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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Honourable senators, I rise today to draw the attention of this chamber and my colleagues to the increasing number of attacks on journalists in different parts of the world. They are being increasingly detained from doing their jobs, speaking truth to power and shedding light on corrupt regimes.

One such journalist, Dawit Isaak, has been imprisoned in Eritrea for 20 years without charge or trial. In 2001, Isaak, a dual Swedish-Eritrean citizen, was summarily detained for his reporting at the *Setit* newspaper. Despite being released temporarily in 2005, he was imprisoned again just two days after his release. Some of the other journalists who had been detained along with him have died in detention. His whereabouts are unknown but human rights groups, such as the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, led by Irwin Cotler, believe there is hope that he is still alive.

Unfortunately, Dawit Isaak is not alone. There are others like him. When truth comes too close for comfort for foreign dictators, they resort to violence and murder, as in the case of Jamal Khashoggi, or subvert their own laws to silence voices, such as that of Maria Ressa, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

This is borne out by the facts. A 2020 report from the Committee to Protect Journalists found that at least 274 journalists have been jailed because of their work. And because of the pandemic and increasing corruption and conflict, journalists seem to have been drawn into this web of violence. And lest we think that this phenomenon takes place only in far away places, let's remember that a record 100 journalists were arrested or criminally charged in the U.S., and another 300 were assaulted as they were covering important stories, including assaults by law enforcement officers.

This past weekend, Massey College in Toronto celebrated the accomplishments and the voice of Maria Ressa, who commented to us on Zoom because she was denied permission to travel from the Philippines. She said you cannot have integrity of elections without integrity of facts, and she cautioned against the rising war on truth.

Honourable senators, without a functioning fifth estate, democracy is not possible. Journalists are not an inconvenience; they are truth tellers. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

PROTECTION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES

Hon. Peter Harder: Honourable senators, soon we will mark the third anniversary of the passage of Bill 21, the controversial Quebec law which prohibits the wearing of religious symbols by teachers and other public servants working in that province.

While the infringement of constitutionally entrenched liberties — which this bill represents — is alarming, equally alarming are the persistence of this injustice for so long a period of time and the worrying example the use of the notwithstanding clause sets for other jurisdictions.

As the anniversary approaches, I am drawn to these observations: First, the continued existence of this law underscores the duty of every citizen to stand up in defence of civil liberties for all Canadians because each time we diminish the civil liberties of anyone, we demean them for everyone. Second, the less we are personally affected by any diminution of civil liberties, the greater our responsibility is to object on behalf of those who are most aggrieved. Third, the compromise of any civil liberty becomes more offensive the longer it remains in place. So long as it remains extant, the responsibility to push for its repeal increases with each passing day. We must not become inured to a compromise of civil liberties simply because it becomes familiar.

Allowing for restrictions on civil liberties within a federal state like ours is an especially dangerous path. It creates a temptation for one jurisdiction to ignore an attack on liberty within another, perhaps in the hope that their own transgressions will be simply ignored. This threatens the creation of a patchwork quilt of civil liberties which changes each time we cross an internal boundary.

Moreover, when we tolerate a restriction on our own civil liberties, we sacrifice our capacity to object to similar or even greater restrictions in other countries. This remains true even if we have acquiesced to the compromise of a civil liberty in only our smallest province. Protecting the liberties of Canadians anywhere in the country is thus a responsibility for Canadians everywhere in the country.

We live in a world where, in many countries, civil liberties are extremely restricted or non-existent. To diminish our nation's capacity to hold other countries to account is to deprive the world of a champion for liberty, which it so sorely needs.

• (1410)

The unwarranted restrictions on civil liberties that we have tolerated in our past, usually to the detriment of specific communities of citizens, speak to the vigilance that is required to protect all our civil liberties for everyone in the present.

Our liberties and our responsibilities go hand in hand. Protecting them is one of our greatest responsibilities for ourselves and for future generations. They are a prerequisite for a tolerant, pluralistic, multicultural society. They are an essential

component of human dignity, social cohesion and respect for our fellow citizens. They must be protected and promoted whenever they are under threat.

THE LATE FRANÇOIS L'HEUREUX, Q.C.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a dear friend and a pillar of the community in Montreal who passed away this past April 4 — a great human was taken away from us way too early. Our colleague Senator Loffreda and I had the pleasure of first meeting François L'Heureux, a highly respected corporate lawyer and also a highly respected member of the federal Liberal Party more than a decade ago. As you can imagine, we often joked about the fact that we most certainly did not see eye to eye on our choice of political parties. Yet, it is critical to remember that while we as individuals held opposing views about the politics of our great nation, we were able to look beyond partisanship, as we all should when gauging a person's character and value as a human being.

Colleagues, I have spoken in the Senate many times about autism and its impact on Canadian families. I have spoken in particular about a wonderful organization in Montreal that caters to the autism community, the Giant Steps Autism Centre and school. It is through this involvement that I got to know François L'Heureux as a lawyer and leader, but more so as a human being, family man, activist and philanthropist. François served on the board of directors of Giant Steps for over 20 years — the last decade as vice-president.

A highly regarded autism activist in Quebec with friends and colleagues from coast to coast to coast, François was very dedicated to his lovely wife, Marie Brouillet, and his two sons, Philippe and Marc, both of whom are autistic and attended Giant Steps. With his sons serving as his inspiration, my good friend served as a tireless advocate, not only for the program at Giant Steps but also for a more open and inclusive society, believing passionately in the principle of neurodiversity and the value that every person inherently has to offer.

Working closely and indeed tirelessly with the dynamic team at Giant Steps, François L'Heureux was instrumental not only in helping to guide the school over the years through his volunteerism but also in developing the new Giant Steps Autism Centre, a visionary \$51.4-million project currently under construction that will be completed in approximately a year.

While this project is, of course, based upon the efforts of a large and coordinated team, the role played by François at Giant Steps was invaluable, and this is most definitely recognized by the Giant Steps community. I have had the privilege not only of calling François L'Heureux my friend but of hearing him speak passionately about Giant Steps and, more importantly, his two beautiful sons and what they meant to him.

He also spoke with deep admiration about the team at the school, what it meant to his family's success and happiness and what the new centre would mean to so many others. While François did not have the opportunity to witness the project being completed in person, his is a legacy to be proud of. It is my sincerest hope that from heaven itself my friend is watching the

project he cared about so deeply as it is completed and, more importantly, help the lives of his sons and so many other Canadians.

I would like to extend my deepest condolences to his friends and family. A great Canadian is lost — a great Quebecer and Montrealer. May he rest in peace.

NATIONAL SOIL CONSERVATION WEEK

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I have risen on a number of occasions in this chamber and in the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to speak of the importance of soil health. Today I would like to highlight National Soil Conservation Week, which was held from April 17 to 23 this year.

Each year, the Soil Conservation Council of Canada, or SCCC, leads National Soil Conservation Week during the third week of April. This week-long event is a perfect opportunity to highlight the importance of soil health and soil science to Canada's economy, environment and future.

As you well know, I have long advocated for a soil health study at our Agriculture and Forestry Committee. During the last sitting week, I was pleased to give notice of an order of reference on such a study, and in fact it was passed in this chamber yesterday evening. I'm very much looking forward to the committee undertaking this study, and I'm hopeful that it will connect with Canadians from all walks of life by introducing soil health through a variety of lenses, including that of food security, environmental conservation and carbon sequestration, among others.

At this time, I would also like to give a shout-out to Jim Tokarchuk of the Soil Conservation Council of Canada and Glenn Munroe of the Compost Council of Canada, as well as the Metcalf Foundation, for their work to develop A Roadmap for Optimizing Carbon Sequestration in Canada's Managed Soils, which was released earlier this month.

It is clear that improving soil health is not a one-size-fits-all endeavour across Canada's varied landscape. However, it is also clear that soil organic carbon is considered the key indicator of healthy, productive and resilient soils. I am delighted to see this road map prioritized, increasing knowledge of how carbon moves into soils and what Canadians can do to keep it there.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the development of the road map for all their hard work to strengthen the health of Canadian soils as well as the team at the Soil Conservation Council of Canada for their continued dedication to soil health.

