Bill S-233 is currently waiting for third reading in the SENATE, if passed it will be made law which means if you are not vaccinated you will not receive EI, CPP, OHS, Social Services or Pension that YOU PAID INTO.

That post alone has been retweeted almost a thousand times, and pretty much every single word of it is untrue.

Bill S-233 is not a government bill. It is not at third reading. And even if we were to pass it, we all know it would not become law, not right away. It would be sent to the other place for more debate and study.

This bill absolutely does not make the payment of a guaranteed basic income contingent on your vaccination status. Indeed, under the terms of Senator Pate's proposal, there would be no such type of social-virtue testing or qualification for the receipt of such an income at all. Nor would a basic income take the place of Employment Insurance, workers' compensation insurance, the Canada Pension Plan, or any other company or private pension.

Even if we passed Bill S-233, it wouldn't create a guaranteed basic income. All the bill really does is call upon the government to consider how it might create a framework for how a possible future guaranteed basic income program might work. Nonetheless, Twitter and Facebook and Reddit and YouTube are filled with posts that repeat word for word the same falsehoods as the tweet I just read you.

Many of the letters and phone calls we've received go much further than fears about pensions. Some express concern that once Canadians become dependent on a guaranteed basic income, the government would be able to leverage that dependency to force people to conform. For example, here is an extended excerpt from an email I received on March 16:

> I suspect that 'a guaranteed livable basic income' creates a dependency upon government and lays down a foundation for creating digital identities tied to bank accounts and all other government agencies, both federal and provincial. Over time, abusive, controlling powers would be assumed and invoked by dictatorial means. We would then be locked into a social credit system that is fascist, communistic and totalitarian, thereby erasing the standards of democracy, our Constitution, the Rule of Law, and our guaranteed Rights and Freedoms.

An email from March 23 mined a similar vein:

> There will be more vaccines to take and other medical procedures the gov[ernment] wants you to undergo! If you don't comply with just one of them, your account will be closed and you won't be able to buy food! You won't be able to do anything! Not even work.

One recent email suggested Bill S-233 was part of what it called:

> . . . the sinister plan for humanity under a New World Order and One World Government, starting with John D Rockefeller's Masonic Creed.

The letter went on to link Bill S-233 to a long-term, worldwide plot that included the assassinations of Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy.

Other messages link Bill S-233 with transhumanism, a concern which is not, as I had first assumed, about gender identity but about an alleged plot to turn us all into bionic cyborgs. One said:

> The Transhumanist war has begun . . . .We are now experiencing the long awaited planning of the sociopathic elite, as Klaus Schwab unleashes a world domination plan with the intent of changing the face of humanity forever.

Another correspondent wrote:

> Bill S-233 is just the beginning. We are losing our freedoms to a group of elites that want to depopulate and control mankind, enslave us to experimental transhumanism, and the removal of any Christian and Godly devotions.

A common theme that runs through many letters is a persistent paranoia about the World Economic Forum, a belief that Justin Trudeau and Chrystia Freeland are subject to the control of German-Swiss economist Klaus Schwab. Many seem to believe that Schwab's agents have infiltrated the government and that Schwab, who is best known for throwing parties for plutocrats in Davos, is somehow simultaneously both a communist and a Nazi.

This excerpt from a letter I received March 10 is pretty typical:

> Nobody voted for Nazi Klaus Schwab. Nobody even knew he existed 2 years ago. He has NOTHING to do with Canada or any other country. Schwab holds a statue of Lenin in his office! This is NOT CANADA. We are NOT going BACK to NAZI GERMANY. Please see NUREMBERG CODE & TRIALS.

Other letters accuse senators and the Senate of outright treason. An email I received March 6 stated:

> This is CANADA . . . not North Korea, not Russia, you are employees of the people! NOT EMPLOYEES OF THE WEF OR THE WHO.

Just this afternoon — we probably all received the same email — was a letter that claimed the adoption of a guaranteed basic income would lead to the forced sterilization of Canadians of child-bearing age and the killing off of the elderly and the disabled.

I must say that many other letters are not from conspiracy theorists or anti-vaxxers at all. They are simply and heartbreakingly heartfelt notes from ordinary Canadian seniors and relatives of seniors who truly believe that this bill will steal their CPP and private pensions.

As senators, we're all used to receiving angry letters and calls, but this campaign is qualitatively different. Three years ago my inbox was full of very angry mail about Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, but even when some of those concerns were hyperbolic and exaggerated, they were based on fact and on the actual content of those bills. The campaign against Bill S-233 is something entirely different. It is a shadow war concocted and orchestrated to protest something that doesn't even exist.

Some of you may worry that by reading these letters into *Hansard* I'm giving these theories undeserved attention, but we cannot ignore the elephant in the room. We must call out these myths and lies. Let us be clear: There is nothing in Bill S-233 that would require any Canadian to be vaccinated or medicated. There is nothing in Bill S-233 that relates to digital ID or digital tracking or digital currency. There is nothing in Bill S-233 that is in any way akin to the Chinese social credit surveillance model.

Senator Kim Pate, who has spent her entire adult life advocating for the civil rights of the vulnerable, the marginalized and the forgotten, is not an agent of Klaus Schwab. She is not part of the globalist elite nor a Davos hobnobber. As her long record of public service attests, she is the last person who would ever want to see a single Canadian lose a pension or job, and that's why her bill does nothing of the kind.

I can attest personally that Senator Pate is not hell-bent on turning us all into cybernetic transhumans.

• (1540)

Many of the concerns of our many correspondents are perfectly valid and based in fact. Some have argued that a guaranteed basic income would sap productivity and reward shirkers for doing nothing or lead to labour shortages. You might not agree, but that's a perfectly rational critique.

Some have argued that Canada's COVID-battered economy could not afford such a program. I would counter that it is entirely possible that a well-designed program might actually save money, streamlining the number of social welfare support programs we have in this country. But, again, an argument about possible costs is perfectly reasonable.

Some correspondents have raised legitimate questions about the bill, which I happen to share. The bill proposes to extend a guaranteed basic income to those 17 and up, and while I understand the logic of supporting emancipated teens or teens who have fled abusive families, most 17-year-olds don't need a basic income. Nor can I agree with Senator Pate's proposition to pay a guaranteed basic income to non-Canadians, such as

temporary foreign workers. I have my own constitutional concerns as an Albertan about setting up such a federal income framework without the full cooperation, support and buy-in of the provinces, territories and First Nations.

We also need to be mindful of inflationary pressures that a basic income might create, especially in overheated rental markets such as in Vancouver and Toronto.

So yes, it is perfectly possible to have a good faith, rational debate about the pros and cons of a universal basic income, and the pros and cons of Senator Pate's particular suggested model. But it is next to impossible to have that debate while Canadian citizens, especially seniors and those with disabilities, are being subjected to a relentless campaign of online psychological terrorism.

I have tried to use Twitter and Facebook to dispel the myths about this bill. I have tried to answer letters from people who just seem honestly confused. One woman I will call Missy was so frightened by what she had heard about Bill S-233 that she told me she was thinking of leaving Canada. After I explained what Bill S-233 actually said, she thanked me.

She wrote back:

> You have truly helped me. I will do my best to spread what you have told me. It's scary, how convincing this can be. I admit I fell for it, and fed into it at time.

She added, "It's scary to live in fear every day."

And that, of course, is the point of this whole disinformation campaign: to create fear and distrust; to keep people scared and vulnerable; to erode our social contract, the social fabric and our confidence in our fellow Canadians, replacing it with suspicion bordering on paranoia.

The purpose of this strategy isn't to defeat Bill S-233, which has only the smallest chance of becoming a law anyway; no, it's to whip up a hysterical frenzy to convince ordinary Canadians — decent, caring Canadians like Missy — that their political leaders and their political institutions are not to be trusted and then to trick and con ordinary, caring people just like Missy into sharing this fake information with their families, faith communities or their friends on Facebook.

Rebutting such insidious campaigns is not easy. Although I did connect with Missy, I had less luck with a more recent correspondent. She wrote to me this weekend that she could not sleep over her fears that Canadian seniors would lose their pensions. When I tried to explain that Bill S-233 just wouldn't do that, she accused me of gaslighting her and demanded that I never contact her again.

In her excellent essay published recently by The Line, Conservative Strategist Melanie Paradis coined a perfect phrase for those corrosive disinformation campaigns: she called them "thought scams." She likened them to those Nigerian prince letters we all used to get that tried to con us out of our money. But these "thought scammers" aren't primarily interested in getting rich. Instead, they are interested in stealing our faith and our trust. They are interested in stealing our Canada.

If we, too, fall prey — if we start demonizing our political opponents, portraying them as treasonous and corrupt — then we forfeit our ability as senators to have any good faith debates over vital public policy questions.

Today, my friends, I am asking you to join me in standing up to the "thought scammers." I ask you not to give a wink, a shrug or a smirk when you see one of these "thought scams" spreading because you think it might help your side or your team in the short term. I ask all of us here to stand united today, not in full-throated support of Bill S-233 but in united support of truth, reason and Canadian democracy itself. We in the Senate of Canada must stand as a bulwark against the tide of lies. We can and we must, my friends.

