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Tuesday, October 18, 2022

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, there have been consultations and there is an agreement to allow a photographer in the Senate Chamber to photograph the introduction of a new senator.

Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

NEW SENATOR

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that the Clerk of the Senate has received a certificate from the Registrar General of Canada showing that Flordeliz Osler has been summoned to the Senate.

INTRODUCTION

The Hon. the Speaker having informed the Senate that there was a senator without waiting to be introduced:

The following honourable senator was introduced; presented His Majesty's writ of summons; took the oath prescribed by law, which was administered by the Clerk of the Senate; and was seated:

Hon. F. Gigi Osler, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, introduced between Hon. Marc Gold, P.C., and Hon. Mary Jane McCallum.

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that the honourable senator named above had made and subscribed the Declaration of Qualification required by the Constitution Act, 1867, in the presence of the Clerk of the Senate, the Commissioner appointed to receive and witness the said declaration.

[*English*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the family members of our new senator: her spouse, John Osler; her daughter, Juliana Osler; her son, Colin Osler; and her mother, Flordeliza Sharma. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Osler.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CONGRATULATIONS ON APPOINTMENT

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, what a pleasure it is for me to welcome our newest colleague, Senator Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler. Senator Osler is a proud born-and-bred Manitoban of Philippine and Indian heritage. Her background and career achievements are most impressive. She is a surgeon, an assistant professor, an advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion, a past president of the Canadian Medical Association and a mentor to Filipino students through the Filipino Association of Medical Students in Manitoba. She has been president of the Federation of Medical Women of Canada since 2021, chair of the Canadian Medical Forum since 2020 and co-chair of the Virtual Care Task Force since 2019.

• (1410)

As CMA chair in 2018, Senator Osler spoke in favour of Senator Boyer's work in ending forced and coerced sterilization of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women and committed the association to working with the federal-provincial working group being set up by the government.

Senator Osler has trained surgeons in Africa in a volunteer capacity, and during her two-year tenure as president of the CMA, she initiated its first in-house policy on equity and diversity.

However, for tens of thousands of viewers, she may be best known as a COVID TikTok star. By her own admission, since the beginning of the pandemic, Senator Osler wanted to reach younger people, those in their twenties and thirties, who rely on social media for so much of their information. In her estimation, the best way to do this was to provide the information on the forum they used. She posted her first short video in March of 2020, demonstrating the best hand-washing techniques to stop the spread of COVID. It was a big hit. She went on to post dozens of more videos displaying and explaining to people how they could stay safe and avoid lockdowns.

When asked why she chose this particular medium to get her point across, she explained that these were the simplest ways for people to understand how best to continue their lives even in the middle of a pandemic. She stated:

So that's my message that I keep trying to get across, [it] is one of hope. It's not one of fear.

Senator Osler has also expanded her TikTok education to include a short history lesson on the Federation of Medical Women of Canada, of which she is the president.

Colleagues, I suggest that you take that 48 seconds that it will take to learn about the founders of the federation and the snub at the 1924 Canadian Medical Association conference, which is the *raison d'être* for the organization.

Senator Osler, your experience and talents are a welcome addition to this chamber, and on behalf of my colleagues in the Government Representative Office, I welcome you to the Senate of Canada and very much look forward to working with you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, on behalf of the opposition and the Senate Conservative caucus, I am also pleased to rise in this chamber to welcome our new colleague.

Where Manitoba has possibly lost a great practitioner and surgeon, I know that the Senate has gained another strong voice from our province, Manitoba. As the dean of the great province of Manitoba, which we both represent, I wish to extend to you a very warm welcome to the Senate of Canada, Honourable Flordeliz Osler. Please know that everyone here today looks forward to working with you in a collaborative way.

As you look around and find your bearings in this chamber, please know that we have all felt the same excitement and nervousness brought on by our very own swearing-in ceremony. It is my hope that you will find reassurance by the fact that you not only find yourself among colleagues and future friends but have also gained a new family — the Senate family.

Like normal families, while our Senate family has a lot of different opinions and perspectives, it's a family that represents different regions and viewpoints, a family that doesn't always agree with one another, but one that must always focus on putting Canadians at the forefront of all their decisions.

As you begin to embark on this new role, you will feel the weight of responsibility that has been entrusted in you in this chamber. I trust that in the days, months and years to come, you will always keep in mind that, during deliberations, our duty — yours and mine — is to ensure the best interests of not only Manitobans but also all Canadians.

Everyone in this chamber brings a unique perspective to our debates and discussions, and I trust that you will as well. I look forward to having another strong voice representing the people of our province.

Canadians are looking at the Senate to not only bring sober second thought and due diligence. They are looking at the Senate for hope, hope that their voices are heard, that their concerns become ours and that, together, this chamber ensures the best path forward for everyone, especially minority groups, across our beautiful country.

The Conservative caucus is determined to work towards making sure not only that all Canadian voices are well represented in Ottawa but that we as parliamentarians work and fight for them.

As I said to Senator Shugart just over a week ago, you are already on the right side of the chamber. You can move one seat over if you wish. We would welcome you with open arms.

On behalf of the opposition and the Conservative caucus, I want to warmly welcome you to the Senate of Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Honourable Senator Flordeliz Gigi Osler, all of my colleagues in the Independent Senators Group join me in wishing you the warmest of welcomes. We also welcome your family members. This will always be a very special day in your history. Our best regards to your family.

[*English*]

Senator, I would like to point out that you have demonstrated on several occasions how active and dynamic a woman you are, finding time not only to serve your patients but also to serve your professional association, in addition to sharing your knowledge and transferring your expertise to several universities in Canada and abroad. For the last several years, Dr. Osler, you have been volunteering in Africa to help train other surgeons in collaboration with the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Institute, Harvard University; University of British Columbia; University of Manitoba; and the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery.

This would be impressive enough, but I'm not done with your very impressive résumé. As a dedicated advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion, your appointment is a continuation of a career in which your professionalism, integrity and competence have long served the public.

Senator Osler, when you were only and mostly known as Dr. Osler, you once said:

In my own work, I've come to realize how important it is to say to a patient who is about to have surgery, "We're all here for you," and give them confidence that they're in good hands.

As this new chapter in your illustrious career begins, I couldn't help but think about this sentence and how, despite your great expertise as a surgeon, you realize just how important it is to reassure your patients about what they are soon to undergo. On a larger scale, whether it is the Manitoban community, the Filipino one or all citizens of our country you will be representing in your new functions, I have no doubt that you will exercise your role with the utmost empathy, and our fellow Canadians will surely be confident that they are indeed "in good hands."

Senator Osler, you will bring a unique perspective to our discussions, and I trust that you will keep in mind our duty to ensure the best interests of all Canadians with the care, the dedication, as well as the patience that have marked your career so far.

You have expressed your love of being in the operating room. This I don't share with you, though. Although this might not look like one, the issues we deal with in this chamber can be delicate in nature and require rigour as well as precision. I have no doubt that you will succeed with flying colours.

Today, you are officially opening in the Senate a new chapter of your life. As this chapter is beginning, I wish to express how eager all members of the Independent Senators Group are to work with you. With your rich background, your proven dynamism and your modern and innovative approach — we saw it on TikTok indeed — we can only look forward to a tremendous contribution to the future of the Senate, especially with the great advantage of the time you have before you.

• (1420)

Senator Osler, welcome to the upper chamber.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, it is indeed my pleasure to join the other leaders in welcoming another new member, Senator Osler, to the Senate of Canada.

Senator Osler, as we know, you were the former president of the Canadian Medical Association, the first woman surgeon and the first woman of colour to hold that title. You have earned another first here as the first woman of Filipino descent to be appointed to this chamber. I have heard you might be the first woman surgeon to hold the title of senator. We are very fortunate to have you join us.

Thanks to your commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, I know you are well aware of the power of representation. It matters to a great many of us here who are proud that the Senate gives voice to historically under-represented groups, and your appointment honours that commitment in two ways.

In your new position here, you will once again be a role model as a previously unrepresented group will now be able to see themselves in the Senate of Canada. We know how very important that is. But it's also valuable for our work here because we are strongest when we hear a variety of views. We are always grateful to have a new voice as we examine the numerous issues before us.

Your policy work has also demonstrated that you will fit right in here as you've focused on topics like seniors' care, the health impacts of climate change and, as I've mentioned, equity and diversity. I'm sure I am not alone in my curiosity to see what you will work on next. Perhaps we will find out over TikTok.

Senator Osler, on behalf of the Progressive Senate Group, it is indeed my pleasure to officially welcome you to the Senate of Canada. We look forward to working with you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Scott Tannas: On behalf of the Canadian Senators Group, I would like to add my voice today in welcoming Senator F. Gigi Osler to the Senate of Canada. My colleagues have

outlined your numerous achievements and accolades. Let me read out some of the statements made from outside this place to clearly show that Senator Osler is indeed needed here.

The Branch for Global Surgical Care of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of British Columbia said about your appointment:

Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler is an internationally renowned surgeon who operates in Winnipeg, an assistant professor at the University of Manitoba, and a dedicated advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusion. . . . Dr. Osler is known for her active involvement within and dedication to the medical community in Canada and abroad. . . . Congratulations Dr. Osler!

Dr. Rey Pagtakhan, former Minister of Veterans Affairs and the first Filipino-born Canadian to be elected to the House of Commons, said:

I am excited and it is good news for our community and country to have a talented woman tapped by the Prime Minister.

Even the Canadian embassy in Manila jumped in to congratulate her and said:

Congratulations to Dr. F. Gigi Osler, on her appointment as a Senator of Canada. . . . Dr. Osler serves as a role model, research supervisor, and mentor for Filipino and other racialized medical students in Manitoba and across Canada, including within the Filipino Association of Medical Students in Manitoba.

It is tributes like these that clearly show that this place will greatly benefit from your expertise and experience as we work together to improve the lives of Canadians.

Senator, I've seen some of your numerous online videos. They are quite remarkable. Your spirit, your openness and your ability to communicate across generations is amazing. The Senate will greatly benefit from your talents. On a personal note, I would suggest that you will some day need to model for all of us here in the Senate that T-shirt that says, "A woman's place is in the House and the Senate." I wholeheartedly agree with that.

It's especially true because today is Persons Day. Again, welcome to the Senate, Gigi. We in the Canadian Senators Group look forward to working with you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN LIBRARY MONTH

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize October as Canadian Library Month and this upcoming Friday, October 21, as Canadian Library Workers Day.

Libraries are tremendous fountains of knowledge and proof that information truly belongs to everyone. Particularly important are the librarians who help us navigate this world of information by providing us with the right books and tools we need to succeed. In my role as a senator, and particularly as a teacher, I have seen first-hand the part that libraries and books can play in encouraging imagination, empathy and civic duty.

This year's Library Month theme is "One card, one million possibilities." In Nova Scotia libraries, some of the programs on offer include career planning and job search assistance, support services for immigrants, language practice groups, tech help and computer classes, housing support services, health and well-being programs, information sessions for small business owners, storytime and activities for babies and children, author readings, book clubs, movie nights, community cafes, parenting programs, teen cooking classes, photo exhibits, music and dance classes, quilting and needlework clubs, running groups, chair fitness and events with Mi'kmaw artist Alan Syliboy, the Halifax Public Libraries' Artist and Innovator in Residence.

Colleagues, the list goes on.

You can see that libraries don't just lend books. Here in Ottawa, you can access a 3-D printer or a musical instrument, borrow passes for museums or to ski and snowshoe in nearby provincial parks or even borrow a telescope to look at the stars. Canadians are increasingly organizing a variety of other libraries, be it for tools, camping gear or even the Little Free Library on your street corner where you can share books with your neighbours or passersby.

We ask a lot of libraries and their staff. During the pandemic, many libraries doubled as food bank distribution centres, vaccine clinics or testing sites. Staff provided wellness checks to seniors during lockdowns. While primarily intended as our information guides, librarians are increasingly called on to act as de facto social workers and, in some cases, emergency responders. Some libraries now have dedicated mental health and addiction support services, and at several libraries across the country, staff are trained to use naloxone kits in response to the opioid crisis.

Colleagues, libraries are so much more than simply a place to find books. They connect people and ideas, and help to build vibrant communities. Libraries bring us together. Whether it is by carrying your library card with pride, visiting or volunteering at your local branch, posting in support on social media or thanking library staff for all they do, please join me in showing your appreciation this month for all that these great institutions provide.

I love my library card, and I love my library.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

THE HONOURABLE VERNON WHITE

Hon. Scott Tannas: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to our former colleague Vern White, who retired from the Senate two weeks ago after serving in this chamber for a decade. Senator White did not want formal tributes or any kind of a fuss to mark his departure, but we could not let him leave without saying at least a few words and paying tribute to a highly respected parliamentarian and cherished colleague.

Senator White spent a 42-year career in public service. As an RCMP officer, he worked throughout Canada, including serving in Canada's three northern territories. His law enforcement career culminated in his position as the Chief of the Ottawa Police Service, a position he held for five years.

• (1430)

In his law enforcement career, Senator White was held in the highest esteem by the rank-and-file members of the police force. He commanded respect and loyalty because of his unique way of "leading from behind" — servant leadership, providing your people with the resources they need to be the very best they can be at the job before them.

Senator White brought his decades of experience and leadership to this place when he was named to the Senate in 2012. With his expertise in public security, he made an important contribution to the Senate. He was a member of several of our committees and chaired the then-called Aboriginal Peoples Committee and the Rules Committee. He also chaired the Senate Speaker's advisory committee on security and was a long-serving member of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians.

Those of us who got to know him well over the years know that Senator White is a very generous person. This was perhaps most evident in his involvement in a wide range of community organizations, including the Dave Smith Youth Treatment Centre, the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation and the Ottawa drug treatment centre. He is very passionate about solving the opioid and addiction crises in our communities.

Senator White retired from the Senate to move to Finland with his wife and daughter. Of course, it's not really retirement at all, since he is still actively teaching university courses and sharing his experience with students and with police services around the world.

Everybody is a buddy to Vern White. It doesn't matter who you are or what position you hold; he always looked you in the eye and called you "buddy." You feel like you're two old pals from Cape Breton.

Vern, we'll miss your humour and quiet leadership here in the Senate and we wish you all the best in your next chapter.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

NEWFOUNDLAND'S SCREECH-IN CEREMONY

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, today I am pleased to present Chapter 65 of "Telling Our Story."

Today, I want to tell you about a satirical tribute to the history of Newfoundland and Labrador known as the "screech-in." It may give you an additional reason to come visit our beautiful province.

A long time ago, before any rules or regulations dealing with the selling of liquor became the law of the land, salt fish from Newfoundland was being shipped to the West Indies in exchange for rum. This resulted in fish becoming the national dish for Jamaicans and the dark rum becoming the traditional drink for Newfoundlanders. At that time, the 80-proof rum did not have a name, and the delightful product may have continued to be a nameless rum except for the influx of American servicemen to Newfoundland during World War II.

Legend has it that during a visit to a local pub, a visiting American serviceman downed the rum in one quick toss. His howls of distress caused another patron of the bar to rush to his aid, shouting out, "What the cripes was that ungodly screech?" A Newfoundland sitting close by simply replied, "The screech? 'Tis the rum, me son."

As word of the incident spread, more of the visiting soldiers began trying this mysterious rum, adopting it as their favourite. Thus, a legend was born. The "screech" name stuck, and today the rum and its place in Newfoundland's culture have become legendary.

Then in 1974, when brainstorming for a Canadian Teachers' Federation conference in St. John's, Merle Vokey came up with the idea of the screech-in to top what had been done in a previous year in another province. Today, it is arguably Newfoundland's most marketed tradition. When a person completes the screech-in ceremony, they become an honorary Newfoundland. Now b'ys, it doesn't get much better than that.

Now, for those who may not have experienced a screech-in ceremony and, more importantly, for those who would like to do so, let me tell you about some of the details of such an event.

The ceremony can take place anywhere in the province such as someone's kitchen, down on a wharf, in the local community centre or in any of the pubs and bars on our famous George Street in St. John's, but it can only be conducted by a born and bred Newfoundland. There is no exception to this rule.

There are variations of the ceremony in different parts of the province. The event usually begins with some good Newfoundland music playing in the background and the entrance of the "master screecher" of the night, decked out in full fisherman's rain gear or at least a sou'wester. He or she will

announce that there are some CFAs in the audience — that is "come from away" for those who do not know — and that they want to become Newfoundlanders.

Each participant is asked to introduce themselves and where they come from, and then they are given a shot of screech to hold in their hands. If one is lucky, there would be more than one shot of screech in the glass, but I digress for a moment.

While holding tightly to their shot of screech, the master screecher will ask the participants if they want to become a Newfoundland, and the answer would be a hearty "yes, b'y."

Then each person, while still holding their shot of screech, is asked, "Is you a Newfoundland?" and they are taught the proper response, which I am not going to repeat here today, but translated means, "Yes I am, my old friend, and may your sails always catch the wind."

That then is followed by the eating of a slice of Newfoundland steak, better known as a slice of baloney. Then a fish — most likely a cod fish — is held up to the wanting lips of a participant who then bestows the fish with a kiss. It could be a frozen fish, but if you strike a lucky day, the cod fish could be fresh out of the water with their tail still flapping when you pucker up.

Then to finish off the ceremony, the participant downs the shot of screech in one smooth mouthful and has earned their title as "Honorary Newfoundland" and will be presented with an official certificate to show everybody back home.

So if anyone is planning a visit to my home province, let me know and I will gladly assist you in making the arrangements for a screech-in. Long may your big jib draw!

CANADIAN SPACE AGENCY

Hon. Marty Deacon: Honourable senators, last year, on Christmas Day, a rocket carrying the James Webb Space Telescope launched from French Guiana, ushering in an era of scientific discovery that is set to unveil some of the longest-held mysteries the universe has thus far hidden from us.

Sitting in orbit 1.5 million kilometres from earth and essentially having to unfold its mirrors and tennis-court-sized sun shield remotely, James Webb is a marvel of engineering that is the result of decades of work and collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency. I will, of course, use my time today to discuss how Canada has contributed to this project.

Critical to the operation of the telescope is its Canadian-engineered Fine Guidance Sensor, which was designed to find and lock onto cosmic targets and is crucial for the long-exposure imagery needed for the telescope to provide the kind of imagery required for quality science to be conducted.

Some of you might be familiar with one of the first images released by the James Webb team in July. It was a field of stars and galaxies littered across a scarlet background, with some stars blacked out with refraction points extending beyond. This was captured using the Fine Guidance Sensor. Though just a test image, it gave a hint of what was to come.

The Canadian Space Agency's other contribution was the Near Infrared Imager and Slitless Spectrograph, or NIRISS for short. Using a camera sensitive to infrared wavelengths, the NIRISS captures the infrared light emitted by objects and gathers information about the spectra of distant planets. This is where some of the real science will emerge from James Webb, and includes its ability to examine the composition of the atmospheres of exoplanets orbiting other stars. In doing so, scientists will be able to determine if these planets have water, methane, oxygen and other molecules associated with life here on earth.

Senators, if you're wondering and if you've forgotten, this was about the third month of your Grade 11 physics class, when you did light refraction, telescopes and all kinds of things in that area.

In exchange for our contribution to this project, Canadian scientists are guaranteed a share of Webb's observation time. This means that our scientists will be at the forefront of groundbreaking scientific discoveries, which could include not only if other planets might harbour life but when some of the first stars and galaxies formed some 13 billion years ago, as well as the mysteries of dark matter, which makes up roughly 85% of the mass in the universe but we know very little about.