I'm certain that the road map will play an important part in ensuring the long-term viability of our country's soils and in guiding the future decisions of farmers and governments at all levels.

Honourable senators, as we also recently celebrated Earth Day, I encourage you to consider the important role that soil health plays in our environment, the future of this country and,

inevitably, the world. It's intrinsically linked to the health of its ecosystem, which itself hinges on soil health. *Meegwetch*, thank you.

[*Translation*]

THE LATE GUY LAFLEUR, O.C.

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to pay tribute to the incomparable Guy Lafleur, his talent, his passion and his desire to do good.

Guy left us on April 22 at the age of 70. His on-ice exploits are well known. As the first draft pick in 1971, Guy proudly donned the Canadiens' blue, white and red jersey upon entering the National Hockey League. Over the course of a 17-year career, he won five Stanley Cups with the Canadiens. In 1988, he was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. Guy was without a doubt one of the best hockey players of all time.

Guy's achievements off the ice are also well known. Up until his death last week, Guy was a community leader, especially in Montreal and across Quebec. Following his retirement in 1991, Guy always made himself available to our young people and hockey fans. He leaves behind a proud history of devotion to his peers, his fans and his sport.

Canadiens owner Geoff Molson was absolutely right when he said:

Guy Lafleur had an exceptional career and always remained simple, accessible, and close to the Habs and hockey fans in Quebec, Canada and around the world. Throughout his career, he allowed us to experience great moments of collective pride.

On a more personal note, I had the privilege of spending time with Guy on several occasions over the years. I remember one moment in particular, several years ago. I had just landed a new position at RBC. The bank had given me an important mandate. I was a little nervous about the challenge ahead. At a dinner party, I was talking to Guy about it. He stressed the importance of never ever doubting your abilities and then shared moments in his career when he successfully overcame challenges. That was exactly the encouragement I needed. Thank you, Guy.

That was Guy Lafleur: encouraging, sincere and genuine.

Honourable senators, tributes to number 10 have been pouring in since his passing last week. Guy was an exceptional athlete, but, more importantly, he was a man who thrilled a nation and whose legend will live on forever.

I offer my sincere condolences to his family, his loved ones and all those who are mourning his early passing and shouting out, "Guy! Guy! Guy!"

[Senator Black]

• (1420)

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Serge Ashini Goupil, Valérie Courtois, Michael Zelniker, Cathy Wilkinson, Nadine Gros-Louis and Anne Allard. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Audette.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

AUDITOR GENERAL

COMMISSIONER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT—SPRING 2022 REPORTS Tabled

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons (Spring 2022), pursuant to the *Auditor General Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. A-17, sbs. 23(5).

[*English*]

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO EXTEND HYBRID SITTINGS TO JUNE 30, 2022

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

That, notwithstanding any provisions of the Rules, previous order or usual practice, the provisions of the order of November 25, 2021, concerning hybrid sittings of the Senate and committees, and other matters, extended on March 31, 2022, have effect until the end of the day on June 30, 2022, subject to the following adjustments:

1. subparagraph 7(a) to (e) of the order of November 25, 2021, be replaced by the following:

“(a) when the Senate sits on a Monday, the sitting:

(i) start at 2 p.m.; and

(ii) adjourn at the earlier of the end of Government Business or midnight;

(b) when the Senate sits on a Tuesday, the sitting:

- (i) start at 2 p.m.; and
- (ii) adjourn at the later of the end of Government Business or 6 p.m.;
- (c) when the Senate sits on a Wednesday, the sitting:
 - (i) start at 2 p.m.; and
 - (ii) adjourn at the earlier of the end of Government Business or 4 p.m.;
- (d) when the Senate sits on a Thursday, the sitting:
 - (i) start at 2 p.m.; and
 - (ii) adjourn at the earlier of the end of business for the day or midnight; and
- (e) when the Senate sits on a Friday, the sitting:
 - (i) start at 9 a.m.; and
 - (ii) adjourn at the earlier of the end of Government Business or 4 p.m.;" and

2. the provisions of paragraphs 12 and 13 of the order of November 25, 2021, cease to have effect, so that the evening suspension be as provided for in rule 3-3(1), including on Mondays, and, consequently, if the Rules require that something take place at 8 p.m., it take place at the time provided for in the Rules; and

That the Senate recognize the need to work towards a return to a schedule of committee meetings reflecting Ottawa-based operations, and call upon the Committee of Selection to continue to work with the leaders and facilitators of all recognized parties and recognized parliamentary groups to advance this objective.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on December 7, 2021, Question Period will begin at the later of the end of Routine Proceedings or at 2:30 p.m.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-13(3), I would like to inform the Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate

will address the items in the following order: consideration of Motion No. 34, followed by Motion No. 1, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

BILL RESPECTING REGULATORY MODERNIZATION

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE CERTAIN COMMITTEES TO STUDY SUBJECT MATTER—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of April 26, 2022, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, previous order or usual practice, and without affecting progress in relation to Bill S-6, An Act respecting regulatory modernization:

1. the following committees be separately authorized to examine the subject matter of the following elements contained in Bill S-6:
 - (a) the Standing Senate Committee on Banking Trade and Commerce: those elements contained in Part 1;
 - (b) the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources: those elements contained in Parts 2 and 3;
 - (c) the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry: those elements contained in Parts 4, 5 and 6;
 - (d) the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans: those elements contained in Part 7;
 - (e) the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology: those elements contained in Part 8;
 - (f) the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade: those elements contained in Part 9; and
 - (g) the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications: those elements contained in Part 10;
2. each of the committees that are authorized to examine the subject matter of particular elements of Bill S-6 submit its final report to the Senate no later than May 30, 2022, and be authorized to deposit its report with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting; and
3. the committee to which Bill S-6 may be referred, if it is adopted at second reading, be authorized to take into consideration these reports during its study of the bill.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak briefly to Government Motion No. 34, which proposes a subject matter examination of Bill S-6 on regulatory modernization. Let me note that the motion before us is the result of consultations that were conducted with the leadership of all recognized parties and parliamentary groups in the Senate.

Colleagues, Bill S-6 is a broad, sweeping bill that covers immense tracts of regulatory terrain. It proposes to modify 29 acts through 46 amendments, and it applies to 12 government departments and agencies. Its scope is impressive. Naturally, we cannot burden a single committee with such a workload. The prudent course of action is to have the various sections of the bill examined by several Senate committees that can lend the necessary expertise to the study of the bill's legislative dimensions.

[*English*]

Colleagues, this is not simply a matter of managing the size of the bill; along with accounting for quantity, we must also ensure we are positioned to conduct studies of the highest quality. The bill's sponsor, Senator Woo, was right to define the scope of the amendments included in Bill S-6 as "both disparate and quite technical." In other words, Bill S-6 covers a wide spectrum of regulatory fixes, which require the subject matter expertise of several committees.

Let me provide you with a broad overview as to the participating committees and the specific parts of the bill they will be examining.

The Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce will focus on Part 1 of the bill entitled "Innovation, Science and Economic Development," where they will review amendments made to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Electricity and Gas Inspection Act, the Weights and Measures Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2018, No. 2.

The Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources will study Parts 2 and 3 of the bill. This includes studying the proposed changes to the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act, the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act.

As for Part 3, the committee will study the Canada Lands Surveyors Act, the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act and the Species at Risk Act.

During the study of Parts 4, 5 and 6, the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry will examine elements of the Agricultural Products Marketing Act and seven different acts pertaining to the Regulatory Measures Respecting Canadian Food Inspection Agency. In Part 6, the committee will examine the proposed changes to the Pest Control Products Act.

The Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans will study Part 7, which contains the proposed changes to the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the Fisheries Act. The Standing

Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology will attend to Part 8 and examine the proposed changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade will examine changes to the Customs Act. Finally, the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications will study Part 10 of Bill S-6, which proposes changes to the Canada Transportation Act.