Thank you, *hiy hiy*.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, we have 25 seconds left and there are a few senators who wanted to ask questions, but we are nearly out of time.

Is it agreed to have additional time? It is agreed.

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Senator Simons, thank you very much for your extremely passionate, well-conducted and well-thought-out speech on this issue.

There certainly seems to be a coordinated disinformation campaign specifically around Bill S-233, but it's not the only one we are seeing. Bill C-67 is another one, which isn't even in the federal Parliament.

However, in addition to the conspiracy theories that have infiltrated all this communication, there has been increasing concern recently — although this has been going on for some time now — about the role of malicious state actors, particularly Russia, in initiating much of this kind of campaign, or in amplifying campaigns currently under way, with the clear intent of destabilizing democratic institutions.

You mentioned some ideas that we as parliamentarians need to be involved in for addressing this. Are there any specific things you can share with us that you think parliamentarians should be doing to address those kinds of disinformation campaigns?

Senator Simons: Thank you very much, Senator Kutcher. As a child of the Cold War, it seems strange to stand in the Senate of Canada and talk about Russian plots. It seems like something from a Cold War movie. I wouldn't have thought that it was plausible until we saw the reporting in the United States about Russian actors manipulating Facebook to create mob mentalities, creating both fake Republican pages and fake Democrat pages and then setting the pages against each other.

So it's incumbent upon us, first of all, as citizens — all of us, not just senators — to practise what I call "social media hygiene." Don't share something if you don't know where it's from or what it is. The more outrageous and anger-provoking the post, the less likely it is to be true.

I have sometimes seen people retweeting stuff they know is nonsense ironically or to call it out. Don't do that because when you share things and interact with them, the algorithm doesn't know you are "hate-sharing." The algorithm just thinks, "Oh, people want to see that." So be careful in how you use social media. We talk about safe sex. Well, practise safe tweeting.

It's also incumbent upon us — in an age in which so many people get their information filtered through social media platforms — to think about what the correct responsibility of those platforms should be and what our responsibility should be as legislators to ensure that — not that we're censoring debate — we're providing some kind of filter for the information so that all of the lies do not get the algorithmic juice to rise to the top.

I think it's fair to ask the major platforms, whether that's Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or all the new ones that come along, what their protocols are to guard against malicious campaigns by foreign actors that are clearly designed to poison democratic debate in Western democracies.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Two other senators want to ask questions, Senator Simons.

Hon. Frances Lankin: Senator Simons, thank you. That was another eloquent speech by you. It's much appreciated.

I particularly like the phrase that you brought forward from the Conservative strategist about a "thought scam." I'll elevate my language because I have been calling it a "bot scam."

Quite frankly, it's not just Bill S-233; this began immediately following the occupation that took place in Ottawa. It involved communications legislation, which you were just referring to, and others.

• (1550)

It is absolutely clear to me that a large majority of these have been electronically generated. When they come in 1,000 at a time and they have very similar themes, you know those are not individuals.

I have also reached out — when it appeared to be a genuine, individual person — to discuss it, to tell them my views, to tell them what I think the reality is, but the other ones, any that I have tried to reach, there is no reaching because there is no person. This is fundamentally an issue of an undermining of democracy.

Do you, Senator Simons, think there is, beyond our individual actions, a collective response from the Senate that should be taken? The leaders of the various groups in the Senate, some of whom —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Lankin, I am sorry. The time has elapsed.

(On motion of Senator Wells, debate adjourned.)

FOREIGN INFLUENCE REGISTRY AND ACCOUNTABILITY BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Leader of the Opposition) moved second reading of Bill S-237, An Act to establish the Foreign Influence Registry and to amend the Criminal Code.

He said: Honourable senators, it is very apropos that after all the questions regarding foreign influence on the debate on Bill S-233 and the good questions from Senator Kutcher, I will be dealing with it a little more, regarding an issue in terms of foreign influence in our institutions. There are many ways that foreign entities can influence our institutions and our country.

Honourable senators, I rise to speak to Bill S-237, which would amend Canada's Criminal Code and establish a foreign registry for entities and individuals who seek to influence Canadian policy and Canada's democratic institutions and processes on behalf of identified foreign regimes.

Foreign interference and influence are not new, but with the advancement of technology and information sharing, it is becoming more pervasive and is likely being used as a tool by authoritarian regimes. In this regard, the occurrence is increasing and thus making it a growing threat. Canada's intelligence agencies have long been warning about this threat of malign foreign influence toward our democracy and our society. Several reports have outlined these warnings, including the 2019 CSIS Public Report, released on May 20, 2020, and the 2019 Annual Report of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians.

The 2019 CSIS report states that espionage and foreign-influence activities are directed at Canadian entities both inside and outside Canada and are direct threats to Canada's national security and strategic interests.

It goes on to warn of the vulnerability of democratic institutions and processes, including our elections. Furthermore, according to a hot issue note prepared for a March 24, 2021, committee appearance by then Minister of Public Safety Bill Blair:

> Through its mandate to investigate threats to the security of Canada, CSIS has seen multiple instances of foreign states targeting Canadian institutions and communities. The scope of potential foreign interference activities can be broad, encompassing a range of techniques that are familiar to intelligence agencies. These include: human intelligence operations, the use of state-sponsored or foreign influenced media, and the use of sophisticated cyber tools.

Honourable senators, we have all witnessed and many of us have voiced concerns about the impacts of foreign interference and influence on our democracy and our foreign and domestic policy. This is not a partisan issue. On the contrary. The truth is, if we don't start addressing it in a meaningful way, it will absolutely erode public trust in our elected officials and our processes and institutions.

I know there certainly was a lot of talk about foreign involvement in the recent "Freedom Convoy," in particular about foreign financing, something that was not actually borne out during committee hearings in the other place.

Some have also expressed concern about foreign involvement and funding of other protests, including all manner of illegal blockades in Canada. Leaving aside the particular political agendas of different activist groups, I know from the tweets and public statements of many of my colleagues, the issues of foreign interference and influence concerns you as much as it does those of us on this side of the chamber. I hope that means, in addition to your always thoughtful reflection on all legislation that comes before this chamber, that I can also count on our support for this particular bill as it seeks to remedy something for which we've all expressed concern.

Foreign interference and influence are real, and it is very much happening right here in Canada. In many cases, it is financial and, in other cases, it comes in the form of disinformation; sometimes both. In the worst cases, those acting on behalf of foreign regimes have intimidated and even threatened Canadians and others on Canadian soil or threatened their loved ones back home in order to silence them or influence their actions, including how they vote in our elections. While we already have laws in Canada to deal with some aspects of these coercive actions, such as removal of persons by the Canada Border Services Agency and penalties under the Canada Elections Act, far more can and should be done.

And, no, the answer isn't in chipping away at our freedoms and democratic processes and institutions by ourselves. The last thing we should do to fight foreign disinformation, for example, is to limit free speech. That is not to say we shouldn't reject the promulgation of foreign propaganda from our airwaves, as we did recently with Russian state-controlled broadcaster RT, formerly Russia Today. But that is a very different beast than censorship of our own citizens. We should not seek to emulate the tyrannical regimes against which we are attempting to guard by silencing our own citizens.

That is why I was troubled to learn of Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly's comments during a house committee last week in which she testified regarding foreign propaganda:

> My mandate as foreign minister is really to counter propaganda online. Social media companies need to do more. They need to make sure that they recognize that states have jurisdiction over them, that they're not technology platforms, that they're content producers. And it is our way collectively to make sure that we can really be able to have strong democracies in the future because this war is being fought with 21st-century tools, including social media.

Colleagues, while I'm happy to hear this government express concern over foreign interference, I am less than comforted by Minister Joly's comments. The first job of any foreign minister is to defend the national interest and the values we hold as Canadians, which include free speech. So I repeat: The answer to combatting foreign interference isn't to censor our own citizens. Instead, the foreign influence registry and accountability act will force greater transparency by exposing those who do seek to influence, on behalf of foreign regimes, our policies, public debate and decision making.

By identifying those acting in the interests of a foreign entity rather than in Canada's interests, we introduce a measure of accountability for both those agents and the officials who receive them. Why shouldn't we have such a registry? Do Canadians not deserve to know who is lobbying their public officials on behalf of foreign entities?

This is no different, really, than the lobbyist registry. The Lobbying Act recognizes that free and open access to government is an important matter of public interest and that lobbying public office holders is a legitimate activity. The registry proposed by this bill is no different. It recognizes that lobbying by foreign entities and individuals as a matter of public interest and benefit to Canada is a legitimate activity. However, the Lobbying Act also recognizes that Canadians and even public office holders themselves should be able to know who is engaged in these lobbying activities. The very same can and should be said about those lobbying public office holders on behalf of foreign entities.

I would argue that, on that principle alone, this legislation should be passed without hesitation. Colleagues, transparency, openness and public accountability are vital elements in Canada's democracy process. We shouldn't abandon those principles in our efforts to combat foreign interference in our affairs.

