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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

CONTENTS

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

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

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

L'ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE DE MONTRÉAL

COMMEMORATION OF TRAGEDY—SILENT TRIBUTE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, before we proceed, I would ask senators to rise and observe one minute of silence in memory of the victims of the tragedy that occurred 33 years ago on December 6, 1989, at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal.

(Honourable senators then stood in silent tribute.)

[*English*]

marginalized and disadvantaged circumstances who are underperforming in the conventional school environment and who are at serious risk of abandoning their schooling entirely.

In recognition of their generosity, the school now bears their name and is known as the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning.

In 2018, Al was a recipient of the Ford Motor Company's prestigious Salute To Dealers, which is presented to a select number of dealers worldwide in recognition of their outstanding contributions to their community during their career.

• (1410)

When asked about his involvement in community projects, Al was quoted as saying, "I don't need fancy things. I'd rather put my money back into my community."

Turning 80 this week, Al can still be found at his dealership in Dartmouth, Monday to Saturday, working 10-hour days doing what he loves and making a difference in the city that he loves. Happy birthday, Al.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

AL MACPHEE

CONGRATULATIONS ON EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I would like to speak about someone who has contributed greatly to my city of Dartmouth and to my province of Nova Scotia: well-known and well-respected business person Al MacPhee.

Al was determined to stand out on his own from an early age. As the tenth of 14 children, he left the family farm in French Road, Cape Breton, for the city, where he found a part-time job at a local car dealership.

Before long, he was selling cars and found he really enjoyed it. By 1983, Al owned his own dealership and eventually turned it into the third-largest General Motors dealership in Canada.

Success in the car business provided Al the means to support his community of Dartmouth and to really make a difference. He has contributed greatly over the years to the Dartmouth General Hospital and was chairman of the capital campaign to build Alderney Landing in Dartmouth — a convention centre, art gallery, market, theatre and events plaza that has helped to revitalize Dartmouth's waterfront.

Al's generosity to his community does not stop there. Al and his wife, Mary, have been long-time supporters of a non-profit youth education centre in downtown Dartmouth, which was established to help bridge the learning gap for youth in

RELEASE FROM DETENTION IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, as you may know from my Question Period interventions over the past eight months, in April a Canadian flight crew working for Pivot Airlines was arbitrarily detained in the Dominican Republic, having discovered and reported 210 kilograms of cocaine on their aircraft during a pre-flight check.

The crew was detained, jailed with drug traffickers, received death threats and had their passports seized. A dead body was left outside their cell and they were told they would be next.

Following their release, the crew had to move from safe house to safe house. In August, video evidence came to light that showed the drugs had been loaded onto the aircraft by a third party early on the morning of departure while the crew was at their hotel.

Colleagues, after multiple interventions and continuous pressure — as you may have heard — I'm pleased to report that, after eight months, the crew has finally returned home.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Wells: I was invited to welcome the crew on their arrival in Toronto late last week. I was able to meet the crew and their families and witness the emotional homecoming. While I am relieved that our Canadian crew has returned safely to Canada, I am disappointed that it has taken this long for the government to act for their rightful release. While they are back on safe soil, the emotional ordeal is not over.

As Pivot Airlines President Eric Edmondson stated, “The crew languished for months unnecessarily because of inaction of the government.” Transport Canada has committed to a full investigation of this, and I will be asking the government leader in the Senate about this in the coming months. The crew asked me to pass along their gratitude to all those who advocated on their behalf, including the Air Line Pilots Association, Canadian Union of Public Employees, or CUPE, Unifor and, of course, Pivot Airlines. The pilot, Captain Rob Di Venanzo said this was the best Christmas gift he could ever receive. Thank you, colleagues.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Lynn Francis, accompanied by a delegation from the Elsipogtog First Nation. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Hartling.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ELSIPOGTOG FIRST NATION

CONGRATULATIONS ON INDIGENOUS TOURISM AWARD

Hon. Nancy J. Hartling: Honourable senators, today I rise to congratulate and honour my friends from the Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick. Elsipogtog means “river of fire” in the Mi’kmaq language and is located on the beautiful Richibucto River about one hour from my home in Moncton.

This year, the Elsipogtog Mi’kmaq Cultural Center Tours & Artisan Gift Shop, which runs the Mi’kmaq Heritage Path Tour, won the Tourism Industry Association of Canada’s prestigious Indigenous Tourism Award. The award recognizes Indigenous businesses that demonstrate a commitment to the development, promotion and delivery of authentic, innovative experiences that promote Indigenous culture and tourism growth in the region.

This award is well deserved, and we welcome you to our Senate. I understand you have an invitation from the other Senators to attend their game in Ottawa tonight and set up a booth to display your products.

Last summer, my husband and I had the pleasure of visiting Lynn Francis, director of the Elsipogtog Economic Development and members of her staff, as well as Chrissy Guitard, co-owner of SheBuilds construction company.

We met with Lynn’s team to learn about the various economic development projects at Elsipogtog First Nation. Our meeting began with a smudging ceremony by an elder, after which we had a chance to learn about the Mi’kmaq Heritage Path Tour, which is a guided walk through the traditional lands of the community.

The tour features historical, cultural and spiritual teachings designed for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It includes an authentically constructed wigwam, longhouse and sweat lodge made by their local elder and knowledge keeper.

The tour ends inside the cultural centre where we were greeted by a group of young women wearing traditional ribbon skirts. It provides visitors a safe place to ask questions about Mi’kmaq culture, which is an excellent way to connect for folks who may not know about this profound history in New Brunswick. The Artisan Gift Shop offers very beautiful products for sale. We also enjoyed a special treat of bannock and fresh blueberries.

Later we had a chance to see several new buildings in the community such as a new hockey arena and to visit one of the SheBuilds construction sites. SheBuilds, in partnership with Elsipogtog Economic Development, provides opportunities for Mi’kmaq women to learn skilled trades while building houses in their own community. The carpenters and apprentices we met were very proud of their work that will help tackle the housing shortage in the community while increasing career opportunities for their skilled workers.

I was so grateful to have the opportunity to visit the Elsipogtog First Nation after so many years. It’s a very progressive place and definitely a tourist destination. Mark it on your calendar for a visit when coming to New Brunswick.

Friends, again, congratulations on your achievement in creating a wonderful cultural experience to share with us, and thank you for joining us today. *Wela’liog*, thank you.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Professor Kelly Saunders, interns from the Manitoba Legislative Assembly Internship Program and interns from the Parliamentary Internship Program. 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!

LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

Hon. F. Gigi Osler: Honourable senators, today I am proud to welcome six members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly Internship Program to the Senate. These inspiring young interns are Alina Hart, Bea Basaran, Tayla Gudnason, Cheta Akaluka, Dane Monkman and Hannah Drudge. Accompanying them is Academic Director, Professor Kelly Saunders.

The Manitoba Legislative Assembly Internship Program was established in 1985 by the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and is intended to serve three broad purposes.

First, the program provides graduates of Manitoba's universities, or graduates of other universities who are lucky enough to be permanent residents of Manitoba, an opportunity to experience the legislative process. Interns are assigned to work with government and opposition caucuses where they perform a variety of tasks. In addition to being directly involved with the legislative process, the interns participate in a series of seminars designed to enhance their knowledge of government operations, the economy, media, journalism and the not-for-profit sector in Manitoba.

Second, the program provides MLAs with competent and educated assistance in policy research and constituency matters. The program enables MLAs to delegate some of the work to the interns, which then allows them to deal more efficiently with specialized legislative issues.

Finally, a long-term goal of the program is to develop a group of young Manitobans who understand the parliamentary system and the role of elected representatives. By fostering a knowledge of, and an appreciation for, our political system, the program brings value to both the province and to these future leaders.

Each cohort of interns can decide on a study trip to Westminster or a study visit to two Canadian jurisdictions. This year they chose Ottawa. The purpose of the visit is to familiarize the interns with the parliamentary process at the federal, provincial and/or territorial level. The visit consists of an intense program of seminars, meetings and tours with leading government and political figures, parliamentary and legislative officials, journalists, academics, community organizations and with parliamentary or other legislative interns.

With them here today are Madeleine Martin and Sarah Rollason-MacAulay, who are both interns from the Parliamentary Internship Programme here in Ottawa. I am particularly delighted to welcome Sarah, as she is from Winnipeg and I first met her years ago through her remarkable family.

The interns all shared with us how the program is an invaluable learning experience and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Honourable colleagues, please join me in welcoming them to the Senate of Canada. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, it was a cold Wednesday afternoon when a young man walked into l'École Polytechnique de Montréal armed with a .223-calibre rifle. The date was December 6, 1989. He entered a classroom of engineering students and instantly ordered all six women to the back and the men to leave. Lining the women up side by side, he yelled, "You're all a bunch of feminists. I hate feminists." He lifted his rifle, pointed it toward the first woman's head and shot her in the forehead. He would go on to do the same for the other

five standing alongside. The shots echoed through the hallways. Students nearby heard the horrifying screams and scrambled for help.

• (1420)

On that dark day, 14 women lost their lives. The gunman's suicide note stated that women had no place in engineering because they would take jobs from men, that feminists were ruining his life, and that his intention was to end the lives of all women in the Department of Engineering.

Today is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and I wish to pay tribute to these 14 brave women who lost their lives 33 years ago. Their only sin was that they had dared to dream they could be engineers. Michèle Thibodeau-DeGuire was the first woman to graduate from the civil engineering program at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. When asked about a possible solution to gender-based violence, she said one way to move forward after an event like this is to continue encouraging girls and women to stay in fields like engineering.

Women continue to be under-represented in engineering, but in 2020, Polytechnique's Department of Engineering reached an important milestone. That year, just over 30% of undergraduate engineering graduates were women.

Honourable senators, remarkably, violence against women remains all too common today. According to the World Health Organization, one in three women experience some form of violence in their lifetime, and most of this is by their partners. It doesn't take much thinking to remember the assaults and abuses against young women recently all over the world. No doubt you yourselves are remembering, perhaps even someone you know.

December 6 is an opportunity for Canadians to reflect on the phenomenon of violence against women in our society and to commemorate women such as those 14 students in Montreal who died on that Wednesday afternoon 33 years ago. They are: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Jennifer Arp, David Awosoga and Ken Lima-Coelho. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Pate.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

L'ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE DE MONTRÉAL

COMMEMORATION OF TRAGEDY

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, I rise today to commemorate the tragedy that occurred on December 6, 1989, at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal.

Thirty-three years ago, Quebec was horrified to learn of this crime that occurred in a place of higher learning. This multiple femicide was committed by a misogynistic killer who silenced the voices and quashed the wonderful potential of 14 female engineering students.

Since then, the rate of femicide has risen, according to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. In 2021, 173 women and girls were killed violently in Canada. On average, a crime is committed against a woman in Canada every two days, which is an increase of 26% since 2019.

[English]

Still today, Indigenous women and girls are victims of atrocious violence, leaving communities across the country in mourning and feeling vulnerable. Just last week, we learned of another deranged man taking the precious lives of several young women. This must stop.

Since 1991, we commemorate December 6 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. This day was created to encourage us to continue raising our voices to find solutions to prevent this kind of violence. This resonates at home, but also abroad. In September, Iranian women and human rights activists gathered in nationwide protests to denounce the death of a young woman at the hands of Iran's morality police because she did not comply with the country's strict dress code for women.