• (1430)

All of these committees participating in the subject-matter study will have until Monday, May 30, to submit and table their respective reports to the Senate. This will ensure that the committees have the appropriate time to conduct their work, establish their findings and carry out the deliberations that will help inform the bill's legislative consideration as it progresses through the Senate.

[*Translation*]

Bill S-6, An Act respecting regulatory modernization, contains a range of practical, common-sense changes to address unnecessarily complicated, contradictory or outdated provisions that have been brought to our attention by Canadians and Canadian businesses. This legislation will help reduce the administrative burden on businesses, facilitate digital interactions with government and simplify regulatory processes by making them more consistent and coherent.

Again, I would like to echo the bill's sponsor, Senator Woo, who elegantly summed up the bill in his speech at second reading when he explained how the proposed changes will make Canada's federal regulatory system "more efficient and less burdensome, while maintaining protections for consumers, health, safety and the environment."

Honourable senators, by having several committees study the subject matter of Bill S-6, not only will we be able to give ourselves the time needed to study such a very far-reaching piece of legislation with all due rigour, but we will also be making optimal use of the Senate's resources.

In closing, I would like to thank the leaders for their collaboration in preparing this motion, and I want to thank in advance the committee chairs and committee members for their customary diligence and professionalism in studying their parts of the bill.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

(Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on December 7, 2021, to receive a Minister of the Crown, the Honourable Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, appeared before honourable senators during Question Period.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, we welcome today the Honourable Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development of Canada, to ask questions relating to her ministerial responsibilities. Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on December 7, 2021, senators do not need to stand. Questions are limited to one minute and responses to one-and-a-half minutes. The reading clerk will stand 10 seconds before the expiry of these times. Question Period will last one hour.

MINISTRY OF FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CABINET COMMITTEE ON CANADA AND THE WORLD

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Minister, welcome. My question concerns your responsibility as Chair of the Cabinet Committee on Canada and the World. I would hope your committee is seized with Putin's illegal war against Ukraine that began just over two months ago.

Yesterday, minister, your government announced a contract to buy eight armoured vehicles to be sent to Ukraine and delivered at some unknown date in the future. This paltry commitment shouldn't surprise anyone. After all, we have a government that thinks Canada is good at convening our allies to do more while we do the bare minimum.

Minister, Ukrainians are fighting for their lives and need as much help as possible right now. How could your cabinet committee and your government possibly think sending only eight armoured vehicles is sufficient?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you very much. It really is a delight to be at the Senate today. I'm glad that you've welcomed me here. I'm looking forward to answering, to the best of my ability, the questions you have.

Senator Plett, as you well know, as chair of the cabinet committee I obviously can't discuss cabinet deliberations. However, I think all members and all senators — all parliamentarians in Canada — have the same commitment to supporting the Ukrainian people in this unjustified, illegal, unprovoked and, quite frankly, barbaric and horrific war that Russia is waging on Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

As you will note, the materiel that we announced yesterday is in addition to the millions of dollars in military aid that we announced back in February of this year. It's in addition to the \$500 million in assistance that was announced in the budget. This is a continuation of the dedicated, unreserved support that the Government of Canada and the Canadian people are providing to the people of Ukraine. We remain extraordinarily committed not just to ensure that Canada is doing its part but also leading the world. Certainly, Minister Freeland, the Prime Minister, Minister Joly and Minister Anand have been galvanizing the free world to respond adequately and appropriately to this horrific aggression that we're seeing on the part of Russia in Ukraine.

Senator Plett: Thank you, minister. I see from where the Leader of the Government in the Senate is taking his speaking notes in not answering questions. I don't even think you touched it. Anyway, I will continue. Hopefully, you'll answer this one.

This past weekend, John Ivison reported in the *National Post* that our proposal to send hundreds of Canada's light armoured vehicles to Ukraine was rejected on the basis that Ukrainians don't have the parts or the training to operate them. As retired Vice-Admiral Mark Norman told John Ivison, "Send them the owners' manual. They'll figure it out."

Minister, we have hundreds of light armoured vehicles, some of which certainly could be on their way to Ukraine today. We could then order more from the manufacturer here in Canada to backfill those that we provide to Ukraine. Why is your cabinet committee and your government so unwilling to send our LAVs to help Ukraine?

Ms. Gould: Thank you again, Senator Plett, for the question. I would gently push back and say that I do think I answered the question. I'll do my best to answer this one. Of course I'm not the Minister of Defence, but I'm happy to respond as best I can.

One of the important things that our government has done is to respond to what Ukraine is asking of us, whether that be with regard to sanctions, humanitarian assistance or military assistance. We have provided many millions of dollars worth of military equipment to Ukraine, based on what the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Ukrainian government is asking for. We recognize that they are in the midst of a conflict right now, and we need to send the equipment that they need and that will be most useful to them.

Certainly, Minister Anand, the Chief of the Defence Staff and the entire Canadian Armed Forces are responding in kind based on the needs and requests of the Ukrainian armed forces and the Ukrainian government.

• (1440)

Canada has been a partner and a friend of Ukraine for a very, very long time, and we continue to work assiduously to meet the needs that they have and support the work and the fighting and the incredible valour that the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the Ukrainian people are demonstrating every single day.

POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

Hon. Rosemary Moodie: Welcome, Minister Gould. In my question today, I would like to focus on child poverty. You have the mandate, minister, for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the delivery of Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy. As you are currently reviewing income supports for low-income families and children, what opportunities do you see now to improve the supports for these families?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you very much, Senator Moodie, for the question. As the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, I take particularly seriously the question of child poverty and what we can do. I'm particularly proud to be part of a government that brought forward the Canada Child Benefit. We've seen over 300,000 Canadian children lifted out of poverty, and those results are incredible. Of course, there's still more work to do. There are a couple of initiatives that I'm particularly excited about. The first is the new dental care plan that we will be working on and bringing forward this year to provide dental care for children under 12. I hope that we can all agree that no child in this country should go without dental care. They shouldn't have to go to the emergency room to get that dental care. So there is something that I'm quite excited about and I think will make a big difference.

The second one that I'm really keen to be working on, in partnership with Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau, the Minister of Agriculture, is the national school food policy. Canada is one of the only OECD countries that does not have a national school food policy. So I'm working with her alongside many stakeholders in the country, because we don't want any child in this country to go to school hungry. We know that when children don't have enough food in their bellies, they struggle to learn. They struggle to be successful —

The Hon. the Speaker: My apologies, minister, but your time is up.

[Translation]

HEALTH TRANSFERS—LANGUAGE PROVISIONS

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Good afternoon, minister. During my short experience as a senator, I have met with francophone groups across the country. They are nearly unanimous in calling for language provisions in the transfer payments. They talked about a serious lack of mental health care services in French and French-language child care deserts.

Your work on negotiations and provincial agreements on child care services is important, but why are there no language clauses to ensure that child care services in French are properly funded?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Ms. Gould: Thank you for the question. On the contrary, every agreement with the provinces and territories includes language clauses, precisely to ensure that the provinces and territories have enough child care spaces in French, in places where French is a minority language.

This initiative is a priority to our government. The information on these agreements is posted on our website. We could provide you with details on these provisions. This initiative is very important to our government and especially important for ensuring the continuity of French and access to child care services in a person's first language.

[English]

MEDICAL EXPENSES AND PARENTAL LEAVE

Hon. Jane Cordy: Minister Gould, welcome to the Senate of Canada. Thank you for being with us today. My question is a follow-up to the question that I raised in this chamber to Senator Gold on February 10. During the last election, this government had committed to provide 15 weeks of adoptive leave for parents. However, for families built through surrogacy in certain provinces there is no adoption process. The names of the parents who use surrogates go directly on the birth certificate.

Could you provide us with the details on how the government intends to support all families built through surrogacy, given that different provinces and territories treat the surrogacy process differently, particularly in provinces where parents are not adopting their children but, rather, have their names directly on the birth certificate?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Certainly. Thank you very much for raising this issue, senator. I'm not the minister responsible specifically for this policy — that's Minister Qualtrough — but I know that she is engaging right now on what a leave policy will look like for families who adopt as well as what it means for surrogacy. I know she's engaging in consultations and has had several consultations. As you mentioned, sometimes these things are complicated because different provinces and territories have different policies. But I know this is something that she is looking at, and I would be happy to get more information for you and get it to you. As I said, I'm not the minister directly responsible, but I know that Minister Qualtrough is engaged on this matter.

