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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

ARCTIC FOOD BANK

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about the incredible work of the Muslim community of Iqaluit's Arctic Food Bank.

The Muslim community in Iqaluit numbers around 100 but has an impact on the city that far outweighs its size. Every other week, the mosque opens the doors to its food bank, serving those facing food insecurity with the support of the Toronto-based non-profit Muslim Welfare Centre.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Arctic Food Bank. This past Saturday also marked the beginning of Project Ramadan, an initiative of the Muslim Welfare Centre, led by Vice President Muhammad Iqbal.

For Muslims, Ramadan marks a time of spiritual renewal through fasting and charity. Project Ramadan serves as a way for Muslims to be of greater assistance to their communities during this period. Fortuitously, the start of Project Ramadan, in anticipation of the beginning of the month of Ramadan, came at a time of increased need in Iqaluit as the city's only other food bank was forced to shut last week after the building froze.

Although I could not be there myself, I am grateful to my colleague Senator Salma Ataullahjan, who journeyed to Iqaluit with me five years ago for the official opening of the food bank and who last week braved minus 55 degree Celsius temperatures and the Arctic winter to attend the event. She was joined by Premier P.J. Akeagok. Fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs and dried goods were distributed to 93 persons from different households. A team of volunteers led by Muhammad Wani prepared and distributed the packages, serving a total of over 237 adults and 170 children in need.

But it is the women of the Iqaluit Masjid who serve as the foundation of the food bank's work — women like Selma, a single mother, who, along with her three children aged just four to nine, worked from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Friday evening to pack bags and then returned to the food bank Saturday morning at 9 a.m. to prepare for distribution.

Because of the tireless work of the dedicated group of volunteers at the Iqaluit Masjid Arctic Food Bank — the youngest being just four years old — hundreds of Nunavummiut are able to put food on the table this week at a time of high inflation and food insecurity.

Honourable senators, please join me in thanking the Muslim community and — on this International Women's Day — particularly the women volunteers like Selma, who are tireless supporters, for their commitment to helping support their neighbours in crisis.

Thank you. *Qujannamiik.*

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of our former colleague the Honourable Douglas Black and Gary Mar.

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

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 Renata Woodward, Brice Caillie, Genevieve Gallant, Paul MacNair, Bianca McGregor and Jodi Joy. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Galvez.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WORLD ENGINEERING DAY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Rosa Galvez: I rise in the Senate today to mark two important international days that take place in March: International Women's Day and World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development.

[*English*]

International Women's Day is a time to reflect on the efforts that still need to be done to attain gender equality but also to celebrate the achievements of women. Achieving gender equality isn't just a moral issue. It also makes economic sense and is good for all aspects of life from access to health and education to political power and earning potential. The most important factor in a country's competitiveness is its human talent — the skills and innovation of its workforce. That's why the proper participation of half the world's population is so important for the well-being of our economy, social fabric and environment.

World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development offers us the opportunity to highlight the achievements of engineers in our modern world and to improve public understanding of how engineering and technology are central to sustainable development. Engineers are at the forefront of developing innovative solutions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the impacts of climate change and build resilience in our communities. We need more women in STEM fields, and for that we must end gender stereotypes, welcome and celebrate young women in engineering and promote role models and mentoring.

It is important to acknowledge that women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change, particularly in developing countries. Women are often responsible for providing food, water and energy for their families, and climate change can exacerbate the challenges they already face. Importantly, women also play a critical role in climate action as agents of change in their communities and as leaders in science, engineering and technology.

As we celebrate these two important days, let us remember that gender equality and sustainable development go hand in hand.

• (1410)

By working together and harnessing the skills of women engineers, we can create a better, more equitable and sustainable world for all.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to invite you all to a reception hosted by Nature Canada tomorrow evening across the street — you will have received an email to that effect. I hope to see you all there. Thank you, *meegetwetch*.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of members of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Boyer.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize and celebrate International Women's Day, a celebration that is shared by women all around the world.