[Translation]

Let us remember the pain that is inflicted on women just for being women. Let us not forget that being a woman should not be an obstacle to freedom of expression, the freedom to choose what to do with her body, to equality and the right to exist.

I want to thank Senators Pate, Audette, Boisvenu, Bernard, Miville-Dechéne, McPhedran, Ataullahjan and all the others who fight in this chamber against all forms of violence against women and girls.

Today we honour the memory of all the victims of the tragedy at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. This is a very emotional time for me. Let us remember all the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and all those who are victims of femicide around the world. We will never forget them.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

[English]

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Larry W. Smith: Honourable senators, as this is my first opportunity, I rise to address my unfortunate attempt at a triple salchow in the chamber last week.

While the audible thump that you may have heard was a lot harder on my ego than it was on my head, I can guarantee that I had not taken a knock as hard as that in the more than 200 games I have played in my amateur, collegiate and professional football career. I would like to thank Senators Ravalia, Osler, Kutcher and Mégie, as well as Greg Peters and others who came to my immediate assistance.

In addition to quickly assessing my condition, these remarkable physicians routinely followed up with me over the phone, as well as in person, throughout the evening and into the following day. My visit to Senator Kutcher's makeshift clinic on the first floor of the Château Laurier that evening was indeed a highlight. I was in awe of the teamwork exhibited by these outstanding individuals, and I am indebted for their lightning-fast response.

Colleagues, my unsuccessful performance last week further highlights the importance of being conscious of your surroundings and your environment, especially during the winter months, which can be unforgiving for many of us in this place. In closing, I would like to thank all of you for your kind messages and care that you have demonstrated over the last few days. I am extremely grateful. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

AUDITOR GENERAL

REPORT ON COVID-19 VACCINES TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada on COVID-19 Vaccines, pursuant to the *Auditor General Act*, R.S.C., 1985, c. A-17, s. 8.

REPORT ON SPECIFIC COVID-19 BENEFITS TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada on Specific COVID-19 Benefits, pursuant to the *Act to provide further support in response to COVID-19*, S.C. 2021, c. 26, s. 19.1.

HEALTH

(Motion agreed to.)

REPORT ON COVID-19 RAPID TEST PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION TABLED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report on COVID-19 Rapid Test Procurement and Distribution from the Minister of Health.

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION BILL, 2022

NINTH REPORT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER DEPOSITED WITH CLERK DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Brian Francis: Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on November 17, 2022, the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on December 5, 2022, its ninth report, which deals with the subject matter of those elements contained in Subdivisions A and B of Division 3 of Part 4 of Bill C-32, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 3, 2022 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022, and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

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

- (1430)

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(a), I move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications be authorized to meet on Tuesday, December 6, 2022, even though the Senate may then be sitting, and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

QUESTION PERIOD**FINANCE***FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT 2022*

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, in his November 15 report, Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux identified \$14.2 billion in new measures announced in the Fall Economic Statement for which no specific details were provided.

This spending represents 17% of all new measures in the Fall Economic Statement. As Mr. Giroux testified at the House of Commons Finance Committee, “This lack of transparency presents challenges for parliamentarians and the public in scrutinizing the Government’s spending plans.” He also said that “The government knows quite well the measures that are going to be funded, but is not disclosing them.”

Again, let me repeat: “The government knows quite well the measures that are going to be funded, but is not disclosing them.”

Senator Gold, why won’t your government come clean and tell Canadians what this \$14.2 billion of new spending is for?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question, senator. The government believes in transparency. It also believes in being clear with Canadians. Certain measures are not yet determined in terms of where the spending might go. As soon as those details are finalized, they will be communicated not only to this chamber but to Canadians.

Senator Plett: It’s surprising how many things the government believes in but does not carry through with, and this would be another one.

At the core of the role of parliamentarians are the review and the approval of spending. Senator Gold, senators and members of Parliament cannot properly scrutinize the government’s spending plan if 17% of it remains secret.

Senator Gold, when will the government stop treating Parliament like a rubber stamp and provide parliamentarians with the information that they need to do their jobs?

Senator Gold: It is simply not the case, senator, that the government treats Parliament, the Senate or the House of Commons as a rubber stamp. There are a number of measures through which the government regularly reports to this chamber and the other place so that we can discharge our responsibilities.

Monthly financial results are reported in *The Fiscal Monitor*. Departments provide quarterly financial reporting. Audited financial statements are published in the Public Accounts, and the government tables an annual Departmental Plan and

Departmental Results Report. Most importantly, measures like the Fall Economic Statement embodied in Bill C-32 come before this house for study and debate.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AFGHANISTAN CRISIS

Hon. Salma Ataulhjan: Government leader, yesterday, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights began hearing testimony on Canada's anti-terrorism rules that bar aid groups from working in Afghanistan. Committee members heard from lawyers, professors and charity organizations, but none of the three Liberal cabinet ministers accepted our invitation. Instead, Ministers Lametti, Mendicino and Sajjan sent bureaucrats from Public Safety Canada, Department of Justice Canada and Global Affairs Canada.

Senator Gold, we were told repeatedly during yesterday's hearing that the government is seized — I repeat, because we heard it five times, seized — with this issue, but nothing is being done. I shudder to think, when the government is not seized with certain issues, what happens with those issues. Meanwhile, our allies have modified their rules to allow humanitarian aid to reach Afghanistan.

What are they hiding? Why send us bureaucrats limited by red tape and who, in some cases, have been in their current positions for only six months?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The government has nothing to hide, senator. Thank you for your question. My understanding is that the ministers to whom you referred all had prior commitments when they received the invitation from the committee. Officials from the Department of Justice and Public Safety Canada attended the meeting and provided the information that they were qualified to provide, and I trust that it was helpful to the committee. The government recognizes the important work that is undertaken by the committee and looks forward to the committee's report on this important issue.

Senator Ataulhjan: Senator Gold, we heard from Professor Kent Roach from the University of Toronto, who took the time to explain to the Human Rights Committee that, in his professional opinion, this government is misinterpreting its own laws and that the needless suffering in Afghanistan could be avoided with solutions such as exemptions on non-prosecution agreements.

Senator Gold, Professor Roach offered three solid and simple solutions to put an end to the restrictions on humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Why has the government not explored these avenues sooner?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. Professor Roach is, indeed, a notable expert, and the government and the country have benefited from his engagement with these and many other issues over the years. The government will look seriously at his recommendations as it values the work that the committee does and those witnesses that come before it.

[Senator Gold]

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Pat Duncan: My question today is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, information provided to senators to support the Statutes Repeal Act motion states in part that, "Pursuant to Budget 2021, consultations were held to inform potential changes to the employment insurance EI program." It further states that "Consultations have concluded and the plan to modernize the EI program is still under development."

Senator Gold, will you please advise the chamber what "still under development" means?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, senator. The government knows full well that the EI, or Employment Insurance, system which is needed for the 21st century is one that needs to be developed and that the current system needs to be modernized to that end.

The government remains committed to strengthening the rights for workers who were employed, for example, in digital platforms and to establishing new provisions to the Income Tax Act to ensure that their work counts towards EI and CPP — the Canada Pension Plan. Indeed, with Budget 2022, the government is investing \$110 million to extend the existing seasonal pilot until October of 2023.

I also note that the government consulted widely with unions, workers, employers and other partners to build an EI system that meets the needs of Canadians going forward. As you referenced in your question, consultations have come to a close, and the government is in the process of analyzing the information that it received.

It is a serious business to modernize an EI system that serves millions of Canadians every year. The government looks forward to presenting its long-term plan for comprehensive EI modernization. It's taking the time to get it right.

Senator Duncan: Thank you, Senator Gold, for that answer. I appreciate that much-needed changes do take time. I would also caution the Government Representative in the Senate that one size does not fit all in this country.

Can the Government Representative in the Senate please advise when we might see the development plan? Is there a time frame attached to the cabinet's work?

• (1440)

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question.

I have not been advised of a timeline, as such. With the consultations having been finished, I have been advised that the analysis is ongoing and the work will proceed with dispatch.

I will certainly pass on your observation. The government would be receptive to the point that the system has to be adapted to the different industries, regions and circumstances that workers and businesses find themselves in.

At such time as there is a predicted date for release of more information, I will be happy to share it.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

Hon. Patricia Bovey: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, the recent, unexpected and sudden firing of four senior staff members of the National Gallery of Canada has created controversy at home and internationally among artists, arts professionals and many donors. Three were long-time employees, one of more than 20 years. Their work, exhibitions, acquisitions, publications and specialized conservation has been widely acclaimed here and abroad.

Has the minister reached out to the interim CEO and board chair to gain an understanding that can be shared with taxpayers and the public as to why those decisions were made? What are the implications and consequences for the upcoming programs of Canada's flagship and the gallery as a whole?

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

We have all followed the developments within the museum with interest. I do not know the answer to your question, but I will make inquiries and report back.

Senator Bovey: Perhaps while you are making those inquiries, Senator Gold, you could ask if the minister has responded to the letters of concerns from the unions within the gallery that had been sent to him before the firings and those letters he has received subsequently from former staff.

Senator Gold: I will certainly be pleased to do that. Thank you.

TRANSPORT

NATIONAL TRADE CORRIDORS FUND

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Senator Gold, we continue to face issues created by fallout from the pandemic, particularly in the North where the most severe lockdowns in the country were imposed to successfully prevent the spread of COVID.

Recently, I have been advised that the Qikiqtani Inuit Association is facing major cost overruns with regard to the building of infrastructure that was promised through the Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area Inuit

Impact and Benefit Agreement, or IIBA, due to pandemic-related delays and increases in materials and labour shortages. Other infrastructure flowing from that IIBA has not been able to begin because the original budgets would require adjustment in order to enable contractors to properly bid on them.

On the other side of the territory, the Kitikmeot Inuit Association has had to pause their progress on the Grays Bay road and port project in order to focus on COVID response programs. It was important to prioritize those programs, but it meant that just over \$20 million in funding received through the National Trade Corridors Fund is about to expire at the end of this fiscal year before they can put it to its intended use, namely the finalization of environmental assessment submission to the Nunavut Impact Review Board.

Recognizing that those issues are well beyond the control of the two regional Inuit associations, my question is this: Will your government be willing to both add additional funding to address the cost overruns of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association infrastructure and to extend the deadline on the National Trade Corridors Fund spending?

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

The government is working closely with territorial and Indigenous partners to build the infrastructure that communities have identified as their priorities. The government knows that some of those projects are facing real challenges due to the global supply chain issues or a shortage of skilled labour. That is particularly acute, as you pointed out correctly, in Northern and Indigenous communities. Indeed, the government knows that the pandemic disproportionately affected remote and Northern communities, as well.

I'm advised that the government is working closely with infrastructure project proponents to address those funding and other challenges. I understand that officials from Transport Canada remain available to discuss how all of this is having an impact on those proposed projects.

FINANCE

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Government Leader in the Senate.

Last week, the Senate Banking Committee heard from Kevin Page, the former Parliamentary Budget Officer, who told the committee that an expected winter recession will hurt small businesses significantly. In fact, the combination of three factors will hurt small businesses, the backbone of the Canadian economy: a recession, high interest rates and inflation. Those mean higher costs for businesses and less money for consumers.