This bill does just that. For those are of you unconvinced of the need for such a registry, and others who will make the argument that this legislation and any such registry would or is meant to target one particular entity or one particular group of people, allow me to further make my case.

From the Government of Canada's own website — again, from that hot issue note prepared for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's then Minister of Public Safety Bill Blair's appearance at committee — I quote:

> Threats to Canada's national security, such as foreign interference and espionage can harm multiple areas of our society. They can have impacts on our democratic processes, our economic prosperity, our critical infrastructure, and even members of our communities.

• (1600)

It goes on to say:

> CSIS has observed persistent and sophisticated state-sponsored threat activity for many years now and they continue to see a rise in the frequency and sophistication of this threat activity.

This note, available to read on the Government of Canada's Public Safety website goes on to describe the nature of these activities. It states:

> Canada has observed state-sponsored information manipulation employed by certain regimes aimed at reshaping or undermining the rules-based-international order. These states are manipulating information, including employing disinformation, to sow doubt . . . discredit democratic responses . . . and erode confidence in values of democracy and human rights.
>
> It is important to note that disinformation, originating from anywhere in the world, can have serious consequences including threats to the safety and security of Canadians, erosion of trust in our democratic institutions, and confusion about government policies and notices . . . . State-sponsored disinformation campaigns are an example of foreign interference.

Honourable senators, some of that was in reference to our response to COVID-19, but CSIS does equally warn of the threat more broadly. In an effort to counter foreign interference in the 2019 federal election, the government created the SITE Task Force, which stands for Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections. So concerned was our government with electoral interference that they did this.

It's not good enough to only be concerned with this when you think it negatively affects your chosen outcome. We have heard a lot about alleged Russian collusion with or in favour of Donald Trump in the United States, but the issue of foreign interference is much broader. What I believe we face is a deeper systemic challenge related to foreign interference by authoritarian states.

We need look no further here in Canada than what happened in our most recent federal election with, amongst others, the author of this bill, the bill's predecessor and former member of Parliament Kenny Chiu. Mr. Chiu lost his seat in the 2021 election in large part because of a disinformation campaign about his bill — a disinformation campaign that was clearly linked to a foreign power. Writing in the journal *Policy Options* in January, Sze-Fung Lee and Benjamin Fung noted that the tactics used against Mr. Chiu were indicative of foreign interference, and said, ". . . these tactics could be deployed against any group in an information and psychological warfare campaign." Imagine — Mr. Chiu introduced legislation aimed at curbing the very thing to which he fell victim.

Elaborating on their findings, Ms. Lee and Mr. Fung noted that the use of fake news is widespread in diaspora communities via social media apps like WeChat and WhatsApp. They point to research that indicates people tend to accept misinformation as fact if it comes from a credible and trustworthy source, and that feelings of "trust" can also be based on feelings of familiarity. Ms. Lee and Mr. Fung write:

> The reliance on internet information often results in the creation of an "echo chamber" that is further exacerbated by the filter effect of the online algorithm. Applications such as the "WeChat Moment," a feature in WeChat, which is widely used by the Chinese community, similar to Facebook and Instagram, allow individuals to view others' stories. Thus, the Chinese community is being trapped in the vicious cycle of reinforced information consumption patterns.

The authors of this article highlight that Beijing was able to use Mr. Chiu's pro-democracy, anti-communism activism and his vocal criticism of Beijing's atrocious human rights record to depict him and his bill as radically discriminatory against the Chinese. They were successful in categorizing the bill's primary objective as being one of suppressing pro-China opinion, and perhaps most troubling to many in the Chinese diaspora community, as a means to surveil organizations and individuals in the community right here in Canada.

Honourable senators, we will never know if this campaign of disinformation alone is what ultimately cost Mr. Chiu his seat in the Greater Vancouver area, but there is no denying that it occurred and that it at least, in some part, played a role or very well could have played a role in him losing his seat. That's cause enough for concern. Whether it was the primary cause of Mr. Chiu's defeat or not is immaterial to the fact that we must take steps to ensure against it happening in the first place to Mr. Chiu or anyone else.

Our colleague Senator Woo will no doubt take just as much exception to this bill as he did with Mr. Chiu's original bill. Senator Woo has been quite vocal in questioning the validity of the argument of foreign interference. He has asserted that the attacks on Mr. Chiu may simply have been indicative of a debate within the Chinese community. In his opinion piece in *Policy Options* from January of this year, our colleague Senator Woo takes issue with the idea behind Mr. Chiu's bill because "many Chinese entities . . . could theoretically be subject to direction from the Chinese state," because they operate from the territory of that authoritarian state. Well, yes, Senator Woo; that is precisely the point. The reality is that in an authoritarian system, an entity that is based on such a state could indeed be acting as an instrument of that state.

In my view, just because the investigation and management of this problem is complicated by the web of influence and control that an authoritarian state possesses, it does not mean that we should not take action to protect ourselves. I would argue that regardless of the challenges, it is imperative that we take action. And no, that does not mean that Mr. Chiu's legislation or mine is an attempt to single out any one group of people. I think it is highly irresponsible and dangerous for anyone, much less a holder of high public office, to make such a claim.

An example of the disinformation campaign that was perpetrated on Mr. Chiu comes from a WeChat post claiming that this bill's predecessor would have had extremely negative consequences for immigrants from mainland China. It claimed, quite obviously falsely, that the bill would automatically harm economic, cultural and technological exchanges between Canada and China. The post goes on to claim that because the bill was undoubtedly targeting mainland Chinese associations. Perhaps the most egregious of the claims about this bill was that the bill aims to control and monitor mainland China's speech and behaviour. Honourable senators, that's just ludicrous and ridiculous. I think all of us here can understand just how ridiculous it is.

Unfortunately, Senator Woo reiterated and attempted to further legitimize this false narrative in his opinion piece, going so far as to suggest that exchanges between a Canadian member of a Chinese cultural group and a senator may be subject to a registry. Honourable senators, that is an absolute misrepresentation of the purpose of this bill and also a misrepresentation as to what a registry would look like in practice.

This bill is not attempting to target or single out China or Canada's Chinese diaspora; far from it. What this bill is about is understanding the nature of foreign involvement and potential interference by authoritarian regimes in Canada. I believe that we must take the steps needed to try to better understand and address the challenges represented by such entities in our nation. Nobody, least of all yours truly, is suggesting that foreign interference in our democratic institutions, policies and processes is limited to just one actor; far from it.

The communist regime of China is just one example of a state that is most certainly engaged in such practices. It's well known and understood. It's accepted and recognized. I've also mentioned Russia. We can't observe what occurred in the United States and then claim that we are somehow immune to the same influence and interference.

In the lead-up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there is no question that information warfare played a key part in Russia's state strategy. Part of that campaign has been to manipulate and shape international opinion. In this regard, we need to understand that Russia's intervention in Ukraine did not begin in 2022, it began years earlier, and Russia's parallel disinformation campaign has been an integral element of Russian state strategy.

If we're speaking about Russia, we must also consider Iran. According to a study out of Simon Fraser University's School of Communication, Russia and Iran appear to have been the most active in targeting Canada with disinformation.

Simon Fraser professor Ahmed Al-Rawi bases his arguments to this effect on analysis he has carried out of tweets, identified by Twitter as coming from Russian and Iranian state actors. These were posted between 2010 and 2019. Professor Al-Rawi calls the campaign of disinformation repeated and systematic.

In a *Toronto Star* article last year discussing the study, Professor Al-Rawi said that he had seen tweets by Iranian trolls written in French falsely linking former prime minister Stephen Harper to ISIS ahead of the 2019 election. He'd also seen Russian trolls falsely suggesting that the man who killed six people in a Quebec City mosque in 2017 is innocent. Then, there are the memes of Justin Trudeau — hundreds of them, the *Toronto Star* points out — that the author describes as sexist and include images using Photoshop of the Prime Minister "wearing headscarves paired with Islamophobic messaging."

• (1610)

Professor Al-Rawi calls this "microtargeting," and its objective is to sow division in Canadian society and to mobilize certain groups. In some instances, these tweets promoted certain positions about events that were happening outside Canada, including some as early as in 2014 at the time of Russia's annexation of Crimea. We continue to see such campaigns, now related to disinformation around the invasion of Ukraine.

Honourable senators, this is not a partisan issue. This is a matter that should be of grave concern to us all, both as parliamentarians and as Canadians. However, it's not just disinformation with which we need to be concerned. Members of various diaspora communities here in Canada have anecdotal evidence of overt threats and attempts at intimidation being carried out within their communities. The objective has been to dissuade people from voting, speaking out against a regime or being activists, which we take for granted in our democracy.

Canadians are often threatened — not only their own safety but also the safety of loved ones back home in order to achieve the desired effect. Activists for human rights are told that if they continue to speak out their parents, brother or sister back home will pay the price. These aren't idle threats, colleagues. Often, the message is delivered or reinforced through a phone call with their loved one who may have just received a visit from the authorities.

Rukiye Turdush, a Canadian Uighur activist, described Chinese police making videos of their visits that could then be played for their Canadian relatives.