International Women's Day is a chance to celebrate the economic, political and social achievements of women, past, present and future. It is an occasion as well to remind and reinforce the important value of equity that we hold dear in Canada and one which we try to help to progress across the world.

[*Translation*]

The Government of Canada's theme for International Women's Day 2023 is "Every Woman Counts."

To celebrate this year's theme, I would like to tell you about some women from New Brunswick who exemplify the values of International Women's Day and who represent three points in time: the past, present and future.

Émilie C. LeBlanc, an Acadian known as Marichette, was truly ahead of her time. Born in Memramcook in 1863 and a teacher by profession, she published a series of letters in the newspaper *L'Évangéline* under the pseudonym Marichette to denounce social injustice against Acadians and women and stand up for their rights, including the right to be heard, the right to education and the right to vote.

She was not afraid to speak her mind, as we can see from a letter in which she said that women were just dying to go to the polls to show seniors how to vote.

[*English*]

As for inspiring women of today, I just need to look around at the leaders in my community of Kent County. We've had amazing leaders such as Danielle Dugas, who was the first woman mayor in Saint-Louis-de-Kent. When I ran to be a member of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, an MLA, 24 years ago, I was asked if Kent was ready for a woman to be their member of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. Today, I can say women are certainly ready. For example, during my second term, the municipality of Rogersville was a great example of the progress that we had made. At that time, I, as the local MLA, myself a woman, served alongside Rogersville Mayor Pierrette Robichaud, also a female, and members of the local RCMP detachment — all women in that municipality.

Since 2021, the Government of New Brunswick has awarded the Minister's Award for Excellence in Championing Gender Equality. The award was created as a way to highlight and acknowledge New Brunswick individuals who are forging paths and advancing equality. One of the awards is dedicated to youth champions: Vera Chen in 2022 and Emma Coakley in 2021. They both demonstrate remarkable values of inclusivity: in music for Vera Chen, and on living with a disability for Emma Coakley. These are important initiatives and acknowledgements to symbolize and strengthen our values as a society.

[*Translation*]

Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 21st century, women began to make progress, going from having to publish under a pseudonym when demanding change to paving the way for change, both for their communities and for future generations of women.

Honourable senators, please join me in recognizing the tremendous work that has been done. May the journey towards progress continue.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Chief Darren Blaney. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Ravalia.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard: Honourable senators, I rise today to celebrate International Women's Day. The theme this year is #EmbraceEquity. This is a day dedicated to the celebration of women's achievements while also acting as a call to action in the pursuit of gender equity.

The first step toward gender equity in the Senate began when the first woman was appointed in 1930. Today I see many of my colleagues with diverse, intersecting identities. I see many of my colleagues who have achieved firsts, which indicates that we are just starting out with gender equity in the Senate.

For example, Senator Mobina Jaffer was the first Muslim appointed to the Senate. Senator Yonah Martin was the first Canadian senator of Korean origin. The first Haitian-Canadian woman named to the Senate was Senator Marie-Françoise Mégie. Our recently retired colleague Senator Sandra Lovelace Nicholas was the first Indigenous woman from Atlantic Canada to serve in the Senate. Senator Yvonne Boyer is the first Indigenous senator from Ontario.

There are senators here who have celebrated firsts outside of this chamber. Senator Pat Duncan was the first woman to serve as premier of the Yukon. Senator Bernadette Clement was the first Black woman to serve as a mayor in Ontario. Senator Sharon Burey was the first Black woman to serve as president of the Pediatricians Alliance of Ontario. Senator Gigi Osler was the first racialized woman elected as president of the Canadian Medical Association. I could go on. There are many more impressive achievements, and I have only had time here to name a small selection.

It is so very important for young people to see diverse women participating in positions of power and influence. It inspires them to lead in their own communities.

Honourable senators, I invite you all to join me on this International Women's Day in celebrating the achievements of all women as we continue our journey toward equality and equity. I wish a happy International Women's Day to all our colleagues here in the Senate. *Asante*, thank you.