Mr. Page confirmed this, saying:

. . . That will hurt small businesses significantly because, with these higher interest rates, people will not want to use credit to go out and spend.

This recession will be caused by high interest rates, which are the direct result of the reckless spending by the Liberals. Leader, what is the government's plan to help small businesses that will suffer in 2023?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The Government of Canada has demonstrated that it has been here for Canadians, small businesses, workers and others throughout all of the dislocations that have occurred as a result of the pandemic and the rising costs of living, which includes rising interest rates. The government will continue to be there for businesses and others as circumstances unfold.

The good news is that Canada's economy is in a good, strong position. Our fiscal position is solid and strong. Canada will have the capacity to provide assistance where appropriate.

Senator Martin: In addition to higher costs caused by inflation and higher interest rates, the government will hurt small businesses by increasing energy costs and payroll taxes. It seems the government is either deaf to the demands of the business community or has no interest in helping small businesses.

Leader, why won't the government cancel its planned hikes of carbon and payroll taxes that will hurt small businesses?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question.

As I have repeated on several occasions in response to this question, the government is of the view that its price on pollution and the other measures that are in place to secure and sustain the sustainability of those funds and programs that Canadians depend upon for their security are correct, prudent and responsible measures. It will continue to act accordingly.

TRANSPORT

APPEARANCE AT INTERPARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP GROUP EVENT

Hon. Leo Housakos: My question is for the Government Leader in the Senate.

Last week, Minister Omar Alghabra attended a gathering hosted by the Canada-Palestine Parliamentary Friendship Group. Among the guests was Nazih Khatatba, publisher of the Arabic language newspaper *Meshwar Media*. Mr. Khatatba is a dangerous anti-Semite, Holocaust-denier and terrorist sympathizer. His publication has referred to the Holocaust as a hoax and the biggest lie in history.

Minister Alghabra refused to apologize for standing with Mr. Khatatba at that event.

This is not the first time that Liberal MPs and ministers have been caught attending events with such anti-Semite, terrorist sympathizers. They always express regret at being caught, but these unsavoury characters continue to show up at the same events as Liberal cabinet ministers.

Senator Gold, do you think that Minister Alghabra should apologize for having attended this event with Mr. Khatatba?

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

This government condemns anti-Semitism and offensive, abusive language and actions in all of its forms. It knows this behaviour must be called out.

As senators would know, the event that the Minister of Transport attended was a parliamentary friendship group event that included MPs and members of the Palestinian community. The invitation — and this is a matter of public record — was extended broadly to members of the community. There was no check being done by the parliamentary friendship group as to who would be attending.

I also understand that the minister had no actual personal contact with this individual, and was unaware of who that person was or that he was going to be attending the event.

The actions that you described quite probably, Senator Housakos, of this particular individual — not the minister, but the attendee — are completely unacceptable.

• (1450)

The government wants to assure all Canadians that the views that that person expresses are completely unacceptable and not what this government stands for. The government is committed to continuing to call out this kind of behaviour, condemn all forms of hate and all forms of anti-Semitism in our country.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, with all due respect, the minister stood in a picture with him, knowing full well that this is a well-known anti-Semite. As I said, Senator Gold, this is not the first time that Liberals and Trudeau cabinet ministers of this government have been found sharing the stage with anti-Semites and terrorist sympathizers.

My question to you, government leader, is the following: If you were allowed to participate in the national caucus of the governing party — which you should, given the fact that you are the government leader and represent the government in this chamber — would you advise the national Liberal governing caucus to stay away from well-known anti-Semites and terrorist sympathizers?

Senator Gold: The minister did not knowingly associate with known anti-Semites. I am choosing my words very carefully, Senator Housakos. You know who I am and my background. I think that we should be careful, especially when leaders of all parties came together just yesterday to light the Hanukia, or Hanukkah menorah, and express solidarity for the actions that we all need to take against anti-Semitism and all forms of hate when

all political leaders, including your own, spoke movingly and passionately about the need to make this a non-partisan issue. On that, I will conclude my answer.

PUBLIC SAFETY

FIREARMS LEGISLATION

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, the Liberal government, in a very sneaky manner, tabled amendments to Bill C-21 that would ban firearms that have been used for decades by Canadian hunters, including members of Indigenous communities. For example, the Liberals would ban the SKS, a very popular rifle widely used by Indigenous hunters. Minister Mendicino confirmed yesterday on CBC that it is the intent of the government to ban the SKS because it is a rifle that was used — now pay attention to this — during a war in 1945.

Senator Gold, did your government consult any Indigenous hunters before deciding to take away their SKS rifles?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The amendments that were introduced were not done in a “sneaky” fashion; they were done in a committee in the other place. More importantly, the government will always respect hunters, sports shooters and Indigenous peoples and their traditions. The government is not targeting hunting rifles or shotguns.

I know there has been confusion on this point, so let me be clear. Many of the hunting rifles mentioned recently in the media are not being prohibited, and that includes the one that was a part of a well-known photo by a very well-known personality from my hometown of Montreal. This is largely a matter of misunderstanding where, for example, a common hunting rifle also has a high-powered version. It is only the high-powered version that would be prohibited under the amendments introduced into the bill.

Having said all of that, as the Prime Minister has made clear, he and the government are open to feedback to make sure that firearms mainly used for hunting are not included in the prohibition. The bill, which I hope we will receive and have the opportunity to study properly and fully as we have always done, is about the guns that were used in the massacre at l'École Polytechnique, in a mosque in Quebec City and in South Simcoe. This is a bill to protect safe communities for Canadians.

Senator Plett: Well, of course, Senator Gold, I was simply repeating what Minister Mendicino stated. This isn't something the Conservatives made up; this was Minister Mendicino on CBC yesterday.

Senator Gold, we have seen this over and over, be it for Bill C-11, the expansion of assisted suicide provisions and now taking away hunting tools that the Indigenous community use for survival. Your government refuses or neglects to truly consult Indigenous communities.

Senator Gold, why is your government only paying lip service to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP? Why aren't they taking their responsibilities more seriously?

Senator Gold: The government takes its responsibilities to Indigenous peoples, and with regard to UNDRIP very seriously — so seriously that this government introduced legislation for which the majority in the Senate, though not members of your group, voted. This government does more than pay lip service; it has done more to work with Indigenous partners and communities to advance this country on a path towards reconciliation. The work is enormous and it will take generations. It is this government that has begun the work in a serious way.

TRANSPORT

CANADIAN TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, on October 27, I asked your colleague Minister Alghabra a question on the backlog of complaints due to flight delays and cancellations at the Canadian Transportation Agency.

At the time your colleague said:

I have met with the chair of the CTA just recently, first, wanting to get briefed by her on the situation, the volume of complaints and the resources that are needed. Our government is now working with the CTA on making sure they have the resources they need.

And yet we are reading in *Blacklock's* this morning that the number of complaints has now reached 30,000, and the minister is now saying that cabinet is “figuring out how we can improve the system.”

Senator Gold, your government is constantly working at a snail's pace when it comes to providing services to Canadians. Can you please share with us what your government is doing in “figuring out how” to improve the system?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The discussions at cabinet are matters upon which, as you would know, honourable colleague, I cannot comment on. I can assure Canadians, however, that this government is, in fact, addressing this pressing problem to the best of its ability.

Senator Plett: Senator Gold, I asked about this issue 40 days ago. Canadians expect that the minister would have made decisions by now on how to remedy this outrageous situation.

For the minister to say that this period has stress tested the system and that it has exposed some areas of vulnerability is simply not good enough. Leadership is not about blaming others and giving excuses; it is about having a plan forward and ensuring that Canadians get the services and the assistance they deserve — services that they, frankly, pay for.

Senator Gold, I will repeat my question: What is the Minister of Transportation doing? What is your government doing to address this backlog? What is the plan to address the growing number of complaints at the Canadian Transportation Agency?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. I will take each and every one of those questions and refer them to the government and hope to get an answer in due course.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): I guess we will have to wait another 40 days, I will ask the question again and hopefully not get the same answer.

In a new report entitled *Patrol and Persuade*, Safeguard Defenders, a human rights organization based in Spain, found dozens of additional overseas Chinese police service centres around the world, including at least two right here in Canada.

Senator Gold, your government has told us that it is taking the matter seriously and investigating. Why then do we have to find out what is happening in our own country from an organization operating overseas? Had the government identified these additional stations prior to this report? If so, why was this information not shared with the public? Most importantly, why are these illegal police stations still operating on Canadian soil?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, senator. As I believe I have mentioned in this chamber before, the RCMP has, in fact, confirmed that they have launched an investigation into these allegations of Chinese so-called police stations, and I am further advised that Global Affairs Canada has, indeed, made representations through the Chinese Ambassador to Canada regarding these allegations.

I want to emphasize, colleagues, as we all know, that it's the Chinese community in Canada who are often targeted by such interference. We're going to work with the community to combat it and protect them and all Canadians. The government is using all its tools and will employ new ones if necessary to combat all foreign interference in our country.

• (1500)

As commented by an official at Global Affairs Canada and recently reiterated in this chamber:

The activity that's being alleged —
— that is the police stations, colleagues —

— would be entirely illegal and totally inappropriate, and it would be the subject of very serious representations

Senator Plett: Senator Gold, the report in question also claims that the vast majority of the newly documented stations found around the world were set up starting back in 2016. Does the government have any knowledge of how early these stations

began operations in Canada, or was this under the government's radar for six years? Again, why are they still operating in Canada?

Senator Gold: Senator, I cannot answer that question for several reasons, not the least of which is that when and what Canada became aware of would have occurred through its security services. All senators will properly understand that those matters cannot be the subject of public disclosure.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: My question is to the Government Representative.

More than six months ago, the Honourable Louise Arbour, in her *Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces*, made 48 recommendations on how to change the way military sexual misconduct allegations are reported and handled. Days after the Arbour report was released in May, Minister of National Defence Anita Anand promised to report to Parliament by year's end on the government's implementation plan.

Senator Gold, it is now December 6, a day to focus on the continuum of violence against women and girls. With less than 10 sitting days remaining on the parliamentary calendar, can you please advise this chamber on when we will receive Minister Anand's promised report on implementation of the Arbour recommendations and, in particular, which recommendations are being declined by the government?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. I don't know the actual date, but I will remind this chamber that the minister welcomed Madam Justice Arbour's final report in its entirety, welcomed all of her recommendations and committed to implementing 17 of them immediately.

I'll make some inquiries. If I have an answer before we rise, I'd be happy to share it with this chamber.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Michèle Audette moved second reading of Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

[Editor's Note: Senator Audette spoke in Innu.]

She said: Honourable senators, this is the first time in 12 months that I've spoken as a senator on Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

This is an emotional week for Indigenous women, but it is also a week filled with history. That's why I think it's important for my colleagues to support this bill. This is an important step for many of us across Canada, not only to move forward with reconciliation, but more importantly to strengthen our country's social fabric.

It is also the culmination of many years of advocacy for many people, groups, experts, thinkers, philosophers, survivors, our knowledge keepers and of course our communities. We've been calling for greater accountability for a long time; this isn't new. We're also calling for greater accountability for everyone, myself included. I have that role and that responsibility.