NATIONAL CHILD CARE PROGRAM

Hon. Robert Black: Minister Gould, thanks very much for appearing in the Red Chamber today.

As you may know, I utilize my position as senator to advocate on behalf of the agriculture industry, rural communities and youth. To that effect, I would like to thank your government for the work it has done to support youth, especially throughout the pandemic, and also take this opportunity to commend your government on its national child care program. It's a critical social and economic reform for families from coast to coast to coast.

That being said, child care is especially hard to find in rural, remote and northern communities, due in part to low population density, large geographic distances and many parents working non-standard schedules.

In fact, many services, from child care to health care to transportation and many other social services are difficult to come by in rural communities. The disparity between urban and rural Canadians has become even more evident and pronounced. According to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, almost 20% of our population lives in rural, remote, Indigenous, coastal and northern communities, and these communities contribute 30% of Canada's economic output.

Minister, could you advise what your government will do to ensure that Canadians living in rural, remote and northern communities are not left behind in the efforts to provide affordable and accessible child care?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Absolutely, Senator Black. Thank you so much for raising the question, because this is something that is really important. This cannot be an urban/rural distinction. We have to ensure that child care is available right across the country.

This is a very small example but one I'm excited about in Grayson, Saskatchewan. There is a new public child care facility that is going to be opened in the fall, and that has been funded through the Canada-wide early learning child care agreement with the Government of Saskatchewan. We're working very closely with provinces and territories to ensure that they're reaching into those spaces where there is an absence of child care and working with potential operators to open those spaces.

I mention this one because it's one that's coming online and it's going to serve a community that never had child care access before. When it comes to working in remote and northern communities, we have specific engagements and commitments from provinces and territories to make sure that this really is reaching right across the country. There are specific infrastructure challenges in more remote and northern communities. So I'm really keen to dig into the \$625-million infrastructure fund that we received in the last budget and see how we can target that specifically to meet those needs.

I heard particularly from the territories about the high costs of infrastructure. So we're going to work very closely with them to meet those demands. Thank you for raising it.

PASSPORT SERVICES

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Minister Gould, there are many stories in the media lately of Canadians waiting long hours in massive lineups for passport services. Service Canada is currently experiencing what it calls an "unprecedented surge" in passport applications, receiving more than 200,000 calls per day for passport requests, about 40 times higher than the average daily requests it received before the pandemic.

Minister, yesterday in the other place you said that you've hired 500 additional passport officers. Are these new staff working today or are they in the process of being hired? Where are they located? Are they on-site in Service Canada locations or working from home?

• (1450)

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you, Senator Martin. It's a really excellent question. It's a combination. Some of them will be in passport processing centres, for example in Mississauga and Gatineau where the majority of mailed-in passports are processed. Some of them will be in passport offices in the 35 locations across the country. Some of them will be in the 303 Service Canada centres that can now receive passports.

There is certainly an unprecedented surge in demand as Canadians are beginning to travel again after the pandemic and have realized that throughout that time their passport has expired. We do encourage Canadians that if travel is urgent — that's 25 days or less — go to a passport office. If it's not urgent — that means 25 days or more — please go to one of the 303 Service Canada centres across the country. They can do the intake in person.

I also want to assure you and all Canadians that we are exploring every option to make this smoother because we know this is a difficult and frustrating experience. We're working really hard at Service Canada to make sure we can provide a smoother service to Canadians.

[Translation]

FORCED ADOPTIONS

Hon. Chantal Petitclerc: Thank you, minister, for being with us today.

[English]

My question brings us back to the cruel practice of forced adoptions of children of unmarried mothers that was made possible between 1945 and 1971 with federal involvement and knowledge.

In 2018, you might remember, a Senate committee heard from those mothers, adoptees and stakeholders, and the Senate adopted the report, *The Shame Is Ours*. This report had some crucial recommendations, including that the federal government deliver a formal apology and make reparations including the provision of professional counselling for survivors.

Minister, I think we all agree that time is running out for these mothers whose lives have been irreversibly affected.

Would you agree with me that it is not acceptable that these women are still looking to obtain mental health supports for those impacted and adequate, specific training for mental health professionals?

[Translation]

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you for the question, senator. I appreciate all the work that was done on this study.

[English]

I read the report back in 2018, and I feel completely heartbroken. Since then, I actually became a mother myself and couldn't imagine what these women and children went through.

As you well know, this is complicated in Canada. The jurisdiction around adoptions is primarily provincial and territorial. However, the incredible testimony and bravery of the women and children — adult children now — who came forward during this time certainly must be recognized. I appreciate all the light that the Senate has shone on this issue, and I think we need to continue to shine this light because it's something that is a dark stain here in Canada.

Since that time, of course, we are not allowed to do forced adoptions thankfully, and we must continue to ensure that we're supporting women and children as we move forward. I really appreciate you raising the issue. It's certainly a difficult one.

[Translation]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: Welcome, minister.

Violence against women has been steadily rising for many years. In 2021 alone, 173 femicides were reported, and half of them involved intimate partner violence. That means 13 more women were murdered in Canada in 2021 than in 2020. Despite this alarming statistic, you have not proposed any measures, unlike Quebec, which recently adopted electronic bracelets, among other measures.

Can you tell me, minister, what concrete action you have taken since the beginning of your mandate that would have saved the lives of these women who were murdered in Canada?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you for your question, senator.

As you know, I'm the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. This is a question for the Minister for Women and Gender Equality.

Nevertheless, our government implemented Canada's first strategy to end gender-based violence early in its mandate. We reinvested in Status of Women Canada after the Conservatives slashed its budget when they were in power. We are working hard on providing shelter for victims of family and intimate partner violence, another area in which the Conservatives made cuts. It is really a shame they did that.

I think our government has done a lot of work on this. There is still much to be done, but we are there for women who are victims and survivors of violence.

[Senator Petitcherc]

[English]

NATIONAL COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Hon. Marty Deacon: My question concerns the matter of a child and youth commissioner. It's been 15 years since the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights asked the government of the day to establish a commissioner for children and youth, but we are still without one.

In the last Parliament, my colleague Senator Moodie introduced legislation that would have created one, but it died on the Order Paper when the election was called.

As a reminder, a 2020 UNICEF Report Card ranked Canada thirtieth out of thirty-eight rich countries in terms of child well-being. Compounding matters is two years of a pandemic that has taken a toll on absolutely everyone, but especially young people.

Moving forward, I think it would be wise to have more tools to support our young Canadians. My question is: Does the government see the utility of a child and youth commissioner? If so, would it support legislation to that end? Thank you.

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you very much, senator, for the question. I am always impressed by the level of advocacy by senators for children and youth in our country. I want to thank you for that. I certainly appreciate it.

I would be happy to have further conversations on this issue. I certainly welcome that discussion.

I think that for too long we have not supported our children in Canada the way that we should be. I'm very pleased, as I mentioned, that in 2015 we brought in the Canada Child Benefit, which we know, in fact, was an enormous improvement when it comes to child welfare in this country. There's more work to do.

I'm extremely excited about what early learning and child care will enable for our children moving into the future. I'm really proud of the work that Canada has done in children's rights, not just here in Canada but right around the world.

Certainly, we have much to be proud of, but we have much to continue to work on. I look forward to continuing this conversation with yourself and others who are interested in having it.

FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS

Hon. Leo Housakos: Minister, earlier this month the President of the Treasury Board Mona Fortier stated that where the federal public service is concerned, the hybrid work model is here to stay. This decision appears to have been taken by your government without conducting any review into the efficiency and long-term impacts of public servants working from home these past two years, including efficiency such as the service provided to the Canadians and impacts including on the downtown businesses right here in Ottawa that are reliant on government offices being occupied.