[Senator Poirier]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Elsie Reford and Alexander Reford. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Forest.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ELSIE REFORD

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, this Wednesday, in honour of International Women's Day, Les Jardins de Métis, or Reford Gardens, and Les Éditions Umanium are launching the book *Elsie Reford: 150 Objects of Passion*.

The official launch is being held this evening at 7 p.m., at Library and Archives Canada. Alexander Reford, author, historian, director of Reford Gardens and great-grandson of Elsie Reford will be in attendance.

Elsie Reford, née Mary Elsie Stephen Meighen in 1872, is best known for founding the Reford Gardens in the Lower St. Lawrence. In 1926, at the age of 54, this self-taught woman began her work to develop the thematic gardens around Estevan Lodge, an estate covering over 20 hectares. Passionate and meticulous, she became a plant expert and was published in many horticultural journals in Canada and abroad.

Open to the public in 1962, her gardens have been designated a heritage site under the Quebec Cultural Property Act since 2012. Visitors to the gardens can admire more than 3,000 species and varieties of plants, including the famous Himalayan blue poppy. I strongly encourage you to visit this magical site.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the work of the current director of the Reford Gardens, Alexander Reford, who has been breathing new life into the estate since 1995. In 2021, Mr. Reford was invested as a member of the Order of Canada for his leadership in Canada's horticultural community, his support for regional tourism development and his contribution to conserving heritage and the environment.

We're familiar with Mrs. Reford's horticultural legacy, but on this special day, I would also like to highlight her contribution to advancing the status of women. Mrs. Reford was concerned about the lack of opportunities for women to be informed about the political, economic and social debates of her time, so in 1907, she founded the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal together with Julia Drummond. The club's goal was to promote Canadian unity and provide information to women.

• (1420)

Over the years, prominent individuals, such as Governor General Earl Grey, politicians and prime ministers, such as Wilfrid Laurier and Arthur Meighen, illustrious writers and philanthropists have been invited to address the Women's Canadian Club.

Elsie Reford's political and social engagement took many forms, including giving speeches, volunteering, lobbying and writing. She put pen to paper to condemn the 1911 Canada-U.S. free trade agreement and participated in various public forums to defend conscription in 1917. It is said that she even tried to convince Henri Bourassa of the merits of the federation movement in the British Empire. We can certainly say that she was confident in her ability to tackle such a task.

She was known for her social engagement. For example, she participated in the financing of Quebec City's tricentennial celebrations and worked on the project to create a national park on the Plains of Abraham. She also helped Canadian military families affected by the war by volunteering with the Canadian Patriotic Fund.

In conclusion, a feminist ahead of her time, Elsie Reford, born more than 150 years ago, did not hesitate to occupy every space afforded her, much like her magnificent gardens, which eventually made their place amidst a forest of spruce trees.

I wish you a wonderful International Women's Day, and I hope that this day will bring solidarity and respect.

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at 2 p.m.

[Translation]

HER EXCELLENCY URSULA VON DER LEYEN, PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

ADDRESS TO MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—MOTION TO PRINT AS AN APPENDIX ADOPTED

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(j), I move:

That the Address by Her Excellency Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, to members of both Houses of Parliament, delivered Tuesday, March 7, 2023, together with all introductory and related remarks, be printed as an appendix to the *Debates of the Senate* and form part of the permanent records of this house.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(For text of speeches, see Appendix.)

CANADIAN NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

BUREAU AND STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS,
APRIL 9-10, 2022—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association concerning the Bureau and Standing Committee Meetings, held in Athens, Greece, from April 9 to 10, 2022.

SPRING SESSION, MAY 25-30, 2022—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association concerning the Spring Session, held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from May 25 to 30, 2022.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ELECTION INTEGRITY

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, *The Globe and Mail* has reported extensively on the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, documents which reveal the extent to which the Communist regime in Beijing interfered in Canada's 2019 and 2021 federal elections — through financing, threats, intimidation, the denial of visas, disinformation campaigns and more — all to arrive at their preferred outcome of a Liberal minority government and to defeat the Conservatives.