In my eyes and in my heart, this bill is of vital importance. It is a step toward healing and reparation. It enables us to take action, which is important because it is more than just words. This is about honouring everyone who came to speak to us and share their truth during the TRC hearings. This is about the families that are still here and the ones that are not, including the little beings of light who were gone too soon.

[English]

If Bill C-29 is adopted, the national council for reconciliation will monitor long-term progress, evaluate — which is very important — and report on the implementation of the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

[Translation]

This is very important.

[English]

It will also respond to Call to Action 53 to create this national council for reconciliation. I think it is very important that it will also respond to Calls 54, 55 and 56, which deal with funding, responsibilities and transparency agreements between the government and the council.

[Translation]

These are hard truths, but it's important for us to continue to share them. We have a duty to do so.

As you know, colleagues, before the first contact with Europeans, First Peoples were a sovereign society with their own systems of governance. We lived according to rules of reciprocity, interdependence, and respect for the land and what it provides. Even then, there was diversity among First Peoples. I have said it before and I will say it again: Our ancestors welcomed the so-called great explorers. We shared with them our knowledge, our science, our medicine and our way of living on the land. We taught them how to survive.

Things changed when greed took over the relationship between our nations. We went from being economic and military allies to being an Indian problem. We did not learn this until later, after

we educated ourselves about our own history. What I also know is that we went from being welcoming, warm, strong people to being heathen, savage, inferior, lazy, and the list goes on.

[English]

As with so many people, I am the product of a residential school. I'm the daughter of a residential school survivor, Evelynne. Some of my colleagues here in this chamber are also residential school survivors. It is the story of my mom, my auntie, my uncles and my mother-in-law. It is also your story, my dear colleagues from the Indigenous communities. But what if it was also the story of all of us?

[Translation]

Throughout my childhood, in my beautiful Malietenam on the beautiful North Shore near Sept-Îles, I normalized the effects of colonial violence. For a long time, I believed that our life was the result of destructive policies, and that was what was setting off each of my five senses daily. Do you know why I thought that? It was because I didn't know the source of this violence, this way of being or this uneasiness; I didn't know where it all came from. However, as we grow older, we come to realize that we're all connected by this little thread. Then the domino effect kicks in and we realize that we're being stripped of our identity, our language — my Innu-aimun — our relationship with the land and, above all, our dignity.

• (1510)

An Atikamekw residential school survivor wrote a book called *Je reviens*. I want to read you the introduction, which says, and I quote:

My story is your story. We have no reason to be ashamed. Our children and grandchildren have the right to know. Taken from our families, uprooted from our culture and traditions, we thought that we had lost all of our origins, losses that we thought we would carry in our hearts forever.

Non-Indigenous people never knew the real story of residential schools. Those who did know it, never dared to talk about it.

Then, one day, there were some elders who had enough courage and bravery to speak out, to reveal what happened so that everyone would know. I admire those who wanted to speak out and I'm deeply grateful to them.

The truth will heal us.

Senators, I think you will understand that truth is a way for me to heal too, as is an understanding of Indigenous peoples' past.

How could I change my feelings of rage and shame? How could we stop normalizing what we hear people saying about us, that we're "savages," inferior beings, lazy or slackers? At some point, I realized that the way for me to stop doing that was to set down my heavy burden of de-victimization and focus on rebuilding. I had to understand, to reclaim my history, the history of Indigenous peoples, and above all, to understand the systemic causes of that history.

I didn't learn any of this in school. I came to understand it by listening, reading, and from the reports of the commissions of inquiry. I read in a report from the Bagot Commission in 1844 that it was believed that if Indigenous children were separated from their parents, that would ensure their assimilation.

Later, when I was president of Quebec Native Women, I learned about the existence of An Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes, 1857. It talks about us, who had ancient knowledge, and yet they wanted to assimilate us gradually as though we were incapable of doing anything. That hurts and it becomes hard to take.

Later, still through this way of learning, I found out that, in 1867, the federal government took control of the First Nations and this authority also extended to the education of Indians.

All this became official in 1883, when Prime Minister John A. Macdonald brought in residential schools to deal with the Indian issue, thereby "killing the Indian in the heart of the child."

More than 150,000 children were forcefully brought to these places. As you've already seen and heard, our ancestors were forcefully brought to these residential schools, these cursed places as some like to say, where they suffered abuse to their souls, their bodies, their way of life, places where people were punished for speaking their Indigenous languages, our beautiful languages.

Today, at 51, like many other people, I have to relearn our language.

However, in 1922, Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce published *The Story of a National Crime*, a book that exposed the neglect that students were subjected to. I wish I'd known this at a younger age, at an earlier point in my process. I wish I'd understood that these little beings of light, these tiny human beings would never return to our land because they were guinea pigs used for research, starved to death, or suffered physical, sexual, and psychological abuse that took them too soon.

At the same time, my grandmother, my little *nukum*, also explained to me the memory she has, as do many other women and men from that time, and how all of this has left silences in our communities. It sent elders and parents into the dark abyss, and it broke the parental bond. It broke our values by eroding our family values. It broke and destroyed our relationship and our reciprocity, the interdependence that exists between a mother and her children and between a community and its children, but also between parents. It ended up breaking so many things.

Now I'm beginning to understand. We also saw, a few moons ago last year, how struck everyone was when it came to be known that these little beings of light were buried in unmarked graves. The reaction was palpable, but for many of us it was something we had already expressed and explained.

Fortunately, communities have done incredible work. Yes, it caused them suffering, but it was important to talk about locating and commemorating the little beings of light who left us during the residential school days.

As devastating and difficult as those realities are, they are part of Canada's history. We cannot undo the past, but we must use these truths to put things right and do better here and now, and especially tomorrow.

Because of the things you have done, I know I don't have to convince you that this dark time in Canada's history occurred. Let us also remember why it's important for me to say these things to you. There are many people here, in the other chamber, in other places and spaces, across Canada and even around the world, who come from these territories and who are rising up today, who are stepping up as the teachers reminding us of this important history.

Like many of us, I carry in my heart always the courageous people who are still living. They are strong, they are resilient, they have suffered and they continue to suffer. They pass on to us their languages, their experience, their ceremonies, their spirituality and their knowledge. I thank them.

There isn't just one path to recovery, there are many, and we must respect these differences and move forward at each individual's pace. There is no one solution that will solve everything, there are many. Together we can do more, that much is sure.

Colleagues, I'd like to go over the ins and outs of how this bill came to be introduced in the other place in June 2022. There's an interesting story there, which I think is worth mentioning.

An interim board was created in 2019, made up of six individuals from First Peoples communities, whether Métis, Inuit or First Nations, including a former TRC commissioner, Wilton Littlechild.

The board was given a mandate to reflect, to propose recommendations for this national council for reconciliation, to name it, to guide its vision, mission, mandate, structure and funding, and to establish a legislative framework for consultation that could serve as a basis for reflection.

On top of that work, they travelled virtually to several countries, from 1973 until very recently, to document thirty or so truth and reconciliation commissions. They wanted to see what is being done elsewhere. They wanted to see what exists elsewhere once an exercise like this is completed, and what kind of entity does this accountability work.

I draw your attention to the fact that several entities were created to act on the recommendations of these commissions. These entities created different models to guide them. When they tabled their reports, they even added a recommendation; there was a mandate with a beginning and an end. Given that we don't want to lose momentum, we're proposing that a transitional committee be established to ensure that the issue remains in the public eye and on the political agenda so that it never again goes, in my words, "poof, and no one talked about it again."

Next December, this transitional committee will be established and will examine the bill or legislative framework, the model. It will consult academics: Indigenous experts who work in

universities, who are lawyers, thinkers, visionaries, men and women in different regions, even artists, to make sure that the right things are being done the right way.

• (1520)

The transitional committee will make recommendations, but it will also exert pressure so that the bill becomes a reality. Why? Because there are a lot of people who would like to see what this council for reconciliation could look like and how it will evolve in their lifetime.

I thank all those who participated in the work from the beginning. You played an important leadership role. I'm thinking of the interim board and the transitional committee. You played an important role in the process and I thank you.

Bill C-29 was introduced in the other place on June 22. Then, in the fall, it passed second reading and was referred to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs on October 6. The committee heard from 32 witnesses, including individuals, organizations, chiefs, men and women who made recommendations to improve the bill. Many changes were made, which are now reflected in the content of this version of the bill.

Honourable senators, the bill proposes a formal structure. This is crucial to achieving sustainable progress and, most importantly, to anchoring the progress we need to see on a daily and long-term basis in an organizational culture, be it political or governmental, across this great country.

Imagine the situation had we created this kind of mechanism when we were going through the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Just imagine. I was there. I was a witness along with my eldest son. We can now look at how that was implemented one year, five years, 10 years, 20 years and 30 years later.

That's why it's important to implement the mechanisms that will enable us to follow through on the Calls to Action. To me, this is obviously crucial to improving the lives of First Peoples and to rebuilding our relationship. We do not know each other well enough. There are great divides. They're there, and we have to rebuild relationships because they're important.

There must be accountability, and not just amongst ourselves. There are many Canadians and Quebecers who are more informed, better informed and aware of our challenges, the challenges of First Peoples. They also deserve accountability.

I'd also like to present to you the objectives and principles of the proposed bill. It will establish a council as an independent, non-political, permanent and Indigenous-led organization.

This bill will also serve as the legal framework for the national council for reconciliation. It will define the functions of the council, including the monitoring of progress being made towards reconciliation and the preparation of an annual report to Parliament and Canadians.

The bill will also set out the federal government's responsibilities to help the council carry out its mission. It establishes the process for creating the council, for example,

appointing the first directors, the articles of incorporation, the purpose and functions of the council and the responsibilities of the board of directors.

That is all important, especially where I come from. We must ensure that this board of directors includes representatives of the Inuit, First Nations, Métis, seniors, residential school survivors and their descendants — people who have experienced the impact of discriminatory policies — Indigenous organizations, young and older women, men, gender-diverse people from different regions of Canada, including urban, rural and remote regions. In these regions, there are Quebec nations where missionaries spoke French. French was imposed on us and we accepted French; today we speak French, like several nations in Quebec. This bill will have to ensure that those for whom French is their first or second language have their small place in this big family.

Colleagues, the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada are a path to follow. They present a road map for all levels of government, for civil society, for teaching institutions and the health sector, and for the private sector.

As Edith Cloutier so eloquently stated when she testified before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and I quote:

... reconciliation requires collective and sustained efforts over time, but also a willingness to venture down uncharted paths to work together. Innovation is needed to move reconciliation forward, and this relies on trust and complementarity among those who wish to participate in this great reconciliation.

As an aside, this woman represents several realities. She is Anishinaabe, a woman, urban and francophone.

Ms. Cloutier continued, and I quote:

Diversity is represented here, as we are as many men as women. We have to be confident that we will have the capacity, the opportunity, the will and the innovation to choose a board of directors that is representative of Canada's indigenous peoples.

I thought her testimony was wonderful, and I had to share it with you.

This initiative is important and requires everyone's commitment. Of course, each of us has the right to say "no." Each of us has the right to offer ourselves up or simply be a witness and watch it happen. I'm the sponsor of this bill, and there are reasons behind that — this bill gives me the opportunity to commit myself to my past, to our past. It also leads me to commit myself to the present, but above all to build things together. That's what gets me excited; we have to build things together.