They're not even covert about it anymore. They're very overt, as we recently saw with the threats against the Chief Executive of Hong Kong Watch, Benedict Rogers. Using the draconian national security law, Mr. Rogers was threatened with a large fine and imprisonment by Chinese authorities because of his activism against the Communist regime and standing up for the people of Hong Kong. If they're that brazen with someone who has such a high public profile, colleagues, imagine the tactics and threats they employ against others.

Other countries engage in similar practices. Take the case of Javad Soleimani. Mr. Soleimani's wife was among the 85 Canadian citizens and permanent residents who were murdered on January 8, 2020, by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC, when they indiscriminately and unapologetically shot down Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752. After speaking out about the murder of his wife and so many others by the IRGC, Mr. Soleimani started receiving messages stating that the IRGC was aware of his activities, that they could target him anywhere and that he had better be careful. Imagine facing those kinds of threats and intimidation on Canadian soil. Mr. Soleimani reported the incidents to police, but says not enough has been done to alleviate the growing fears of Iranian Canadians.

Mr. Soleimani told a media conference in late 2020:

> One day Canada was the safest place for all of us to live, but currently it's not at all safe.

From that same press conference, The Canadian Press detailed the story of Chemi Lhamo, a University of Toronto student who recalled a harrowing tale of harassment to which she was subjected when she ran for student government in 2019. Ms. Lhamo spoke of the thousands of messages she received that included threats of rape and murder directed at her and her loved ones. Ms. Lhamo brought these messages, as well as reports of being followed on campus, to various law enforcement agencies, including the campus police, Toronto police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Canadian Security Intelligence Service. As Ms. Lhamo stated:

> Ultimately, I still do not have a physical piece of paper that says, here's a report that we did, or here is the information on the people that have been threatening to kill you on Canadian soil.

Honourable senators, this is happening right here on Canadian soil to Canadian citizens. It's happening in our communities, on our university campuses and throughout our institutions. We must do something to address it.

Colleagues, I don't profess that this bill is a cure-all. However, in terms of seeking to better catalogue foreign attempts to influence our political leaders and our institutions, I believe that it can be an important first step. It also builds on what was proposed by former MP Chiu and incorporates an amendment to the Criminal Code that also strengthens our ability to hold accountable those who do not respect our laws and, indeed, our democratic system.

What this bill does not do, colleagues, is target one group of people or new Canadians coming to this country. New Canadians are looking for a better life. They are often looking to leave behind the oppression that was endemic in the country they left. They are looking to ensure the oppression they left behind does not follow them to these shores. In that regard, this bill seeks to ensure that everyone in Canada can pursue their dreams and live their lives free from threats and intimidation.

This bill has widespread support from Canadians. A Nanos Research poll conducted last year showed that 88% of Canadians surveyed supported the passage of a foreign agent registration act to combat foreign influence. The call for a foreign agent registry also comes from a wide array of civil society and community groups, including Canada-Hong Kong Link, The Central and Eastern European Council in Canada, Saskatchewan Stands with Hong Kong, Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, Vancouver Society in Support of Democratic Movement and the Council of Iranian Canadians.

Honourable senators, at a time when all the world's democracies face an unprecedented threat, Canada must take firm measures, similar to the legislation that has already been enacted by many of our democratic allies, such as Australia and the United States. This bill will provide transparency and give us an important tool to better protect our democratic order against attempts being made to potentially subvert that same order.

I strongly urge you to support this bill in order to strengthen and protect our democracy, our democratic institutions and our freedom. Thank you.

Hon. Frances Lankin: Honourable senators, I think there may be some controversy here. I truly appreciate your speech, senator. In addition to Senator Simons's speech, this is an important moment in the Senate, with a laser focus on this. I want to ask you three questions.

First, you said that you didn't think the registry was a silver bullet. Will you explain how the registry would work and how it will help? Embedded in that is an understanding of how some of this foreign influence takes place, that the people doing the targeting are not always obvious and that names could not always be added to a registry.

Second, if there were a criticism of your bill, what do you think it would be? Where could the bill be improved?

Third, is there something the Senate could do beyond passing or amending your bill to bring greater focus on this issue? Is there a joint project in which we should be engaging? Thank you very much.

Senator Housakos: Thank you, Senator Lankin. The primary role of this bill is simple. There are organizations that are state sponsored — or connected with some of these tyrannical and authoritarian regimes around the world — operating in Canada, and many are directly and indirectly subsidized. They work under the veil of being intellectual institutions or research centres, and often they're not even veiled. They're state-run, multinational corporations that are directly affiliated with some of these authoritarian regimes. This registry simply states that any time one of these organizations, entities or corporations act to influence government officials — MPs, senators or senior bureaucrats — to sway public policy or to intimidate, directly or indirectly, office-holders or Canadian citizens, they would face the full thrust of the law.

Of course, this bill also amends the Criminal Code, adding some stiff financial penalties and jail terms for those who are found guilty of breaking the law in this particular case.

Is there any weakness in this bill? I don't think there is. As we all know, laws are fluid in this country. We put them forward with the best of intentions, and I believe this will be a great first

giant step forward. We will become more vigilant, because the number one challenge facing all democracies, including Canada, is authoritarianism around the world. Unfortunately, with countries like China, Iran and Russia, we have evidence to show that they're very active right now within our borders, within various institutions, and according to reports we have to take action.

• (1620)

Quite frankly, I think this is the first giant step forward. It's badly needed and would be the right thing to do at this juncture.

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Would Senator Housakos take a question?

Senator Housakos: Absolutely.

Senator Boehm: Senator, thank you very much for your comments. Near the end of your comments, you referred to both the United States and Australia as having foreign agent registry-type legislation.

In the case of the Americans, it goes back to 1938. It was definitely pre-internet, leaflets, newspapers and that sort of thing. In Australia, it was 2018, so it is much more recent. The Australian legislation has a component in it that would require any former cabinet minister who acts on behalf of a foreign entity to register or face sanctions, and in both cases there are sanctions there.

As you put this forward, I'm wondering to what extent you've been influenced by these two bits of legislation from other countries, given that there's much consideration going on in other jurisdictions, particularly Europe at this time, to look at ways and means.

Senator Housakos: I have looked at the Australian model. I find it is a lot more rigid than what we're proposing over here. Again, I did not want to go outside of the realm of public office-holders and public officials in this particular instance. I'm very cognizant of the fact that I don't want to infringe upon the private life of corporations and other entities in Canada. There's always a fine line. Is it something that we can look at? Do we want to strengthen it up to the point where we hold people accountable once they leave public office? I'm not averse to those kinds of suggestions, amendments and changes as we go along.

Clearly, we have a problem — based on the reports we've seen from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and our intelligence services — and we are being infiltrated at the highest levels in our institutions right now. This would be the first step, and as we go along we need to continue to be vigilant. As we also know, it doesn't address cyber and social web influence, which is very powerful.

I think this is very concrete and specific. It deals with entities that are affiliated with these totalitarian regimes that are very often trying to influence our public institutions and our public Crown corporations in various other sectors.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Thank you, Senator Housakos, for drawing attention to my op-ed. I encourage all of you to read it for yourselves rather than rely on the caricature that he has offered.

Senator Housakos, you have been quite clear in saying that China is an authoritarian state, which I entirely agree with. You also described it as "tyrannical." I'm not sure I would go that far, but it's certainly a Leninist state.

I think you said that all entities in China are subject to the direct or indirect control of the Chinese state.

Let me put my question in the reverse. Can you name some legally constituted entities in the People's Republic of China that would not fall under the definition of directly or indirectly controlled or influenced by the Chinese state and therefore would not be subject to registration under this bill?

Senator Housakos: Senator Woo, I can tell you that your op-ed and comments over the last while have garnered enough attention without me having to draw any attention to them.

Where we fundamentally differ on in this debate is that China is a tyrannical state. It's unfortunate that a member of the upper chamber doesn't recognize that. We don't recognize that what happened in Tiananmen Square as an accident. It was tyranny. What is going on with the Uighur people is tyranny. It is something that is recognized around the world, including our own Parliament, and it is shameful that we didn't recognize it in this chamber.

To stand up and say that you take exception to the comments of me referring to the administration and the regime in China as tyrannical is in itself outrageous.

The United Front is just one example of an organization operating in Canada funded directly to uphold the principles of that tyrannical regime. Organizations like Huawei are state funded. They're international multinationals that have been recognized by organizations like CSIS and the RCMP in engaging in security espionage right here in our country.

We've had these organizations. Our security forces tell parliamentary committees that we need to take action and do something about it. I find it outrageous that a parliamentarian questions the veracity of that information and questions the veracity of where we are vis-à-vis a democracy and the Republic of China.