None of this would come as a surprise to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and his office knew about it, did nothing to stop it and kept it hidden from Canadians. We all know why — it's because he benefited from it, leader.

Two weeks ago, the Prime Minister claimed the reports about foreign interference in our election had “so many inaccuracies.” Leader, what were these inaccuracies?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, colleague. We can all agree, despite differences of opinion, that this is a serious matter. This government is taking this very seriously. Protecting our democratic institutions, preserving the integrity of our elections and ensuring that our system is resilient against attempts by foreign actors to interfere are all high priorities — and these are priorities for every member, I'm sure, in this chamber, every parliamentarian and, indeed, every Canadian.

The government is taking this seriously. There is no evidence, as a number of reports have indicated, that the elections were compromised. This was made clear in Morris Rosenberg's report.

Indeed, the former Conservative national campaign manager Fred DeLorey is on record as saying that, without a shadow of a doubt, the outcome of the election “. . . was not influenced by any external meddling.”

That's not the end of the story. The important questions are what steps are being taken both to protect our institutions and to understand the full extent of the actions that were taken, and what measures are being taken to combat them?

In this regard, the approach that the Prime Minister has announced to empower the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA, and the appointment of a special rapporteur are all measures designed to get to the bottom of this in a responsible and prudent way.

Senator Plett: I was hoping that somewhere in there I would, at least, get you to allude to my question in your answer.

You say the government is taking this seriously — so seriously that the Prime Minister is refusing to answer one simple question: when?

Global News recently reported that senior staffers in the Prime Minister's Office were briefed by CSIS — prior to the 2019 federal election — about a specific example of foreign interference by the Communist regime in Beijing. None of the responses we've heard from the Prime Minister have come even close to answering the serious questions posed to him about this — very similar to your answer here a minute ago.

It is shameful that his first instinct was to go after the CSIS whistle-blowers — and not the interference in our country. The Prime Minister's announcement on Monday was completely insufficient. But he wouldn't have said a word if reporters had not seen the CSIS documents.

Leader, when was the Prime Minister and his staff briefed by our national security agencies about these allegations of interference by the Communist Party in Beijing, and what information did they receive?

Senator Gold: These are important issues. It is important that we, as parliamentarians, approach them in a responsible way.

Advice that is given, or information, from the security services of the Prime Minister is not something that the Prime Minister is going to divulge, and it is certainly not something that would be appropriate to divulge in this setting.

• (1430)

The fact is, the Prime Minister has announced that NSICOP — a committee of parliamentarians with security clearance — will be examining this issue, as they've examined in their important reports on foreign interference the question of the measures that are being taken by our institutions to protect ourselves. I commend to each and every senator to read the NSICOP report on foreign interference because you will see that the issue has been taken seriously by this government for a long time now.

In addition, colleagues, the imminent appointment of a special rapporteur will also have a role to play in advising the Prime Minister as to what further steps might be taken. I should add, again, that the former campaign chair of the Conservative Party recommended that the appropriate way in which to get to the bottom of this is indeed to empower NSICOP to do the work.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Government leader, with all due respect, this is not about whether Justin Trudeau and his friends in Beijing succeeded in influencing the outcome of an election. In response to the talking points from Fred DeLorey and the government trying to justify a bank robbery, even though you didn't walk away with the loot, it doesn't mean you didn't attempt to break the law.

When news first broke last fall that the Prime Minister had received warnings from our intelligence community about Beijing's interference in Canada's elections, he denied, denied and denied. But every day for the past few weeks as more details come to light about numerous reports about the Prime Minister and his staff, the deniability has become far less plausible.

One such report from came from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, and, as you know, that committee does not, unfortunately, report to Parliament. It reports directly to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has very recently acknowledged that he actually ignored their recommendation in regard to foreign interference. These are the facts.