I look forward to learning what they have to tell us, and I'm sure you do as well. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

INTERNATIONAL METROPOLIS CONFERENCE

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Honourable senators, I wish to thank Senator Tony Loffreda for his very gracious and kind comments about me yesterday. I was, sadly, not in the chamber. Let's put it down to the vagaries of Air Canada. But I do really appreciate them. I should tell you that he, too, was a rock star, especially as he placed his substantive comments in the context of his own compelling personal narrative. Senator Loffreda, I'm happy to go with you on the road again any time. We do a good two-step.

Substantively, I came back with three distinct but interconnected challenges. The first is the incredible rise in global displacement. These figures are not to be taken lightly, colleagues. We're now at 100 million globally displaced people. Along with this unfortunate rise in global displacement, there is another disturbing trend, which is the global meltdown in governance and solidarity.

• (1440)

Second, there is the looming challenge of climate migration. In 30 short years, the International Metropolis Conference, or IOM, has estimated that we will see 1.5 billion — not million — people be displaced. We don't know where they will go, and we don't know how they will get to safety.

Third, there is the growing number of so-called low-skilled workers moving for work and filling labour market gaps in essential work — in OECD countries — without certainty for their future, as well as without any predictability for employers. In Germany, I was reminded by Germans about their field experiment with their guest workers, the *Gastarbeiter*. They

paraphrased it to me as, "We wanted workers; we didn't realize we were getting human beings instead." Let's keep that experience in mind.

In each of these buckets, sadly, there is less and less multilateralism, when, in fact, we need more and more. If there is a silver lining I came back with, it's at the bilateral level. It is the policy coherence and values alignment between Germany and Canada, whether it is energy policy, trade, climate change or migration. As a member of the German-Canadian Parliamentary Friendship Group, I look forward to deepening these bilateral ties in the next couple of years under the capable leadership of our chair, Senator Boehm. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

AUDITOR GENERAL

2022 FALL REPORTS TABLED

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

QUESTION PERIOD

CANADIAN HERITAGE

FUNDING APPROVAL

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): My question today is again for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Senator Gold, I want to follow up on my question to you from yesterday, which revealed that the Prime Minister's office — along with Minister Hussen — sat on its hands for over a month.

Let me repeat this, Senator Gold. It took them both more than a month to publicly condemn derogatory tweets written by a government consultant who was granted taxpayer funds. This story became outrageous when we learned the minister knew about the situation for more than a month prior to doing anything, but now it's hit a new level. The Prime Minister's office — the highest office in the land — was aware of this, and it also took them more than a month to publicly condemn the anti-Semitic tweets of Laith Marouf, after being informed of the situation.

I can't even understand the rationale here. Were there hopes that the comments of xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism would simply disappear out of nowhere? The Trudeau government has lost its way, leader. Canadians deserve better leadership than this. What is even more bonkers is the fact that the Prime Minister himself said the government had acted quickly.

My question to you, Senator Gold, is a simple one: Do you believe that taking more than a month to publicly condemn comments is acting swiftly?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and for raising an important issue about the vile and unacceptable comments directed against the Jewish community of Canada.

The comments from this individual were absolutely appalling, and the government condemns the comments — condemns the racism and hatred that lies behind them — as it does in all forms directed at any of our citizens. The government is grateful to the member of Parliament Anthony Housefather for bringing this to their attention.

I'm advised that when this issue was raised, the government immediately asked the Department of Canadian Heritage to confirm the details of the funding that was allocated, as well as to inform the government on the next procedural steps — and after the government was advised, they also sought the legal opinion of legal officials to make sure that any steps they took were within the law. The government followed the legal process — the responsible process — to quickly act and cut funding to the organization and to suspend the project.

Senator Plett: Senator Gold, my question was a very simple one, and it required a yes or no answer. You didn't even touch on that. Yesterday, you said the government agrees that there was a failure in the vetting process. You alluded to that again. But will you agree that was not the only failure? There was clearly a failure by the Prime Minister and the minister to publicly condemn the comments.

Is your government prepared to specifically address the 30-day delay — not your talking points — in condemning the comments? Or will the government try to put their head in the sand, as always, in hopes that the situation will go away on its own?

Senator Gold: Senator Plett, thank you for your follow-up, but I don't know that I need lessons about talking points — or talking points that come from other places.

The government condemns the statements and the sentiments behind the statements. They're deeply hurtful to all of us in the Jewish community and, indeed, to all Canadians who care about the proper, just and respectful treatment of all Canadians, regardless of their religion, race, culture or background. The government stands by its condemnation of these and also acknowledges — as I did yesterday and again now — that there were errors made in the vetting of this particular project and its proponent.

[Senator Plett]

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

CRIME RATES AND COST OF HOUSING

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My question is also for the Leader of the Government. This weekend, the voters of Vancouver sent a clear message: They are done with the radical policies of the Prime Minister and the NDP mayor. They are fed up with the violence, the overdose deaths and the overpriced housing market. Voters in Vancouver have said, "Enough." They have fired the NDP mayor and rejected the radical policies — and, instead, they voted to remove the gatekeepers, build more affordable homes and bring in common sense laws to restore safe streets.

Senator Gold, will your government get the message and correct the failed policies that have contributed to the growing concerns of safety and security in the streets and communities of Vancouver and Metro Vancouver?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Martin, thank you for the question. First of all, I think all of us in this chamber want to congratulate the new mayor of Vancouver. It's an historic moment for Vancouver's first Chinese-Canadian mayor. And we should celebrate our democracy, which gives people a chance to hold their governments to account and to make changes when appropriate. But it's simply not the case that this Government of Canada — or any government, frankly, of whatever stripe — is responsible for the opioid crisis, for worldwide inflation and for the inflated cost of housing in Vancouver, which is hardly an issue.

• (1450)

I lived and studied in Vancouver, proudly and happily, in the 1970s. It wasn't cheap then, and it has gotten completely out of hand now.

The fact is that this government is working with its provincial counterparts and municipal governments where appropriate. It is doing what it can to address the opioid crisis and, in fact, to divert people from the criminal justice system when it's really a health issue. We have a bill before us now in committee that is studying the issue to that effect. I will not repeat yet again the very important measures that the government has introduced to assist Canadians with the rising costs of living caused by the global pandemic, the war in Ukraine and other factors that are worldwide in nature.

So, yes, congratulations to the mayors and the citizens who elected them, but, no, this government is on a strong path to help Canada emerge from the pandemic and to grow our economy in a safe and sustainable way.

Senator Martin: Mr. Ken Sim, the mayor-elect, did make history: he is the first Asian and Chinese-Canadian mayor of Vancouver. He brings renewed hope for the future to one of the greatest cities in Canada and the world.

Senator Gold, what exactly will the Trudeau government do to concretely help Mayor Sim reduce crime and build more affordable housing?

Senator Gold: First of all, thank you for the question. In terms of fighting crime, let's start with that. This government is proud that it is taking an intelligent, progressive approach to addressing not only crime but the social determinants of crime.

Again, we have a bill before us, of which I'm the proud sponsor, that will take a major step forward in reversing some of the misguided policies of previous governments, which assume that the best solution to crime is to simply legislate more and have harsher penalties. Instead, we should deal with the actual causes of crime, which includes the over-incarceration of persons from all communities, including Indigenous and marginalized communities. They then learn very sad lessons in their first incarcerations, very often in the provincial system, with the corresponding impact on their lives, their families' lives and their communities' lives.

In terms of housing, there are a number of measures in terms of housing affordability.

Again, colleagues, to be serious — because this is a serious chamber — and to be real, let's acknowledge that, well before the pandemic, there has been strong demand for housing in certain markets, notably in Vancouver, not only by Canadians but by those who seek to live in Canada. That strong demand existed even before the pandemic, exacerbated by limited housing supply, and it has led to surging house prices in many centres across the country and, indeed, even in more rural areas such as where I live in the Township areas in Quebec. The government is committed to building more homes and to helping Canadians save and buy their first homes.

That's why measures such as the Tax-Free First Home Savings Account introduced in Budget 2022 will help. The government launched a \$4-billion Housing Accelerator Fund to provide incentives to municipalities — and the mayor to whom you referred — to build more homes faster. It is taking initial steps to develop a homebuyers' bill of rights and bring forward a national plan to end blind bidding and to ban foreign buyers from owning non-recreational residential property for two years.

These measures and others, with the collaboration of provinces and municipalities and the private sector, we hope and expect will make a difference so that Canadians can have the homes they want and can acquire the homes they seek.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

Hon. Paula Simons: My question is for the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transportation and Communication.

Senator Housakos, on Wednesday, October 5, our committee heard from a witness, Blayne Haggart, a professor at Brock University. You, in fact, praised his testimony. You said that if

you had professors more like him, maybe you would have stayed in university. But this Saturday, Dr. Haggart received a surprising email signed by you. It says:

Hello, Blayne. Right now the Trudeau Liberals are dangerously close to being able to control what you see and say online.

It continues:

[Bill C-11] is online censorship, pure and simple.

And then in bold print:

Canadians have a right to freedom of expression online — they should not be censored by government gatekeepers.

But I'm just wondering, because you sent this to a witness we've just heard from who spoke in support of the bill so, presumably, future witnesses may have received a similar letter. I'm wondering if future witnesses, never mind past ones, will feel safe and welcome to speak freely to our committee, knowing that you, as committee chair, are sending out what might politely be called hyperbolic letters, attacking the bill, while you yourself are chairing the hearings?

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Simons, firstly, what I said at the committee was that I found the testimony interesting. I didn't say I agreed with it. Second of all, I think you're talking about an email that went out to stakeholders and party membership of the Conservative Party of Canada, asking them to sign a petition.

I don't know how the gentleman would have gotten on that particular list. He's probably a member of the party, and that's how he got on the list. So, at the end of the day, when you have 680,000 members, as the Conservative Party of Canada currently has — an historic number, the largest number of any political party in the history of the country —

Senator Plett: Wow. How many do the Liberals have?

Senator Housakos: — obviously, you communicate with a lot of people. It's called democracy. And, of course, when they receive these emails, they have the right to sign on if they agree with the content. They have the right to do whatever they think is appropriate. It's called, again, democracy. I don't think I have anything to apologize for. I think this is common practice in public discourse to be able to communicate your position and points of view with people.

Senator Simons: It is curious, as somebody who is charged with the task of chairing the hearings, that you should do this. You have heard the same witnesses I have, Senator Housakos, and, to the best of my recollection, not one of them has described Bill C-11 in the terms you used in your letter to Mr. Haggart. I'm wondering where you see in the text of the bill anything that would control what Canadians say online or would censor their free speech.

Senator Housakos: For starters, section 4 of the bill is very concerning to me, as it has been a concern to you.

Ultimately, when you have the chair of the CRTC coming before our committee and publicly stating that this bill doesn't take away from him the right to force platform providers to push algorithms toward a particular direction, that in itself, as far as I'm concerned, controls what people see and what people get to post. At the end of the day, I think there are many witnesses who have come before the committee and are very concerned about how algorithms are being used, both in terms of platform providers and in the future. This bill hasn't been clear when it comes to these particular issues.

If you're telling me that these concerns have not been addressed at our committee, I disagree. I've heard a number of stakeholders and witnesses address those concerns. I will continue to fight those concerns. If we're a regular member of the committee, a chair of the committee or if we're a part of this chamber in a leadership position, nothing takes away our right to express ourselves on a particular issue, and I will continue to do so.

[Translation]

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR

Hon. Renée Dupuis: My question is also for the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications. It is a bit more general than Senator Simons' question, but it pertains to the same email signed by the Honourable Senator Housakos.

Where do you draw the line between your responsibility as the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, which is currently examining Bill C-11, to ensure the smooth flow of debate in committee and the kind of messages that you sign as "the Honourable Senator Housakos" asking citizens to help you stop Bill C-11 in the Senate?

Can you enlighten us on where you draw the line?

Hon. Leo Housakos: Yes, it is very clear. First, it is important to understand that there are some differences between the Senate and the House of Commons. A committee chair, like the Speaker of this chamber, is not a referee. They are a regular member of the chamber. I do not know whether most senators are aware of this or not, but the Speaker has the right to vote and express their opinion on political issues.

The chair of a committee has the same rights, privileges and responsibilities. The chair of a Senate committee has the right to vote, to express their opinions and to ask questions. They also have the right to be against a bill. That is nothing new or out of the ordinary. That is the way things have worked for years. If senators want to change that rule or procedure, then let me know, but for now, I am upholding the tradition and rights that have applied here for a very long time.

• (1500)

Senator Dupuis: Thank you for enlightening us, but I already knew that. I am well aware that chairs can have an opinion of a bill. That is not what I was asking. As a member of a committee, I don't have the same responsibilities as the chair of the committee.

[Senator Housakos]

As the person responsible for maintaining what I call the smooth flow of debate, you have to show openness and neutrality. You hear all sorts of opinions, those you agree with and those you might not. Where do you draw the line between those responsibilities, as chair, and keeping the debate flowing smoothly?

Senator Housakos: It's not complicated. The work of the chair is by nature procedural and concerns the rules. As chair, I have a duty to enforce the rules and ensure that the committee operates fairly and justly. From day one, this committee has worked well, independently and transparently, and we will stay the course.

However, a chair cannot be prevented from taking a position on a bill. That has never been the case. Personally, the problem I see at the moment is that people are opposed to my point of view on the bill and not my work as chair of the committee. The work is about respecting procedure and the rules. Moreover, I have the right and the obligation to speak to a bill, as does the chair of any other committee of this institution.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF HURRICANE FIONA

Hon. Brian Francis: This question is for Senator Gold.

Last week, the Canadian Red Cross announced that more than \$11 million had been distributed to people impacted by Hurricane Fiona. However, serious questions and concerns about the rollout have been raised by Islanders who registered for assistance.

For example, seniors and others struggling had to wait in line for hours just to verify their identity and receive \$250. Those with mobility issues were provided with no accommodation.

What is the Government of Canada doing to ensure that the Canadian Red Cross is distributing funds to Islanders in an inclusive, transparent and accountable way as soon as possible?

How will the Government of Canada ensure this demeaning, complicated and exclusionary situation is not repeated in future crises?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and reminding us all that, although the hurricane came and went, its effects are still being felt with, in many cases, devastating consequences to our fellow citizens.

The Government of Canada is pleased to have partnered with the Red Cross, as it has done in the past, and pleased that Canadians have been so generous. The government is matching those funds, as you know.

I apologize for not knowing the details of the situation that you described. I will look into it as quickly as I can and report back to the chamber.

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

SENATE APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Scott Tannas: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Today we welcomed Senator Osler to this chamber. She's the nine hundred eighty-seventh person to be summoned to sit in the Senate of Canada since Confederation.

I think it's an appropriate occasion to point out the 15 empty seats that remain in this chamber today; some have been vacant for a long time. In fact, one of British Columbia's six seats in this chamber has been empty for over 1,000 days.

One of the six seats in my home province of Alberta has been unfilled for nearly two years. This is a big problem for a chamber that was created to guarantee regional representation in our Parliament.

It's a different situation in the other place, as you would know, leader. A by-election must be called to fill a vacant seat within six months in the other place.

Would the government support a similar process for the Senate whereby the Prime Minister must recommend an appointment to this chamber when a seat is vacant for more than six months?

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

We all look forward to having more Senate appointments announced so as to continue to receive senators, colleagues, of the quality that we need to do our work.

The process that this Prime Minister has introduced, a process whereby candidates are identified and vetted, is a different process. It is one that involves not simply an application process for those before it, but the constitution — in each and every region and province — of a committee jointly composed of two provincial or territorial representatives and three named by the government.

In some cases, though not all, the delay in appointments is a function of the failure of one of the jurisdictions to name their members to the committee. In other cases, frankly, it is just a function of the time that the process seems to take, and it's longer than most of us would want.

I do not believe that your proposal is something that would find favour with the government, because it runs counter to the merit-based and participatory process not only of Canadians but of the committees that vet them.

However, it is always possible to improve processes. I will take your suggestion back to my colleagues in government so that they can reflect upon it further.

Senator Tannas: I agree with you, Senator Gold: The process that this government has undertaken is unprecedented and has created extra value with the candidates who have come.

I hope you're not saying that it's satisfactory in any way, or that somehow a province is at fault, it's out of the government's control or that it's okay for a seat to sit vacant for 1,000 days or, in my case, two years.

Senator Gold: No, I was not saying that everything is okay.

I regret that we still have the vacancies that we do. I look forward eagerly to announcements. It is, unfortunately, the case that the situation in every province differs and that, in some cases, the committees were slow to be constituted. As a result, the process has taken longer. I am choosing not to name names, because that would be unfair.

The process has more levels and layers to it, and is somewhat more time-consuming than previous processes. I join you in looking forward to filling our vacancies as quickly as possible.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: This is a pleasant surprise. My question is to Senator Gold, please.

• (1510)

Recently, I had the honour of co-hosting with Senator Lynn Ruane of Ireland an international round table, the first of its kind, that brought together lawmakers from many different countries who are leading in making new laws to address the misuse of nondisclosure agreements, or NDAs, that are used against victims of harassment and sexual misconduct in private and public workplaces, including publicly funded universities.

A report from Employment and Social Development Canada found in 2017 that 60% of women reportedly experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. As demonstrated by Hockey Canada, NDAs are often used to gag victims of sexual misconduct in the interests of the institution perpetuating the violating behaviour.

My question today is focused on the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 190 entitled *Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work*. The International Labour Organization adopted this in 2019 as the first international treaty to recognize the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. Twenty governments have ratified this convention, Senator Gold, but Canada has not. The Canadian federal government has no clear legislation to identify, regulate and stop the misuse of NDAs.

My question is: When will Canada adopt ILO Convention No. 190 and join these countries to start putting in place the necessary laws and policy measures to more effectively prevent violence and harassment in the world of work?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The short answer is I don't know and I will make inquiries. As the honourable senator knows, and colleagues here would know as well, although

Canada has the power through the Crown prerogative to enter into any treaties, the implementation of treaties requires legislation. In that regard, in matters dealing with labour, for example, this engages the provincial jurisdiction over labour, so it is not uncommon. And those with greater foreign affairs experience would probably attest that it is sometimes the case and it may or not be the case here. I will inquire.

But before Canada makes a commitment internationally, it needs to make sure it has some buy-in or participation from the provinces. I don't know if that's the case and I will certainly inquire. Thank you for raising that.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

SOLE-SOURCE SERVICE CONTRACT

Hon. Leo Housakos: While some of my colleagues — independent senators in this place — are preoccupied with why critics on government bills criticize and oppose government bills, I will continue to hold the government to account.

[*Translation*]

My question is for the government leader. Yesterday, an hour before a House of Commons committee meeting, someone let the cat out of the bag. Since 2017, the Liberal government has granted \$21.8 million worth of contracts for facilities near Roxham Road to Pierre Guay, a Liberal Party of Canada donor. History is repeating itself. Liberals always benefit from the largesse of the Liberal government.

Sadly, Senator Gold, this comes as no surprise. The difference this time around is that, until yesterday, the Trudeau government refused to disclose the amount, claiming it was confidential information. In 2021, *La Presse* tried to get this information by submitting an access to information request to Public Services and Procurement Canada, but the request was denied.

Senator Gold, why did your government try to hide how much money it had paid to Mr. Guay? Are you ashamed? Is there any other information you're hiding? Are other loyal Liberals taking advantage of this situation?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. As has been mentioned several times, nobody is trying to hide information as such. The disclosure of confidential contract information would be a violation of agreements between the government and suppliers. This is standard practice, obviously. I am not ashamed, and neither is the government.