Senator Woo: I take it from your non-answer that you consider all legally constituted entities in China to be subject to the direct or indirect control of the Chinese state. In that case, I ask you why would we not register a cultural organization in China that wants to promote cultural ties with Canada and, through its agent here in Toronto or Montreal, wants to speak with me, for example, about having a concert in Calgary or some other city? Why would somebody representing that institution in China, in a "tyrannical" state, subject to the direct or indirect control of the Chinese Communist Party, not be registered and perhaps punished if he or she were to speak to not just me but to any of us in here, including, of course, our colleagues who support the arts? We heard earlier today about the motion to give

more attention to the importance of the arts in this country. Why would someone representing that cultural institution not be covered under the registry?

Senator Housakos: You're using an extreme case, Senator Woo. We're not talking about holding accountable people who are promoting cultural exchanges. I can tell you that the Chinese community in Canada does not need any help from the Chinese republic in order to promote Chinese culture and Canadian-Chinese culture. They can do it on their own very well.

That is not at all the essence of this bill. The essence of this bill is very simple. When you have organizations that are funded directly by Beijing, which are here promoting the agenda of that tyrannical organization to government agencies, to our institutions — particularly in commerce, trade, science, technology, energy sectors — those are the ones that are of serious concern when it comes to dealing with this issue, Senator Woo.

Trying to muddy the waters and justify the unjustifiable isn't right and isn't appropriate.

Senator Woo: If I could follow up again, your non-answer would seem to suggest that the cultural organization would, in fact, be covered under the registry, even though you said it would not be in your speech. Presumably, other organizations, such as alumni associations, sporting groups, municipalities, again under the direct or indirect control of the state, would have to be registered if an individual representing that entity were to speak to a parliamentarian or indeed with a senior official.

In that situation, where essentially every legally constituted entity in the People's Republic of China would have to be registered under this act, would you not agree that the assertion of the two authors in the op-ed about the circulated "disinformation" in text messages and WeChat posts saying that many entities and individuals associated with China would be targeted under Mr. Kenny Chiu's failed bill was in fact accurate?

Senator Housakos: Senator Woo, my answer is very clear. If you have any organizations funded by Beijing that are active on Canadian soil, they are going to be obligated to register. Absolutely. That's what this bill is saying. I'm not disagreeing with it. That's really the objective of the bill at the end of the day. However, it doesn't target Canadian-Chinese cultural organizations that are active on Canadian soil.

My point is exactly that. We do not need Beijing and their money in order to be infiltrating Canadian-Chinese cultural organizations. That is precisely part of the point and part of this exercise we're going through. Beijing should be worrying about promoting their own cultural activities at home as we are preoccupied with promoting our own cultural and multicultural activities in Canada with our Canadian citizens. That's really the objective of this bill. I don't see where you're lacking an answer to your question.

• (1630)

Senator Woo: Let me put it even more directly, then. Would you consider that any Canadian, whether a recent immigrant from China or anyone else, representing any Chinese organization, institution or entity in China — a school, a municipality, a badminton club, a mah-jong association, all legally sanctioned in China, presumably under the direct or indirect control of the state — who wants to speak to a parliamentarian or senior official — would that person be covered under your bill? Under Mr. Chiu's bill, he would. Would that person be covered under your bill and would he or she be required to register?

Senator Housakos: Any entity that is connected to this tyrannical regime in Beijing would be covered, yes. The answer is yes. I'm not hiding from that reality. If you have a Chinese, state-owned and operated institution in Canada, yes, it would fall under this bill, as it should.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Housakos, as I see more senators rising, you have, as acting leader, unlimited time. Do you wish to continue to answer questions?

Senator Housakos: Absolutely.

Hon. Victor Oh: Thank you, Senator Housakos. Would you take a question?

Senator Housakos: Absolutely.

Senator Oh: You talked about former MP Kenny Chiu. I think there is a lot of misinformation. I would like to correct it. I know Kenny Chiu well. I flew to Vancouver to support him during the election. After being elected, I saw he was going bizarre, acting in a different way. After that, he is a Minister of Foreign Affairs. I told Kenny Chiu that you have to work for your community, your constituents; you are elected by Canadians, and you are supposed to work for Canadians, and not Foreign Affairs. I warned him many times, including through the intern who worked for me and went to help him, and I told him to carry the message to Vancouver.

I said, "Now you are claiming that you have Chinese agent influence that sabotaged you." I said that's not true. Ms. Meng Wanzhou was arrested in Vancouver by the government. You would stand a good chance to be re-elected, but he chose to jump to a different way, and I warned him, and finally, enough. So what happened to the result?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Oh, do you have a question for Senator Housakos?

Senator Oh: Yes. Senator Housakos, did you talk to Kenny Chiu about what the truth is about what happened to him?

Senator Housakos: Yes, I did.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Oh?

Senator Oh: He's lying to you. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

THE SENATE

MOTION PERTAINING TO SECTION 55 OF THE CONSTITUTION ACT, 1982, AS AMENDED, ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion, as amended, of the Honourable Senator Dalphond, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy:

That the Senate:

1. recall that, despite the commitment found in section 55 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* to have a fully bilingual Constitution, as of today, of the 31 enactments that make up the Canadian Constitution, 22 are official only in their English version, including almost all of the *Constitution Act, 1867*; and

2. call upon the government to consider, in the context of the review of the *Official Languages Act*, the addition of a requirement to submit, every 12 months, a report detailing the efforts made to comply with section 55 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Honourable senators, I move that the motion standing in my name be put.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, as amended.)

[*English*]

MOTION PERTAINING TO MINIMUMS FOR GOVERNMENT BILLS—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Tannas, seconded by the Honourable Senator Black:

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; and

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.

Hon. Frances Lankin: Honourable senators, the saying is that timing is everything. I'm not sure how to come down from the important and vital discussion that we had with interventions by Senator Simons and Senator Housakos and others to talk about the *Rules of the Senate*, as important as these are, but I will try and just put forward some brief thoughts on this.

This motion was put forward by Senator Tannas and the Canadian Senators Group. I want to thank them for the work they did in determining how to approach this issue. The issue is one that many of us talk about, complain about, whine about, and it is something that the general public would have no direct knowledge of or see as insider baseball. It's difficult to command time to find solutions to that and that issue is the challenge that the Senate has when bills arrive in such a time frame from the House of Commons with an urgent request from the government to deal with this in a quick and expedited fashion.

Now, when I began my remarks when this item was last called, I was present in the chamber and not virtual, and I could see the reaction of a number of people when I said I basically agree with the intent, direction and the attempt put forward by this motion. My apologies to my dear colleagues in the GRO. They all looked at me with some shock and I understand why. They have a job to do and I appreciate how hard they and their team all work in impressing upon the government the need to respond and plan in a different way and to give sufficient time — not wasteful time but sufficient time — for the Senate to deal with items in a thorough fashion that allows us to do our job and do our job appropriately on behalf of Canadians and at the expense of taxpayer dollars. I understand and I do thank them for that work.

• (1640)

I also want to say that in terms of our complaints about governments, the Senate's complaints about how government handled these things stretch over many governments; it's not just this government. In fact, at this point in time and this Parliament, I acknowledge that we're dealing with a minority government and that other parties have as much influence over the timing of things coming through to the Senate as the government does. Having said that, I still want to put forward that I support the intent of this.

There are many different opinions around the Senate about whether this particular motion and the particular rule changes being proposed are the appropriate or necessary steps to achieve our goal. I know we will hear speakers coming from different perspectives.

What I have not heard from a majority of senators is a lack of agreement with the concern that Senator Tannas raised. That's important for us to bring into our consideration as we look forward. If not this, what are the options?

Some will say that the options are using the existing rules. While rules do exist, there are ways to deny requests for leave to expedite. There are other ways in which people can get across the message and achieve a different response, perhaps in timing, and we'll hear some of those from other speakers to come on this.

However, none of those truly deal with the concern that Senator Tannas and the Conservative Senators Group have raised about the inevitable pressure put on groups or caucuses within the Senate to respond in a way that meets the sense of emergency that is conveyed to us from the government.

I believe that this is an important discussion for us to have. The discussion comes out of frustration with lived experience with this problem as an institution for many years, as the group of us sitting here now for the last few sessions of Parliament has experienced.

The frustration is exacerbated by all the conditions and stresses that we lived through with the pandemic, with all of the world activities that are going on, by the way — and I will say it directly — with an opposition in the Senate that rings bells unnecessarily many times, uses the rules that are there in a dilatory fashion. Again, I understand the reasons for it.

All of those things contribute to a less-than-effective and efficient operation of this chamber and of a consideration with full force of the Senate's capabilities being put to government legislation that is coming through in every circumstance.

The thing that concerns me about the response that says "just use the existing rules" is that all of those discussions generally take place before they come to the floor and we would use those rules. All of those discussions take place in a meeting among leaders. I fully respect our leadership within the Senate, leaders and facilitators; I respect the work they do and what they bring forward. However, the need for understanding emergency, the need for understanding what it affects in terms of the rest of the scheduled agenda, the need for understanding what it means for perhaps a truncated study or, in cases other than money bills, pre-studies in which we are not actually dealing with the bill in its final form coming from the House of Commons, I find it concerning that it is not a discussion that is fully transparent to the whole Senate or open for the whole Senate to take a decision on — whether we agree with that kind of approach for dealing with the issue of emergency or urgent handling of bills, treatment of bills in the Senate and voting on bills. As I said earlier, echoing Senator Tannas, it also brings the pressure to bear on either individuals or individual groups.