Yet on Monday, included in a stall-tactic list announced by the Prime Minister, there it is — none other than the same committee to report back on the same matter to a Prime Minister who has been ignoring them. Senator Gold, after lying about what he knew and has now admitted — and yes, the Prime Minister has lied. In the beginning he said these were lies, reports not founded in facts. Well, the facts have proven contrary.

Now my question is a simple one: How can the Canadian public trust this Prime Minister after he has blatantly lied on this issue?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I gather my opening comments had no impact on members of the opposition. These are serious matters that should be approached in a responsible way. Partisanship is one thing. Attributing and calling our Prime Minister a liar is an example of how irresponsible partisanship on serious matters that should concern Canadians contributes to undermining faith in the institution. I should add, it's time for us to show real leadership in this debate.

It is time for all parliamentarians, including in this chamber, to show true leadership on this most important and delicate issue that involves several government departments and several agencies who are committed to keeping Canadians safe and secure. I commend them for their work.

We only have to look south, colleagues, to see how this kind of trash talking, whether it's to our Prime Minister or to other leaders or institutions, can be corrosive and undermine the important fabric of our democracy.

I'm going to stop because there is more I could say, but, of course, the Senate Conservative opposition is independent of their leader, so we are told, so I will not take the opportunity to remind you of what the Leader of the Opposition has said about our Prime Minister, but I'm sure that you have all read it with interest. This is not the responsible way, colleagues, to deal with an important issue.

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, what's not responsible is a government that for eight years has done absolutely nothing to address foreign influence. We have a bill in this place calling for a foreign influence registry. It hasn't moved an iota because independent senators don't seem to be concerned about foreign influence.

Your government has done nothing and you have ignored calls from CSIS. Now we have the former director of CSIS, the former chief electoral officer and a democratic House of Commons parliamentary committee all requesting an independent public inquiry; and the Prime Minister continues to stall, and you're lecturing us about partisan politics — please.

Senator Gold, what's even worse about drawing conclusions that somehow we're Americanizing our politics is that the funniest defence is you're a bunch of racists because you care about the security of Canadians. That's the best the Prime Minister has been able to give us.

At this time, the people most victimized and threatened by this foreign interference, people whose democratic rights are being trampled, are Chinese Canadians and other diaspora Canadians who are being influenced, cajoled and intimidated on our own Canadian soil, and they deserve better than that.

The defence of "It's just partisan politics" just doesn't cut it. Since you're not going to recognize the Prime Minister lied about what he knew and when he knew it, will you at least recognize that he owes Canadians of the diaspora an apology for calling anyone who brings this issue up a racist, and he is doing harm by using such an important tool for political partisanship? When will he apologize to those Canadians?

Senator Gold: What the Prime Minister is doing is working appropriately and responsibly to protect Canadians from foreign interference.

I will repeat, this is a serious issue. It should be dealt with responsibly, and it is not responsible to call a Prime Minister a liar. It is not responsible for the leader — someone who aspires to be Prime Minister of this country — essentially to say that the Prime Minister is working against Canadians in the service of a foreign country. That's calling our Prime Minister a traitor and that's reprehensible.

I accept the partisanship in Parliament, but I expect more on a serious matter.

Since we're doing this, Senator Housakos, let us remind Canadians and senators that the accusation and the allegations of foreign interference are not new. The same person who is accusing our Prime Minister of working in the service of a foreign country and against the interests of his own country was the former minister of democratic reform, current leader of the Conservative Party. He held that position from 2013 to 2015. He was warned by CSIS and the Prime Minister's national security adviser that Chinese interference was a problem. He did absolutely nothing. This Prime Minister is doing something and Canadians should be proud that the government is looking after its best interests.

PUBLIC SAFETY

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Senator Gold, the media reports to which Senator Plett and Senator Housakos referred are based entirely on anonymous, unverified sources who are selectively leaking what appears to be classified information. I would point out that senior officials, when asked to comment on this kind of information, have described it as "not truth," "incomplete" and "rumours."