[*English*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Evgenia Kara-Murza, Project Manager of the Free Russia Foundation; the Honourable Irwin Cotler, former Minister of Justice and Attorney

General; and Brandon Silver, Director of Policy and Projects at the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Dalphond.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INCOME TAX ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

Hon. Tony Loffreda moved third reading of Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (temporary enhancement to the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax credit).

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today at third reading to speak to Bill C-30, a government bill introduced in the other place by our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, on September 20.

The fact that this bill was introduced on the first day of regular business after the summer recess indicates to us how important this bill is for the government. In fact, it shows us how important it is for Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet during these extraordinary times of high inflationary pressure.

[*Translation*]

I spoke at length about this bill yesterday at second reading, and you can rest assured that I will not repeat everything I said.

[*English*]

I see some people smiling, which is nice.

[*Translation*]

I would simply remind all my colleagues that the objective of this bill is to give low- and moderate-income individuals and parents a little additional money under the GST/HST credit program.

The objective of this measure, a temporary six-month tax credit, is to help the most disadvantaged Canadians as we continue to fight above-average inflation.

I hope, and it is the government's hope, that these additional amounts will help alleviate some of the financial difficulties of more than 11 million Canadian households that are striving to feed and clothe themselves.

I want to take a moment to make a small clarification about this matter as a follow-up to the question Senator Dupuis asked me yesterday. It is indeed 11 million households that are eligible

for this supplementary benefit. According to the government, these 11 million households include about 9 million single people and almost 2 million couples.

[*English*]

Eleven million Canadians who already receive the tax credit will receive the top-up, but this represents approximately 11 million households. Let me explain that. It's 9 million single people and 2 million couples. For the 2 million couples, the GST top-up is paid to the spouse or common-law partner whose return is assessed first. So as is the case in many tax policies and legislation, it gets a little complicated, but these are approximate numbers. The important point is that half of Canadian families and more than half of Canadian seniors will benefit from this top-up. That is the important point.

Yesterday I addressed the issue of inflation and highlighted some of the challenges with respect to working-age Canadians who don't file their taxes. On the latter, I hope the government will take that issue seriously and seek a remedy. Minister Freeland acknowledged this is a problem and more needs to be done on the issue.

I wasn't planning on addressing the issue of Canadians who don't file their taxes again, but our National Finance Committee met this morning, and I have some additional information that might interest some senators.

The Canada Revenue Agency appeared before the committee and elaborated on some of the outreach efforts it deploys to assist citizens who might otherwise not file their taxes. The agency confirmed they have employees across the country working with various partners and community associations to increase knowledge and awareness of tax filing.

For instance, through the government's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program, the agency hosts income tax clinics in numerous cities and communities. We were informed that — through this partnership program — approximately 600,000 returns were filed, and I'm told that it resulted in over \$1.4 billion in tax returns and benefits being distributed.

• (1520)

In fact, just last week, the Minister of National Revenue announced enhanced funding for these volunteer organizations to better help Canadians with the costs involved in running such clinics. This funding will also benefit the northern CVITP clinics and clinics serving Indigenous populations. Additionally, the agency works with software developers to make sure that tax-filing software is free of charge for low-income Canadians. The CRA also sends letters to Canadians who they believe could benefit from certain benefits, as well as encourages them to file.

With respect to the North — as a follow-up to Senator Patterson's question yesterday — this morning, the CRA also addressed community outreach efforts in the territories. Witnesses reminded us of the opening of three centres — in the North — for in-person services. The CRA also introduced a dedicated telephone line for northern residents to compensate for some bandwidth challenges in the territories. According to the

witnesses who appeared this morning, there had been 944 in-person community visits in Indigenous communities, in the North, prior to the pandemic.

The CRA also mentioned that they have personnel who speak various Indigenous languages, including Inuktitut. They also have various products, including fact sheets, on the importance of filing taxes and how to file in various Indigenous languages. Witnesses confirmed that the CRA is currently working on products in 11 new languages, and these should be ready by the next tax-filing season.

I hope this new information is useful to those who are interested in community outreach by the CRA and some of its efforts in the North. It's important knowledge to share and great work that's done in our committees. That was the case this morning.

Honourable senators, it has been clear to me during our debate on Bill C-30 that many colleagues are concerned about broader economic questions, as well as about the overall health and stability of our economy. I, too, share these concerns, and I believe the government needs to re-evaluate some of its spending programs. I know the minister takes fiscal restraint seriously, too.

I was most pleased during Committee of the Whole when she said:

We recognize that all Canadians are cutting back on costs right now, and we recognize that our government needs to do that, too.

As she acknowledged on October 6:

... it's been difficult for our government to strike a balance between compassionate support for those who need it the most and remaining fiscally responsible.

I totally appreciate that difficulty, and I have no doubt many of us in this chamber will keep a very close eye on future government spending. It's a job I take seriously and enjoy greatly as a member of the National Finance Committee.

[*Translation*]

I would be remiss if I did not mention the degree of cooperation demonstrated in both houses of Parliament in examining this much-needed legislation. The fact that all parties in the other place support this bill speaks volumes about the need to put money in the pockets of low-income Canadians.

[*English*]

Some senators may be disappointed that this bill did not make its way to committee. Senator Marshall voiced her disappointment yesterday, and I can certainly appreciate that. However, this bill is straightforward, and there is an urgency for it to receive Royal Assent.

I appreciate that Minister Freeland made time for us, out of her busy schedule, to appear before the Senate for 90 minutes on October 6. Personally, I think that was sufficient for all of us — not just members of the National Finance Committee — to challenge the government and seek answers to our questions. In

fact, I would suggest that some issues that were raised during Committee of the Whole may not have been addressed in committee.

We know we have been under pressure by the government to pass this bill today in order for the Canada Revenue Agency to get the ball rolling on this new rebate, with the expectation that the first top-up payment will be received before the holidays. If getting this bill adopted today means that families across this country may enjoy a better meal at Christmas, or some child might receive a new winter snowsuit, or parents can turn the heat up a bit higher during our cold winter months, I am certainly willing to vote in favour of this bill and ensure that it receive Royal Assent today.

Honourable senators, Bill C-30 is timely, temporary and necessary. If passed, the money that is going to be distributed for the GST top-up is, indeed, as the minister stated, “a significant sum of money.” As she said, in response to a question from Senator Plett, the measure in Bill C-30:

. . . is carefully targeted relief that is supporting the people who need it the most. It is absolutely within a fiscally responsible approach

I tend to agree with her, which is why I am honoured — as an independent senator from Quebec — to sponsor this government bill in the Senate. I hope all senators will join me in voting in favour of Bill C-30, the cost of living relief act, No. 1. Let’s get this done now and send a clear message to Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet that we have their backs.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Bellemare: Colleagues, I will try to be brief, but I do want to speak at third reading of Bill C-30. Before I begin, I would like to congratulate all my colleagues who spoke before me on this budget bill. The speeches have all been very interesting and have raised important questions. I share many of the concerns that have been raised, especially regarding the fact that this bill has not been thoroughly studied in committee.

As I told Minister Freeland in Committee of the Whole, I will be voting in favour of this bill. I would nevertheless like to share some concerns that could be studied more thoroughly going forward. My comments will focus on taking a critical yet constructive look at the government’s strategy for dealing with this period of inflation.

Many colleagues who rose to speak yesterday at second reading reminded us of what experts are saying about what caused the inflation that we have been experiencing for over a year now. All of the major international research institutions, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, the central banks, like the Bank of Canada, and the macroeconomics experts that the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy has been hearing from over the past few weeks on the state of the economy agree that this inflation is being caused by supply chain issues.

[Senator Loffreda]

In other words, the current inflation is a supply problem, not a demand problem. Were it not for the supply chain disruptions that have been going on since 2020, inflation would not be exceeding the central bank’s targets.

The disruptions in the supply of goods and services are the result of a combination of factors, such as the temporary halt to production due to the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and specific climate considerations that contributed to reducing the production of certain foods. We all hope that these factors are temporary. That is why the central banks are saying that the inflation will be temporary.

In its latest report, from September 2022, the OECD is still saying that the causes of this inflation are temporary. According to the OECD’s economic outlook, inflation is hitting the global economy and has spread beyond the food and energy sectors, but it will ease. However, some supply problems, for gas in particular, may persist as a result of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

For the time being, as confirmed by central banks, inflationary expectations did not get out of hand. Furthermore, the witnesses we have heard from so far at the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy confirm that there is no wage inflation in Canada.

However, despite the fact that current inflation may be temporary, the prices that have gone up could remain at those higher levels. In other words, even if price increases stabilize, prices will still be higher than they were in the past. It will take a lot of market competition for prices to come down. Moreover, with wages rising in many sectors in a bid to shore up purchasing power, a drop in prices is becoming less likely. In short, when inflation stabilizes, price levels will be higher. I want to emphasize that, and it will soon become clear why.

There are definite losers when it comes to inflation, namely the most vulnerable citizens, who tend to live on fixed incomes. Bill C-30 is aimed at individuals and families whose incomes are not increasing by much and who are struggling to make ends meet. That said, inflation also creates winners. Among these winners are governments, particularly the federal government, whose revenue is going up because of inflation. Goods and services tax revenue has gone up significantly and, most likely, permanently.

• (1530)

Now I’d like to talk about strategies recommended by the OECD and experts to get through this temporary period of inflation. The main recommendation is to reduce overall demand to alleviate price pressure caused by supply shortages. That’s why authorities such as the OECD and the International Monetary Fund recommend higher interest rates to cool demand and ease price pressure. That is what the Bank of Canada and most central banks are doing.

These organizations also recommend temporary income transfer measures to boost the purchasing power of low-income individuals. That is exactly what the federal government, the

Bank of Canada and many other governments are doing. Bill C-30 is therefore consistent with the OECD's recommendations.

Is this strategy really effective? Are there any alternatives?

Some people are beginning to question the effectiveness of this strategy. Various tools exist to temporarily reduce demand, and monetary policy is not the only tool. In a context of inflation caused by ongoing supply chain problems, using monetary policy can be very costly. It would be like using aggressive chemotherapy to treat a localized cancer at an early stage, which could kill the patient.

Some economists consider this strategy to be dangerous. Witnesses who appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce shared their concerns with us. David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, sent a clear message that increasing supply should be the focus for the medium term and acknowledged that short-term fiscal measures could also help reduce demand.

Professor Trevor Tombe from the University of Alberta, whom Senator Woo quoted, also questioned the unintended consequences of using interest rates to curb inflation caused by supply shortages. According to his study and others like it that he cited, raising interest rates can have a boomerang effect on inflation. Economist Jim Stafford also shared his concerns about using monetary policy to curb inflation.

In fact, a rapid, substantial interest rate hike may reduce demand, but it could also exacerbate increases in the cost of rent and other prices and services. It could even hinder our production system's ability to fix supply shortages and to support the investments that are needed with respect to climate change. According to David Dodge, the only advantage of using monetary policy to reduce demand is that it is quick. It also relieves elected members of that responsibility.

As for the interim household income support measures also recommended by the OECD, they are by definition temporary. We might even question whether they are truly helpful for the most vulnerable citizens, given that we know that many people do not file tax returns and are therefore ineligible. These measures are politically beneficial, however, and the cost is temporary.

I consulted the latest financial reports from the Department of Finance, including *The Fiscal Monitor* for March 2022. For 2021-22, GST revenues were \$45.5 billion, an increase of 48.9% over the previous year. Obviously, inflation is not the only reason for this increased revenue. It is also due to a return to normal consumption patterns post-COVID.

If we compare 2021-22 to the pre-pandemic years, we nonetheless see a significant increase in GST revenues. The fiscal reference tables that are published every year show that, for fiscal year 2019-20, the year before COVID-19, GST revenues reached \$37.4 billion, and roughly the same amount was recorded in each of the preceding five years.

When we compare pre-COVID years to the fiscal year that ended in March 2022, there was an increase of \$8.1 billion, or 21.7%, in the federal government's revenues. This increase will be permanent. When inflation stabilizes, GST revenues will increase more slowly, but will remain high because prices will not go down.

In this context, Bill C-30, which, according to the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, proposes temporary assistance that will cost \$2.6 billion, represents a rather restrained measure in contrast to the GST revenues taken in by the government. The government could have done more by making the supplement permanent, given that the incomes of vulnerable groups are not going up while prices are not coming down. The government could have temporarily reduced the GST by an amount equivalent to the increase in revenues. A reduction in the GST would have had an impact on inflation because it would have reduced the cost of the market basket.

France, along with other European countries, chose to lower electricity and gas rates and prices. According to a study conducted by France's national institute of statistics, this measure reduced the rate of inflation by three percentage points, from 8% to 5.1%. It is an important measure.

All in all, the federal government has followed the recommendations of the OECD, which suggested adopting temporary income support measures rather than reducing taxes, but is that enough for poorer Canadian families that are struggling to make ends meet? I am not sure.

These same low-income groups are the ones that will bear much of the economic costs of the monetary policy. It must be said. The monetary policy lowers interest rates but creates other costs.

As you know, Canada's monetary policy will slow the economy even though it has already begun to slow. That is already happening in the United States, where there have technically already been two consecutive quarters of falling output. It is generally the most vulnerable groups that pay the price of an economic slowdown. As you know, an economic slowdown is accompanied by job losses. More people draw on employment insurance benefits and, once again, it is lower-income workers and small businesses that, proportionally speaking, pay a lot more than other groups for EI. Is that fair? The answer is obvious.

Finally, like other senators and like Senator Dupuis, I would have liked to see the studies the government did that prompted it to choose this strategy. I would have liked to understand the regional impacts and GBA+ impacts of this strategy. In essence, my goal is to question the information we get from organizations about fighting inflation and to promote more creative solutions going forward.

The government could have done better, but I'll vote in favour of Bill C-30 because families need it. Nevertheless, I think budget measures like Bill C-30 are just short-lived band-aid solutions to a problem that calls for strategic supply-side measures to address supply issues responsibly and permanently. I urge the government to show us its supply-side strategy.

Thank you for listening. *Meegwetch.*

• (1540)

[*English*]

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: I very much enjoyed your discussion of alternative economic models and wanted to ask you about your recommendation of a GST cut as opposed to the measures in this bill. There is merit to the argument — and you've pointed out that some of the countries are doing it — but would you not say that the main difference between an across-the-board GST cut and the doubling of the GST credit is, of course, in its distributional impact? Whereas an across-the-board cut would benefit all consumers, the credit increase would benefit a targeted group of lower-income Canadians. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I'm sorry, Senator Bellemare, but your time is up. Are you asking for five more minutes to answer the question?

Senator Bellemare: Yes.

[*English*]

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Do we have leave, honourable senators, so that Senator Bellemare will answer the question?

Hon. Senators: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Senator Bellemare: Indeed, Senator Woo, I agree with you completely that the distributional impact would be different in each case. I can't tell you in advance what that impact would be. What we do know is that the GST credit will be distributed via the tax system. However, as we heard in the speeches yesterday, a significant portion of our most vulnerable citizens don't file income tax returns and therefore won't benefit from it. This is a very short-term temporary measure.

Lowering the GST would have cost more, obviously, but it would have taken pressure off the Bank of Canada to stop raising interest rates so quickly. Lowering the GST would have benefited consumers, who wouldn't have to spend so much, and it would also have reduced the macroeconomic costs of an anti-inflation strategy that is clearly not designed to address supply problems, and may even exacerbate them. That is specifically where the problem lies, and it needs to be addressed.

In the short term, we have to reduce demand to avoid worsening inflation and, in the medium term, we need to have a plan to improve supply chains.

[*English*]

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I'm not using this podium because of the length of my speech but rather because, as we get on, we all have different issues, and I may need something to lean on.

[Senator Bellemare]

Colleagues, I rise this afternoon as well to speak to Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act. To be honest, colleagues, it's difficult to know where to begin. I've seen a lot of bills introduced in this chamber since I was appointed as a senator, but I do not think any of them were as misleading as what this bill is.

The word “duplicitous” comes to mind, and if you Google the definition, you will find that Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as “marked by duplicity: deceptive in words or action.” These are strong words, but allow me to explain and then judge for yourself if that description does not indeed fit this bill.

On the surface, the purpose of this legislation makes sense. It will put money back in the pockets of Canadians. It basically amounts to a tax refund, and for that reason, our Conservative caucus supported it unanimously in the House. I expect that it will be passed with the same support here in this chamber, and this is something I assured the Minister of Finance of when she was in this chamber. But as soon as you scratch the surface of this bill, you find that this bill is not at all what the government says it is.

While it is claiming to be a “Cost of Living Relief Act,” it is little more than a Band-Aid being applied to a gaping wound that the government insists on repeatedly poking. It does nothing to address the root of the problem and, in fact, will make it worse.

COVID-19 caused supply chain issues, and Vladimir Putin's illegal war in Ukraine has driven up energy prices. Both of these have been significant factors in the increased cost of living we are currently experiencing. But even prior to these developments, colleagues, the government was on a collision course with reality, as it opened the floodgates on spending with no regard for the longer-term impact on our economic health. Much of the spending during COVID was necessary — it helped sustain individuals and our economy while we were trying to navigate uncertain waters with a novel coronavirus — but much of it was not.

The Fraser Institute last week released a study which documented what has already been observed by others when they wrote:

... a significant percentage of Ottawa's huge spending increases during COVID, which produced large deficits and much more debt, had nothing to do with the pandemic . . .

They went on to say:

... approximately 60 per cent of the federal budget deficit during the pandemic . . . related directly to COVID-19 . . . while the remaining 40 per cent was not related to the pandemic.

This is a government which believes it can spend its way out of any problem with no regard for the negative consequences. Even now, in the midst of an inflationary environment, they continue to pour fuel on this fire. You may recall that at the beginning of COVID, the Liberal government did not even think inflation would be a problem, even though Pierre Poilievre warned repeatedly that runaway government spending would

undoubtedly result in inflation by increasing the money supply. An article in the *Financial Post* echoed these same concerns back in May of 2020, stating:

Theory states that a big increase in the money supply will result in runaway prices, and there are those who are adamant that the hundreds of billions of dollars the Bank of Canada intends to create over the next year can only end in a rerun of the 1970s.

Government debt has a long association with inflation, so the Parliamentary Budget Officer's April 30 forecast that debt will spike to about 50% of gross domestic product in 2021 from about 30% in the previous year is making some people nervous. Apparently, some people did not include the federal government. Rather than being nervous about inflation, they dismissed the threat and mocked those who dared mention it. Instead, they lined up with the Governor of the Bank of Canada, who captured this Liberal mindset the best when he said the bigger threat to the Canadian economy was deflation, not inflation.

Even when we began to move out of pandemic restrictions, and the inflation rate could be seen to be notching up, it was still not a priority for this government. Instead, their only concern was to not turn off the firehose of cash too quickly, even though businesses were struggling to find workers and begged the government to make benefits contingent on the recipients being prepared to return to work. The government refused. They assured us that inflation would only be transitory. But by January 19 of this year, Statistics Canada was reporting that the annual rate of inflation had already hit a 30-year high, and economists were warning that rates would climb further yet.

The very same day the Parliamentary Budget Officer released his *Economic and Fiscal Update 2021*, which warned that the government's planned stimulus of \$100 billion was threatening to overstimulate the economy and contribute to inflation. The government, again, ignored these warnings.