I don't see anything unreasonable if the government brings forward on first reading a request that, under these rule changes, automatically could bring forward a 20-minute discussion of what the nature of the emergency is and hear a back and forth. The Senate could vote on that with only a 15-minute bell. That is barely over a half-hour. Most of the unnecessary dilatory bell-ringing that goes on in this chamber is an hour or multiple back-to-backs, several hours sometimes, when it occurs like that. I don't see what is unreasonable about that.

Yes, we could use other rules that are there, but not necessarily in the same efficient way. The reasons are put out. It's transparent. The Senate takes a vote and those reasons are understood and accepted. And I think, in the majority of cases, the Senate is reasonable in how they respond and they would, in fact, respond appropriately if it's truly an emergency. But it brings the transparency to it. It brings it to a decision of the Senate as a whole. Because of the structure of the rules and the timelines, and the automatic right of the Government Representative or the Government Representative Office to bring forward immediately the declaration of this being an urgent matter and have that debated upon, that brings us efficiency.

If people have other ideas, I would urge them to find a way of bringing a small group of people together to talk this through, to see if people could reach a consensus and bring that forward and let us thoroughly, as a chamber, talk about that. Otherwise, I think what has been brought forward is a constructive proposal. It is one that tries to get at the heart of the problem, without creating more delays, and it is to be commended.

I also know that those colleagues who will disagree with the specific approach, but who share the reasoning behind the intent that this is a concern for our chamber, will bring forward their ideas of what is an effective alternative. At the end of the day, that's what we will have to vote on.

With that, I will keep my remarks uncharacteristically short and stop at this point in time. Thank you very much.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Would the honourable senator take a question?

Senator Lankin: From my dear colleague in the GRO, yes.

Senator Gold: Well, to my dear colleague at the Senate, thank you for your remarks, thoughtful as always.

Senator Lankin, you have had the benefit of being in the chamber since the beginning of the current government. I am sure that you will recall that, over the last six or seven years, the Senate has spent considerable time and effort on many critical and crucial pieces of legislation, such as cannabis legislation, gun control legislation, Indigenous reconciliation legislation and legislation regarding medical assistance in dying.

The Senate's treatment of these issues, its robust study and debate on these issues are well-documented and, might I say, were done with very little government pressure, were done collegially and without time allocation motions. There has not been one yet used.

We also know how frequent it is — we are living it these days, also — for government items to be adjourned, to sit on the Order Paper for weeks on end with no debate whatsoever, with no speaker, sometimes for many consecutive days, if not longer. There is little that the government can do in these circumstances to prevent this.

I come to my question.

When you look at the entire record of this government, especially taking into consideration, as you noted, the uniqueness of the pandemic through which we have lived for the last two years, in your heart of hearts do you really think that the government has been guilty of irresponsibly or unnecessarily rushing the work of the Senate?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Lankin, your time has expired. We have two more senators who wish to put questions forward. Are you requesting five minutes?

Senator Lankin: Yes, please.

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

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Leave is not granted, Senator Lankin.

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Honourable senators, I rise today to join the debate on what I consider to be a crucial discussion regarding the ability of the Senate to fulfill its constitutional duty of sober second thought. I want to thank Senator Tannas for putting forward this discussion. I do so as an independent senator and not as ISG facilitator. This is a disclaimer — a preemptive move. I want to share my view on this issue, knowing very well that some of my ISG colleagues will agree and some will disagree. This plurality of opinion and expertise paired with mutual respect is, I believe, one of the strengths of our group.

• (1650)

Allow me first to speak to the context surrounding this motion and on the existing tools we currently have at our disposal. I will also share my thoughts more precisely on the content of the motion that aims to solve the problem that we often face nearing the end of a session or before rising for the winter and summer recess: the rush and the inability to properly study and improve bills coming late to the Senate. I believe we can all agree that the Senate is the master of its own destiny. We should not accept or fold in the face of pressure from the government or the House of Commons that would prevent us from fulfilling our role as senators. On this, I concur with Senator Tannas. However, I believe we have now, within our rules, the power and the ability to provide our sober second thought while working in a complementary way with the elected House as the Canadian public expects us to do.

Let me continue by citing some of the tools that we have at our disposal. We have the ability to do pre-studies on bills that we know will arrive late for our consideration in accordance with rule 10-11(1). This practice is beneficial because it allows us to be ready for debate and, eventually, amendments when the bills arrive in circumstances requiring a diligent and timely response.

We also have, in exceptional circumstances, a simple, yet effective, option: sitting for a longer amount of time. When it comes down to it, the onus to properly study a bill is on us. Notably, there are no rules that say we must adjourn three days after the other place. So then why not sit for one week, two weeks or any amount of time that is needed to complete the work Canadians expect us to do? Bills do not arrive in the Senate with an expiry date, after all. I know some of my colleagues will argue that sitting longer would not solve the issue and that we could not amend bills while the House is adjourned. But I see it differently. Let's remember that the Senate is the master of its own destiny. There is nothing preventing us from amending these late-arriving bills and sending them back to the other place.

Actually, I agree generally with the notion that the bad planning of the House is not the Senate's emergency, as stated by the leader of the Canadian Senators Group. However, it is up to senators to express the collective and individual will to sit on days when they do not wish to and stay later than what is indicated on proposed sitting calendars in order to achieve the goal of having thorough examinations of pieces of government legislation.

I want to address the questions surrounding the notion of sending a Senate amendment on a piece of government legislation back to an adjourned House of Commons. Doing this is not simply an ISG problem, a CPC problem or a CSG or PSG problem. It is, in fact, not a Senate problem at all. This is a government-of-the-day problem. This is a House of Commons problem. It is their problem to address it if the situation arises.

We shall keep in mind that the Speaker of the House of Commons has the authority to recall MPs during those break periods in accordance with rule 28(3) of the Standing Orders of

the House of Commons. As for us, we would only be fulfilling our constitutional duty, and frankly, colleagues, I do not believe we shall then have to apologize for doing our collective job in keeping the government to account.

Consequently, I also wish to address Senator Tannas's statement made in his speech of February 8 that ". . . CSG senators will not grant leave to facilitate or waive our rules on the passage of any legislation anymore."

While I agree that waiving leave of the Senate is an important tool at our disposal and that the practice of granting leave has been vastly used — maybe overused — in this pandemic period, I strongly disagree with this Pavlovian response to deny leave. It doesn't mean that because of some past abuses there is no merit in granting leave to some urgent issue that would, if legislation is adopted swiftly, greatly benefit Canadians. For example, would any colleague who cares for public interest really be comfortable denying leave of an urgent supply bill, even in a case where that bill had been thoroughly studied by our own expert senators at the National Finance Committee? I don't believe so.

Allow me to use the example of Bill C-10, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020. It was passed in one day in the Forty-third Parliament on March 13, 2020, at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. We passed Bill C-10 with leave of the Senate to provide important benefits to Canadian citizens and enterprises for the difficult times ahead.

It was necessary at the time to meet the needs of Canadians and it may still be necessary in the future. While in the worst peaks of this pandemic, we had the duty to act timely in the best public interest. This is not a nuance, colleagues. It is the realpolitik we were then in. Hopefully, the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, but we are not immune to tragedies or natural disasters that would require urgent action and approval.

To further highlight the negative effects of this dogmatic approach — and even ill-conceived sophistry — I would like to refer to the debate we had recently on the Emergencies Act. The choice of some of our colleagues to deny leave on a request to waive the usual one-day notice and expedite the debate, while totally valid within our rules, ended up slowing down our work and ensuring that many senators — 16 for the ISG alone — were, in the end, not able to rise and speak to this vital issue. Had this permission been granted, we could have debated on the Friday and on the following Monday.

And what about Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Criminal Code to ban the practice of conversion therapy? It was tabled in late June 2021 in the Senate, but we were not able to pass that bill because leave was then denied for us to do a pre-study. That bill had close to unanimous support in the chamber and was urgently requested by independent experts and the LGBTQ2+ community. Furthermore, it was adopted with leave of the Senate in this new legislature. So, then, why needlessly block its pre-study last summer?

I must say, I think those examples prove the counterproductive nature of this practice and are not in line with the ideal of legislating in the best public interest.

It is, furthermore, proof that Motion No. 30 is superfluous. Since the opening of this Forty-fourth Parliament, Senator Tannas himself has used our rules almost systematically to deny leave, thus preventing the Senate from being rushed by the government or the other place.

I do not agree with the terms of the debate as expressed in the third point of the motion. Limiting debate time to 20 minutes with 5 minutes to each senator would mean that only four could speak up during debates. I feel it would be greatly unjust, letting aside the superficiality of this approach.

Between the recognized groups, the Conservative caucus, the non-affiliated senators and the government representatives, somebody is assured to go unrepresented.

• (1700)

For my own group, the ISG, the option would not be viable. Even in the case where one of our members should rise and speak to the urgency of a bill, it would be impossible for the senator to do so as a spokesperson or representative for the group. Other ISG senators could disagree and feel unrepresented in the debate.