While your government says it is conducting a review now, what will be the focus of that study? Will it focus on cost savings? As the Minister of Service Canada, will you confirm it will also look at the level of overall service — or lack thereof — provided to Canadians for things like, for example, passports or the enormous backlog that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is facing? We all know in this country there is a huge shortage of labour.

Will it also look at the devastating effect it will have on the downtown Ottawa business sector? And why wouldn't that study have been completed prior to making any such decision?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Certainly. Thank you, Senator Housakos, for the question.

I think that one of the things that we've actually learned throughout the pandemic is that governments, like many workplaces around the country, can and must modernize. In fact, it's not just government. Many private sector businesses are also looking at the efficiencies that have been achieved by hybrid workplaces, and some in the private sector have decided that they are not going back to the office at all. It completely depends upon what area of work we're talking about.

• (1500)

Certainly, if it is an in-person service, if it's front-line staff then, yes, there will be a requirement to go back to the office or to those front lines. But if it is something that is a back-end function, on occasion that can be more efficient from home as opposed to in an office. All of these things are going to be looked at.

I think one of the important things is that the Government of Canada has to modernize. Unfortunately, for decades, we didn't do that modernization, and the pandemic forced us to. One of the great things that Service Canada has been able to achieve is e-services, where we can serve clients over the phone or online in ways that we haven't done before, and that has shifted a lot of the work that has been done and has resulted in faster processing times for EI, Social Insurance Numbers, OAS, CPP, GIS, et cetera. But there are other things that require in-person services, so we need to get that balance right, and that's absolutely something that we're looking at.

At the end of the day, the number one focus is on service to Canadians and how we can better deliver it to Canadian citizens, and that is exactly what we're looking at.

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Hon. Diane Bellemare: Welcome, minister. Canada's Official Poverty Dashboard of Indicators includes an indicator for youth, specifically the percentage of Canadians aged 15 to 24 who are not in employment, education or training. This indicator, known as NEET, sits at 11.4% in Canada, which is high, considering there is a labour shortage.

According to data from a recent poll I commissioned with Angus Reid, 64% of young people would support federal funding for a job pathway program that would be managed by the provinces. The European Union funds those types of programs through the reinforced Youth Guarantee, to reduce the NEET.

As the minister responsible for the poverty reduction strategy, would you be prepared to advocate for such a strategy to your colleagues? Also, how do you propose addressing this issue?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you for the question, Senator Bellemare. I think I will have to do more research on this topic, since this is the first time I've heard about this initiative.

However, I think that what's important is to understand why young people are in this situation. We also need to identify the most appropriate strategies here in Canada to help them and to support their ambitions.

I thank you for raising this issue, but I will have to do more research on the subject.

[English]

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE AGREEMENTS

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Welcome, Minister Gould. I'm speaking as the senator for Nunavut about the commitment that your government has made to invest \$30 billion in Budget 2022 over the next five years to "build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system in collaboration with provinces, territories, and Indigenous partners."

Looking at our 85% Inuit population, whose first language is Inuktitut in Nunavut, I would like to ask you whether this funding includes capacity development such as ECE training programs for bilingual Indigenous-language speakers so that there are workers equipped to deliver culturally appropriate care for children, as set out in your mandate letter.

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you, senator, for your question. I was delighted to be able to sign the agreement with Nunavut. One of the things that I found particularly heartwarming and that generated a lot of optimism for me, but also, I think, for the Government of Nunavut, was the fact that Inuktitut will be widely available within ELCC moving forward. The objective is to make sure that early learning and child care spaces in Nunavut are culturally relevant, linguistically appropriate and very much include Inuit culture, heritage, customs and traditions within the child care setting.

Of course, within that agreement there is funding for training of ECEs. I'm not sure whether there's a specific language-training component, but we can look into that and get back to you. But I know it is a priority for the Government of Nunavut, and we are eager, keen and excited to support them in that work. There are a lot of opportunities and possibilities with the work that we're going to be doing in Nunavut.

[Translation]

CABINET COMMITTEE ON CANADA AND THE WORLD

Hon. Claude Carignan: I would like to ask you about your role as Chair of the Cabinet Committee on Canada and the World and your work on that committee with respect to Canada's response to Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

Several weeks ago, President Zelenskyy reportedly asked Prime Minister Trudeau to send Harpoon anti-ship missile systems to Ukraine. Most of the systems belonging to the Canadian Navy are currently in storage. Despite this direct request from the Ukrainian president, as his country struggles to survive, your government has not yet been able to provide these Harpoon missiles.

We learned yesterday that the government has decided to send only eight armoured vehicles and four missile launchers to try and fight one of the largest armies in the world. Why has the government not responded to President Zelenskyy's requests?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you for the question. As I mentioned, I am not the defence minister or the foreign affairs minister. However, as I already told your honourable colleagues, Canada is there for Ukraine. We are working directly with the authorities of that country to meet their needs and respond to their requests.

It is important to mention that it is not just Canada that is addressing their requests, but more or less all of NATO and all countries. We must also coordinate everything with all our allies to meet the needs and requests of Ukrainians. Canada is there for Ukraine, and it is providing military equipment and humanitarian aid, as well as financial assistance, so that Ukraine can pay its armed forces and public services now and rebuild when the time comes.

So, yes, Canada is there for Ukraine, and we continue to analyze what we can send to help them in this struggle that is so important to everyone.

[English]

GUARANTEED LIVABLE INCOME

Hon. Kim Pate: Thank you, Minister Gould, for joining us, and thank you to you and your colleagues for all the work you are doing. It is well appreciated.

As you know, \$1 invested in children, including measures like the Canada Child Benefit, results in up to \$9 of saved future health, social and legal services system costs. Guaranteed basic livable income programs for working-age adults and their families demonstrate similar benefits: for example, an 8.5% reduction in hospitalizations in the province of Manitoba alone during its pilot project. This is one reason provinces including P.E.I. and Newfoundland and Labrador have expressed interest in partnering with the federal government to implement guaranteed livable basic income initiatives.

Could you please advise us on your progress and what steps the government has taken to collaborate with these provinces around the whole issue of basic income and on any other meetings or negotiations currently under way to assess the feasibility of the initiatives that they are proposing?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Well, thank you, Senator Pate. I know this is a particular passion of yours, and I know how engaged you have been on this particular issue, so thank you for all of your work leading here in convening stakeholders.

As you mentioned, Canada essentially has a livable income for children as well as for seniors, and we have seen remarkable results. It was quite disappointing when the Ontario government under the current premier cancelled the basic income pilots that were taking place near my home community, in Hamilton. I'm from Burlington. I think that would have provided a great modern example for us to draw a lot of information and knowledge from. The pilots that occurred in Dauphin, Manitoba happened, I believe, in the 1970s, and so it would have been good to have a bit more updated information off of which we could draw and learn from.

• (1510)

That being said, I think the Government of Canada has made some important strides when it comes to improving income supports. Particularly I'm thinking about the Canada Workers Benefit, but other initiatives as well.

Of course, additional investments in things like housing, dental care, early learning and child care help to alleviate some of the high costs of living, but we know that there's still more work that needs to be done, and I know that you are leading some of this important work, convening and research, and I look forward to carrying on that conversation and learning from the results of that work.

CANADA CHILD BENEFIT

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Minister Gould, welcome to the Senate. Since its inception, the Canada Child Benefit has lifted about 300,000 children out of poverty and has helped reduce child poverty by 40% from 2013 to 2017. What I'm concerned about is the silly policies that we're hearing during the debate for the leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada. How can good government policy like this be insulated against the partisan whims of an unlikely future Conservative government?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Gosh, I guess the best thing is to just keep electing Liberal governments. That's probably the best way to go about it.

But certainly, I'm not sure how we do that other than the fact that this is a policy that has helped 9 out of 10 Canadian families. It would be quite cruel, I think, for a future Conservative government to hurt Canadian families in such a big way if they were to get rid of the Canada Child Benefit.