• (1550)

By March, the so-called transitory inflation had risen to 6.7%, on its way to 8.1%. And yet, even as the government saw the numbers rising, they refused to consider holding their spending to pre-COVID levels. This year's Main Estimates showed that the federal government has, in fact, expanded its fiscal policy by over \$120 billion this fiscal year when compared to 2018-19. COVID spending is a bare sliver of what it was during the height of the pandemic, yet this government refuses to do the responsible thing and show a little restraint.

The hypocrisy is unbelievable. They claim to care about skyrocketing prices, but they refuse to take any action on the things that are within their direct control. Grocery prices, for example, are up by 10.8%, rising at the fastest pace in 40 years. I'll just name a few: Fish is up 10.4%; butter, 16.9%; eggs, 10.9%; margarine, 37.5%; bread, rolls and buns, 17.6%; dry or fresh pasta, up over 32%; fresh fruit, 13.2%; oranges, 18.5%; apples are up by almost 12%; coffee, up by 14.2%; soup, 19%; lettuce, 12.4%; and potatoes are up by almost 11%.

The average family of four is now spending \$1,200 more each year just to put food on the table, not to mention the rising cost of heat, gasoline and rent.

And in the midst of soaring food costs and people struggling to feed their families, the Liberal government decided it was a great time to target an arbitrary 30% reduction in fertilizer emissions by 2030. This was in spite of warnings from the ag sector that:

. . . reaching 30% is not realistically achievable without imposing significant costs on Canada's crop producers and potentially damaging the financial health of Canada's crop production sector.

Furthermore, while family budgets are being crushed by rising energy prices, the response of this government was to raise prices further by increasing taxes. We are the only country in the G7 that has raised fuel taxes during this period of record inflation, and the government is steadfast in its plan to move ahead with a tripling of the carbon tax.

A report by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation last week noted that while more than half the G7 and G20 countries, and two thirds of the countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are cutting taxes, ". . . the federal government has recently increased the carbon tax, alcohol taxes, and payroll taxes" instead of providing tax relief.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation noted:

Australia cut its gas tax in half. The United Kingdom announced billions in fuel tax relief. The Netherlands cut its gas tax by 17 cents per litre. South Korea cut its taxes at the pumps by 30 per cent. India cut gas taxes to "keep inflation low, thus helping the poor and middle classes."

But what did our NDP-Liberal government do? Instead of adopting policies to help reduce inflation, this government keeps inventing new ideas to make life even more unaffordable for Canadians.

Colleagues, if the government really wanted to reduce inflation, they could do it simply and easily. They could reduce the GST. In fact, 18 countries, including Belgium, Germany and Norway, have reduced consumption taxes to make life more affordable.

As noted by Senator Bellemare when the Minister of Finance was here, GST revenues have increased by almost 50% in one year. Part of that is linked to inflation, because the one thing that inflation helps is government revenue. Higher inflation means higher tax revenue without even having to increase the tax rate — a Liberal's dream.

Last week, in his *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*, the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated that inflation will add an additional \$83 billion to the federal government's coffers over the next five years.

A reduction in the GST tax rate would automatically lower inflation. And as noted by Senator Bellemare at the Committee of the Whole, this is not a novel idea. She pointed out that:

France has experimented with similar kinds of measures and, according to its National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, they have had a meaningful and significant impact. France's current inflation rate is 5%, not 8%.

But rather than taking meaningful action, this government decided to do the only thing it knows how to do: try to spend its way out of the problem.

The government's response to a crisis, which they helped to create through unrestrained government spending, is to spend even more money. After starting the inflationary fire that we find ourselves in today, they cannot resist pouring fuel onto it.

Minister Freeland admitted that increasing government spending can make the problem worse when she said:

... We cannot compensate every single Canadian for the rising costs that are driven by the global pandemic and by Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine. To do so would only make inflation worse and make the Bank of Canada's job harder.

For what was perhaps the first and only time that I have found myself agreeing with Minister Freeland, blasting inflation with more spending is like a fire department that sprays gasoline on a fire in an attempt to put it out. What the finance minister failed to acknowledge, however, is that whether you put a little gasoline on a fire or a lot, it has the same result.

Economists around the world have been warning about this.

On September 22, the headline of a *Financial Post* article was very clear when it said, "... Government aid to help with rising prices risks fuelling 'inflationary fire,' economists warn."

The CIBC, Bank of Montreal and Bank of Nova Scotia have all released reports expressing concern over using revenue windfalls for additional spending.

CIBC's Avery Shenfeld said, "While there are times when fiscal largesse is just what the economy needs, these aren't such times."

Andrey Pavlov, at Simon Fraser University's Beedie School of Business said:

... while the Bank of Canada is doing quite a bit to bring inflation down ... the government hasn't really done much of anything.

Derek Holt from Scotiabank said:

... it seems sensible to assume that this will add to pressures on measures of core inflation ... Any belief that it will ease inflationary pressures must have studied different economics textbooks.

I have no idea which economics textbooks our finance minister studied or, indeed, if she studied any, but one thing is certain: She is misleading Canadians by making them think that this bill is a cost of living relief act. In the end, it will do nothing to relieve the cost of living and only pretends to do so.

You may have noticed that when the finance minister was here for the Committee of the Whole, I asked her a point-blank question:

Did your department conduct any analysis of the impact that this spending measure will have on the inflation rate in Canada?

It's a fair question, I thought. If economists are warning that measures such as this could make things worse, then Canadians have a right to know if the government bothered to take the time to determine what that impact would be. Maybe it's a little or maybe it's a lot. The problem is that we will never know because the finance minister refused to answer even the most basic of questions — although we shouldn't think that is a surprise, the way we get questions answered.

• (1600)

In fact, the finance minister refused to answer every question I asked her, and instead used the opportunity to regurgitate her unhelpful talking points like she was attending Question Period in the other place.

I asked if her department conducted an analysis of the impact that this spending will have on the inflation rate in Canada, and all I got was reassurances that she takes spending very seriously.

That we already knew, colleagues. About the only thing this NDP-Liberal government takes seriously is spending, which is why they are still spending \$120 billion more than before COVID. They are very serious about spending as much money as they can because they are convinced that the budget will balance itself, and the Prime Minister cannot be bothered to think about monetary policy.

However, colleagues, we did not invite the minister here to parade her talking points in front of us and promote her government's agenda. Committee of the Whole is to take the place of a committee meeting. At committee meetings we call witnesses to give us answers, not to spout government rhetoric and political talking points. Yet we did not receive a single answer to a question on Bill C-30. For 95 minutes, colleagues, we heard the finance minister talk about everything from fossil fuel subsidies, to mandatory reporting on climate-related financial risk, to dental care and housing benefits.

Yet, when I asked how Bill C-30 would help slow spending in the economy — as the Governor of the Bank of Canada noted is necessary — I was told that we have the lowest budget in the G7. When I asked whether the Prime Minister was beginning to think about monetary policy, I was schooled about the independence of the Bank of Canada.

When I posted the video of my questions along with the minister's non-responses to social media, people were outraged. I will read a few quotes.

Brian said, "A grade 3 student would give more concise answers than the liberal government of Canada would."

Melody said:

. . . thank you for your questions . . . and your amazing patience when it is obvious that she will never offer more than tiptoeing through the tulips. I'd be livid!

Roger wrote:

She likes to start with "let me be clear" but every answer is word salad. Her patronizing arrogance is sickening. She talks like she's reading a 5-year-old a bed time story.

Bill wrote, "Asking a Liberal, any Liberal, a question, any question, is a complete waste of time."

Sandy said, "So triple the carbon tax, that's how compassionate they are."

Charlie wrote, "She's obviously not taking this seriously, just making a mockery of this and having zero respect for the inquiry."

Colleagues, I could go on and on, but I have made my point. The Minister of Finance was not the least bit interested in answering questions, and that is unacceptable. If this is the way that ministers of the Crown treat Committee of the Whole, then our caucus is going to start opposing Committees of the Whole.

If we had held regular committee meetings on this bill, we would have had the opportunity to call other witnesses in order to get some answers. I am certain that one of those witnesses would have been the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who confirmed last week in his *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* that the government's spending to alleviate the rising cost of living will actually increase the cost of living.

Some will argue that the impact will be minimal, but I would argue that it is inexcusable and irresponsible for the federal government to be working against the Bank of Canada's efforts to bring inflation down. This, colleagues, is shameful. It's no wonder the finance minister did not want to answer the question.

Colleagues, if Committee of the Whole is just a way for the government to dodge a proper examination of their legislation, then we will begin to insist that every bill go to full committee hearings regardless of the government's time frame.

The fact is that this bill did not need to be rushed. The government had ample time to put this legislation together and table it. It is not complicated. Yet, as Senator Martin noted in Committee of the Whole, they appear to have just woken up to the fact that Canadian families are being pummelled by inflation.

We know this because the bill is accompanied by a Royal Recommendation. A Royal Recommendation is required when a bill authorizes new charges that were not anticipated in the estimates.

But consider that the Main Estimates were tabled on March 1 — the same month that inflation hit 6.7%. Supplementary Estimates (A) were tabled on June 7 — the same month that inflation hit 8.1%. Yet neither contained any mention of this spending.

Inflation did not just show up on our doorstep one morning, colleagues. There was ample time for the government to anticipate the need for this bill and include the allocation in the estimates. But apparently, even as inflation was ramping up, the government was asleep at the wheel.

Senators, why is it that this government cannot get legislation to us within a decent time frame even when the bill has unanimous support in the House of Commons? It was tabled in the other place on September 20, and then it took them the next three sitting weeks to get an uncontested bill over here. Let me repeat that, colleagues: An uncontested bill took three weeks to get over here. If there was ever a government that is unable to walk and chew gum at the same time, it is this NDP-Liberal government.

You don't have to take my word for it. Former Governor of the Bank of Canada Stephen Poloz noted at the recent Global Business Forum in Banff that Canada is a chronic underachiever — a condition caused by poor political decisions and the failure to address unresolved issues.

The problems that he listed were the following: "a political quagmire that requires a crisis to make decisions," "layers of regulation," "permit and consultation that take ages to complete," and the fact that "Canada is one of the most highly taxed economies on earth . . ."

That is why we find ourselves here tonight, forced to fly back early to deal with this bill. It once again comes down to this government's never-ending incompetence.

Colleagues, the other thing you need to realize about this bill is that it doesn't help people as much as the government makes it sound like it does. It's not that people won't appreciate receiving the help — they will. But the way the government likes to strut and gloat like they are being the hero by introducing this bill is misleading.

For starters, you need to understand that this money is only going to go to these who would normally receive the GST credit benefit. Numerous senators noted during Committee of the Whole that this doesn't include anyone who does not file an income tax return.

Secondly, the government likes to give the impression that this money is largely going to help single moms with small children. In reality, out of the 11.6 million cheques that will be sent out, only 1.3 million will go to households with children, and less than half of that will go to single-parent homes. The other 10.3 million cheques will go to households with no children.

Thirdly, as Statistics Canada has pointed out in the past:

Since the economic well-being of an individual also depends on family income rather than just personal income, those who qualify for the GST credit are not necessarily disadvantaged. An example would be a young adult living with parents and working part time at a low-paying job. . . . the majority of recipients . . . are from multiple-earner families or those with more than one recipient (for instance, a child and another relative of the major income recipient living in the same family).

In other words, senators, there is no surgical precision in the deployment of this \$2.5 billion.

The fourth thing I would point out is that this program was designed to be a tax rebate of GST expenses, not an inflation-fighting tool. This means that the lowest earners will not necessarily receive the higher amounts.

• (1610)

The way the program is designed, an eligible adult will receive a tax credit of \$306 plus \$161 for every qualified child under 19. If you're married, you and your spouse each receive \$306 plus the \$161 for your child. This comes to \$773, half of which is \$386.50, which is the benefit they will be eligible for under Bill C-30.

If you're a single parent, the calculation is the same because there is an "equivalent to spouse" amount for single parents where they receive two times the base credit. However, if you are among the 9 million recipients who are single with no children, then you receive the base amount of \$306, but if you earn more than \$9,900 a year, you will receive 2% of every dollar earned over and above that amount, up to a maximum of an additional \$161.

What this means in practice is that a single person earning just under \$10,000 a year will receive \$154 under this bill, whereas a single person earning twice that amount will receive \$234, which is 52% more.

Colleagues, my point is not only that these payments are small but that they are inequitable. Although this bill is supposed to help those most in need, in many cases those with the greatest need will actually receive less than those who earn twice as much as they do.

For a GST rebate, the program makes sense because if you have more money, then you spend more on GST in a year, but for a measure which is supposed to provide targeted tax relief to those who need it the most, it is a joke.

To make it practical, consider this: A single mother with a \$30,000 net income will receive an additional \$2.10 per day for six months, for a total of \$386.50. However, over the same period, the purchasing power of this single mother's income will have been reduced by more than \$1,000 due to "Justinflation," or about \$5.43 per day. While the NDP-Liberal government is presiding over the highest inflation hike in 40 years which takes more than \$5 a day from a single mom, their solution is to offer \$2 a day and pretend to be heroes.

[Senator Plett]

Colleagues, let me be clear that no one is suggesting the government should "compensate every single Canadian" for the rising cost of living, to use the finance minister's words. We cannot spend our way out of this mess as the Liberals always like to do. We are asking the government to stop raising taxes on Canadian families and use their inflation tax windfall to reduce taxes rather than blowing it out the door in new spending. If we want to avoid a full-blown recession, we need to be fiscally prudent, not careless.

We do not have to look far to see what will happen if the Trudeau government is not careful. The United Kingdom is learning the hard way that the markets will punish a government that does not pay attention to its balance sheet. This could have lasting effects.

As Mr. Torsten Bell from the U.K.'s Resolution Foundation told *Politico*:

The big picture in a world where interest rates are rising and inflation is high, is that you don't want to be seen as the one country that everyone decides is a bad bet.

Showing how serious you are is important. If we are really arguing that our growth strategy is to borrow lots more and then that will pay for itself then they [the markets] don't believe that.

And as Royce Mendes, head of macro strategy at Desjardins Group, told *Global News* in October:

It's more important than it has been in many, many years for the federal government to reassure (investors) that it is nowhere close to following the U.K.'s path.

Let's hope our government is paying attention, colleagues, and will not repeat the British mistakes.

In closing, let me say this: When the Minister of Finance was here in this chamber to give non-answers to questions about this bill, she said, "Canadians are smart"

On that point, I am in full agreement with the minister as well. Canadians are smart. I believe they will see through this nonsense of ratcheting up costs for consumers and then swooping in, pretending to be the hero by tossing back a morsel here and there. Canadians are smarter than this. And, colleagues, they are going to show this government just how smart they are in the next general election.

Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Plett, a few senators would like to ask questions. Are you ready to answer some questions?

Senator Plett: Yes, I will at least take some questions. I'm not sure how well I will answer them. I am the critic on this bill, not the government, and it's not my place to defend it or answer the questions, but let's try.

Senator Woo: Thank you, Senator Plett. I have the same question for you that I asked Senator Bellemare, but whereas I asked Senator Bellemare a question out of genuine interest in the economic model she was proposing, I am befuddled by your explanation of how the economics work in the model you have put forward. Your starting point is that federal government spending is out of control and therefore unsustainable, and that it is this same spending that has added "fuel," to use your words, to inflationary pressure essentially through what they call expansionary fiscal policy. Your solution, then, is to reduce the GST by a few percentage points, but that is expansionary fiscal policy.

While I haven't done the detailed numbers, the back-of-the-envelope calculation in my head suggests to me that a reduction in GST of a few percentage points for everyone will be much larger than the cost of Bill C-30. Therefore, that policy would be an even more expansionary fiscal policy than what we are considering in this bill. It would also, by the way, exacerbate what you claim to be a problem of fiscal unsustainability.

Then there is the magical thinking that by reducing the GST — and increasing expansionary fiscal policy and adding to inflationary pressure — that reduction will allow the Bank of Canada to be less strict and harsh on increasing interest rates. That's what we call fiscal dominance, where the fiscal policy of being irresponsible by cutting GST puts more pressure on the Bank of Canada to increase interest rates. Since you brought up the U.K. example, that is exactly what is happening in the U.K.

You are proposing, essentially, a policy of increasing expansionary policy, which will push up interest rates and inflation more than it does currently. You are creating pressures for the Bank of Canada, to the extent that this is an unsustainable fiscal policy, to increase interest rates more. I would add that reducing GST is a very difficult policy to unwind. You know that very well because it was under a previous Conservative government that reduced GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, which is where we are today.

My question to you, Senator Plett, is: What economics textbooks are you consulting?

Senator Plett: That was an awfully long preamble, Senator Woo, and I am not consulting economists on this. I am making a speech that is contrary to what the government is doing, and I don't need to defend that. They need to defend their bill. I don't need to defend their bill.

You say it's very difficult to reduce the GST, and then with that you said, "But your government did it." So it's not impossible. It might be difficult, but it's not impossible.

Hon. Clément Gignac: Senator Plett, I wanted to mention to you that I share your frustration regarding the conduct of monetary policy in Canada. I think the Bank of Canada slept on

the switch before removing liquidity, and we have a significant problem. Even the Governor of the Bank of Canada recognized that.

• (1620)

I also share your concern — and I expressed that yesterday — that a lot of poor people who are on social assistance do not file income tax. This morning at the National Finance Committee, chaired by our friend and colleague Senator Percy Mockler, we gave a hard time and some suggestions to the Canada Revenue Agency to do that.

My question is this: Regarding your proposal to reduce the goods and services tax, or GST, Canada leads the G7 in terms of economic growth this year with 3.2%, and next year, it expects to lead the G7 at 1.7%. To continue on the angle of Senator Woo's, the GST reduction will help stimulate the economy and will help the people who are rich compared to the poor. Personally, I would call that the kick-the-can inflation policy because in the short-term, yes, you are reducing the inflation rate — no doubt about that — but everyone knows that the government will restore the GST to the previous level after that. For me, it just postpones the problem.

I listened to your answer to Senator Woo and I know you're not here to — we talked about the bill — but nonetheless, this GST reduction is not exactly the best idea at the current stage of the economy because we have a significant risk to increase the GST at the time that the economy cools significantly as the global economic slowdown confirms.

Senator Plett: Thank you, senator, and you may be right: Future governments may decide to increase the GST again, but this government is responsible for acting under their watch as the Harper government was responsible for acting under his watch. He did decrease the GST. It has not gone up since then. This Liberal has not tried to raise the GST. They have raised a whole pile of other taxes, but not the GST.

So you saying that reducing the GST means it will only be raised in the future is entirely hypothetical — it might or might not be the case.

Also, when you say that reducing the GST will help the rich more than the poor — that may also be correct, but so is this bill. In the illustrations I used, this bill is helping those in a higher income bracket more than those in a lower income bracket. So this bill is doing that as well.

Senator Gignac: For the record, I disagree with your last sentence that this bill will help the rich more than the poor. It's limited because people who earn more than \$30,000 a year do not have access to this GST reduction.

Senator Plett: Let me clarify that: It will help those who are not the poorest people more than the poorest people. You're right: Someone earning \$30,000 a year is by no means rich, but it will help somebody earning \$30,000 more than it will help somebody earning \$10,000.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.)

[*Translation*]

ONLINE STREAMING BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Dawson, seconded by the Honourable Senator Bovey, for the second reading of Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts.

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise to speak to the debate on the online streaming act. This is an important government bill that honours its commitment to creating a fairer, safer and more inclusive Internet for all Canadians. I would like to focus on the positive measures in the bill for promoting the official languages and enhancing the vitality and development of official language minority communities.