There are thousands of us involved in the decolonization process. Let me tell you a little secret: I make up a lot of words. For me, as an Innu woman — and someone who is overflowing with creativity — I often say "Innuize" instead of decolonize. My

children are also Wendat, so they might say, “We need to ‘Wendatize,’ Mom,” instead of saying decolonize. I have to make sure that, for me, this prompts me to “Innuize” a space, to understand the real history of Canada and Indigenous peoples. There are also beautiful things that are worth knowing.

Every day on Facebook, Twitter and other social media — I don’t have a TikTok account but I know others do — in our friendships and our professional relationships, we see the beauty of Indigenous nations across Canada, the celebration of Indigenous languages. We see it. We see a lot of young people reminding us that we are beautiful and proud and that we should honour that.

I can feel the wind of change. It may have been there before, but it is blowing stronger. I know it is there. I thank my parents and ancestors for their strength and sacrifices. I am very grateful to them. Thank you to you too, senators, because, before I came here, I listened to what you were saying, I watched, I read and I saw that there are people here with open hearts, eyes and ears, who are ready to accept our truths. That made it less stressful to become a senator.

I have also often heard it said in this chamber that we have a shared responsibility. The institutions also have a responsibility.

• (1530)

[English]

It is important to continually monitor each Call to Action in order to see the meaningful and structural change necessary to improve the lives of our people — or, I should say, the lives of Indigenous people. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC, emphasizes education as the foundation for raising awareness on what needs to happen to ensure true reconciliation.

[Translation]

I couldn’t agree more. Education plays a key role in addressing the ignorance and unconscious bias about what is happening to First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in our own communities. More and more educational institutions are integrating these issues into the curriculum, and are taking the history, or histories, the realities and the contemporary issues of First Peoples into account. This is having a direct effect, then, because teachers, nurses and other professionals in various fields are better equipped, better trained and better informed.

As a result, when we’re appointed to this place, as Indigenous senators, we get fewer requests for assistance. The next generation will have a lot of information. I wish to say thank you to all those institutions doing this educational work. We will see more and more publishing houses taking important steps and giving us this space. We could also encourage some of them to follow suit by integrating the history of First Peoples, by and for First Peoples, into textbooks, so that it becomes part of the organizational culture and doesn’t hinge on the will of individual professors or faculties.

[Senator Audette]

We also know that municipalities and communities together can do wonderful things, if they’re not already doing so, and create spaces where people can share their truths so that we can live together and do things together.

Imagine the survivors who will listen to the government every year. They will hear what’s going on directly from the government, what’s not being done, what’s working, what’s harder. When we know why things haven’t progressed, when we’re told the truth, when someone explains to us why things haven’t progressed, we can understand. However when we’re not told the truth, of course we will take a stand. I think that this will enable us to organize all of that.

This is for everyone who, like me, wants to understand. I need to understand, not because I am a senator, but because I am a mom, a lover, a *kokum* — a grandmother. I am also the daughter of Évelyne, and I need to understand. The government is going to create important commissions, which will give us a chance to write new chapters, but there’s no accountability mechanism here. We’re voting to create commissions, but they have to be connected to that culture, to that accountability. What then?

For me, Bill C-29 gives us the opportunity to start laying the foundation for the *shaputuan*, the big tent of the Innus, or to take a step towards our collective responsibility. You will remember that when I gave my inaugural speech I mentioned that I like to bead. I realized that it will be difficult to bead in the Senate because we work hard. However, I can sometimes take a few minutes to do some beading.

I would ask you to recall what I told you: At times, I will leave some beads for you. If you can pick them up and assemble them, together we can create a just, fair society that values every individual’s diversity, language, culture, values and history. I am leaving many beads for you.

Honourable senators, this was a new experience for me. I thank you for listening, for accepting some of my truths and the truths of those I carry in my heart. I know that your questions, your comments and the path that this bill will take will all be in the interest of improving it. Thank you very much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Thank you very much, Senator Audette. Are you sure that this council has sufficient funding to ensure long-term sustainability?

Senator Audette: Thank you for your question. In the long term? I don’t have a magic wand to see what we need to do, but I can say that this requires a long-term commitment. Funding will be a daily reality for this not-for-profit organization. The commitment that we have right now, the information that I have right now, seeks to reassure us that this is a start. From what I understand, the organization will receive, if it hasn’t already, a charitable number, which will allow it to get funding from sources other than the federal government.

Yes, the federal government should fund the council for the long term, but the commitment that we have and the numbers that I have right now will be used to start the work and to invest.

[English]

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I have a few questions if Senator Audette will accept them.

Senator Audette: Of course.

Senator Martin: First of all, thank you for your speech, and for giving us an understanding of the journey in arriving at this place with this bill. It has been a long time. I really appreciated your personal testimony, as well as helping us understand what is in the bill.

I will focus on what is not in the bill, and what we could perhaps consider in a study of amendments from this chamber.

You mentioned “Innuizing” a space. I thought I would start with a question related to the Inuit representation: Natan Obed, President of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, a national Inuit organization, expressed his disappointment with this legislation at a press conference just last Friday. He said the bill could result in recommendations that may be completely out of sync with Inuit positions — with only one seat on a board of 9 to 13 people to be nominated by the organization. Mr. Obed believes that, had they been consulted when this legislation was first being considered, this would not have been the result.

I’m curious, senator, what would your response be to Mr. Obed and these concerns?

[Translation]

Senator Audette: I will be candid with you. I understand that position and reaction. I understand it. In a perfect world, when the bill was introduced in the other place, the democracy or power and discretion would have been left in the hands of our Indigenous leaders, who could determine whether one day we’re able to create something that meets the needs of the Inuit people, rather than creating large entities where we have to fight for a place among ourselves. Unfortunately, that divides us and puts us in situations where people are left wondering why them and not us?

In my heart, Mr. Obed has the right to share that message. We need to determine how we can then, when we are at the study and reflection stages, find something that he’s comfortable with or not, as a leader and an Inuit representative.

• (1540)

Also, it’s important to remember that this organization must not take the place of existing relationships with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. Nation-to-nation governments must remain and be maintained, and this council must not interfere with that. If I were in a position to make recommendations, and I’ll leave that up to you to decide, I would say that we must ensure that the door remains open for nations to withdraw or return, and that we must respect their choice if they decide not to return.

[English]

Senator Martin: Do you think that the government is open to potential amendments to this bill from our chamber based upon your conversations?

[Translation]

Senator Audette: In my heart, officially, yes, it must be open to that. If I agree to participate in an initiative, I don’t want to be someone who just rubber stamps everything. If we can improve things, or if we can disagree and still do so in this place, that has to be honoured, Senator Martin.

[English]

Senator Martin: When this bill was studied at committee in the House of Commons, an amendment was put forward to reserve a seat on the council for a national organization that has experience with and is focused upon economic reconciliation, as was suggested by several witnesses during the study. Some witnesses called for this amendment specifically, while others spoke of its importance. For example, Karen Restoule, CEO of Shared Value Solutions and a member of Dokis First Nation, stated that:

Economic reconciliation is the vehicle forward in terms of setting our peoples or communities back on a path to prosperity . . .

Given the importance of economic reconciliation, do you know why this was not included in the bill and why it was rejected by Liberal and NDP MPs in the House of Commons committee?

This is a very important phrase that we have heard at committee: the “. . . path forward for economic reconciliation.”

Senator Audette: To be honest with you, Senator Martin, I didn’t ask that specific question but I did ask a member of the committee why and who decided and what the process was.

Right now, what I understand — and what is reassuring me — is that the board is something but the activity, the *chantier* — I do not know how to say that in English — the justice reconciliation, the human rights reconciliation and the economic reconciliation are all important.

I was told that it will be very animated or involved if the council is officially adopted and put in place.

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Would the Honourable Senator Audette take a question?

[Translation]

Senator Audette: Yes, of course.

[English]

Senator Omidvar: Thank you for your sponsorship of the bill, your explanation of it and, in particular, for putting yourself in this story in a very personal way. I really do appreciate that and, of course, I support the creation of a national council for reconciliation.

My question is a follow-up to Senator McPhedran's question. I must confess that I now have a concern about the funding of the national council of reconciliation. You said that this organization will seek charitable status and seek funding from charitable organizations to complete its financing.

Many people in Canada now, especially people from the Indigenous community, have concluded that charitable giving in Canada is a colonial construct. By going down this path of seeking charitable funding, the council could, in effect, be buying into a colonial path.

Don't you think it is important for the federal government to fund the national council of reconciliation to the full and commit to it in this bill?

Senator Audette: I asked that question, Senator Omidvar. I thought that they would go through an entity that looked like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, for example.

By discussing not with the government, but with the people who were involved, right now it's at the stage where they want to make sure that they are not officially attached to the federal government in order to keep their independence, knowing that the funding will either be there or it may slowly go down, or it may increase. They were aware of that when they had those discussions.

It is something that we can ask, but this is what was explained to me. I will finish in French to make sure that I am understood.

[*Translation*]

The important thing is that there are groups other than the First Nations, Métis, Inuit or specific groups of Indigenous leaders, for example. They've already begun discussions to have formal entities that have relationships with the federal government, to have a human rights tribunal for First Nations, Métis and Inuit, a space where an ombudsman can respond. This exercise is really something that should be done by a non-profit organization, the national council for reconciliation, but talks are already under way elsewhere and there's a direct relationship with the federal government.

I see that you're looking confused. I don't think you understood what I was saying. I would be happy to better explain what I meant.

[*English*]

Senator Omidvar: Thank you for explaining to me the unfolding of this council of reconciliation. If I may suggest this, the issue of funding and independence should be seriously looked at in committee. There is a history of institutions that have been started by the federal government and then abandoned because of a lack of funding and because the position was made that charities will pick it up. Ombudspeople and tribunals are not funded by charity; they are funded by governments themselves.

Thank you, Senator Audette, for taking my question.

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Thank you, Senator Audette for your wonderful speech. I enjoyed it immensely.

[Senator Omidvar]

I want to bring to your attention as well that, of all the other concerns that I have heard from the Native Council of Prince Edward Island, they are also concerned about representation. They represent 1,244 members of the Native Council of P.E.I. and 3,385 Indigenous people residing off-reserve in P.E.I. They share the same concerns that have been expressed by others.

They want to make sure that the representation is there from all of the interested groups. I simply wanted to pass that on to you. It's more than a question. The question would be: Do you agree or would you take it under advisement? We only have a few seconds left.

[*Translation*]

Senator Audette: I will take just a few seconds to answer. I want to believe that the people who are appointed to sit on this new board of directors will have the expertise and knowledge to serve everyone across Canada. I feel confident of that at this point in time.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

• (1550)

LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH BILL

THIRD READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Cordy, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dalphond, for the third reading of Bill S-246, An Act respecting Lebanese Heritage Month.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I must admit that after hearing the excellent speech by Senator Audette, I'm a bit embarrassed to speak. However, I wanted to talk to you about what I consider to be a personal event that contributed to the discussion on the bill respecting Lebanese heritage month.

Indeed, in our small rural region of northwestern New Brunswick, we have a Lebanese family. They're entrepreneurs, but mostly people who are dedicated to the community, volunteers at the church and members of every cultural organization. I will never forget them.