Certainly, we saw under the Harper government that they would rather send cheques to millionaires than send meaningful contributions to lower-income families. We reversed that. That was the right thing to do. Of course, I'm quite concerned about what we're hearing out of some Conservative leadership candidates about getting rid of the early learning and child care agreements that we have.

Again, across the country we're talking about thousands of dollars in savings for families, which is not just important for the affordability and ability to pay for things that families need, but it is also important for future economic growth, because if you can have two parents in the workforce, that makes a big difference in the lives and opportunities of families.

So I guess my best advice would be just to make sure we keep electing Liberals.

NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD POLICY

Hon. Robert Black: Minister Gould, I would like to bring attention to the agriculture sector for my next question. According to your mandate letter, you have been asked to work with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, with the provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous partners and stakeholders to develop a national school food policy.

I'm no stranger to the importance of food. Just yesterday I spoke to my Bill S-227 regarding food day in Canada. I highlighted that food is at the heart of our communities and that one positive thing that has emerged from this pandemic is that many Canadians have become more interested in learning about their food.

I believe a national school food policy would be a step in the right direction, not only to ensuring that youth become more educated in where their food comes from, but also in ensuring that no child goes to school hungry.

As I have previously highlighted in this chamber, the COVID-19 pandemic further threatened families already at risk of food insecurity. In fact, statistics show that one in seven Canadians have experienced food insecurity during the pandemic.

Minister, I'm sure you agree that no Canadian should face these challenges. It is my understanding that Canada remains the only G7 country without a national school meal program. With that in mind, minister, could you please provide an update on the national school food policy and when we can expect it?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Certainly. Thank you, Senator Black, and maybe I will just use this opportunity to provide an invitation to any senator who would like to have a further discussion on the national school food policy, because I would be very open to hearing your thoughts and advice as we work to build this.

I couldn't agree with you more in the sense that I think this is absolutely vital, and there is a real opportunity to make it holistic and comprehensive in the way that you are describing in that it's

first about providing healthy, nutritious meals to children from coast to coast to coast, which is imperative for their well-being, their learning outcomes and their future development.

However, there is also an opportunity to build an educational component of local food, agriculture and sustainability into that. There is a real opportunity to do something that will have a really meaningful impact in our country and also support local farmers as well and work with local producers in how we can get that local produce, that local food into the school system and have that engagement about where food comes from, why it is important and how to build a healthy meal.

I'm excited, and anyone who would like to contribute to that discussion, perhaps we can set up a time to have a more formal engagement.

NATIONAL CHILD CARE PROGRAM

Hon. Elizabeth Marshall: Welcome to the Senate of Canada, minister.

Last year in Budget 2021, the government announced its \$30 billion child care plan, which has committed to creating 250,000 child care spaces and 40,000 child care positions for a five-year period ending March 31, 2026. However, there's no information available indicating how many of these child care spaces and child care positions will be created in each of the five years leading up to 2026.

Given the significance of the \$30 billion cost of the program and the need to monitor the implementation of the new child care program, when will you be releasing your plan indicating how many child care spaces and child care positions will be created each year leading up to 2026?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: It is a wonderful question, so thank you very much for asking it. In fact, this information is generally available on the Government of Canada's website.

We have published almost all of the bilateral agreements that we've signed with the provinces and territories, as well as their accompanying action plans, and it will be in the action plan where you will be able to track how many spaces each province and territory has committed to creating each year.

We did two-year action plans so that we could assess, reevaluate and pivot as needed. For example, Alberta has committed to create 10,000 spaces this calendar year, so by the end of 2022.

We will be ensuring that we're tracking the progress in each of these agreements.

I'm speaking about Alberta because I was just there and we were talking about it so it is fresh in my mind, but that would be the case for each province and territory. They will have specific goals and objectives and targets for each year. So for example, in Ontario, they've committed to creating an additional 86,000 spaces over the next five years, 23,000 of those within the first two years. So each province and territory has milestones and

objectives, and those are and will be — if they are not already, because they are just going through the translation process — up on the website and publicly available.

[*Translation*]

SUPPORT FOR CANADIAN ARTISTS

Hon. René Cormier: Good afternoon, minister. Welcome to the Senate.

In 2020, the National Advisory Council on Poverty released its first report, in which it recommended that the Government of Canada do the following:

... build on its COVID-19 response and strengthen existing strategies, programs and policies to ensure a coordinated robust social safety net in Canada by collectively providing income support that is at least at the level of Canada's Official Poverty Line.

Minister, more than ever before, the pandemic made artists' financial insecurity and poverty abundantly clear, but unfortunately artists were struggling long before the pandemic hit. According to 2016 data, the median income of an artist in Canada was about \$24,300. I'm sure you agree that this is unacceptable, and something has to change.

How will the federal government act on the National Advisory Council on Poverty's recommendations? Will it provide artists and cultural workers with a better social safety net in the short, medium and long terms?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you for that excellent question.

Again, it's not necessarily my department that handles such matters, but I know that my colleague, Minister Qualtrough, is holding consultations on employment insurance with a view to making it less complicated and easier for Canadians to access.

• (1520)

I know that she is also working with the provinces and territories on issues pertaining to persons living with disabilities. As you mentioned, this is a complex benefits system that affects all Canadians.

With respect to artists, in particular, I know that my colleague, the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, is currently working with various cultural groups to see what opportunities exist to support Canadian artists in all art forms.

We are working to support Canadian artists, because culture is very important in Canada.

[Ms. Gould]

CHILD CARE LEGISLATION

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Welcome to the Senate, minister.

In the mandate letter you received from the Prime Minister, you are asked to introduce, and I quote:

... federal child care legislation to strengthen and protect a high-quality Canada-wide child care system.

Could you tell us what stage that project is at? Also, given that education and child care are essentially under provincial jurisdiction, what steps have been taken with the provinces to avoid a jurisdictional dispute?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you for the question, senator.

The issue of jurisdiction is one of the most important in our system of government in Canada and the provinces.

It is a topic we are currently discussing with the provinces and territories. We held consultations with them and have received their responses.

The important thing, and what motivates me on this issue, is not necessarily that the legislative authority gives instructions to the provinces and territories, but that it protects the federal investment.

During the last election, we heard Mr. O'Toole say that he would cancel the child care agreements with the provinces and territories. We want to make that more difficult for a potential future Conservative government to do.

The program is being well received by the provinces and territories. Implementing this system is a major investment; it is a big job at the national level. It is a project that offers a lot of possibilities, but we must do whatever we can to move forward and ensure that a potential future Conservative government can never cancel this agreement.

[*English*]

CANNABIS EDIBLES

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Minister, thank you for being with us today. Minister, an Ontario hospitals study published in January shows monthly emergency room visits by children under the age of 10 from cannabis poisoning have been nine times higher since your government's legalization of cannabis. About a third of these children required hospitalization.

The lead author of the study stated: one, edibles appear to be a key factor; two, the current approach to preventing this increase has not met its goal; and, three, we need better protection for our children. As an example, Quebec prohibits the sale of edible cannabis products in the form of candies, desserts and chocolate.

Minister, as the minister responsible for children, what steps will you and your government take to further restrict the appearance, content and taste of edibles to better protect our children?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you for the question. It is a very important one and one that I'm certainly concerned about.

We have a couple of things that we need to do. The first one is to work more closely with provinces and territories in terms of restricting the sale of products that could be closely identified with candy or other things that children may have access to. We also need to do better at educating parents and adults who are consuming cannabis products to make sure that they store them in a place that is far out of reach from children and that they are doing their part to put them away, much as they would with alcohol products that they also have in their homes.

It is important for us to continue to do that educational piece, because it is really important. We certainly don't want to see children going to emergency rooms because they have accidentally consumed these products.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE AGREEMENTS

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Minister, my second question relates directly to the first and is about training. Your mandate letter is clear that subsidized child care spots are regulated. It tasks you with establishing nationwide standards. This would require access to appropriate daycare facilities and an established system of oversight with qualified inspectors to ensure that everything from curriculum, sanitation, privacy, snacks and lunches are adhered to.