However, let me first remind you why it is essential to act in the area of broadcasting. The last major review of the Broadcasting Act dates back to 1991. The act was therefore not designed for the Internet and digital technologies. This means that the CRTC, as an independent regulator, does not have all the tools it needs to regulate and monitor the broadcasting sector. As we know, that sector is rapidly evolving, I would even say with the click of a mouse.

While ensuring that the CRTC has the right tools to engage all the players who benefit from the Canadian broadcasting system, it is also important to support and promote the creation, production and broadcast of Canadian programs and music for generations to come. The time has come to act for all Canadians, including those in official language minority communities.

The official languages are at the core of our identity. That is why Canada has adopted laws and policies to promote and protect French and English throughout its history. The Official Languages Act is one example. The government has undertaken to modernize and strengthen the act in order to ensure substantive equality of French and English in Canada.

However, the Official Languages Act is not the only tool available. There are other tools and legislative mechanisms to promote the full recognition of both official languages in Canadian society. For example, the Broadcasting Act plays an essential role. As the Minister of Canadian Heritage rightly pointed out in his speech, the vitality of a language is closely linked to the culture. In other words, culture is expressed through language and, in the digital age, the programs we watch and the music we listen to are delivered through online platforms. These channels and portals are essential means for the transmission of language and culture today.

That is why Bill C-11 strengthens the provisions of the Broadcasting Act in order to support the official languages and official language minority communities.

It is important to remember that linguistic duality is one of the key principles of Canadian broadcasting policy. In addition, the Broadcasting Act recognizes that English- and French-language broadcasting have different needs.

However, official language minority communities have made it clear that this reference to linguistic duality alone is not enough. They want to be identified by name in the act. Official language minority communities have also stressed that it is crucial to their vitality and development that the Broadcasting Act take their specific needs and interests into account.

Honourable senators, it is also important to note that, as part of the work done by the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages to modernize the Official Languages Act during the first session of the Forty-second Parliament, the committee's 10th report states that the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act should include official languages obligations. Those observations can be found on page 24 of the report.

As a Franco-Manitoban who has had the pleasure of working with official language minority communities across the country, I would like to point out that the reflection and expression of francophone and Acadian communities in the Canadian landscape has always been problematic. The perennial question is this: How do we achieve Canadian cultural sovereignty and preserve Canada's voice in this tidal wave of audio and video content? For francophone and Acadian communities, this issue is crucial. Their vitality and their future depend on it.

• (1630)

I am pleased to see that the voices of francophone and Acadian communities have been heard.

As a result, the online streaming act strengthens the official languages component of the Broadcasting Act. It sets out meaningful objectives for official language minority communities.

At this point, I'd like to concentrate on three provisions of the bill.

First, Bill C-11 states that the Broadcasting Act should be construed and applied in a manner that is consistent with, and I quote:

. . . the commitment of the Government . . . to enhance the vitality of official language minority communities and to support and assist their development, as well as to foster the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.

This is the new subsection 3 proposed in clause 2 of the bill.

Second, Bill C-11 stipulates that the Canadian broadcasting system should enhance the vitality of official language minority communities and support and assist their development. Supporting the production and broadcasting of original programs by and for these communities is key to this commitment. As you know, colleagues, the concept of “by and for” is essential for official language minority communities because it embodies and implements their autonomy.

Finally, the bill defines the CRTC’s mandate with respect to official language minority communities. It specifies that the CRTC should take into account the specific needs and interests of these communities and facilitate the provision of programs created and produced by them. That is important. Once again, the “by and for” is central to the objective. That is clause 6 of the bill, which adds sections 5.1 and 5.2 to the act.

Honourable colleagues, the Broadcasting Act must support official language minority communities. In Canada, approximately 2 million people belong to these communities. They need to see and hear themselves on television, on the radio and online.

Official language minority communities did not wait to go digital. They are at the forefront of this trend. I am thinking in particular of TFO, which reached the milestone of more than 1 billion views across all of its channels in 2019.

I am also thinking of WebOuest, a French-language digital platform that launched in February. WebOuest is a reflection of francophone communities from the Prairies to the Rockies to the Canadian North. WebOuest is the voice of the groups that make up our communities.

The Société des Jeux de l’Acadie, whose mission is to develop the Acadian Games movement in order to enhance the vitality of francophone youth in the Atlantic provinces through competition and athletic and cultural activities, has created the digital platforms Acajoux and Les Étoiles d’Acajoux. They help support the athletic and cultural development of young people from an Acadian language and culture perspective, because as we say in Acadia, “As long as the flame burns, the star of Acadian youth will shine.”

Now it is our turn to do our part by ensuring that the legislative framework reflects the realities of broadcasting in the digital age, that every player that benefits from the Canadian broadcasting system also contributes to it, and that stories and music produced by and for official language minority communities are supported financially, made available, broadcast, presented and showcased

for generations to come. To promote our art and culture, an online presence is imperative, and discoverability is crucial to our cultural sovereignty.

[*English*]

I quote and echo the sentiments expressed by the minister:

. . . as francophones, we depend on culture to preserve our language. If we want our children to speak our language, we need to keep our culture strong. To do that, we need a system that is both just and fair.

[*Translation*]

Culture is a vital part of a vibrant francophone community because it is expressed through the way we tell our stories, celebrate, remember the past, keep ourselves entertained and imagine the future.

I would like to close my remarks by borrowing the poetic words of Viola Léger, who played the famous Canadian character La Sagouine, because they express how important culture is to us francophones. She said, and I quote:

Culture is like breathing. Culture breathes. It is in our blood. It lives between the lines. Art is the hope of humanity and culture is the vehicle through which that art is expressed. The art that makes us believe. That makes us want. That makes us live.

That is why I invite you, honourable senators, to support the online streaming bill at second reading so that it can be sent to the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications as quickly as possible. The vitality and long-term survival of our official language minority communities depend on it. Thank you. *Meegweetch*.

[*English*]

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, I support Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts. I thank all who have spoken on this bill’s goals and complexities, which have come to the fore, in this chamber, as well as through the hundreds — no, thousands — of emails we have received.

Bill C-10 — not completed before we rose in the summer — has become Bill C-11. As Senator Dawson said, Bill C-11 reflects the issues raised, especially those around user-generated content. It now strengthens protections on free speech. Bill C-11 represents the first and long-overdue Canadian Broadcasting Act overhaul since 1991. The world of broadcasting has been through a sea change since then, and modernization is absolutely necessary in today’s world, dominated by the internet and digital technology.

Canadians now access digital platforms for much of their entertainment, with Netflix being accessed by 62% of Canadian households. In 2019, that platform alone generated some \$1 billion. That success story is well-earned, but this digital shift created a significant imbalance. Online broadcasters are not

required to support Canadian content like traditional broadcasters are. This is a major concern for Canada's arts and culture community. Bill C-11 seeks to redress this situation.

The changes we're discussing today, for the most part, have come from the 97 recommendations outlined in the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review panel's 2020 report. Tasked to review the current situation, the panel's objective was to provide the government with recommendations to best modernize the Broadcasting Act in the digital age — in the Canadian context.

The purpose of this bill is to boost creative protection, support arts and culture in Canada and benefit millions of audiences. May we remember this goal as we study it. The three key desired — needed — outcomes are artist payments, production monies and discoverability.

Simply put, Bill C-11 clarifies that online broadcasting is within the scope of the Broadcasting Act. The changes better reflect Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and Canada's diversity. It underlines fair and equitable treatment between online and traditional broadcasters, introduces an administrative monetary penalties regime and adds more explicit information sharing and confidentiality provisions. We must determine if these objectives are met.

• (1640)

Key for me is that internet platforms will be regulated like broadcasters. This is very much supported by Canada's creators, for whom support for creation and presentation is essential. The early internet was described as the information highway, and highways have rules and realities. Now, our living culture, the internet, presents the unique talents of Canadians.

[Translation]

Let me again remind you of the reality in this country. The arts and culture industries are the third-largest employer in Canada. They contribute significantly to our GDP, yet the startling anomaly is that our artists make up the largest percentage of the working poor living below the poverty line. This must be corrected. They, like any other professional, should be compensated fairly for their work and the development of new projects. This bill takes that step.

[English]

During COVID, artists created and shared their work using means they had at their disposal, including cellphones and internet platforms. Musicians, writers, storytellers and more gave us solace, inspiration, connections and hope through the pandemic and other recent tragedies. They did so earning nothing, as internet platforms don't pay. Indeed, a recent study showed that musicians who put their work on internet platforms during COVID earned an average of \$67 per year. Who in this chamber could live on \$67 per year — or even \$67 per week?

Canada's artists have supported and do support this country. Now Canada needs to support its creators fairly. This bill takes important steps for compensation to creators, producers and arts communities.

[Senator Bovey]

Colleagues, the arts are not a societal frill. As I frequently say, they are at the core of society — an anchor in myriad dimensions. They are not unimportant. They are essential.

[Translation]

During the debate on Bill C-10 last spring, I took you back through a bit of history. I underscored the consistency of the guiding principles that have been maintained nationally, for decades, even as new technologies have successively been developed. The broadcasting chapter in the 1951 Massey report, chaired by future Governor General Vincent Massey, shows some equivalencies to today.

[English]

Back then, the general feeling was that television was becoming an important and dangerous rival to other mass media and the cinema. The Massey report debunked that perception, saying:

There is television broadcasting today in a number of countries . . . Each of these countries follows in television the same policies as in radio broadcasting.

Colleagues, each update of the broadcasting regulations saw an increase in Canadian content — in the 1950s, the 1980s, the 1990s — and will again now. Protecting, encouraging and developing Canadian content, the goal of Bill C-11, is a goal supported by artists across Canada.

Piers Henwood, an esteemed musician and music manager working nationally and globally, underlined for me that support for Bill C-11 a few months ago. In his summer 2022 *Rifflandia Magazine* article "Creative Courage," he talks of creative courage as:

. . . the courage to create art, but also the courage to enter a creative industry, the courage to support a creative economy, and the courage to face social judgment for taking creative risks.

He described music professionals' livelihoods as "the ability to create and then monetize art." He noted that a melody, "a uniquely mysterious and magical foundation for building a creative economy," starts it all. The melody:

. . . cascades outwards to create an economic engine, moving from one head to millions . . . Agents, managers, record labels, recording engineers, publishers, touring crew, and concert and festival promoters . . .

— and all media industries.

My experience corroborates his. It is the creators who generate content and, in turn, open doors for myriad professions, together making up a vital economic and social engine through anglophones, francophones, Indigenous artists and those of all diversities. Without artists, there would be no platforms. This bill updates regulations to ensure that, as with traditional broadcasters, the whole sector is fairly treated, with artists being paid.

As Piers emphasized to me, and as our Senate report *Cultural Diplomacy at the Front Stage of Canada's Foreign Policy* pointed out, the benefit and impact of this sector are global. Production and digital presentation on air and online by Canadian artists enrich Canada's perception at home and around the world. That, senators, should be compensated just as every industry compensates its innovators.

Colleagues, I truly believe Bill C-11 needs to be passed as quickly as possible. It is only right and fair that the same principles hold for today's new technological platforms as they have with earlier ones. We saw in the early stages of CBC the early commissioning of thousands of commissioned and performed scripts and music scores. Some are in the archives, some not. But even George Woodcock in his book *Strange Bedfellows: The State and the Arts in Canada* noted:

Even the employment provided by the CBC to actors, musicians and writers assured in most cases only part of the money needed to survive.

In June of 2021, *National Post* voiced the question of protecting domestic cultural industries as more Canadians turned to internet companies for music and video programming. They were concerned about stunting the influence of U.S. culture, a core principle of modern Canadian media law. They noted that for decades the government has required radio and television broadcasters to produce and distribute local content.

Hundreds of people I have spoken with, including Robin Sokoloski, Director of Organizational Development at Mass Culture, expressed unwavering support for this bill, for the monies that should be paid for and to the arts and for the discoverability of art. Ms. Sokoloski told me the bill includes policy objectives needed to ensure the works of our creators are discoverable, and in this algorithm-driven online world, accountability isn't just a consideration. We need to build in measures that both protect our artists and provide access to their work.

Many people also told me of the urgent need for the internet platforms to be within the purview of the CRTC. Without the due financial contributions that should be coming, our stories cannot and will not be told. I contend, colleagues, that their telling has never been more important. We must be able to see and hear the Indigenous, Black and immigrant histories that have never been part of the traditional Canadian histories. Further, it stands to reason that if we don't have content creators, we won't have internet platforms, and if that content is not created by and about Canadians, we won't know our country, stories, places or ideas.

Senator Dawson said in this chamber:

The policy objectives . . . will ensure that our broadcasting system reflects Canadian society and that diverse and inclusive programming is available to everyone. That is essential to ensuring that the Canadian broadcasting system can help broaden people's perspectives, spur empathy and compassion for others and celebrate our differences, while strengthening the common bonds that unite our unique Canadian society.

Now is not the first nor the last time new technologies have challenged broadcasters. Broadcasting legislation and regulation was addressed by the 1929 Aird Commission, the 1949-51 Massey Commission, the 1981 Applebaum-Hébert Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, not to mention the Mulroney government's well-handled concerns of Canadian periodicals when negotiating the first Canada-U.S. trade agreement. Today, in 2022, the issue is just as simple and just as complex as in former times.

[Translation]

This first modernization of our Broadcasting Act since 1991 would add three new requirements for digital media companies. They must provide information about their revenue sources, give a portion of their profits to a fund to support Canadian content and increase the visibility or discoverability of Canadian content.

• (1650)

[English]

Canada is not alone. The government has assessed and drawn from policies and actions of other countries, including Britain, Australia and the European Union. EU local content rules, for instance, require platforms to promote European cultural productions. At least 30% of their catalogues must be made in the bloc, and the EU requires video-on-demand services to prioritize local content.

As to freedom of speech, it is not curtailed by this bill. In fact, history has demonstrated many times that no members of society fight more for free speech than artists. Indeed, the foresight and courage of artists and scientists, as I have said in this chamber before, puts lights on issues our society must deal with, including those not always popular or heard, like raising the issues of residential schools and murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls long before the commissions for either were established, and long before the concerns were heard by society.

[Translation]

Colleagues, it is important to know what this bill actually contains. We must update the 1991 legislation to recognize and use modern technologies. The need to respect and compensate Canadian artists is key, as is the production and presentation of Canadian content, our stories, our issues and our perspectives.

[English]

We must do it so Canadian stories are told, celebrated and heard, so their creators and producers are recompensed and so there are budgets for more stories for the engagement and enjoyment of Canadians. Heaven knows we are in dire need of Canadian truths, insights and inspirations. Only then will we be able to fully understand who we are and what we need to do to honour our past and envision our futures. This bill provides for that. Without it, I fear we will lose so much about who we are. Without that content, we won't have platforms. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT ANTI-RACISM AS THE SIXTH PILLAR OF THE CANADA HEALTH ACT— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson:

That the Senate of Canada call on the federal government to adopt anti-racism as the sixth pillar of the *Canada Health Act*, prohibiting discrimination based on race and affording everyone the equal right to the protection and benefit of the law.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Honourable senators, this item is adjourned in the name of Senator Dean. I ask for leave of the Senate that, following my intervention, the balance of his time to speak to this item be reserved.

Tansi. As a senator from Manitoba, I have previously made my land acknowledgement, as in speaking today, so I would like to proceed with my remarks on Motion No. 11.

Allow me to begin by emphasizing our responsibility as senators to represent the voices of minorities in this country. Minorities can mean many different things, depending on the context, but, in the context of this motion, I want to suggest that "minority" pertains specifically to members of BIPOC populations: Black, Indigenous and people of colour living in Canada.

Senator McCallum's Motion No. 11 asks us to recommend the adoption of anti-racism as the sixth pillar of the Canada Health Act, to strengthen the intersectionality of the existing pillars of universality, comprehensiveness, portability, accessibility and public administration.

What an indictment it is that such an amendment is even necessary. I support this motion because it is a crucial step in recognizing and responding more effectively to the indisputable fact that there is systemic racism in our health care system in this country.

[Senator Bovey]

People living in Canada should not have to fear racial discrimination when trying to access health care services, whether that be at a doctor's office or in a hospital. Although we understand this basic right and we recognize it in the equality clauses of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as the Canada Health Act, we continue to ignore aspects of systemic racism that seep into Canada's health care system at the cost of people's well-being and dignity, sometimes taking their lives.

As a White woman raised with privilege, my chances of receiving the health care that I need, without being challenged about my honesty or my needs based on my skin colour or socio-economic status, are better than average. I do not have to wonder whether I will be unknowingly sterilized when I'm in surgery. It is highly unlikely that I will be ignored or that health care providers will give up on finding a diagnosis that I need. It is unlikely that it will be implied that my health problem is my fault. I do not need to wonder at or fear these things, but others do. We cannot deny that. It is our job to establish a higher standard of care that is consistent and is available everywhere in Canada so that every person in Canada can access health care without discrimination.

Indigenous people experience a high level of racism across Canada. Depending on the geographic location, between 39% and 78% of Indigenous people have reported experiencing unfair treatment as a result of racism. In particular, one study highlighted that Indigenous patients strategize how to manage racism before going to the emergency room. Can you imagine that? To have to weigh whether seeking medical aid is worth it, even when you are in great pain or sick enough that you know you need to go to a hospital?

One of the most obvious examples of racism in Canada is the deplorable treatment of Indigenous women who were sterilized without their knowledge, without their consent.

• (1700)

With credit to Senator Yvonne Boyer for her leadership, the harrowing report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights on forced sterilization is compelling in honouring witnesses who bravely shared the violence of their experience of health care.

These patients — women — were vulnerable, laid open following birth and entrusted into the care of doctors, nurses and other health care providers who essentially coerced them into permanent procedures that robbed them of their agency, robbed them of their liberty and denied them the choice of their fertility.

In addition, this assault on their bodies was compounded by the added humiliation they reported because they were subjected to medical staff making irrelevant, inappropriate comments about their lives and their culture.

Across the country — not just in Manitoba — people were horrified when Indigenous patient Brian Sinclair died after waiting over 34 hours in a Winnipeg emergency room in 2008 while medical staff took care of others who came much later than he did to care.

Recently, in 2020, we have been made well aware in this chamber of Inuit Indigenous woman Joyce Echaquan who managed to record the vicious treatment that preceded her death in a Quebec hospital while strapped to her bed suffering in agony. She recorded the staff insulting her, ignoring her pleas for help.

Again, we were shocked. But have we been shocked enough to act? How many of these well-documented cases of racism-driven health emergencies do we need to know about before we start to analyze this as systemic, before we start to address these individual cases as inextricably connected to each other and connected to failures in our health care system because of racism?

These are not all isolated cases but, rather, it is that racism is built into many aspects of our health care system. And racism can kill. How are Indigenous and other BIPOC people expected to trust the health care system when it continues to fail them in this way?

It is not only Indigenous people that experience the consequences of systemic racism. According to research published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, Black people experience risk factors that purely biological disparities cannot explain. In large measure, these risk factors can be attributed to systemic racism.

Specifically, experiences of anti-Black racism in Canada's health care system can be found in stereotyping and provider bias. Provider bias is when a health care provider embodies a particular attitude and restricts client access and choice. As a result, health care providers can rely on assumptions and stereotypes when making decisions about that patient's health.

Time does not allow for many more examples.

However, I do want to speak very personally now about one of my very dearest friends, a Black woman — I will not name her — who is highly educated in the medical profession. A Black woman who is almost never ill, is physically fit and lives in a high-income household.