However, I want to remind some of you here today — several of you who weren't here 10 years ago — of an event involving a potato farmer in my great region of northwestern New Brunswick.

[*English*]

That potato farmer was named Henk Tepper. And Henk Tepper was imprisoned in Lebanon 10 years ago based on an extradition mandate requested by the Algerian government supposedly for a shipment of bad potatoes that was, a month after, sold to the Syrians. We have no knowledge of any Syrian who died from eating those New Brunswick potatoes.

However, since the month of May when the family came to my home and asked for my help to try to get Mr. Tepper back to Canada, I started on a journey that I never thought would bring me to so many challenges — so many personal, political challenges — in all my life. Actually, for 10 months, I hardly slept because I was going over and over in my head: What can I do? What have I missed? Where do I go from here?

The issue was that Mr. Tepper was in a Lebanese prison. And though myself and many of my colleagues in the Senate at that time made representations to our Canadian foreign affairs office and minister, there was, from my perspective, no real help provided to Mr. Tepper while in prison in Lebanon. That avenue was hardly open.

We also explored the Algerian avenue to see how we could provide proof to the Algerian government that the potatoes were not rotted. There, we bumped into another dead end because I called the senator in Algeria who was responsible for agriculture. It turned out that senator's nephew was the Minister of Agriculture. It triggered something bizarre in my head, and I went and did all of the research for agriculture for the year before the event happened in Algeria, where I figured out that in the Algerian press there was the notion of a potato consortium in Algeria. That was another dead end.

The only option that we had was to give all the proof that we could to the Lebanese government. We managed to provide that to the Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, Attorney General and a few judges who understood the case. We did so from May going to December of that year, where myself and Mr. Tepper's lawyer from New Brunswick went to Lebanon. Landing in Lebanon, we got the message from the Canadian embassy that we should leave Lebanon, that we had nothing to do there.

Those of you who know me certainly understand that I am more dedicated and persistent than that. The next day, we visited Mr. Tepper in his prison. Boy, he was certainly not the jolly giant that I knew the year before. But through that effort, we spent five days meeting with ministers, including the then-Minister of Tourism, who has dual citizenship. He was also a Canadian from Montreal.

Colleagues, if it had not been for the very tight relationship and mutual respect between Canadians and Lebanese, who understand and share our values, Mr. Tepper would have been sent to Algeria to never be seen again.

Two months after our visit to all of these Lebanese authorities, Mr. Tepper was given back his Canadian passport, put on a plane and sent back to Canada. That is my experience with the Lebanese community, and the values that we share and the friendship that we share.

I am very grateful to Senator Cordy to have put this bill in front of us. I hope that it will not be delayed. Don't delay this for the sake of delaying tactics. It does not give you anything at the end of the day.

Coincidentally, it is before Christmas. I will be ever so grateful — and not only me. The entire northwest of New Brunswick wanted their potato farmer back in their community.

It was because of the Lebanese authorities and friendship that they have with Canada. At least for me, I want this bill to be moved forward before Christmas as a sign of good will for this very decent human event that you did for a Canadian potato farmer. Let's do this and get this passed before Christmas. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

**CONSTITUTION ACT, 1867
PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT**

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

On Other Business, Senate Public Bills, Second Reading, Order No. 6:

Second reading of Bill S-226, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 and the Parliament of Canada Act (Speaker of the Senate).

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Honourable senators, I see that this item is at day 15. Therefore, with leave of the Senate, I ask that consideration of this item be postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.

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

Hon Senators: Agreed.

(Debate postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.)

[*English*]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Carignan, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Seidman, for the second reading of Bill S-234, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (final disposal of plastic waste).

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

CRIMINAL CODE

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Kutcher, seconded by the Honourable Senator Boehm, for the second reading of Bill S-251, An Act to repeal section 43 of the Criminal Code (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 6).

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, I rise to speak in support of Bill S-251, An Act to repeal section 43 of the Criminal Code (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 6). This bill proposes to repeal the law that authorizes the use of corporal punishment on children as a means of correction in Canada.

Today I will add to our debate with the following: additional information on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's justification for this change, a few comments on policy details and thoughts on the Senate's role in answering this Call to Action.

First, thank you to the sponsor, Senator Kutcher, for championing this legislation to answer Call to Action 6. Your knowledge and compassion as a leading psychiatrist are cause for optimism that we can finally succeed in repealing section 43. This change will advance reconciliation and benefit children across Canada.

Senator Kutcher laid out a comprehensive case for passing this evidence-based bill. This includes scientific research indicating that the practice of hitting children for discipline — such as spanking — increases the risk that children will become aggressive and develop mental health problems.

Senator Kutcher told us that, by passing this bill and promoting parenting supports, we can both protect children from this form of violence and help Canadian parents in learning and applying effective and much less damaging parenting practices.

We also heard that Bill S-251 will enable Canada to join 63 other countries that have enacted laws prohibiting physical punishment of children in all settings.

By passing this bill, Canada would live up to the international legal commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by our country in 1991.

In her speech, Senator Moodie, as an esteemed pediatrician, bolstered the case for Bill S-251. Senator Moodie further explored expert evidence and international experiences relating to this subject. She noted that in countries that have banned corporal punishment on kids — such as Sweden, Germany and New Zealand — the bans have resulted in a significant drop in reports of the practice. In Germany and Finland, for instance, that reduction was nearly 50%.

Senator Moodie highlighted that these countries acknowledge the need for public education and adequate family supports as a complement to banning corporal punishment. This is a point requiring Parliament and the government's attention that I hope we can attend to through a Senate committee study on this bill, perhaps toward recommendations accompanying the repeal of section 43.

Colleagues, Bill S-251 can be summarized in three words: Every child matters. This is a principle that Canadian society is learning and working to uphold.

In the media, we have collectively witnessed the truth of our country's history at places like Kamloops, Cowessess First Nation, Cranbrook, Penelakut Island, Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Williams Lake First Nation and Keeseekoose First Nation. We keep in our hearts the thousands of children who never came home from residential schools and the survivors who were scarred for life.

We always keep them in our hearts.

Corporal punishment was a significant part of life at these institutions. Experiences of colonial forms of discipline traumatized Indigenous peoples in Canada, contributing to a legacy of multi-generational harms.

We know that section 43 of the Criminal Code connects to the values of the relatively early days of the residential school era. As Senator Kutcher told us:

Section 43 is an anachronism — an historical holdover from laws written in 1892 that permitted corporal punishment of employees, wives and children.

Senators, I would like to quote two passages from *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* to help inform our debate from a historical perspective. From Volume 4, *Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*, a passage explains the culture shock to Indigenous peoples who were subjected to corporal punishment:

The churches and religious orders that operated Canada's residential schools had strong and interrelated conceptions of order, discipline, obedience, and sin. They believed that human beings were fallen, sinful creatures who had to earn salvation through mastery of their nature by obedience to God. The approach to discipline used in schools was based in scripture: corporal punishment was a Biblically authorized way of not only keeping order, but also bringing children to the righteous path. In their use of corporal punishment, church leaders had the support of nineteenth-century educational bureaucrats such as Egerton Ryerson, who believed that opposition to corporal punishment was “contrary to Scripture.”

The report further states:

Corporal punishment did not historically have this same level of acceptability among Aboriginal people. The large number of recorded parental complaints, coupled with the ongoing difficulty in recruiting students, is evidence of

occasions where discipline imposed by the schools exceeded what would have been acceptable in either Aboriginal or European communities.

Students were punished for not finishing their lessons, for bedwetting, talking out of turn, throwing rocks at the school fence, immorality, refusing to eat their meals, speaking their own languages, neglecting their chores, and theft (often of food).

• (1610)

From Volume 5, *The Legacy*, we learn how colonial punishments conflicted with traditional Inuit parenting:

Traditional Inuit parenting is based on kinship relationships and cultural and spiritual beliefs. Inuit believe that a newborn named after a deceased relative takes possession of that relative's soul or spirit, and this is reflected in the parents' relationship with the child. According to the national Inuit women's association, Pauktuutit, it "would not be considered appropriate ... to tell a child what to do, as this would be the equivalent of ordering an elder or another adult about, thus violating an important social rule in Inuit culture."

Ignorance of this aspect of Inuit culture caused many non-Aboriginal people, including residential school administrators and child welfare officials, to make culturally biased judgments. They often saw Inuit parents as extremely permissive and indifferent to discipline. At the residential schools, in contrast, teachers attempted to control a child's behaviour through corporal punishment and other harsh disciplinary measures distasteful to Inuit parents.

Honourable senators, in recommending the repeal of section 43 in Call to Action 6, the TRC concluded, as noted by Senator Kutcher:

The Commission believes that corporal punishment is a relic of a discredited past and has no place in Canadian schools or homes.

In answering Call to Action 6 by repealing section 43, we can denounce the historic imposition of foreign corporal punishments on Indigenous children by colonial authorities. Such a decision by Parliament would be an important act of reconciliation — following the Senate's unanimous apology on September 29 of this year for Canada's role in the residential school system, through a motion from Senator McCallum.

In addition, with Bill S-251, the federal legislature would act to protect all kids across Canada today from the fear, pain and embarrassment of corporal punishment. A key role of the Senate is to protect vulnerable persons in Canada, and the time to act is now.

I will add what I hope are a few common-sense comments about the legalities: In 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada found section 43 to be constitutional, and interpreted the section to restrict forms of corporal punishment allowable on children. The Supreme Court stated that section 43 allows "only minor corrective force of a transitory and trifling nature." It can only be

used on children between ages 2 and 12. Teachers can apply force to remove a child from a classroom. Lawful corporal punishment cannot involve blows or slaps to the head, or hitting a child with an object, and cannot be inflicted in anger, or on a child with a cognitive disability.

On debate, Senator Plett raised concerns that repealing section 43 could criminalize picking up a child who is throwing a tantrum, and putting them in the car or in a car seat. My reaction to these comments is optimism for common ground. I would not wish to criminalize the behaviour Senator Plett describes, which sounds to me like acceptable parenting. Rather, with repealing section 43, as I understand the issue, the goal is to eliminate the use of force for the purpose of correction. For example, this bill would ban spanking and similar actions aimed to influence behaviour through a negative imposition of force, involving fear, pain or embarrassment.

However, the purpose of Bill S-251 is not to criminalize the incidental use of force by parents or teachers in fulfilling their legitimate responsibilities, such as safely transporting children. To me, the examples raised on debate are in the latter category — rather than being a punitive or deterrent use of force on children.

In 2017, on debate of Bill S-206 — the last version of this legislation — the replacement sponsor, former Senator Sinclair, offered the following clarifications:

. . . we must not forget that minor touching is not criminalized anyway, on the principal of *de minimis*. If it is something so minor, it is unworthy of the criminal law's attention and sanction.

The law also recognizes that some applications of force are socially and legally acceptable. In order to get someone's attention, for example, sometimes you have to touch them on the shoulder or on an arm. Engaging in a boxing match or body checking in hockey are not assaults on the basis of consent. Accidental touching is not illegal, nor is the use of reasonable force to defend or protect yourself or another person or even your property.

Section 43 says that if you assault a child for the purpose of correcting a child's behaviour, you have a special defence if you use reasonable force. Society is beginning to accept that no amount of force is reasonable.