In Nunavut, we face many barriers in meeting such standards due to a lack of infrastructure, the high cost of food and, as I said, a lack of trained individuals. Will the forthcoming \$30-billion investment, as announced in Budget 2022, address those kinds of deficits as well?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Yes, thank you, Senator Patterson. We're working very closely with Nunavut on addressing some of those issues that you raised.

It is a great example of a partnership between the territorial government and the federal government with regard to training and standards. In fact, in Nunavut, one of the challenges — and you raised it — is with regard to infrastructure. It is just having suitable locations in which to offer child care services.

The \$625 million announced in this year's budget is really concentrated on infrastructure. The Canada-wide agreement covers those other areas that you mentioned, and that is already part of the plan. But some heavy lifting will be needed to actually find physical space, create physical space or to co-locate in an appropriate area that is safe, has a kitchen facility and has the needed supports for child care facilities.

Part of what I will be working on with this additional money is how to best meet some of those needs and areas, particularly in a territory like Nunavut where the infrastructure costs are much greater than they might be in a more urban context, for example.

I am very happy to engage with you further on this item, but that \$625 million is very specific to infrastructure, and the Canada-wide plan covers those other areas that you mentioned.

MENSTRUAL EQUITY FUND

Hon. Pat Duncan: Thank you, Minister Gould, for your appearance here today.

Budget 2022 commits \$25 million over two years for the pilot project Menstrual Equity Fund to make menstrual products available to those in need. In Scotland, after several pilot projects and extensive consultation, they've adopted the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act, ensuring universal free and discreet access to period products. It's not yet fully implemented, and consultation is ongoing. I note that the Period Products in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020 require the provision of products in public schools.

The budget funding is under the lead of the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth. With an all-of-government approach and your responsibility for families, children and social development, are you actively involved in the design and implementation of the Menstrual Equity Fund with Minister Ien? Can you provide any details on the fund's design? Thank you.

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you, senator. Unfortunately, I'm not actively involved in the design of this, but I am really excited about it because I think it's really important and necessary.

In my home community of Burlington, for example, there are a couple of young women who got together and convinced the City of Burlington to provide free menstrual hygiene products in all city facilities. We've done this similarly at the federal level, so the federal government has to provide free menstrual hygiene products in all of their facilities. I'm excited about what this means in a broader context and how we can ensure that we are ending period poverty and making sure that women, girls and those who are menstruating have access to dignified menstrual hygiene products and can do so in a way that is discreet and appropriate.

• (1530)

I would be keen to learn more about the Scottish experience and learn any lessons. I am happy to share those ideas with Minister Ien, who I know is very motivated on this initiative as well.

ART AND HEALTH

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Madam Minister, welcome.

My question is in regard to creative ways of assisting families during personal traumas, particularly serious illnesses. Montreal, to me, is a leader, with doctors prescribing museum visits to help, particularly with mental illness. Special events like B  be Symphonique with the Orchestre symphonique de Montr  al are impressive. That light and sound presentation truly has positive effects.

Do you have plans to assist similar events in other cities to help families in need in order to stimulate imaginations and special moments of family connection?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: Thank you, senator. What a wonderful idea. I feel as though you must have been talking with Minister Bennett, who talks about when she was a family physician and would often prescribe moments of family closeness to her patients, or perhaps going to the movies or something like that.

I am working closely with Minister Bennett and providing some input into the mental health strategy that we're putting forward. My particular focus is children's mental health. I recently met with the Canadian Mental Health Association and spoke specifically about the mental health of children and youth.

As you rightly point out, there are many different ways to support this: our more clinical interventions or our interventions that provide that pastime and the ability to do different things that may provoke imagination and creativity. Certainly, I will look more into that, knowing we need to support the diverse and broad array of mental health challenges that children, in particular, are experiencing right now.

BENEFITS DELIVERY MODERNIZATION

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: Thank you, minister, for being with us today.

Last year, the federal budget included \$648 million over seven years to upgrade Service Canada's information technology system to modernize the delivery of benefits, such as Employment Insurance. At the time, your colleague Minister Qualtrough stated that the IT system needed to be upgraded before major changes to the IT system could take effect. As you know, she's still consulting on those changes.

As the minister responsible for Service Canada, could you tell us the following: What is the current status of the work to upgrade Service Canada's IT system to modernize EI delivery, how much of the \$648 million over the seven years that was allocated in Budget 2021 for benefit delivery modernization has been expended to date and when is that work scheduled to be completed?

Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development: That is an excellent question; it is one that is incredibly important.

The sad joke at Service Canada is that the Old Age Security system is almost eligible for OAS itself. There have been decades of underinvestment by successive governments, and it is extraordinarily important that we make these important investments in modernizing the system.

I can tell you that work is already under way. It is important for us to build out the system before we can put EI on it. As you mentioned, Minister Qualtrough is very much engaged in that consultation process. We have one of the most complicated employment insurance programs in the world. There is a need to modernize and streamline it while we are, at the same time, modernizing our IT systems to meet the needs and demands of citizens in the 21st century.

So work is already under way in that process. I will have to get back to you with the specific number in terms of how much of that money has already been spent, but my office can follow up with you on that question. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the time for Question Period has expired. I'm sure all senators would like to join me in thanking Minister Gould for being with us today. Thank you, minister. We look forward to seeing you again.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

(For text of Delayed Answers, see Appendix.)

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson:

That the following Address be presented to Her Excellency the Governor General of Canada:

To Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Military Merit, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the Senate of Canada in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

[*Editor's Note: Senator Audette spoke in Indigenous languages.*]

Hon. Michèle Audette: Colleagues, I am honoured, excited and, of course, a little bit nervous to rise today to give my maiden speech in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

First, I would like to acknowledge the Anishinaabe nation and, of course, thank the Anishinaabe people for welcoming me on their territory and enabling me to continue my journey. *Kitchi meegwetch.*

I would also like to thank everyone who directly or indirectly helped make my childhood dream of becoming a senator come true. It has been a long time coming. At the time, this dream was fuelled by my anger and rage and a desire to change discriminatory laws. Now that the dream has become a reality, I see it as an opportunity to speak for those whose voices go unheard and to help them be part of a vibrant Canada.

I cannot name everyone or every important person who helped me achieve this dream, but please know that you are dear to me. I sincerely thank you.

I also want to say a very special thank you to two people, my mother and father. Thank you for your patience. Thank you also for your courage and your unwavering support. You have helped me all along the way.

My mother, Evelyne, is a great Innu woman — small, but great — and my father is the most beautiful Quebecer, obviously. It is also said in certain stories of the first peoples, that I was a little star in the sky and that I chose my parents. I swear that I do not regret it; I am proud of my choice.

My arrival in the land of the Atiku, the caribou, was not without its challenges. I was born in Labrador, after stopping a train travelling from Sept-Îles to Schefferville. A helicopter came to pick up my mother in the middle of this vast land. She was taken to Labrador. She told me that she already knew that I would be a handful. At such an early age, on that very train, I experienced segregation. Yes, up until 1989, there was a car for white people and a car for the "savages." That was the word used in those days, of course.

As the apple does not fall far from the tree, I joined Quebec Native Women as its president in 1998. I've continued the work of my mother, Evelyne, to defend the interests of First Nations women. My mother is also one of the co-founders of Quebec Native Women. She is supported by gentle warriors; they have come together to stand up for their rights, which were taken away from them by discriminatory laws, and to work on improving the living conditions of women and their families.

On the one hand, I've had to deal with segregation, and on the other hand I am criticized for being half Quebecer. Why should I have to choose? Why not bring together my Innu and Quebec sides and harness these rich woven identities I've been blessed with?

As Samian, an Anishinaabe artist I strongly encourage you to listen to, so eloquently said, "Growing up mixed in a world divided, I didn't choose sides, and on fusion I decided."

As a beader, I say that I chose to bead them together. Beading is a source of healing for me. Every bead represents a light and has its very own soul.

Today I will leave some beads for all of you. I sincerely hope you pick them up and that, together, we can reassemble or assemble them into a just, fair society that values every individual's diversity, language, culture, values and histories.