Last summer, she overdid it moving bricks in her garden and ended up in a paralyzing, crippling pain that forced her to go to the emergency. We almost lost her. Although she is among the most highly qualified people I know, she is a Black woman. It was that Black woman that triggered decisions by the doctor who ignored her initially, repeatedly in terms of even asking for certain aspects of her condition to be attended to.

That doctor prescribed completely inappropriate medicine that almost killed her — I am not exaggerating — to the point where the medical doctors who then treated her and saved her life have joined in a complaint to the medical association. It was so obvious that this was based on her skin colour. There was no other rational explanation for what happened to her.

In 2021, The Commonwealth Fund ranked the health care systems from 11 different countries on a variety of factors, including equity. Canada ranked second last in equity. Although

Canada ranked significantly higher than the United States, it was far below the average. Australia, Germany and Switzerland placed in the top three. Canada was also in the bottom three in 2017. It is important to note that The Commonwealth Fund's 2017 report only included income-related inequities.

However, in recognizing intersectionality, BIPOC groups are more likely to earn a lower income. The accumulation of advantage among primarily White people due to our society's cultural and political framework creates and perpetuates structural racism.

Issues of structural racism have been linked with negative health outcomes in BIPOC populations, such as higher infant mortality and myocardial infarctions — which are a lack of blood flow to the heart.

While Canada has made improvements, we clearly have much further to go.

Adding anti-racism as the sixth pillar of the Canada Health Act would be influential in a number of ways. First, it would shine a light on systemic racism at the forefront of health care by explicitly showing that they are intertwined. Acknowledgement of its existence is the first step in addressing this.

I am reminded of the appalling, ignoring, head-in-the-sand refusal to acknowledge what happened to Joyce Echaquan as exemplified by the top political leader in Quebec, who condemned Ms. Echaquan's death but denied the existence of systemic racism as a contributing factor. This was despite the damning fact that a comprehensive 488-page study of the issue in Quebec, released only a year before, found pervasive evidence of systemic racist practices throughout provincial public services.

We know that systemic racism has many forms. There are fewer BIPOC health care providers in management. There is less knowledge regarding conditions or diseases that are more prevalent among members of a particular racial group.

BIPOC patients receive a lower quality of health care based on stereotypes, as I have demonstrated with the story of what happened to my friend last year.

BIPOC people know that health care in its current form is tied to racism. It is time that Canada acknowledge this truth and change the Canada Health Act. Adopting anti-racism as a pillar will not only shine a light, but it will force health care providers and institutions to evaluate the ways in which they make decisions regarding a patient's health.

Currently, Canadian provinces generally apply a more Eurocentric perspective when making decisions regarding priorities for hiring in health care. Applying a one-size-fits-all approach contributes further to the discrimination faced by marginalized groups. Historically, this has created better health outcomes among White communities compared to Black or Indigenous communities.

An anti-racism pillar can open the door to new perspectives and create better outcomes for all. It can make accountability measures clearer and more targeted. We know well that what is measured gets done.

I also support this motion because it would give a voice to BIPOC members, both patients and health care workers alike. BIPOC people are those who will benefit most from this motion, and they should have the opportunity to share their experiences and recommendations. It is obvious that Band-Aid solutions like anti-racism training or diversity training are not going far enough to facilitate real, structural change, and BIPOC people have to be part of this process.

• (1710)

Fourth, anti-racism as the sixth pillar of the Canada Health Act would also address equality rights promised in the Charter. If everyone has the right to equal protection, then why do we continue to see the deaths of Brian and Joyce and others as isolated incidents? Why do BIPOC individuals feel that they must strategize to get the health care they deserve? Why are Indigenous women the targets of forced sterilization? Failing to adequately take steps to reduce and eliminate systemic racism in health care is unconstitutional. I will conclude by indicating my support. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(Debate adjourned, in the name of Senator Dean.)

ROLE OF LEADERS' DEBATES IN ENHANCING DEMOCRACY BY ENGAGING AND INFORMING VOTERS

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Dasko, calling the attention of the Senate to the role of leaders' debates in enhancing democracy by engaging and informing voters.

Hon. Donna Dasko: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to the inquiry I gave notice of last November to call the attention of the Senate to the role of leaders' debates in enhancing democracy by engaging and informing voters.

As citizens and parliamentarians, we must always be vigilant about our democratic institutions, especially in today's world where democracy is threatened in so many places. But why talk about leaders' debates? My inquiry was prompted by my profound dissatisfaction in watching the leaders' debates in last year's 2021 federal election and the outpouring of criticism that was directed toward those debates — criticism of just about everything about them, particularly the English-language debate.

Personally, I have always loved watching leaders' debates, and I still remember some of the great debates of our history. "You had an option, sir," said Brian Mulroney to his overwhelmed opponent John Turner in a memorable exchange in 1984. But debates are not just a form of entertainment. They play an essential role in our democracy. Leaders' debates may be the single most important opportunity for voters to learn about the choices before them, the character and temperament of leaders, the party policies and the approaches to national issues.

Today, in Canada, leaders' debates are also a matter of public policy. In 2018, an order-in-council created the Leaders' Debates Commission to ensure that at least one leaders' debate would be held in each official language during each federal election campaign. Prior to the order-in-council, consultations were undertaken by the government, and a House of Commons committee deliberated and investigated. At no point, however, did the Senate participate in this debate before the order-in-council came forward. It all happened without us. But, colleagues, it's not too late. Given the very mixed results of the debates undertaken by the commission in both the 2019 and 2021 federal elections, in my view, it is time for sober second thought.

Now, some esteemed colleagues may think that the Senate should take no role in deliberations about elections. I profoundly disagree with this view. Free and fair elections are an integral part of all democracies, and we in this chamber have not only the right to participate and deliberate on these topics by virtue of our constitutional role, but we also have the responsibility to engage. And thus I hope that we can make a contribution to this inquiry.

American scholars have studied political leaders' debates for many decades, and there is widespread agreement that these debates inform the electorate. Canadian researchers have reached similar conclusions about the importance of debates in this country. In testimony before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in 2017, Professor Vincent Raynauld of the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières concluded that leaders' debates in Canada have had an important impact on public attitudes, levels of mobilization, voting intentions and information, describing them as a one-stop shop. In a series of round table consultations held with experts in five cities in 2018, the IRPP reported as follows:

Participants unanimously agreed that leaders' debates are an essential feature of any federal election and that their distinct qualities separate them from other campaign events.

Of particular importance is that, "Over time, leaders' debates became the campaign experience that would be shared by the highest number of voters"

The first televised leaders' debate in Canada was held in conjunction with the 1968 federal election. This historic debate was jointly broadcast on CBC/Radio-Canada and other media. Although the actual number of viewers is uncertain, reports prior to the debate estimated a significant audience of between 14 and 15 million people.

Following this first televised leaders' debate, no such debates were held during either the 1972, 1974 or 1980 elections. From 1984 to 2011, the main debates were organized by a so-called broadcast consortium of major English- and French-language television networks including CBC, CTV, Global, Radio-Canada, Télé-Québec and TVA, who worked together to negotiate with the parties and to broadcast the debates.

The vast majority of debate production up to 2011 included two debates in each election, one English and one French. The debate situation changed significantly in the 2015 election, setting the stage for new developments. Only one debate, a French-language debate, was organized by the broadcast consortium in 2015. Conservative leader and Prime Minister Harper declined to participate in an English-language debate organized by the consortium. Instead, smaller debates were hosted by other media organizations.

The unprecedented situation prompted a vigorous debate, and the drop in viewers of the English debates from 2011 to 2015 was a particular concern. There were more debates in 2015, but they were watched by fewer citizens. And, thus, following the election in December 2015, Prime Minister Trudeau charged former minister of democratic institutions Karina Gould to "Bring forward options to create an independent commissioner to organize political party leaders' debates during future federal election campaigns . . ."

Consultations were undertaken. A House of Commons committee investigated and recommended the creation of a debates commission, which was created in October 2018 through order-in-council. For better or worse, federal election leaders' debates came under the purview of government. Former governor general David Johnston was tapped to be the new leaders' debates commissioner, and the commission set to work to fulfill its mandate. In each of the 2019 and 2021 federal elections, the commission opted to contract out the promotion, production and distribution of the debates through a competitive process. The selected group therefore carried out these processes without commission involvement in the themes or questions or in editorial decisions. The commission undoubtedly did not want to be involved in or be seen to be involved in a political process on behalf of any government. However, the results from the commission debates have turned out to be extremely problematic in the view of many experts.

At the risk of oversimplifying, the 2019 debates revealed important issues which were not resolved but, in fact, were exacerbated in 2021. These issues affected the English debates more so than the French-language debates, although the latter still received notable criticism.

Let me focus on 2021. Here is a sampling of reaction, taken from the Leaders' Debates Commission's 2021 report and social media, to the main English-language debate held on September 9: "ghastly," "an insult to the intelligence," "the worst debate I have ever seen," "a train wreck," "a dumpster fire," "absolutely disgraceful," "an epic fail," "a nadir on the history of debating."

And here are some headlines: "The farce of Canada's televised federal leaders' debate is an insult to viewers and voters."

[*Translation*]

"Quebec nation 'attacked' in English-language leaders' debate."

[*English*]

"Canadians deserved better than just one lousy debate."

The French-language debate on September 8 was also criticized:

[*Translation*]

"Debates nothing but a sad farce."

• (1720)

[*English*]

There are many other examples.

Colleagues, responses like this raise serious questions about whether this country has taken a wrong turn and how we can proceed on a better path.

Let's examine which elements of debate enhance our democracy, as is the subject of this inquiry. We can look at the goal or purpose of leaders' debates and how the format and other aspects can work to achieve these goals.

There is an inherent conflict of interest among the three participants — political parties, the media and citizens — when it comes to the goals of leaders' debates. The parties naturally view the debates as opportunities or threats depending on their electoral situation, and will try to structure the timing, topics and format to maximize partisan advantage.

The media has other goals. As journalists, they strive to hold politicians to account and present information with a critical perspective. But according to former journalists Elly Alboim and Paul Adams, media apply their own news values, such as novelty and conflict, which they learn in journalism schools. Debates are produced like TV shows, imposing news and production values to generate sparks.

Then there are the voters and citizens. Just about every expert in this area says that the needs of the voters should be the focus of debates given their importance for providing vital information to voters. But if debates belong to the citizens, who is representing them in this process? Well, it's hard to say. According to former journalist Elly Alboim, the debates have gone from bad to worse as the interests of the journalists have taken over the process. He believes the fundamental error in 2019 and 2021 was to view the debates as a journalistic exercise, allowing a destructive format and abandoning responsibility to voters.

Essentially, the best format for debates to achieve democratic goals is one that maximizes an unmediated environment, where voters and viewers can have direct access to leaders and parties. According to journalism professor Chris Waddell, former director of the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University, moderators should stimulate discussion by

posing open-ended questions, strive for invisibility and not act as a challenger or fact checker. Further, rigid time limits should not be imposed.

Professor Waddell believes that both the English and French debates in 2021 were utter failures in achieving goals. The format allowed almost no time for debate among leaders, but posed complicated questions to a single leader and imposed rigid time limits on answers. The many questioners, Waddell asserts, were antagonistic, disrespectful and were acting themselves as if they were the participants in the debate.

On the topic of antagonistic questions, I would be remiss if I did not mention the most antagonistic question of all, which is the one posed by the moderator to Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet in the English debate. The question uses the word “racism,” and the moderator asks Mr. Blanchet why he defends Bills 96 and 21 and why he supports these discriminatory laws. The question generated a strong response in the debate, generated outrage across Quebec in the following days and even a change in party support in Quebec in the election. How ironic it is that the English debate would have such an impact in Quebec.

The debates have problems. Still, the Leaders’ Debates Commission in its report on the 2021 debates points to some positive outcomes. In both 2019 and 2021, more people consumed the debates than was found for those problematic 2015 debates, and they generated very significant social media activity and comment. These debates can be considered the most important single events for the public in those campaigns outside of election day itself.

The post-debate research in 2021 does point to some positive impacts as well, but it also reveals that viewers did not learn about party platforms and promises from that debate — which is exactly what Canadians said they wanted to learn from those debates in the first place. They didn’t learn what they wanted to learn.

In light of this, the commission itself has concluded that the public interest has not necessarily been well served, and it concedes that it has not fully achieved the goal of what it calls overall debate integrity. So the many critics of those debates are not wrong.

Colleagues, there are many other topics to explore in the analysis of leaders’ debates, but I will end my comments today with a question about whether government should continue to play a role in election debates.

Is government involvement necessary to keep leaders’ debates as a major feature of our election campaigns? Can the commission make the changes that are clearly required to benefit citizens, or should debates be set up under another arrangement? Or should they return to the private sector entirely as is the case in most other countries of the world and was the case here before the Leaders’ Debates Commission was created?

Colleagues, I want to thank the experts who met with me and sent me research sources for this inquiry, including Leaders’ Debates Commissioner David Johnston and his team. Now, colleagues, I look forward to your comments and to your participation.

[Senator Dasko]

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Petitclerc, for Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that the following communication had been received:

RIDEAU HALL

October 18, 2022

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 18th day of October 2022, at 4:56 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ian McCowan

Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

Bills Assented to Tuesday, October 18, 2022:

An Act to amend the Criminal Code (disclosure of information by jurors) (*Bill S-206, Chapter 12, 2022*)

An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (temporary enhancement to the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax credit) (*Bill C-30, Chapter 13, 2022*)

• (1730)

[*English*]

SENATE’S SELF-GOVERNANCE

INQUIRY—DEBATE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator McPhedran, calling the attention of the Senate to parliamentary privilege, the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators* and options for increasing accountability, transparency and fairness in the context of the Senate’s unique self-governance, including guidelines on public disclosure.

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, this item is adjourned in the name of Senator Pate, and I ask that — with leave of the Senate — following my intervention, the balance of her time to speak to this item be reserved.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: So ordered.

Senator McCallum: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator McPhedran's Inquiry No. 6, which calls the attention of the Senate to various instruments and concepts to be explored as options for increasing accountability, transparency and fairness in the context of the Senate's unique self-governance. This is an important and timely discussion, and I would like to thank Senator McPhedran for bringing this forward.

In my remarks, the matter that I will be focusing upon is parliamentary privilege. I will be talking about it, colleagues, from my current position as a truly non-affiliated senator. In making the decision to sit unaffiliated, I was aware that it would not be a simple transition, and I am not surprised by the second-class status that non-affiliated senators must adopt. As this small collective of senators does not fall under the purview of one of the main groups, we do not enjoy the same consideration that the majority of our colleagues do. But why should I have to go to another group to be treated fairly?

This fact is regrettable, especially as we — senators — are the masters of our own domain. Ironically, the right for senators to be self-governing and self-adjudging is one of the rights associated with parliamentary privilege. This was made clear by the Senate's Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament when they put forward an important 2015 discussion paper on Canadian parliamentary privilege in the 21st century.

Within this paper, the Rules Committee affirms that one such privilege senators enjoy is the Senate's collective right to regulate their own affairs related to their debates and proceedings, also known as exclusive cognizance.

Honourable senators, Canada's Parliament adopted the concept of parliamentary privilege from the U.K. This can be found within section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which reads:

The privileges, immunities, and powers to be held, enjoyed, and exercised by the Senate and by the House of Commons, and by the members thereof respectively, shall be such as are from time to time defined by Act of the Parliament of Canada, but so that any Act of the Parliament of Canada defining such privileges, immunities, and powers shall not confer any privileges, immunities, or powers exceeding those at the passing of such Act held, enjoyed, and exercised

by the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and by the members thereof.

As such, it is clearly established that senators and members of Parliament are intended to enjoy similar privileges as those in the U.K.'s House of Commons.

Colleagues, when considering the broad umbrella of parliamentary privilege, there are a number of rights and immunities that fall under this purview. These privileges are broken down into two categories: corporate privileges and individual privileges. Corporate privileges include the right to regulate our own affairs and the power to discipline. Individual privileges include freedom of speech, freedom from arrest and civil actions and exemption from jury service. As I make my remarks, I would like to put forth and challenge each of you to contemplate whether our collective actions toward, and our treatment of, non-affiliated senators constitute an infringement of their privilege.

Honourable senators, during Canada's Thirtieth Parliament, the Special Committee on Rights and Immunities of Members was struck to consider matters surrounding privilege. That committee found that the purpose of privilege was to allow members of the House of Commons to carry out their duties, as representatives of the electorate, without undue interference. Although it was a House committee, that assertion holds true for senators, as we hold the same privilege.

That exact sentiment is reflected in the very first line of the Rules Committee's 2015 paper on parliamentary privilege, which stated:

Parliamentary privilege, an essential component of parliamentary democracy, exists to enable Parliament to function effectively and efficiently without undue impediment.

It is within this context that we must view privilege: as rights and immunities, held individually and collectively, that enable us to function as parliamentarians.

In 1999, the U.K. Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Privilege considered the necessity test — a concept that holds that an exercise of privilege must be necessary for the contemporary conduct of parliamentary functions. That 1999 U.K. joint committee expressed necessity in terms of Parliament's needs in order to fulfill its constitutional role. Parliament and its members need certain rights and legal protections in order to carry out their essential public duties of scrutinizing legislation, enacting laws and holding the executive to account.

In the Canadian context, the Supreme Court of Canada's 2005 case, known as *Canada (House of Commons) v. Vaid*, considered the application of privilege. In his ruling, Justice Ian Binnie articulated a test of necessity that needs to be met to sustain a claim of privilege, focusing on the "purposive connection" that must exist between the claimed privilege and the fulfillment by the member, or the assembly, of its function as a legislative and deliberative body.

Yet, as our Rules Committee astutely pointed out in their 2015 paper, this necessity test is limited by its very design. As the committee wrote:

. . . the test provides a dynamic means to determine the parameters, or scope, of privilege. On the other hand, determining the contents and exercise of privilege remains the bastion of parliament, and parliamentarians.

Honourable senators, as members of our 2015 Rules Committee argued, determining the contents and exercise of privilege remains a bastion of parliamentarians, and determining this exercise must be “more in keeping with the ultimate accountability of a democratic legislature” In other words, as self-adjudicators, we define infringements of privilege.

As the Rules Committee’s 2015 paper on privilege states:

The Committee posits that the exercise of parliamentary privilege should . . . “be informed not only by history, but by a vision of the relationship between the legislative branch and its constituents that is in keeping with the democratic values of today and that is responsive to public expectations for accountability, transparency, natural justice and respect for human rights.”

Colleagues, to further this critical point of how we view and approach privilege, I would like to refer to a 2012 letter that was jointly written by five Canadian senators to New Zealand’s House Privileges Committee. In that letter, the Canadian senators spoke of the “living tree” doctrine, used in constitutional interpretation, in keeping with a view that sees parliamentary privilege not as static and immutable, but as an adaptable component of Parliament designed to better ensure its ability to function properly and effectively — with minimum infringement on the legitimate rights of others.

• (1740)

Honourable senators, it is this dynamic, living-tree view of privilege that is needed to ensure that infringements are duly addressed when we parliamentarians become unable to fulfill our senatorial duties due to forces outside of our control. For it is forces and decisions beyond the control of non-affiliated senators, in which they have no voice, that are working to place non-affiliated senators in a place of severe deficit. I would like to bring some of these barriers to light for all to know.