I am sure many of my colleagues from other groups will feel the same way. This approach is simply not aligned with the realities of the contemporary Senate.

However, I must salute Senator Tannas on his openness to suggestions and improvements, which demonstrates his long-standing and unwavering dedication to the efficiency of the Senate.

Colleagues, the motion before us today is a political statement. It is a demonstration of bravado in response to frustration from the perceived dismissiveness of the other place, which I share. However, it is not necessary nor substantiated if we take a closer look at the rules and if we have the collective courage to apply them properly in combination with a good plan for our parliamentary work.

Moreover, it is only a temporary solution, considering it would only be a sessional order and would not amend any of our Rules. It is so unsubstantiated that, for instance, the Government Representative in the Senate has not, either in the last Parliament or in this new one, used the pressure tool that is time allocation. Instead, he has sought to build consensus among senators. We must keep working in this collegial way.

I will now conclude, hoping that Senator Tannas will still be my friend, with the wise words of a former senator, the late Michael Pitfield, taken from the foreword of the book *Protecting Canadian Democracy: The Senate You Never Knew*:

> Longstanding experience in public administration has taught me to approach anything as challenging as Senate reform with prudence and a reserve of humility. . . .

Those wise words shall inspire us to take our distance from group branding and political bravado. Rather than safeguarding the Senate's sober second thought, this motion would lead us to the denial of the various options we are already provided with by our Rules and by the rules of the other place. Actually, it would simply delay our parliamentary works, both in the chamber and in committees, at the detriment of the timeliness required in times of need.

That is why I will not support this motion.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Acting Leader of the Opposition): Will Senator Saint-Germain take a question?

Senator Saint-Germain: Yes.

Senator Housakos: Thank you for that very thoughtful speech. Again, it was well articulated.

Senator Tannas, I hope we're still friends after I ask the question, but we've done a fair amount of naval-gazing in this place. We're always looking at the Rules. Of course, I'm not against the idea of constant improvement. Nothing is static. We should review the Rules.

However, I've been here a number of years, and at the end of the day, we have rules to give certain advantages to the government. We have rules to protect the role of the opposition. I've looked at the last few parliaments. Have there been any examples where we haven't found a consensus to make sure the opposition's voices are heard? Are there any examples where this chamber hasn't respected the agenda and timelines of the government in order to respond to important issues, be it during COVID or what-have-you?

It seems that every time we engage in debate here, we need to fix something. I listened to your speech carefully, and it doesn't seem that the proposition that we have here is fixing anything. Is it really fixing a problem that exists?

Second, we also have time allocation, which the government, of course, has hailed as a badge of honour due to the fact they've never used it, which it is, because it also indicates that we have found consensus among leadership, even though we've added so many leadership groups.

Would you agree that we're not really fixing anything at this particular point with this motion?

Senator Saint-Germain: Thank you, Senator Housakos, for the question. There is a trap in it, so I will first address the question and then the trap.

As for the question, I do agree that Motion No. 30 does not fix the problem it pretends or wants to fix. On the contrary, I believe this motion is counterproductive, because it will provide some delays that are not relevant regarding an emergency bill or a bill the government pretends is an emergency bill.

As for the trap, I would agree with you that if we use the Rules wisely, as they are written wisely, from a sober-second-thought perspective, I would say that the majority are very well thought out and do not need to be amended. However, I still believe that, given the contemporary Senate, some rules have to be updated in order to provide more fairness for all senators and all groups, and also — and I intend to be polite — to "undust" some practices that are time-consuming and that don't have any impact on our efficiency — on the contrary.

That's my answer.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Senator Saint-Germain, would you take another question?

Senator Saint-Germain: Gladly.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: I agree with what you said in your speech, but I wanted to ask a question about something specific that has always seemed very simple to me but that also seems to cause huge problems: our schedule.

The problem I have with Senator Tannas's motion is that it doesn't take into consideration what we can do to give ourselves more time to study bills. I have to tell you that it's bewildering how, during the first months of a parliamentary session, we're always rushed because of upcoming break weeks. We have very little time because of break weeks and our three-day schedule here. That said, our senators' schedule is surely the main tool we have to work longer hours so we can study government and private members' bills more in depth.

Ever since I arrived, it has seemed to me that we can't expect any sympathy from the public if we say we don't have enough time to study bills, especially if people take a close look at our schedule. I know what I'm saying is a little harsh, but I think it would give us a lot of power if we could all agree to modify the schedule.

Senator Saint-Germain: Thank you for the question. I understand that it is about the importance of organizing our work at committees and possibly in the chamber in a way that would keep us from having to push through our work quickly — sometimes even too quickly — at the end of break weeks, during the summer or during the holiday season. I think it is a good example of rules and work organization strategies that could be studied by the Rules Committee or the Selection Committee. The goal would be to organize our business more efficiently while taking into account the constraints of our work, including interpretation and the presence of a fourth group of senators. I agree with you. It depends on us, and it is up to us to see to it. Thank you.

[*English*]

Hon. Marty Deacon: Thank you for your speech.

Something I think we're all thinking about is how we practise and do our work, how we are efficient and how we can do better. I have great empathy and respect for the day we spent before Christmas, on December 17, which was much guided by Senator Tannas. I thought that was a very important day. We took an extra day. I'm sure for some folks that might have even been a stressor going into Christmas, but it was good to have that day and to be able to step back from it.

• (1710)

I am continuing to ask my question — and thank you to Senator Lankin, also — on the problem we're trying to solve. I hate to be that basic here, but I find that's where I need to go back to because we do have a set of standards, a set of rules, that we follow. And we do have a problem that we all seem to look at, at the end of June and before Christmas, that we never want to be in again. We want to get away from this.

Is the problem that we don't have the collective courage and understanding on how we can take the rules of the game in this frankly oversized sandbox — and I mean that in the kindest of ways; I really do, but it's an oversized sandbox — of understanding how we can progress forward so that we are not sitting again — we might feel an artificial sense of security because we have heard — yes, we have heard — that we might be in a somewhat more stable position until 2025. I don't know if it's true or not, but we've heard that. So people might think, "Oh, well, this isn't a rush because I think we've got some time."

What is the collective courage that we need, in your opinion, to make this right within the rules of the game in this sandbox?

Senator Saint-Germain: Thank you for the question. You referred, as I also did in my speech, to courage. But courage is linked to remembering, each and every day, why we are here. We are here to give sober second thought to the government bills, to the elected chamber's analysis of those bills, first and foremost, and to make sure that Aboriginal peoples, vulnerable peoples, regions and people who have no other voice than ours are duly represented. The courage is taking the needed time to do so but not to interpret and use the rules for other objectives.

We are also responsible for our own organization. If we interpret and use the rules in a way that is not aligned with sober second thought, we are accountable to Canadians for that.

Personally, I just don't like having to rush at the end of a session but, at the same time, what if we never took the time to amend, when so needed, the bills that we really believe need to be amended at the end of a session? Do we then have the courage to send back those bills, to send back a message with amendments to the other place? I do believe this is part of the problem because then the onus will be on us for not having done our job in a timely manner.

But the first condition, I do believe, or the first goal that we should have, is to better organize our work. Frankly, there is a need there, and I think that belief is pretty unanimous.

To that end, I commend the Rules Committee for the work and the dynamism they are having now. I know that the Selection Committee, if and when it has to act, will be acting as well.

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Senator, I have a question. It would appear that there's some thought that we should sit longer, maybe Mondays and Fridays. Obviously, if I lived in the bubble — Quebec City to, let's say, Hamilton — I could drive here every day. But, unfortunately, some of us live across Canada, and it takes us two days or a day and a half to get here. Do you think a possible solution here is changing our sitting times so that we can sit five days a week?

Senator Saint-Germain: Thank you, senator. You see the problem that I see. Even from Quebec City, it takes me six hours to come here, but we disagree on the solution.

I do believe we could organize our time in order to sit during the usual three-day week that we have planned but to reorganize our schedule and rethink this. At the same time, I also believe that if we have the courage to send a message with amendments to the other place and that means that the Speaker of the House will have to call back the other place, then they may also want to reorganize their work.

Hon. David Richards: Senator Saint-Germain, thank you for your speech. The problem with Supplementary Estimates (C) is we had two days. We had to have translation. We had to do clause-by-clause consideration. Within another three or four days, we're going to get the Main Estimates; they're going to come through.

We are really rushed with this Supplementary Estimates (C). I don't think we studied it as well as we could. It is a fundamental financial bill; it has to go through. But there are a lot of clauses in it and a lot of monies that were spent, and we didn't get as much clarity on it from the witnesses as we may have wanted because it was rushed. I think that was part of the problem that Senator Tannas was trying to deal with and trying to explain and to come to some solution. I wonder if you could address that.

Senator Saint-Germain: Senator, I agree that estimates and supply bills are complex bills. This year, especially, those two bills came late, but there is a benefit to the pre-studies that were made, as you know, by the members of the National Finance Committee.