The government has gone ahead with the appointment of a special rapporteur, but what is the government doing to investigate not just who broke the law by leaking classified material, but also into the broader effort by elements in and around the intelligence establishment who are using clandestine methods to spread unverified information that subverts our political system and stigmatizes many Chinese Canadians?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. As you and Senator Housakos pointed out in the context of his question and comments, there are victims in this story, and many are members of the Chinese-Canadian community who are either targeted or vilified.

• (1440)

My understanding is that there is actually an investigation going on with regard to at least some aspects of the disclosure of classified information, but beyond that, in response to your question, I don't have information with regard to other steps the government may be taking.

Senator Woo: In the same vein, Senator Gold, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, NSIRA, recently released a damning report on the way in which CSIS can instruct third parties, such as private corporations, to take action against individuals based on a secret risk assessment without taking responsibility for the adverse effects on individuals and entities.

What is the government doing in response to the NSIRA report to rein in any overreach on the part of our intelligence agencies?

Senator Gold: Again, I don't have the answer, so I won't speculate as to what the answer would be or whether it would be appropriate to release it.

Having put in place the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, NSICOP, and empowering NSIRA to provide — for the first time, really — a proper, robust review and oversight function of our security services, this government is taking more seriously the importance of civilian oversight and civilian review of our intelligence operations. I think that should give Canadians confidence that if there is wrongdoing, it is going to be explored properly by those best suited to do so.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: My question is for the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications.

Senator Housakos, on February 7, the CBC announced their intention to become a digital-only format. While they have clarified that they are “not abandoning anyone who's watching on traditional television or listening on traditional radio,” it still does raise for me, from a rural region, questions about the timing

of making such an announcement now given the serious issues around broadband and connectivity throughout rural and remote Canada.

Senator Housakos, given your experience on this file, can you share with us whether or not you have any concerns with this announcement?

Hon. Leo Housakos: Thank you for the question, Senator Patterson. It is a very timely and legitimate one.

I do have concerns, and all Canadians should have concerns because at the end of the day, we saw the CEO of CBC/Radio-Canada come out and acknowledge — and it's interesting that right in the middle of the heated debate on Bill C-11, she acknowledged, for all intents and purposes, what many of us have been saying for a long time — that traditional broadcasting is declining quickly. The announcement she made is that there is a plan over 10 years for CBC to transform into a digital platform rather than a cable broadcaster.

However, if you look at the licensing obligations of CBC/Radio-Canada, they are a national cable broadcaster supposedly responsible for providing national regional news and local news serving rural and remote regions of the country. Clearly, they've been subsidized to the tune of billions of dollars over a number of decades to provide that service. As they cut their obligatory licensing responsibilities, they are taking funds from taxpayers and putting it in a digital world, developing their digital platform, which is clearly not their mandate. I am concerned, and Canadians should be concerned.

I am also concerned why the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, isn't taking steps to reel CBC/Radio-Canada in and to remind them of their licensing obligations. I'm equally concerned as to why the minister and the ministry have not imposed the fines and penalties that CBC is due to be imposed upon when they breach their licensing responsibilities.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

COPYRIGHT ACT REFORM

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Senator Gold, last Friday, eight arrests were made in the largest art fraud in Canada. About 1,000 fake pieces of art were seized, and individuals in three rings were charged with faking the work of famous Indigenous artist Norval Morrisseau. It is thought between 4,500 and 6,000 of these fakes exist. Many were sold for tens of thousands of dollars to unsuspecting collectors. It has been widely known for years that fakes of Morrisseau's work were in the system. The police took 2.5 years investigating these arrests, and work leading to that investigation went on for more than 10 years.

I have brought up my concerns about the depth and extent of art fraud in this chamber before and I have noted some other fraudulent activities that negatively impact Canadian artists, especially Indigenous artists.