Non-affiliated senators do not have a presence at scroll that allows them to be forceful advocates. While we’re very grateful to our officials from the Chamber Operations and Procedure Office who convey our speaking intentions at scroll meetings, we do not have an equitable seat at the table, wherein non-affiliated senators’ items are forcefully spoken for as is done by each group or caucus’s scroll representative. Similarly, non-affiliated senators are not granted slots to make Senators’ Statements. We

must rely on members of the established groups to cede their time to us. The same is true for ministerial Question Period, where non-affiliated senators are not given an equal opportunity to question the government and hold them to account. On multiple occasions, non-affiliated senators have requested a spot to speak but have not been called upon to ask a question before time expired.

Non-affiliated senators are also not consulted with or informed of decisions taken at leaders’ meetings. While these are informal and ad hoc, they result in consequential decisions for the Senate, including everything from programming motions to decisions surrounding hybrid sittings. While most other senators have an indirect voice in these matters via their respective leaders, non-affiliated senators have no such voice. While most other senators are informed of the decisions taken on these matters, non-affiliated senators are kept in the dark.

All of these matters converge in a very profound way to keep a very small collective of senators consistently unprepared and ill-advised on Senate sittings. They have also proven to be a dangerous barrier in representing those we are appointed to serve.

By not being able to equitably participate in Senate proceedings and decision-making processes, as well as being unable to participate equitably in meaningfully holding the government to account via ministerial Question Period, the untenable situation non-affiliated senators are confronted with has come to represent a serious infringement on our collective privilege as it has on numerous occasions had an adverse impact on our ability to fulfill our senatorial duties.

Honourable senators, as our Rules Committee indicated in a 2015 paper on parliamentary privilege:

. . . to properly and effectively perform parliamentary and representative functions, a member must be able to operate without fear of undue interference or . . . obstruction . . .

The committee expanded on this to say that while it is impossible to codify all such instances, any attempts to obstruct, impede, interfere, intimidate or otherwise bother parliamentarians are often considered to be breaches of privilege. The Rules Committee’s 2015 paper went to indicate:

It goes without saying that parliamentarians must be able to function in a climate free from obstruction, interference, and intimidation in order to serve effectively.

Our Rules Committee further wrote:

With respect to non-physical acts that can be considered obstruction . . . the Subcommittee is of the opinion that procedures should exist and be enforced to ensure that the dignity of Parliament is not undermined.

Honourable senators, I ask you again to reflect on the minority voice of the non-affiliated senators and whether the status quo is acceptable. For if it is not, it’s incumbent on senators, as masters of our own domain, to challenge such injustice.

I will close with more wise words from the Senate Rules Committee's 2015 paper:

It is expected that Parliament will be transparent, accessible, and accountable to the public, and reflect contemporary norms of natural justice and procedural fairness.

Canadians expect Parliament to conduct itself in a manner appropriate to its role. A contemporary, Canadian interpretation of parliamentary privilege can help facilitate and protect the work of parliamentarians, while helping to instill pride in the institution throughout Canada and the Commonwealth.

[*Editor's Note: Senator McCallum spoke in Cree.*]

Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator McCallum, Senator Plett wishes to ask a question but your time has expired. Are you asking for five minutes to answer a question?

Senator McCallum: Yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Yes.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Senator McCallum, for your speech. I want to phrase this question properly. Before we had this — I don't know whether I should call it a shambles of a Senate that we have now, with all these different groups instead of us being back in the good old days when we had two political parties here. Even during those days, Senator McCallum, we did have independent senators or non-affiliated senators, and those non-affiliated senators typically would go and they would be, not under the umbrella of the government, but they would deal with the government leader. I think Senator Martin would agree with me. When she was the deputy leader back under Claude Carignan, every day she would deal with some of these non-affiliated senators and make sure they got speaking slots, they got to ask questions and they got to make their speeches.

What I find strange, Senator McCallum is that, first of all, you're under the same title as our government leader and deputy leader. They're also non-affiliated, so I think you should have at least the same rights as they have, since you are under the same umbrella. But tell me, Senator McCallum, what is the answer? If you get what you are asking for, it would seem to me that you would have a caucus of non-affiliated senators. We already have three or maybe four caucuses of non-affiliated or independent or these kinds of senators. Now, are you suggesting that we have one more and that you form a group of non-affiliated senators? Is that what you would suggest is the answer for this?

Senator McCallum: Thank you for your question. We have talked about this, and when I look at modernization of the Senate, which everyone is talking about and was already on the floor when I came here, my understanding was that eventually everyone would be non-affiliated and that there would be no caucuses and that's where this chamber was going. It would be a

chamber of elders, and it would be run differently. That is a question that I had put. What is the best way to address this, since we are self-governing?

With the process that's in place toward change, I don't see this moving toward change. I just see groups that are entrenching themselves further into caucus-like behaviour. If we had more senators, I believe there would be more senators coming in non-affiliated. We don't know. It's so fluid that it's difficult to say what we would do, but it's unacceptable for me to be marginalized in the way that I am.

I did this because I need to be more than what I am right now. I was able to bring a lot of issues to the floor for Indigenous people and for First Nations, because that's who I work for, and I notice that I'm doing that less and less. I'm going to the community more and trying to think about how I can bring their issues to the floor. I don't know what to do. I just had to bring this forward. Hopefully, we will get help from people here who may know a way to move forward.

• (1750)

I realize that doesn't answer your question. It's difficult to discuss this, but it needed to be brought to the floor. We need to come up with a solution because I'm not willing to sit here, nor am I willing to join another party, just to be able to do what I should be doing. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Plett, we're out of time.

Senator Plett: Your Honour, if I could, I will enter the debate for five minutes to put some things on the record, if that's all right. Of course, then it will go back in the name of Senator Pate, I believe.

Senator McCallum, first, again, thank you for your speech. I agree with you. I don't necessarily agree with the way our Senate is set up — I just flat out don't. I believe in the old Senate that we had. In that Senate, there were senators like you, who were non-affiliated, and it worked fine. We didn't have four or five caucuses that all claimed to be the same thing: that all claimed to be independent. Only one caucus is proud enough to say they are Conservative. Even the Liberals have decided that they need to have a different title than what they used to have, although they are still there as a Liberal caucus. As my good friend and cousin Senator Harder has said, he's a progressive. He actually suggested he might be a progressive conservative. I'm not sure if that was said in confidence — if it was, Senator Harder, then I apologize.

Nevertheless, Senator McCallum, you are absolutely correct that you need to be treated with the same degree of respect as every other senator in this place. So does Senator McPhedran, Senator Shugart and our newly appointed senator today, Senator Osler. Right now, you are a caucus of seven.

Although our leader is looking at me like who are the seven, he considers himself to be non-affiliated, so he's part of your caucus. He should be taking you under his wing and treating you like a member of his caucus because he's not a Liberal. He's a representative of the government, but he isn't a Liberal. I find

that strange. That is why we call him “leader,” because we believe he’s been appointed to be the leader. Nevertheless, you haven’t been. Yet, here you find yourself wanting to do things.

Some of the caucuses — maybe all of them — have taken one or more of you at least partially under our wing to give you a committee spot. Both Senator McPhedran and Senator Brazeau are part of that through our caucus. So we have, in part, done our bit, but it’s not enough.

How many spots should you get? I’m not sure how many spots you should get. How often should you get to ask a question? I’m not sure, but I do fervently believe — and I do not want to be disparaging here to our leader and our deputy leader — that you should fall under the umbrella of the leader and the deputy leader. That is the way things used to be in the good old days. There was some “good” in the good old days.

This experiment that the Prime Minister initiated a few years ago has created a number of difficulties. More and more are cropping up right now, and you are not given the opportunity to fulfill your role. You specifically, Senator McCallum, have made it very clear what your passions are in this chamber. You have a constituency that you represent in this chamber, but you aren’t able to fulfill your duties properly unless you join a caucus. So you joined a caucus, but that didn’t work.

You are now non-affiliated again — I think that is correct — and with that, you should have that right. You should be able to make a Senator’s Statement — not every day, maybe not even every week, but you should certainly be able to do so. Furthermore, you shouldn’t have to come to a Conservative, or one of the other caucuses, to ask for a spot. You should be given a spot. I support that. I’m just not sure that there’s a clear answer to your dilemma, unless the government does what I think they should do, which is to take you completely under their umbrella and say, “You are part of our group, our caucus. We will make sure that you can properly represent your constituency,” because that is important.

This is a chamber that is supposed to be working for minorities, not just majorities. Yet, we find ourselves pretty close to being one of the lower groups here. We are still the second largest, and hopefully soon — I was going to say “fortunately” soon — will become much larger, but we don’t know for sure when the election will be.

Nevertheless, Senator McCallum, I support what you suggest. If there is anything that we, as a Conservative caucus, can do to ensure that you receive the treatment and respect that you deserve, our door is open. I will stand in this chamber and support that over and over. We may not agree on issues, Senator McCallum, but the one thing I have said in the past is that I will defend to the death your right to have your opinions, as I hope you would for me to have mine. They may not line up, but we do agree on this one thing.

I don’t often have a drink, but I had one a few months ago with an individual who is in the Senate. I won’t name any names, but he is certainly a senator who, for most of our lives, would have been in the far opposite spectrum. However, he invited me out to have a glass of wine. We wanted to talk. He made the comment, “You know, Don, you and I definitely do not agree on the way to

get to where we want to go, but we do agree on where we want to go. We are both passionate Canadians. We both believe strongly in where we’re going, it’s just a matter of how we get there.” I think the same thing could be said, Senator McCallum, about what you are trying to do.

I have spent much of my adult life working in the areas where you have lived most of your adult life. I see many of the problems. I know what you’re doing. I’m passionate about those issues, and I’m passionate about what you are trying to do in the Senate. It’s unfair that you are not able to get up in a timely way and speak. You do have our support. I don’t know what the answer is either, but I think you need to start by — and I’m going to put them on the spot here — going across to the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Government, and tell them, “Listen, we’re part of your caucus. You’re unaffiliated. We’re unaffiliated. We demand to have the same rights as you.” I will support you in that. Thank you very much, colleagues.

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: I am curious about Senator Plett’s proposition. I don’t have as many years in the Senate as you do, but I know enough about the Senate, as it is constructed today, to understand that the government leader and his team have certain responsibilities. However, they do not have what the other groups have, which is the authority to make statements. They can always rise up and make statements, of course, but they don’t have the capacity, let’s say every day, like three members of your caucus or two members of our caucus.

More significantly, while the members of the Government Representative Office, or GRO, have ex officio status on committees — where the real work gets done, I think we can all agree — they don’t have a committee seat. I think that is what Senator McCallum is asking for. I have certainly heard both Senator McCallum and Senator McPhedran, whilst they were members of the ISG and whilst they were unaffiliated, rise up on many occasions —

• (1800)

The Hon. the Speaker: Excuse me, Senator Omidvar. I apologize for interrupting you, but it seems we have reached the bewitching hour. It’s now 6 p.m., and rule 3-3(1) requires me to leave the chair until 8 p.m. unless it is agreed that we not see the clock. Is it agreed that we not see the clock?

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: The sitting is suspended until 8 p.m.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (2000)

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator McPhedran, calling the attention of the Senate to parliamentary privilege, the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest*

Code for Senators and options for increasing accountability, transparency and fairness in the context of the Senate's unique self-governance, including guidelines on public disclosure.

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: I don't wish to take any more points. I believe the point of my question was made, and it was more about the mechanics of Senator Plett's proposal and exactly how it would work, given our true and tried principle of proportionality on the one hand, the fact that the Government Representative Office, or GRO, does not have an assigned number of seats on committees, nor do they have numbers of statements.

I'm wondering if you could explain your vision for all the non-affiliated senators being embraced by GRO as members of their caucus. I'm not quite sure how I would see that working.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, senator. I probably find myself in the same situation as you do. I'm not entirely sure how I envision that. That is, of course, why I started by asking Senator McCallum some questions.

What I did refer to is the old iteration of the Senate, when we had the two caucuses, and we did have independent or non-affiliated senators. At that time, generally they were taken in by the Leader of the Government. So I was just simply suggesting that maybe they could as well, because I believe that Senator Gagné or somebody from the government attends scroll.

As to how many unaffiliated senators there are now, I don't know whether there are more or less than what there usually were, but, at that point, they certainly didn't get the same number of questions as the opposition did. We're talking about more things than Question Period, but, in the old days, during Question Period, it was basically the opposition asking questions. Every so often, somebody on the government side asked a question, but that was it.

So how do I envision this? I'm not sure. My suggestion is simply that Senator McCallum raised some good points and they need to be addressed.

Senator Omidvar: Fair enough.

Hon. Leo Housakos: I have a question for Senator Plett.

Senator Plett, you talked about the good old days of the Senate, and I remember some of those good old days. I remember when I first came here, it was a very simple place — you had the government and the opposition. What this place did back then was very simple: They had people for and people against bills and motions at the end of the day.

But there was also another principle that seems to have faded away in this new Senate, and that is the principle of consensus. I remember being on the Internal Economy steering committee with Senator Cordy — when we had only representatives from government and the opposition — and we understood that the principle of consensus meant that nothing would move on major decisions without us consulting then Senator Cools and Senator

McCoy. We made sure that, even though they might not have had representation at Rules or Internal Economy, that we had sign-off.

Of course, at the time, we also understood, because those independents were a little more aggressive than today's independents, that the Rules served their purposes. They decided when we adjourned and when we sat, and they exercised the power because in this place the Rules are designed for minority voices.

In the spirit of cooperation, and you having a lot of weight in this place as leader, I suggest — and this would be a good suggestion — that you sit down with the other leaders and find a compromise where the true independents — those who are not affiliated with any group — have a place and feel they have a place in terms of questions during Question Period, committees and so forth.

Would you undertake to take that leadership, in conjunction with the other leadership groups, and come to a consensus so that these minority voices feel that they have a place in this institution?

Senator Plett: Thank you, Senator Housakos. Before I answer, I would like to elaborate a little bit, and certainly you talked about consensus. I was a member of Internal Economy, and even at the full committee there was consensus; we dealt with consensus. We didn't have votes. If we didn't reach a consensus, things didn't move forward.

Now we are being accused of those being the dirty partisan days, and now it seems we have to vote on almost every issue that we have in the Senate.

You mentioned a few senators, and obviously, good friends and good senators, Senator Cools and Senator McCoy. When they sat in their places as independents, Senator Martin met with them daily.

I would never want to suggest to any one of our affiliated senators that leave is being asked for many times. I would never want to suggest to them that they could deny leave just as easily as you or I or an entire caucus could. So if they wanted to exercise their power, they would be able to deny leave, because that is what this is set up for. That is the reason we negotiated regularly with those non-affiliated senators, because they had that power. That power is still there, and should always remain.

I would encourage senators to take note of that and stand and be counted, and make sure that the proper people deal with them. For the sake of total transparency here, all of the leaders have received letters from non-affiliated senators asking for things. I was always of the opinion that wasn't our job to deal with it; it was the government's job. That is why I chose to stand up and suggest that to Senator McCallum.

• (2010)

But, yes, Senator Housakos, I would certainly at least go as far as saying that I would make myself very available to discuss this and make sure that the government does what the government should do and deal properly with those senators who are not represented in a caucus.

Hon. Patricia Bovey: I wonder if Senator Plett would take another question.

Senator Plett: For you, Senator Bovey, always.

Senator Bovey: I'm not so sure about that.

As a leader in the Senate — and earlier, you referred to yourself in this chamber quite rightly as the “dean of the Manitoba senators” — here is a Manitoba senator asking you a question with the comment of another Manitoba senator in the works.

You referred to the “good old days.” I'm a widow of an archivist — Manitoba's archivist. I am a historian, albeit an art historian. As we look to our past, we are always looking at what we can pull out of our roots to build a platform to make our place a better place.

Given your experience in this place, which is much longer than mine, and mine is a little longer than Senator McCallum's, what would you pull out of those “good old days” to make the platform for the present, which has to be the platform in the vision of the future?

We don't go back as a society. Society evolves, and we are a major institution in Canadian society. So I wonder, senator, if you can help me think about — and if you can advise us — as to what you would be pulling out of those “good old days” to help define what might be the next steps we need to take to make a modern Senate so that all our members can reach the goals and heights that Senator McCallum talked about.

Senator Plett: Senator Bovey, let me start off by saying that I am a firm believer that if something isn't broken, don't fix it. I think we had a perfectly workable Senate for a number of years. I believe it was working fine when the leader of the then-third party in the other place decided to remove all of his senators and his caucus unceremoniously out of there and decided that he would himself remodel and modernize our Senate.

When you look at it that way — and I never did mention this because I didn't take note when I was defending and speaking up for my friends Senator McCallum and Senator McPhedran that I was defending two fellow Manitobans. I was simply defending two fellow senators, but thank you for pointing that out to me. I now have that much more reason for defending what they want. Maybe I'll work a little harder at getting them to join a caucus again. We'll see how that works out.

Nevertheless, Senator Bovey, I'm not fond of the modernization of our Senate, let me be clear. Having said that, I do want to qualify that. I have grown to be fond, at least — and that's a good start — of everyone in this place. I know how much you love me now — you probably never used to — but you found out how likeable I am. So as we get to know each other,

we find out that we can disagree in here, and fight and argue, but I want us to never, ever lose that. You and I had a personal conversation in the Maple Leaf Lounge in Winnipeg a few weeks ago, and we talked about some of these changes.

I want us never to lose the fact that we can debate, get angry and we can do things in the Senate, knowing that our end goal is to improve our country.

Whatever it is in this modern Senate that we can take out of the old Senate to improve our country, I will always want to continue with that.

But I'm going to be the first one to admit that I miss the Terry Mercers, the Serge Joyals and the George Bakers of the world — and I'm speaking only of Liberal senators — with whom we had these debates with, whether they were at committee or in here. It was Senators Joyal and Baker who convinced me — because I really did not enjoy being on the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. I'm a plumber and not a lawyer. I felt out of place and a number of times I wanted to leave that committee. It wasn't even my own colleagues telling me that I had to stay. It was Senators Joyal and Baker who said, “Don, we need a plumber on this committee. We need someone who doesn't think or speak like a lawyer but like an everyday individual.”

That's the great thing about this chamber: We are all equal here; no matter where we come from, we are all equal here. And that's good, even in this modern Senate, Senator Bovey.

Senator Bovey: I'm not sure I like the word “end goal.” Surely, we should be looking at the word “future goal.” I wasn't in the “good old Senate” — I know that. I never had any aspirations of being in the new Senate. Surprises happen in one's life.

However, it must have been the case — and I hope you agree with me on this, Senator Plett — that not all the workings of the old Senate were necessarily “good old.” What I'm trying to get us to — and I hope you can agree with me and I asked you about this — is to agree to look for the future goal as opposed to the end goal. And as we do so, can we think about the needs of the ever-changing society and communities that we represent?

I would be interested if you do that, too, in our changing Manitoba. Remember, Manitoba was the “keystone” province, Senator Plett, so I come from the basis of that. Can we look at how the history of even our province changed the scope of Canadian Confederation and has changed the dynamics of this country that we call Canada?

Shouldn't we be looking at how we can make this place a better place? As a chamber of sober second thought, don't you agree with me that we have a responsibility to look at what that sober second thought is in terms of future goals?

Senator Plett: Whether it is end goals or future goals, some of us — and the one thing about the Senate is that we are allowed to talk about other people's ages because anybody can look that up, and you and I are going to be retiring from here not that far apart — but for some of us, this has become looking toward the end as opposed to the future.

We have drifted a little bit away from what Senator McCallum was talking about, so I will simply leave it at that.