A senator cannot be in a position to study, clause by clause, each and every bill. This is the role and the duty of the Senate committees, to go thoroughly through the bills and then to report to us and make their recommendations of amending or not.

As for supply bills, there is an important tradition to rely or to defer to the other place and to the government. As you know, on a finance bill, a supply bill, a government can be defeated, so there is a nuance there that is important.

In a nutshell, the Senate committees need time to do their work, but we must also consider that the membership of those committees are experts. They must advise us and, if so needed, recommend to us amendments that we need to carefully study as a chamber.

Senator Housakos: If the honourable senator will take another question, I will be very brief. I seem to get a sense, especially from Senator Miville-Dechêne, and I do know this, that some senators have been frustrated with the pace at which things move here.

The truth of the matter, though, if you will admit, Senator Saint-Germain — is that we choose to sit Tuesday to Thursday. This Parliament has a calendar schedule of Monday to Friday. Like the House of Commons, we can easily be sitting Monday to Friday.

Do you agree we could easily be sitting past the end of June to deliberate issues? It's the choice of the leadership groups that we rise when we rise.

Again, going back to my point, I don't think this is an issue that will be resolved by the Rules. The Rules are there to have this chamber sit as long or as little as we want. Thank God, in 2022, in Canada, it doesn't take two days to come to Ottawa unless you're coming by horse and buggy. The truth is if we wanted to sit intensely, we could.

Senator Saint-Germain: Senator Housakos, I won't admit anything, but I will concur with you that the onus is on us to organize our work first during these three sitting days. There is more efficiency to gain there; I am sure of it. If and when so needed, it is what we do and what we have done during the intensive sessions, when we need to be there for more than three days, be it four days or five days, or when there are emergencies as well. So, yes, the onus is on us to better organize ourselves.

Hon. Scott Tannas: Thank you, senator, for your intervention. We are still friends.

I wanted to ask for your comments on a couple of things. First of all, let me say I totally agree with you. I know Senator Mercer mentioned this at Christmastime.

• (1720)

We have to be brave enough and apply the right amount of sobriety to a decision to reject any argument that says we shouldn't amend because the House of Commons has gone home. I agree with you. If we collectively say we will do that, then I have no problem staying here for as long as it takes to thoroughly study bills at the end of sessions. But it is galling that we are asked to whistle something through, not study it properly or be able to deal with amendments.

I want to associate myself with that portion of your speech.

I think I said that I don't believe that Motion No. 30 is going to fix all of our problems, but there have been some scenarios, and you mentioned some in your speech. Let me give you some scenarios where this would be helpful.

We know that in our Rules a piece of legislation needs two days to go from first reading to second reading, and one day to go from second reading to third reading. This would eliminate that. Instead, at second reading the leader could stand up and say, "This is an emergency. We need to get rid of the two days and the one day, and we need to focus on this because of time." We could then take it from there. We could send it out for a two-day study. We could do whatever we want, but we're not wasting time on days.

The scenario that I also wanted to raise was one that didn't happen but very nearly happened in this chamber in the last week, and that would have been back-to-work legislation where the modus operandi would have been to ask for leave and would have put at least one member of this chamber in the incredibly uncomfortable spot of granting leave in order to speed up back-to-work legislation. If we had this, that senator and others could exercise their right to object without having the wheels go off the cart.

I'm wondering what piece of the Rules you would imagine we could use that could then replicate this in a way that is within the Rules. In other words, how do we suspend without granting leave and requiring every single senator to sit with their mouths shut and on their hands in cases where maybe it's a religious thing, maybe there is a key piece of social legislation that they vehemently oppose? That's familiar, where there is an emergency and we need to get it through for whatever reason. That was being somewhat sold to us at Christmastime on Bill C-6.

How do you see this going? This may not be the answer, but I'm interested to know what thought you gave to some of those scenarios that we have confronted or very nearly confronted.

Senator Saint-Germain: On the first part of your question with regard to the notice that requires one or two days hence, I think as a chamber we can decide that the emergency exists and waive it. Then we agree that it won't be one day hence, but will be now.

I will now go to your third question, because there is a link. If only one senator refuses to grant leave, the senator has the onus to demonstrate why it is this way. When denial of leave is only for one or two days and there is no emergency, we can cope with that.

When you refer to back-to-work legislation, generally we know that the situations have evolved, the negotiations with the unions have not been conclusive and that we will need to study the bill in a kind of emergency situation, but that does not mean that we won't vote on a bill in a timely manner, given we have enough time to organize our work and study this back-to-work legislation. It doesn't come with a time allocation. Each time we did this — and I remember it has been the case three times since 2016 — we took the time needed to study these bills.

To return to your first question, the issue of one senator being able to deny leave comes with the responsibility of the senator to have a very good reason in doing so. I trust all my colleagues to be responsible to that end. Frankly, when we look at the best public interest, it is normally something that we have to do only exceptionally.

If we see some abuse of this, let's refer it to our Rules Committee to try to find a different way to address this issue. Thank you.

Senator Gold: My apologies, honourable colleague, but if I may ask you a question. I think you made a really good point about our calendar, as others have made as well. If we go back in history — and those with more experience will confirm this — our Senate calendar was organized differently to better accommodate the work of the House and the corresponding work of the Senate.

Do you think a potential solution to the problem that is being voiced is for the Rules Committee to take a look at our calendar and perhaps we could sit for a couple of weeks in July, or at least

after the House rises? We could take away a couple of weeks or do some switching in terms of the calendar, such that if and when, as I think history reveals, bills do come to us in June, to put them in the window. Sometimes, because they are a matter of importance, we do take the time, as you've suggested, to study them and have the ability to do our work with an expectation that that's, in fact, how we carry out our work, not simply — regardless of what the House says or the government says — "well, we're off for our two and a half months of summer break."

Senator Saint-Germain: I think that the Rules Committee and the Selection Committee could have a look at it, and at the same time the site of MétéoMédia for us to benefit from the best times in the summer as well.

(On motion of Senator Wells, debate adjourned.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO ADOPT THE SENATE OF CANADA ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY STATEMENT ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Deacon (*Nova Scotia*), seconded by the Honourable Senator Kutcher:

That the Senate adopt the following *Environmental and Sustainability Policy Statement*, to replace the 1993 *Senate Environmental Policy*, adopted by the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration:

"SENATE OF CANADA ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY STATEMENT

OBJECTIVE

The Senate of Canada is committed to reducing the Senate's carbon footprint to net zero by 2030 and to implement sustainable practices in its operations. Achieving this goal requires a whole-of-organization approach which prioritizes reduction of outputs and utilizes standard-leading emission offsets. The road to net zero will include quantifiable regular reporting on progress towards target. These actions are to demonstrate leadership as an institution on climate action, to encourage accountability of federal institutions and to inform the legislative process.

PRINCIPLES

The Senate is committed to achieving its objective through adherence to the following principles:

1. **Serve as a model of environmental leadership** in accordance with the best practices of international, federal, provincial and municipal environmental laws, regulations, standards and guidelines where applicable;

2. **Integrate a robust accountability framework into the operating planning cycle.** This includes benchmarking, tracking and applying results-based management to achieve continuous improvement in environmental performance, in accordance with the best practices of accountability frameworks of internationally recognized standards. Progress should be reported publicly on a regular basis to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration (CIBA).

3. **Require environmentally conscious acquisition of goods and services** that incorporates: the purchase of environmentally responsible products and services; the selection of innovative suppliers demonstrating environmentally sound business practices; and the setting of environmental requirements in requests for proposals.

4. **Reduce the environmental impact of activities** by using resources more efficiently, with a focus on the reduction of outputs throughout the Senate's operations.

5. **Incentivize and enhance environmental awareness throughout the Senate** through education and support, while recognizing and incorporating environmental actions undertaken by Senate employees and senators.

6. **Operate facilities and conduct activities of the Senate in a sustainable manner** with a view to preventing pollution and reducing waste. Consider environmental impacts and implications when planning projects and activities.

7. **Develop and implement tools that promote and integrate environmental considerations into day-to-day operations of the Senate** to encourage Senators and Senate employees to make environmentally friendly decisions within their activities and tasks.";

That the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration examine the feasibility of implementing programs to establish:

(a) an accountability framework and annual reporting cycle;

(b) the promotion of climate-friendly transportation policies and reduced travel;

(c) enhanced recycling and minimizing waste;

(d) a digital-first approach and reduction in printing;

(e) support from central agencies to allow the Senate to charge carbon offsets as part of operating a sustainable Senate; and

(f) a process for senators and their offices to propose environmental and sustainability recommendations; and

That the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration acquire any necessary goods and services to examine the feasibility or to implement these recommendations.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

NATIONAL FINANCE

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY MATTERS RELATING TO FEDERAL ESTIMATES GENERALLY AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

Hon. Percy Mockler, pursuant to notice of March 22, 2022, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to study matters relating to federal estimates generally and other financial matters, as described in rule 12-7(5); and

That the committee submit its final report no later than April 14, 2024, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings until 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(*At 5:30 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.*)

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