Colleagues, it seems to me that practical concerns could be addressed through committee observations, or perhaps even through an amendment to convey greater certainty in the Criminal Code about what is — and is not — intended as allowable, while repealing section 43. However, the repeal is required to eliminate the negative impositions of force on children that we want to target, such as spanking which is currently lawful under section 43. A committee could undertake such a constructive effort to ensure the Senate is not proposing a law at odds with common sense, while at the same time effectively banning corporal punishment on children. I, therefore, urge the timely referral of Bill S-251 to committee, as the Senate did with Bill S-206 in 2018.

I turn now to the role of the Senate in answering this Call to Action. Legislatively, Call to Action 6 is perhaps the most straightforward call to answer. Along with the House of Commons, the Senate is one of two bodies with decision-making authority and responsibility on this matter. We are in the driver's seat — and if we don't act, no one can.

In recent years, the Senate has delivered results in answering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action: We have passed legislation to protect and renew Indigenous languages; to restore Indigenous jurisdiction over child and family services; to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; to establish the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation; and to realize a new Oath of Citizenship.

We have also received — from the other place — Bill C-29, a government bill to establish a national council for reconciliation, addressing Calls to Action 53 to 56, sponsored by Senator Audette. Many senators have expressed their personal determination to do more. I wish to do more. With Bill S-251, we have our chance. Let's show Canada, and the world, that every child matters. Thank you. *Hiy kitatamihin*.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

• (1620)

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Victor Oh moved second reading of Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (temporary resident visas for parents and grandparents).

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak as sponsor of Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (temporary resident visas for parents and grandparents), introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. Kyle Seebach, Member of Parliament for Dufferin—Caledon.

I have the privilege to support a bill that would advance the rights of family reunification for parents and grandparents with children and grandchildren who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada.

Bill C-242 aims to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or IRPA, in regard to the super visa, brought in by the Conservative government in 2011. In its current state, this super visa is a multiple-entry visa for 10 years that allows grandparents and parents to reunite with their Canadian children and grandchildren here in Canada.

To be approved for the super visa, applicants must first have a signed letter from their child or grandchild that officially invites them to Canada. The child or grandchild must be able to prove that they can financially support the applicants for the duration of their visit.

The applicants must also be admissible on medical grounds through a medical exam and have private medical insurance from a Canadian insurance company. This insurance must have at least \$100,000 emergency coverage and be valid for one year from the date of entry. Proof that the insurance is paid in full is also required.

Bill C-242 makes two amendments to the IRPA regarding the super visa. The first amendment is to allow the applicants to purchase health insurance from a company outside of Canada. Of note, these companies would have to be pre-approved by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. As a result, this would allow increased competition between Canadian and foreign insurance companies, thus reducing the price of premiums.

One of the reasons why reducing these prices is important is the fact that the cost of private health insurance can be expensive, particularly for lower-income people. This cost is on top of the application fee for the super visa, plane tickets and the medical exam, plus other expenses. Taken together, these costs could serve as an impediment for parents and grandparents to reunite with their children and grandchildren here in Canada.

It's important to note that in order to be eligible for the super visa, applicants must pass a medical exam. Applicants will have passed this exam and proved they do not have any pre-existing health conditions, major issues or concerns that could consequently place a burden on Canada's health system.

I would also like to note that this bill addresses any potential issue of the foreign insurance company not paying the Canadian health care system or health provider by requiring the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to approve the health insurance policy prior to the approval of the super visa. This measure will significantly mitigate the risk of any unpaid claims.

In addition, this amendment would lower the cost of insurance for those trying to use the super visa, and the proposed safeguard would ensure that Canada's health care system and its health providers are protected from any unpaid claims.

The second amendment being proposed is to extend the authorized time a grandparent or parent is allowed to enter and remain in Canada from the original two years to five years over a ten-year span.

It's important for me to note that there was a recent change. If applicants applied on or after July 4, 2022, they may be eligible to stay for up to five years at a time. Further, some applicants may also be able to stay for five years if they applied before July 4 but didn't arrive in Canada until after this date. For those who received the visa or entered Canada before July 4, their time remains two years. This amendment to make it permanent for five years is important so that all future applicants may share this benefit.

This amendment would provide additional time for the parents or grandparents to spend time with their family without worrying about having to leave Canada so often. Further, this allows the grandparents to save money by not having to purchase a plane ticket to leave Canada and instead contribute to their family. Again, this consideration becomes even more important when we think of lower-income people in or visiting Canada.

Another improvement this bill requires would be for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to prepare a report on reducing the minimum income that the child or grandchild of a foreign national must have to be approved for a super visa.

I strongly believe that this element deserves our thoughtful consideration given the potential impact on many new Canadian families. As you are no doubt aware, it is not uncommon for new immigrant families to struggle at first when they move to Canada. Perhaps the jobs they qualify for don't pay enough, or their credentials from their country of origin don't translate here, and they have to take a job that pays lower wages. Whatever the reason, there are many immigrant families who cannot apply for the super visa because they simply don't meet the income test.

• (1630)

Some might argue that grandparents or parents would not contribute to the Canadian economy. However, having grandparents does help the economy by providing support to families and allowing Canadian parents to go to work. Many of the families who sponsor their parents or grandparents for the super visa are in the Canadian workforce or own their own family business. By having the parents or grandparents here in Canada, they are able to watch the children while the parents go to work. They could even directly help with the family business.

That support allows the parents to continue contributing to the Canadian economy because of that extra help and aid. Further, parents who otherwise couldn't afford childcare and who, therefore, would not be able to work are now able to leave their children with the grandparents and go to work.

According to the study *What do Sponsored Parents and Grandparents Contribute?* by Madine VanderPlaat, Howard Ramos and Yoko Yoshida:

. . . not only is the family good for the well-being of the individual, it is good for society as a whole because access to family relationships and networks can support and mitigate the settlement and integration process. By providing child care and/or labour to family owned businesses, sponsored parents and/or grandparents can contribute to the overall economic well-being of the family and support the educational pursuits and labour market activities of other family members. . . . In addition, the possibility of sponsoring relatives may be an important element in attracting and retaining immigrants.

Colleagues, Bill C-242 is important for our country and for Canadians with families across the globe. If passed, this bill would reduce barriers to family reunification so that Canadians can benefit from familial support while also contributing more actively to the Canadian economy.

The benefits of this bill are significant to those families. That is why I rise today to support Bill C-242. I encourage you to do the same.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Omidvar, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Simons, calling the attention of the Senate to the challenges and opportunities that Canadian municipalities face, and to the importance of understanding and redefining the relationships between Canada's municipalities and the federal government.

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable senators, Pericles, a politician born in ancient Greece in approximately 495 B.C., said, and I quote, "Because of the greatness of our city the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us."

The Greek capital, Athens, undoubtedly owes its most brilliant period to this statesman. In addition to his support for the arts, architecture, philosophy and the introduction of democracy, he had a vision that can surely serve as inspiration for us today.

It is with this in mind that I rise to speak to Senator Paula Simons' inquiry, drawing the attention of this chamber to the challenges and opportunities facing Canadian municipalities and the importance of understanding and redefining the relationship between municipalities and the federal government.

I want to begin by acknowledging that we are on the unceded territories of the Algonquin Anishinaabe nation, a place where many municipalities were born.

Colleagues, we are all aware that Canadian municipalities are currently facing many challenges, be they economic, social or cultural. I'm particularly concerned about how these issues relate to human rights.

Growing poverty, the number of homeless people in some of our cities, including here in Ottawa, the affordable housing shortage, violence against marginalized communities and women — let me take a moment in remembrance of the women at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal — public transit needs, the impact of climate change on our lives, these are all issues that demand concrete action to strengthen cities' ability to ensure that their citizens can live safe, healthy, full lives.

[*English*]

While Ottawa is our workplace where we collectively serve the best interests of all Canadians, our communities from coast to coast to coast play pivotal roles in our lives. Whether it be my hometown of Caraquet, New Brunswick, Kelowna, British Columbia or Iqaluit, Nunavut, our municipalities help to shape our cultural and linguistic identities. Those are the places we call home — the places where we live, work, celebrate, raise our children, love and imagine our futures.

As a more proximate level of government to citizens, municipalities are also the places where we can express our grievances on a myriad of issues, such as public transit, water and sewer services, animal control, road maintenance and waste management.

Colleagues, it is simply appalling that those democratic bodies are facing so many challenges today.

[*Translation*]

The first such issue is undoubtedly the unequal status of municipalities in relation to the provinces, a status enshrined in the Canadian Constitution and reaffirmed by the courts.

The term “creature of the provinces,” commonly associated with municipalities, derives from the division of legislative powers under section 92.8 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which provides that municipalities are under the authority of the provincial legislatures.

It is therefore provincial legislation that “creates” these entities by defining their powers of intervention. Legally, the provinces have the power to change the structure and governance of municipalities, whether it be the composition of a municipal council or even the powers of a mayor.

This lack of political autonomy can impede their development, and that’s unfortunately not the only issue facing Canadian municipalities. In particular, they have to deal with limited revenue sources, with the primary source being property taxes. This has a disproportionate impact on the delivery of public services.

From that perspective, many municipalities face challenges in the delivery of cultural and linguistic services. There’s also no denying that federal government support in these matters is crucial and expected.

I want to draw your attention today to the vital role that Canadian municipalities play with regard to official languages and the arts and culture sector by giving a few examples from my province, New Brunswick, and highlighting how the federal government can and must be a true partner to municipalities.

Our municipalities have a leading role to play in protecting and promoting our official languages.

Some provincial and territorial language regimes set out specific official languages obligations for municipal institutions.

[Senator Cormier]

• (1640)

For example, in New Brunswick, if the official language minority population of a municipality is at least 20% of the total population, the provincial legislation on official languages requires the adoption and publication of municipal ordinances, including services and communications set out in regulations, in both official languages.

Dawn Arnold, Mayor of Moncton, New Brunswick — the only officially bilingual city in the country — said the following about the impact of official languages on the economic, social and cultural development of her city, and I quote:

Moncton puts a great deal of emphasis on respect for its two linguistic communities and our bilingual status is a source of great pride. Moncton’s economy is flourishing in great part because of the presence of a bilingual workforce to support the ability of businesses to provide exceptional service to their clientele, generate greater economic activity and promote job creation.

[*English*]

Bilingualism also leads to infrastructure development as schools, post-secondary institutions, hospitals and more are built to accommodate this unique population. A market segment for products and services in French is also created, such as cultural activities, restaurants, services like translation, customer service, banking, et cetera, thus allowing a community to fully prosper.

[*Translation*]

The federal government also contributes to the prosperity of Canadian municipalities through the Official Languages Act, which, it is important to remember, is quasi-constitutional in nature.

Part VII of the act is vital to ensuring the sustainability and survival of official language minority communities, which are an integral part of our country’s municipalities. It sets out the federal government’s explicit commitment to enhance the vitality of French and English minorities and support their development.

In New Brunswick, for example, the implementation of this commitment resulted in a federal government investment of \$776,000 in 2018 to support a governance initiative to improve the provision of French language services through municipal group projects. That is a positive measure that recognizes the contribution that municipalities make to the development, vitality and growth of the Canadian francophonie.