When will the government tighten the Copyright Act and develop other legislation to protect Canada's visual artists?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, senator. I don't have specific information about the Copyright Act dimension of your question, but I will say that the government strongly condemns frauds and scams, both in the art world and in every context where they are perpetrated. Indeed, the government and law enforcement continually work to detect, disrupt and prosecute crimes, because that's what these things are.

As we know, through Budget 2022, the government will establish the Canada financial crimes agency dedicated to investigating complex cases of a wide range of offences. It will work with law enforcement to ensure that criminals are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Senator Bovey: Thank you for that, Senator Gold. There have been some very constructive suggestions as to how activity might be curtailed, from instituting an electronic tag system on works while still in artists' studios, to creating a registry confirming authentication, which could be with the piece as it moves from collection to collection, to developing a fund to assist artists in fighting these breaches of copyright, to better training of CBSA officials. These measures would not only protect artists from loss of their income and legacies but also assist unsuspecting collectors.

Will the government consider these and other proposals that may come forward in light of these frauds?

Senator Gold: Thank you for those suggestions, senator. The government is always open to consider ways in which to improve its ability to disrupt. It's far better to prevent than to have to cure, if I can use a health analogy.

I would be pleased to arrange meetings with you so that your recommendations can be put into the proper hands. Please contact me, and we will do that.

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: My question is for Senator Gold. You spoke about the Prime Minister's leadership. I would say that a real leader is also there to reassure citizens.

A recent poll showed that 90% of Canadians are concerned about the situation with the Chinese regime and that 60% of Canadians think that the Prime Minister's leadership has been rather weak when it comes to dealing with China.

Many incidents that have occurred over the past several years are causing concern about the Prime Minister's leadership, for example, the RCMP's investigation into the presence of five Chinese police stations in Toronto.

In 2020, I asked you about the possible presence of the Chinese army on Canadian soil, and General Vance stated his position that it would not come here, because that would give

China access to privileged information about Canada and the U.S. At the time, Mr. Trudeau objected to General Vance's position.

Senator Gold, my question is this. Is Prime Minister Trudeau's admiration for the Chinese regime an indication of naivety or complicity?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. In fact, it is neither.

It is no secret that, over the past few years, the Chinese regime has changed both its tone and its actions toward the world.

• (1450)

For several decades now, Canadian governments — and not just the Liberal government, but also the Mulroney government — have hoped that the economic liberation of China and the economic rapprochement, the very integration of China into our western economy, would lead to political and democratic liberalization. These hopes have been shared by Canada's business community as well as consumers in Canada and around the world. As the last few years have shown, unfortunately for the men, women and children of China, that has not happened.

It is not a question of complicity. I strongly reject that. Nor is it a question of naivety. One must be willing to learn and change when faced with facts and situations like the one Canada and the democratic world are experiencing right now. We are dealing with a power that has global political ambitions, which is why the Canadian government is taking meaningful action to protect us and to reassess many aspects of our relationship with China.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to the order of Thursday, February 16, 2023, I leave the chair for the Senate to resolve into a Committee of the Whole on the subject matter of Bill C-39, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying). The Honourable Senator Ringette will chair the committee.

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—CONSIDERATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On the Order:

The Senate in Committee of the Whole in order to receive the Honourable David Lametti, P.C., M.P., Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health, accompanied by a total of no more than three officials,

respecting the subject matter of Bill C-39, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

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

The Chair: Honourable senators, the Senate is resolved into a Committee of the Whole on the subject matter of Bill C-39, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

Honourable senators, in a Committee of the Whole senators shall address the chair but need not stand. Under the rules the speaking time is 10 minutes, including questions and answers, but, as ordered, if a senator does not use all of his or her time, the balance can be yielded to another senator. The committee will receive the Honourable David Lametti, P.C., M.P., Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health, and I would now invite them to join us, accompanied by their officials.

(Pursuant to the Order of the Senate, the Honourable David Lametti, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos and their officials were escorted to seats in the Senate chamber.)