Hon. Sandra Lovelace Nicholas: Would the senator take another question?

Senator Plett: Certainly.

Senator Lovelace Nicholas: As you know, she's already a minority, and we represent minorities here. Now she's trying to protect and prevent herself from being a minority on top of a minority.

I'm sorry; I agree with you and I agree with Senator McCallum. We should not do this. She is a minority on a minority, and she is a woman — a Native woman.

• (2020)

Senator Plett: Senator Lovelace Nicholas, I entirely agree with you, which is why I supported Senator McCallum in what she said. I believe that this chamber has been set up for minorities. We're finding ourselves over here awfully close to being part of a minority as well. Of course, in the good old days we were not a minority. We're still a few more in numbers than your caucus; nevertheless, we also find ourselves getting closer to a minority. But I support what you are saying.

(Debate adjourned, in the name of Senator Pate.)

[Translation]

THE SENATE

MOTION TO CALL UPON THE PRIME MINISTER TO ADVISE
THE GOVERNOR GENERAL TO REVOKE THE HONORIFIC STYLE
AND TITLE OF "HONOURABLE" FROM FORMER SENATOR
DON MEREDITH—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Josée Verner, pursuant to notice of October 17, 2022, moved:

That, in light of the reports of the Senate Ethics Officer dated March 9, 2017, and June 28, 2019, concerning the breaches by former Senator Don Meredith of the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators* as well as the statement made in the Senate on June 25, 2020, by the chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration expressing regrets to the victims of Mr. Meredith's misconduct, the Senate call upon the Prime Minister to advise Her Excellency the Governor General to take the necessary steps to revoke the honorific style and title of "Honourable" from former senator Don Meredith.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today to move that the Senate call upon the Prime Minister to ask Her Excellency the Governor General to take the necessary steps to revoke the honorific title of "Honourable" from former senator Don Meredith.

You will recall that I moved a similar motion in February 2020. That motion died on the Order Paper a few months later when Parliament was prorogued.

You will also recall that during that period, our institution undertook a very important process to right the wrongs and address the suffering that Don Meredith's victims went through and are still going through today. An important step was taken on June 25, 2020, when the Honourable Sabi Marwah, who chaired the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, made a solemn and historic statement in this chamber expressing regret to the victims on behalf of all senators and the Senate institution as a whole. It was the "honourable" thing to do.

Other steps have been taken in that regard. For example, financial compensation has been paid to the victims. With an eye on the future, we adopted a new Senate policy on the prevention of harassment and violence and developed required training for senators and employees. That said, I firmly believe that we must take one last step to complete this process of reparation, and that is what I am suggesting we do with the motion I have moved today.

Honourable senators, I realize that this is an extraordinary process that has never been attempted since this Parliament was established in 1867. However, it concerns circumstances that are equally extraordinary in the long history of our institution.

We are all privileged to sit in this chamber and be referred to as "honourable" for ceremonial and protocol purposes. Section 6 of the Table of Titles to be used in Canada states that we are entitled to the style of "Honourable" for life. This table is part of the protocol directives used by Canadian Heritage to facilitate the organization of special events to which various federal or provincial political figures are invited.

This leads me to ask the following question: What is honour? What does it take for a person to be truly described as "honourable" without an official title? The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines honour simply and accurately as "high respect; glory; credit, reputation, good name." In a parliamentary context, that same dictionary defines honourable as "a title indicating eminence or distinction."

These characteristics are an indirect part of our commission of appointment, which was signed by the Governor General of Canada on the recommendation of the Prime Minister because of the "especial trust and confidence" they manifested in each of us.

We are therefore deemed "honourable" for the duration of our term. We also have the privilege of retaining this title for the rest of our lives, after we retire or resign from the Senate. That allows us to attend state functions or funerals alongside sitting senators.

Honourable senators, we also understand that this title carries with it significant responsibilities and obligations. For example, section 7.1 of *The Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators* states that we must conduct ourselves in a manner that upholds the highest standards of dignity and refrain from acting in a way that could reflect adversely on the position of senator or

the institution of the Senate. Section 7.2 states that we must perform our parliamentary duties with dignity, honour and integrity.

Honourable senators, in two reports, one published on March 9, 2017, and the other on June 28, 2019, the Senate Ethics Officer found that former senator Don Meredith had breached sections 7.1 and 7.2 of our code. There is no need to repeat the damning findings of these two reports. However, we must all ask ourselves a very serious question: How can a former senator connected to these events retain the title “Honourable?” Do we really want to run into him at state functions or see him still using his title in the public domain?

Colleagues, October 15 marked the fifth anniversary of the #MeToo movement, which brought the thoughts and discussions that I initiated in February 2020 back to the fore. Some of you, including Senator Miville-Dechéne, who seconded my motion, recently encouraged me to once again move forward with this, now that we are back to business as usual in the Senate. I thank them for that.

This motion also responds to a desire expressed by some victims in private conversations they had with me and other colleagues. This highly symbolic measure is important for them. In that context, we have no choice but to call upon the Prime Minister to ask the Governor General to take the necessary steps to revoke the honorific style and title of “Honourable” from former senator Don Meredith.

Let’s not forget that, in our constitutional system, only the Prime Minister can recommend that the Governor General appoint a senator and thereby grant them the title of “Honourable” associated with that position. He is therefore the only person in Canada who has the authority to recommend that the Governor General use her prerogative to revoke that title from Don Meredith.

As a result, I ask for your support to speak with one voice in this chamber to immediately send a clear message to the Prime Minister. This decision will show our determination to take the last step in this unfortunate affair that tarnished all of our reputations.

Thank you for the consideration you will give to this motion, and I hope I may count on your support.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: Honourable colleagues, today I rise to briefly speak in support of Senator Josée Verner’s motion. It is understood that this motion and today’s debate have nothing to do with any proceedings before any court.

I rise as a senator of course, but also as a woman. I am certain that my male colleagues in this chamber share my indignation, our indignation. However, on this, the fifth anniversary of the #MeToo movement, the issues before us clearly resonate with women in particular.

[Senator Verner]

• (2030)

The issue we are debating today has to do only with the revocation of the title “Honourable” from former Senator Meredith. I would like to remind you of two things that are not open to debate.

The first are Don Meredith’s actions that led to the scandal, the investigation and his resignation from the Senate. The whole thing is described in detail in the two reports from the Office of the Senate Ethics Officer. What we find there is disgusting. It reads like a playbook for tyrants and abusers who are convinced that they are above the law. We must not allow the passage of time to erase the serious and repugnant nature of those actions. We owe the victims at least that much.

The other thing that I think is indisputable is that Don Meredith has already lost his honour, outside this chamber at least. His actions have made him persona non grata in the eyes of the public. He has sullied his name and the Senate’s image.

Nevertheless, Don Meredith still has the title “Honourable”. This inconsistency is embarrassing and ridiculous. The Senate does not have the power to revoke this title. It can only urge the government to ask the Governor General to do so.

Generally speaking, I don’t like titles that people get because of their position. Interestingly, Quebec did away with parliamentary titles in 1960. That is my preference too. Personally, I have never used the title “Honourable,” even though I obviously believe it is important to carry out my duties honourably.

I would add that it is one thing to limit the use of these formulas to parliamentary debate, where they can help to keep exchanges civil, but I don’t think those titles have a place outside of Parliament.

That goes double for people who have proven themselves unworthy. The Senate Ethics Officer noted in her report that Don Meredith violated his obligation to, and I quote:

. . . uphold the highest standards of dignity . . . and . . . refrain from acting in a way that could reflect adversely on the position of Senator or the institution of the Senate.

In this case, I think the facts speak for themselves.

The inquiry process was thorough and took four years, which is a long time — too long. Now we can finally put this matter to rest symbolically and close the book on an episode that damaged our institution’s reputation.

[*English*]

I urge you, colleagues, to bring the matter to a vote now. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Would Senator Miville-Dechéne take a question?

Senator Miville-Dechéne: Of course.

Senator Saint-Germain: Senator, I would like to begin by thanking and congratulating you and Senator Verner on your initiative, which I believe is worthwhile.

In her speech, Senator Verner talked about an “extraordinary process” that has never been attempted in the history of the Senate, which is true. However, because this is true, and notwithstanding the nobility of the cause and the strong desire that I myself may have to see this course of action against our former colleague happen quickly, I nevertheless believe that there is no reason to shut out senators who wish to contribute to the debate on this issue this evening and who would perhaps like to ensure the constitutionality of the motion being moved.

I don’t see any reason to deny them this opportunity, so why the rush to call for the vote immediately?

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Senator Verner and I have had that discussion. As you know, this was Senator Verner’s initiative, but of course I immediately agreed to second it. This is a difficult debate. It’s a debate that we don’t want to prolong, given the nature of the facts that have tarnished all of our reputations. The idea was to keep debate short and avoid adjourning debate so that there is no break. This has been dragging on and hurting us for a long time. The idea of having a short debate where we all agree is obviously an idea that I support.

However, I understand what you’re saying. I have a feeling, given that this story has been affecting us for a long time, that the senators have made up their minds. After all, is it so hard to agree that Senator Meredith does not deserve the title “Honourable?” It makes complete sense. The two reports that I have reread are devastating, and they were produced by our Senate Ethics Officer as a result of our internal mechanisms, so I feel that the issue is relatively simple.

I consulted people before drafting this text to make sure it avoided any potential legal pitfalls. Are there constitutional issues? I’m sure Senator Verner had this motion drafted by a trained law clerk. I am no legal expert, but on the face of it I see no constitutional problem. That’s my point of view.

Senator Saint-Germain: Once again, I’m not saying I’m opposed to the objective, but, given senators’ right to express their opinion on such an important issue and given our responsibility to ensure that the motion is constitutional, I move adjournment of the debate in my name.

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

[*English*]

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: I hear a “no.” All those in favour of the motion will please say “yea.”

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

The Hon. the Speaker: All those opposed will please say “nay.”

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

The Hon. the Speaker: In my opinion, the “yeas” have it.

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker: I see two senators rising. Do we have agreement on a bell?

An Hon. Senator: One hour.

The Hon. the Speaker: The vote will take place at 9:37 p.m. Call in the senators.

• (2130)

Motion agreed to on the following division:

YEAS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Bellemare	Housakos
Boniface	Klyne
Bovey	Lovlace Nicholas
Busson	MacDonald
Clement	Manning
Cordy	Martin
Cotter	Marwah
Coyle	Mégie
Dalphond	Mockler
Deacon (<i>Nova Scotia</i>)	Oh
Duncan	Omidvar
Dupuis	Petitclerc
Francis	Plett
Gagné	Ringuette
Gerba	Saint-Germain
Gold	Seidman
Harder	Simons—34

NAYS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Audette	Patterson
Black	Quinn
Boisvenu	Ravalia
Gignac	Smith
Greene	Sorensen
Loffreda	Tannas
Marshall	Verner
McCallum	Wallin—17
Miville-Dechêne	

ABSTENTIONS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

• (2140)

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Gwen Boniface rose pursuant to notice of September 29, 2022:

That she will call the attention of the Senate to intimate partner violence, especially in rural areas across Canada, in response to the coroner's inquest conducted in Renfrew County, Ontario.

She said: Honourable senators, thank you for your indulgence at this late hour. I will only take about 12 minutes, unless you have questions.

On September 22, 2015, three women lost their lives at the hands of one man. He travelled around Renfrew County, Ontario, not far from where we sit, to seek out these women on their own properties, in their own homes, in what would be brutal and targeted attacks. Carol Culleton, 66; Anastasia Kuzyk, 36; Nathalie Warmerdam, 48 — three lives lost tragically and ruthlessly.

Unfortunately, all the warning signs were there but were missed. The perpetrator had a track record of violence against women, he had been deemed high-risk in multiple assessments, was known to the police and was on probation at the time of the murders. He flouted court orders without consequence and skipped the group counselling program he was mandated to attend, offering excuse after excuse to his parole officer, while never being charged with breaching his conditions.

Somehow, he was even allowed to relocate closer to one of his former victims of abuse, later to become a victim of his murders.

As a result of this atrocity, a chief coroner's inquest occurred after much delay due to the pandemic, and the recommendations, over 80 of them, were published this past June. These are wide-ranging, detailed and targeted to the Government of Ontario, the Chief Firearms Officer, the Office of the Chief Coroner, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario and to the Government of Canada.

Inquests are held to inform the public about the circumstances of a death. Any conclusions of inquests are non-binding, but it's always hoped that any recommendations, if implemented, will prevent further deaths.

Some of you may remember another prominent inquest on intimate partner violence, then known as domestic violence, that came out of Ontario in the 1990s. The May-Iles inquest of 1998 returned over 200 recommendations, ranging in areas from policing to victim assistance, education and training to all facets of the justice system.

The case involved a murder-suicide: Arlene May, the victim, and Randy Iles, the perpetrator. Mr. Iles had a past criminal history which included convictions for indecent exposure, harassing phone calls, breach of probation, possession of stolen property and a weapons offence. Ms. May and Mr. Iles had been in a relationship, and an assault on Ms. May occurred in November 1995. It was reported to police after a visit to a women's shelter. Mr. Iles' final appearance before the court in Grey County was on February 29, 1996, and he was released on condition that he leave the jurisdiction.

His criminal record provided to the court for that appearance was printed on February 26. Unfortunately, what was not known at the time of his release on February 29 was that there was also a warrant for his arrest in the neighbouring jurisdiction of Simcoe County, which had only been entered on the system on February 27. Therefore, the record for his February 29 appearance did not include the arrest warrant of February 27.

Mr. Iles moved with his family to the Oshawa area, and on May 6 another warrant was issued in Grey County for communicating with Ms. May. After he was advised about the most recent warrant by his lawyer, he purchased a firearm in Oshawa, rented a van and drove to the home of Arlene May. There he killed her and killed himself.

This case and subsequent inquests identified gaps in the process that could have avoided the tragedy, for instance, the gap in record-keeping that would have identified the arrest warrant in Simcoe County, and the failure to demand the surrender of Mr. Iles' firearms acquisition certificate as a condition of bail. This was not recorded on his recognizance.

At the time of the May-Iles inquest — and I remember it very well — our understanding of intimate partner violence was less than it is now, but with such a detailed review of the May-Iles case, 200 recommendations, how do we find ourselves in a similar position 24 years later?

Since 1998, there are far more governmental supports in place, and our justice system hopefully has a better understanding of the risk factors involved, as do the policing partners.

While our comprehension of intimate partner violence has progressed, there is still much to do. The Renfrew County murders are sadly only one example of our continued inability to recognize and address the risk. For example, intimate partner violence, IPV, in urban settings has its own unique challenges that differ greatly from IPV in a rural community. The Renfrew County inquest shed light on the difficulties of combatting IPV in

rural settings. Some of the following recommendations from the inquest relate to the reality, particularly for women, of living in rural areas in Canada.

Recommendation 19 suggests the creation of an emergency fund that includes the recognition of needs for rural and geographically remote survivors of IPV.

Recommendation 20 recognizes that funding in remote or rural communities cannot be the per capita equivalent of urban settings, and that the remoteness quotient be considered for use, akin to other social services, such as education and policing.

Recommendation 29 seeks to provide professional education and training for justice system personnel on the IPV-related issues that include the very unique rural factors.

Recommendation 52 seeks to expand cell service and high-speed internet in rural and remote areas.

In the summer of 2020, my office sought the aid of a law student, Kallisti Sipidias, to research IPV in women's shelters in Ontario. She did a fantastic job. She contacted many women's shelters to discuss their experience and challenges. Some of this research was in relation to the pandemic, but much of it also applied more generally. In her findings, issues with women's shelters included shelters operating at full capacity with many demands unmet, a lack of affordable housing to which the women could move and the eligibility requirements and red tape in applying for affordable housing. The shelters themselves lack appropriate governmental funding as well. She discovered the provincial government, as an example, provides funding for 50% to 80% of a shelter's total costs. Many times, shelters are required to make up the shortfall in operating costs through fundraising endeavours and federal grants. Federal grants are temporary and often intermittent, and fundraising efforts consume a lot of time and human capital to meet operational baselines, neither of which shelters have. This creates a burnout situation which ultimately has consequences both for those who run the shelters and those who desperately rely on them.

• (2150)

I was pleased to see that Kallisti's findings are echoed in the inquest. Recommendation 21 seeks to have the provincial government develop a plan for enhanced second-stage housing for survivors. Recommendation 20 seeks to realign the approach to public funding provided to service providers to one that is annualized, like every other public service, and to also enhance funding considering the differences in rural and urban realities.

Rural communities have other challenges that many of us might not consider because we take them for granted. Those in rural communities may have spotty or no internet access or cellular coverage. Women may not have access to personal

transportation and certainly less access to public transportation, if they have it at all. Availing themselves of any services that may exist can be an uphill battle or could be hours away. All of these are mentioned in the inquest recommendations. But even before coming to the decision to seek out services, there may be many personal reasons preventing IPV victims from reaching out.

As Pamela Cross, a lawyer and expert on violence against women, remarked in the *Ottawa Citizen*:

There's a lack of anonymity in rural communities that prevents some women from seeking help A shelter worker could be a friend. The OPP officer answering a call might play hockey with the woman's partner. The partner's mother might see her car parked outside a law office.

This accounts for an added layer of complexity in rural communities. A tight-knit culture of rural living doesn't allow for many secrets, and this alone is enough of a reason to dissuade women from bringing cases forward to the authorities or seeking out help on their own.

Unfortunately, honourable senators, this is an epidemic. The first recommendation from the inquest is to formally declare it as such. What's even worse is that IPV is more prominent in rural areas, and with more IPV in rural areas comes more firearm-related intimate partner violence. The perpetrator's tool of choice for two of the murders in Renfrew County's triple homicide was a firearm; the first woman was strangled. Statistics from 2020 indicate there were 8.1 female victims of firearm-related IPV per 100,000 female population in the rural South, and 31 per 100,000 in the rural North. In urban areas, that number is 4.1.

Firearm-related intimate partner violence for male victims was low compared to female victims across all three categories. Overall, one in four female victims of firearm-related violence was targeted by a current or former spouse or intimate partner.

Firearm-related homicides further paint a devastating picture for women. Between 2015 and 2020, statistics on firearm-related homicide cases show that in solved cases, 70% of the homicides involve a current or former spouse, another intimate partner or a family member.

Now, these are generalized statistics for all of Canada, but in rural areas, the situation is even more dire. Firearm-related homicides of female victims by a spouse, intimate partner or family member hits 84% in the rural areas of Canada and 81% in the North, compared to 62% in urban areas.

I've outlined but two inquests, spaced decades apart, to help honourable colleagues understand the situation that we continue to face today. Despite the progress that has been made, we are still far from creating continued safe environments for intimate partner violence victims or reducing occurrences of violence against women altogether.

The Renfrew County inquest wants this formally declared an epidemic. This should be a wake-up call to all levels of government. Year-to-year funding, burnout amongst staff, overcrowded shelters and gaps in the system continue to put intimate partners, particularly women, at risk of violence. Recommendations are worth as much as the paper on which they're printed if actions don't follow. While I raise this issue through an Ontario lens, the rest of the country is not immune to the epidemic.

The purpose of a Senate inquiry is to draw the attention of the chamber to an issue and this, in my view, is an issue that needs highlighting. An inquiry does not result in a vote, but I

nonetheless encourage all senators to speak from their own regional perspectives on this topic to help push the intimate partner violence narrative forward for the safety and security of all victims, past, present and future. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

(At 9:56 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

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