It is important to note that the current modernization of local governance in New Brunswick is the biggest reform the province has undertaken since the Equal Opportunity Program in the 1960s under the government of Acadian Premier Louis J. Robichaud.

Prior to that reform, approximately one-third of New Brunswick’s population lived not in municipalities, but in local service districts administered by the Department of Environment

and Local Government, a structure that enabled the administration and delivery of local services to unincorporated regions of the province with neither mayor nor councillors.

This long-awaited reform, which strives to attain a higher democratic ideal, is radically transforming governance in my province by reducing the number of local entities and devising French versions of the names of certain entities, thereby affirming the importance of our communities' linguistic and cultural heritage. This initiative explicitly recognizes municipalities' contribution to the linguistic, cultural, political and economic development and vitality of our province and its Acadian regions.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of New Brunswick for undertaking this important reform, and I extend my heartiest congratulations to the recently elected members of the municipal councils of these new entities.

[English]

Going back to the Official Languages Act, I will highlight that Part VII of this act also provides that Canadian Heritage can take measures to:

. . . encourage and assist provincial governments to support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities generally and, in particular, to offer provincial and municipal services in both English and French . . .

The implementation of this provision has notably resulted in the signing of agreements with provincial governments to help municipalities provide services and communications in both official languages, such as the translation of municipal bylaws. Notwithstanding Part VII, under Part IV of the act, members of the public have a right to receive services from federal institutions in the official language of their choice, notably if there is significant demand for these services in that language or if the nature of that service justifies it.

As we all know, colleagues, the federal government is in the process of modernizing the Official Languages Act to better attain substantive equality between Canada's official languages through Bill C-13, which includes some provisions that touch, directly or indirectly, on the vitality of municipalities.

[Translation]

Bill C-13 clarifies the nature of the duty of federal institutions, including federal departments, to take positive measures to implement certain federal government commitments, such as enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities in certain strategic sectors.

[English]

Honourable senators, taking positive measures to support sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities equally helps to make municipalities more vibrant and robust. In other words, the development of official language minority communities is a catalyst for growth for Canadian municipalities whether it be economically, socially, culturally or politically.

[Translation]

Our Canadian municipalities, especially in the regions, are also facing a major challenge with regard to declining populations in the regions. Immigration is a key factor in addressing this problem, which is only getting worse, year after year.

Bill C-13 provides for the adoption of a francophone immigration policy. This provision, which will undoubtedly help counteract declining populations, will likely have an impact on the operations of municipalities, including francophone associations, whether at the stage of welcoming, integrating or retaining immigrants.

Beyond official languages, there's no doubt that the arts, culture and cultural industries are true vectors for the development, growth and promotion of our Canadian municipalities, and that the federal government also has an important role to play in this area.

Before coming to this place, I had the privilege of leading the États généraux des arts et de la culture dans la société acadienne du Nouveau-Brunswick, a major social project aimed at promoting the cultural development of the province's Acadian jurisdictions. This approach centred on ensuring that all sectors of society were involved in developing and implementing initiatives to integrate culture, the arts and heritage in their jurisdictions.

This major project, carried out by the Association acadienne des artistes professionnels du Nouveau-Brunswick and funded by the federal and provincial governments, sought to develop a global strategy for integrating the arts and culture into New Brunswick's Acadian society. In other words, a national cultural policy had to be created for the Acadian people.

Today, the implementation of this global strategy is under way and has resulted in significant changes in Acadia. Municipalities in New Brunswick of varying sizes have adopted cultural policies with the help of a training and support project partially funded by Canadian Heritage. These cultural policies have embedded the arts and culture in several key sectors within municipalities, such as tourism, health, education and the economy, thus contributing to the economic, social and cultural development of our regions.

Guy Chiasson, Mayor of Balmoral, in New Brunswick, participated in this project and created a cultural policy. He said, and I quote:

The creation of a cultural policy for and by the people has made it possible for our municipality to develop in several areas at the economic, social and cultural level.

One thing is clear: Federal government support for the community partners of municipalities is a concrete way to contribute to the development and success of our municipalities.

I would be remiss if I concluded this speech without recognizing the role that Canadian municipalities can play in Canada's cultural diplomacy. In 2019, the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade conducted

an important study on this. In its report entitled *Cultural Diplomacy at the Front Stage of Canada's Foreign Policy*, it recommends, and I quote:

That the Government of Canada explore opportunities for greater and more effective collaboration and coordination with provinces, territories and municipalities in its cultural diplomacy activities.

The use of cultural resources in our municipalities from one end of the country to the other can and must be at the heart of the federal government's cultural diplomacy initiatives.

• (1650)

In this regard, while we often tend to focus on large cities, I want to reiterate how important it is that the federal government do everything in its power to support and help small and medium-sized cities, which are found throughout Canada. They are the true engines of cultural, economic and social development for our country.

Colleagues, these are all ways in which the federal government can support our Canadian municipalities. There is much more to be said about the fundamental role that these municipalities play in our country's development.

Federal, provincial and territorial relations are key to ensuring that municipalities continue to develop. It is my hope that the various instruments available to these different levels of government will fully meet the needs of our municipalities.

In closing, I would like to quote Pericles once again: "To be happy means to be free and to be free means to be brave." May we be brave enough to work together to strengthen the relationship between the federal government and our Canadian municipalities, so that our constituents can live happily and freely. May we create, as Senator Audette suggested, spaces for meeting, rebuilding and co-creating, where together we can dream of the country we call home. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

[English]

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE IMPACT OF SUBSECTION 268(3) OF THE CRIMINAL CODE— DEBATE ADJOURNED

On Motion No. 68 by the Honourable Frances Lankin:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs be authorized to examine and report on the impact of subsection 268(3) of the *Criminal Code*, enacted in 1997, including but not limited to:

- (a) the reasons why there have been no prosecutions under this provision since its enactment 25 years ago; and

- (b) the extent to which female genital mutilation is currently occurring in Canada and to Canadian girls taken abroad for such procedures;

That the committee make recommendations, as appropriate, to ensure the *Criminal Code* provision has its intended impact of ending such crimes being perpetrated against girls in Canada; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than December 31, 2023, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15. Therefore, with leave of the Senate, I ask that consideration of this item be postponed until the next sitting of the Senate in the name of Senator Lankin.

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

Hon Senators: Agreed.

(Debate postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.)

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO EXTEND DATE OF FINAL REPORT ON STUDY OF THE FEDERAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

Hon. Ratna Omidvar, pursuant to notice of November 30, 2022, moved:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Thursday, April 28, 2022, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology in relation to its study on the Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention be extended from December 16, 2022, to June 30, 2023.

She said: Thank you, Your Honour. I will be brief. The Senate Social Affairs Committee is conducting an important study on the evaluation of the Suicide Prevention Framework. We have heard from 23 witnesses, including our very own Senator Brazeau. We have heard from the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. We have had many briefs and correspondence. Steering is unanimous in its conclusion that we need to do a good job, as opposed to simply doing a quick job.

With that in mind, I request your approval to extend the study to June 2023 so that we can present a report to you of which you can be appropriately proud. Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(At 4:55 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

	PAGE		PAGE
L'École Polytechnique de Montréal Commemoration of Tragedy—Silent Tribute The Hon. the Speaker	2579	Fall Economic Statement Implementation Bill, 2022 (Bill C-32) Ninth Report of Indigenous Peoples Committee on Subject Matter Deposited with Clerk During Adjournment of the Senate Hon. Brian Francis	2583
<hr/>		<hr/>	
SENATORS' STATEMENTS			
Al MacPhee Congratulations on Eightieth Birthday Hon. Jane Cordy	2579	Transport and Communications Committee Authorized to Meet During Sitting of the Senate Hon. Leo Housakos	2583
Release from Detention in Dominican Republic Hon. David M. Wells	2579	<hr/>	
Visitors in the Gallery The Hon. the Speaker	2580	QUESTION PERIOD	
Elsipogtog First Nation Congratulations on Indigenous Tourism Award Hon. Nancy J. Hartling	2580	Finance <i>Fall Economic Statement 2022</i> Hon. Donald Neil Plett Hon. Marc Gold	2583 2583
Visitors in the Gallery The Hon. the Speaker	2580	Foreign Affairs Afghanistan Crisis Hon. Salma Atallahjan Hon. Marc Gold	2584 2584
Legislative Internship Programs Hon. F. Gigi Osler	2580	Employment and Social Development Employment Insurance Hon. Pat Duncan Hon. Marc Gold	2584 2584
National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women Hon. Judith G. Seidman	2581	Canadian Heritage National Gallery of Canada Hon. Patricia Bovey Hon. Marc Gold	2585 2585
Visitors in the Gallery The Hon. the Speaker	2581	Transport National Trade Corridors Fund Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson Hon. Marc Gold	2585 2585
L'École Polytechnique de Montréal Commemoration of Tragedy Hon. Rosa Galvez	2582	Finance Small and Medium-Sized Businesses Hon. Yonah Martin Hon. Marc Gold	2585 2586
Expression of Thanks Hon. Larry W. Smith	2582	Transport Appearance at Interparliamentary Friendship Group Event Hon. Leo Housakos Hon. Marc Gold	2586 2586
<hr/>		Public Safety Firearms Legislation Hon. Donald Neil Plett Hon. Marc Gold	2587 2587
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Auditor General Report on COVID-19 Vaccines Tabled Report on Specific COVID-19 Benefits Tabled	2582 2582	Transport Canadian Transportation Agency Hon. Donald Neil Plett Hon. Marc Gold	2587 2587
Health Report on COVID-19 Rapid Test Procurement and Distribution Tabled Hon. Marc Gold	2583		

CONTENTS

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

	PAGE		PAGE
Foreign Affairs		Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (Bill S-234)	
Canada-China Relations		Bill to Amend—Second Reading—Debate Continued.	2595
Hon. Donald Neil Plett	2588		
Hon. Marc Gold	2588	Criminal Code (Bill S-251)	
National Defence		Second Reading—Debate Continued	
Independent External Comprehensive Review		Hon. Marty Klyne	2596
Hon. Marilou McPhedran.	2588		
Hon. Marc Gold	2588	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Bill C-242)	
<hr/>			
ORDERS OF THE DAY		Bill to Amend—Second Reading—Debate Adjourned	
		Hon. Victor Oh	2598
National Council for Reconciliation Bill (Bill C-29)		Challenges and Opportunities of Canadian Municipalities	
Second Reading—Debate Adjourned		Inquiry—Debate Continued	
Hon. Michèle Audette.	2588	Hon. René Cormier	2599
Hon. Marilou McPhedran.	2592		
Hon. Yonah Martin	2593	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	
Hon. Ratna Omidvar	2593	Motion to Authorize Committee to Study the Impact of	
Hon. Percy E. Downe	2594	Subsection 268(3) of the Criminal Code—Debate	
Lebanese Heritage Month Bill (Bill S-246)		Adjourned	
Third Reading—Debate Continued		Hon. Bernadette Clement	2602
Hon. Pierrette Ringuette	2594		
Constitution Act, 1867		Social Affairs, Science and Technology	
Parliament of Canada Act (Bill S-226)		Committee Authorized to Extend Date of Final Report on	
Bill to Amend—Second Reading—Debate Adjourned		Study of the Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention	
Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond	2595	Hon. Ratna Omidvar	2602