You may recall that on November 22, a date forever etched in my heart and in my memory, I stood before you with my Innu moccasins to remind me of my relationship to the land, to keep me connected to Mother Earth and, most importantly, to remind me where I come from.

• (1540)

I also wore a ribbon skirt, which was a gift from my daughter-in-law, for a march in honour of our sister Joyce Echaquan. This was also another reminder of my duty to remember. On my sweater I wore a beautiful beaded medallion depicting the women of spirit, our missing and murdered sisters, with a *nukum* holding our Senate pin. Her heart showed an openness to change, to ensure that the voices of marginalized and vulnerable people could be heard and resonate from coast to coast to coast. My medallion reflects my priorities of self-determination, justice and education. It was imperative for me to arrive here with my symbols, which are as important to me as the symbols we see in this chamber. They are a way for me to redefine our relationship, a relationship based on knowledge, recognition, healing and reconciliation.

There is a growing awakening, and people are beginning to react as unmarked graves are being found, confirming the presence of tiny lights, tiny human beings. All this is starting to hit home for people, as you can imagine. We will be forced to bear witness to these truths many times, perhaps too many times.

I want to commend all of those people, 10,500 of them, who dared to share their truth and allowed their pearls, their stories, to be translated into calls for justice, calls for action and, of course, recommendations. I will list three inquiries that have been conducted since 1991: the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and, of course, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, known as MMIWG.

All of these extensive reports have yielded over 10,000 pages of content and over 1,000 recommendations, calls to action and calls for justice.

Clearly, for someone standing in my moccasins, recommendations are no longer an option. We now need legal imperatives, accountability. What mechanisms are in place for monitoring and implementing these things? What are the steps to be taken and what progress has been made?

We have a responsibility to honour the truth of members, families and survivors and to ensure that human rights, health rights, cultural rights, education rights, and the rights to security and justice are respected. I am making it my duty to remind parliamentarians of the importance of implementing and following through on the calls for justice. They are all important, but in my opinion, it is important to focus first on an accountability and transparency mechanism, pursuant to call for justice 1.7 of the NIMMIWG, which called for the establishment of a National Indigenous and Human Rights Ombudsperson.

Reconciliation is practically on the lips of each and every one of us.

In the chamber, on one side we hear about the importance of the First Peoples, the founding languages and reconciliation. On the other side, I sometimes hear people say that everything began with the discoveries and the explorers, their colonial languages, what we call official languages, and with the passage of certain laws that perpetuated harm So, when the federal government takes major steps in its relationship with the governments of the First Peoples, in some regions we have to deal with disputes, as we do back home in Quebec.

This is the start of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. These languages are part of our strengths, they are the cultural fabric and identity of this vast country. To my mind, Indigenous languages are also official languages. Like thousands of people and like the Inuit people of Inuit Nunangat, I am proud that an Inuk woman, Her Excellency Mary May Simon, was appointed Governor General of Canada.

I will quote the Pauktuuit organization, as follows:

[*English*]

Having an Inuk Governor General is especially inspiring for our youth. It is also a meaningful step on the journey of reconciliation with Inuit. It also removes stereotypes held towards Indigenous women by mainstream society.

[*Translation*]

There is no doubt that First Peoples are resilient; we have survived and we are welcoming people.

We invited the people who are my half and your ancestors to come out of their boats. *Kapak! Kapak!* Quebec! Come out of your boats.

All of this should be taught in every school. Education must play a key role in closing the gap of ignorance and eliminating unconscious bias, racism and discrimination. It is important that we advocate for Joyce's principle, for Joyce was our great sister, gentle warrior and an Atikamekw mother. I have worked alongside Carol, her spouse, and Diane and Michel, her mother and father, on this principle.

[Senator Audette]

It is shocking to me that in 2020, when medical students, future doctors, were presented with a case study involving an Indigenous man in the ER who was staggering slightly and had some vomit on his shirt, 100% of them consistently diagnosed him as being under the influence of alcohol or drugs. I am sure that these students were not born racist, but their education and the little they know about the First Nations contribute to these unconscious biases. Institutions are making progress on "Inuitizing" — a word you will hear me use a lot — and decolonizing their materials and working towards reconciliation. Nevertheless, I have a dream for the self-determination of the First Peoples, a dream that we will one day have our own university, by and for the First Peoples, in Quebec of course, but why not elsewhere? I dream of a university where our identity, our culture, our languages, our knowledge, our ceremonies, our traditions and our governance structures are honoured and celebrated.

Esteemed colleagues, with respect to reciprocity, I encourage all of us here to systematically reflect on the potential impact that any bills we are drafting or studying may have on the First Peoples. Were they involved in the process? Let's be proactive and invite them to work with us, together. As I have already said, I am making it my duty to ask you these questions, because this is one of my responsibilities.

Before I wrap up, I will share a little secret — or a big one, actually. Many people know this. When I came here, it was important to me to choose the East Block for these reasons: I wanted to encounter John A. Macdonald, or at least his spirit. I was determined to go looking for him. I can assure you that, when I found him, I was trembling and crying. I looked at his picture and stood there, my hands on the photo. Then I told him that all his attempts at assimilation and destruction had failed. I am here. I am alive. We are here. We are alive.

Despite everything that happened, I agreed to invest my time and energy here, in an institution that passed laws to assimilate and destroy. At the same time, when I listen to you, when I look at you, when I hear you, when I observe you, I can see that your individual and collective intelligence is astounding, and I am sure that, in this great chamber, we will work for the good of our societies as we pursue justice, equity, equality and social justice. I even told Mr. Macdonald that I was ready to forgive him if we could write a new chapter to change everything that happened. Only time will tell.

I also want to chase away the alienation that my mother feels. My mother Evelyne, this beautiful Innu woman, has always felt like a stranger here in her own country. She is reaching out to you, telling you that she is your neighbour and only wants to get to know you. She is my hero.

Tshinashkumitnau, colleagues.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Gagné, debate adjourned.)

(*At 3:51 p.m., pursuant to the orders adopted by the Senate on November 25, 2021 and March 31, 2022, the Senate adjourned until 2 p.m., tomorrow.*)

APPENDIX

DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Pamela Wallin on December 9, 2021)

Department of Justice

The government is committed to examining advance requests for MAID as part of the parliamentary review process required by former Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying). The government takes note of the Quebec Select Committee's report and will continue to work closely with the provinces and territories as they consider potential changes to their MAID laws and policies.

The government supports the ongoing work of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying and will continue to work with parliamentarians in the Senate and the House of Commons to continue the committee's study of these important issues.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Leo Housakos on December 9, 2021)

The 26th Conference of the Parties in Glasgow, Scotland, was historic in galvanizing global resolve and ambition, coming on the heels of international reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the United Nations Environment Programme, which outlined the current state of the climate crisis.

The total costs (as of November 25, 2021) for the Canadian delegation is \$1,067,886.85, which included travel costs for ministers, members of Parliament and federal government officials in addition to Indigenous, youth, and non-governmental organization representatives, along with accommodations, meals, room rentals, hospitality, and other associated costs.

Given limitations associated with the extent of replies to Senate Delayed Answers, please refer to the response to Parliamentary Written Question Q-103 that was tabled on January 31, 2022, and available through the Library of Parliament (library@parl.gc.ca), for a complete list of the Canadian delegation.

JUSTICE

OMBUDSMAN FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu on March 2, 2022)

Department of Justice

Our government is committed to ensuring that Canada's criminal justice system shows compassion to victims, holds offenders to account and upholds the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$85.3 million over five years to support a national program for independent legal advice and independent legal representation for victims of sexual assault, as well as to support pilot projects for victims of intimate partner violence. Through the Victims Fund, we have made more than \$28 million available to provincial and territorial governments and non-governmental organizations to increase awareness and knowledge of victim issues, legislation, and services available. The work to fill the victims ombudsman position is ongoing. It is important to note that the ombudsman's office still handles victims' complaints and assists them in finding the right services. We will keep working collaboratively with the ombudsman's office and across government to empower victims and survivors and ensure that their voices are heard.

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