The Chair: Ministers, welcome to the Senate. I would ask you to introduce your officials and to make your opening remarks of no more than five minutes combined.

[*English*]

Hon. David Lametti, P.C., M.P., Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to Bill C-39, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), which I introduced in the other place on February 2, 2023.

As you know, I am joined here today by my colleague the Minister of Health, Jean-Yves Duclos; Joanne Klineberg from my department — she can wave — Deputy Minister Stephen Lucas, Health Canada; and Jacque Lemaire from Health Canada.

Madam Chair, Bill C-39 will temporarily extend the period of ineligibility to receive medical assistance in dying — or MAID — in circumstances where the only medical condition identified in support of the request is a mental illness, and this is for one year — until March 17, 2024.

[*Translation*]

I sincerely believe that extending the period of ineligibility due to mental illness by a year is necessary. This temporary extension will ensure proper MAID assessment and safe delivery under these circumstances. The delay will enable us to properly prepare the health care system by giving us more time to distribute and activate key resources and provide adequate training within the medical and nursing care communities.

This extension will also give the federal government more time to carefully examine the final report of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, which was tabled just three weeks ago on February 15, 2023.

The comprehensive and detailed report contains recommendations and additional clarifications pertaining to MAID assessment and delivery when the sole underlying medical condition identified in support of the request is a mental illness.

The Minister of Health, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and I are carefully considering these conclusions. We remain committed to working with our provincial and territorial partners to ensure that our MAID laws respect autonomy and freedom of choice while protecting the most vulnerable.

I want to be very clear. Bill C-39 is not a step backwards in terms of the potential eligibility for MAID where the sole underlying medical condition for the request is a mental illness. Two years ago, legislators — including those in this chamber — decided that eligibility for MAID should be expanded in this direction, and that is not something I intend to change. That is not what Bill C-39 is proposing.

However, I do believe that more time is needed to ensure that MAID is being safely assessed and delivered in all circumstances where mental illness is the sole underlying medical condition.

The one-year temporary extension will strike the right balance between expanding eligibility for MAID as quickly as possible and ensuring that it is done in a careful and measured manner. I am confident that one year will be sufficient for the dissemination and uptake of key resources by the medical and nursing communities, to ensure that the health care system is ready.

During that time, the federal government will be carefully considering important reports such as the one from the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

I will now be happy to answer your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, minister.

[*English*]

Senator Plett: My questions will be for Minister Lametti, starting out, at least.

Minister, I am really saddened to hear your comments telling us that even if over the next year you find reasons why this is entirely the wrong way to go that you wouldn't have enough of an open mind to say that we are always open to changes, always open to do the right thing — that you have already made a decision. Regardless of what information you get over the next year, you're not going to change course.

Minister, there is no expert consensus on whether expanded assisted dying to those suffering from mental illness as a sole underlying condition can be done safely. The Special Joint

Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying heard from several renowned psychiatrists who have stated unequivocally that there is no way to ascertain irremediability and no way to distinguish between suicidality and assisted dying requests with any certainty.

Minister, the latest survey from the Canadian Psychiatric Association demonstrates that less than half of Canadian psychiatrists support expanding access to those suffering from a mental illness. The Ontario Medical Association survey demonstrates even less support among medical professionals.

Minister, when there is absolutely no professional consensus among experts that this can be done safely, why would your government even consider continuing with this radical expansion? Why not listen to the experts and abandon this policy altogether, especially given that the consequences of getting this wrong are so dire?

• (1500)

Mr. Lametti: With all due respect, senator, I disagree on most counts.

First of all, this is a law that has already been passed. We are only temporarily delaying its implementation. It would be disrespectful to both houses of Parliament, but this honoured house in particular, Senator Plett, to turn around and reverse exactly what it did only two years ago, considering the expertise shown by the committee in this house.

I would also dispute quite vigorously your assessment of the expert evidence that is out there. The expert committee that looked at this gave us a very good set of guidelines that are not just workable but, I think, extremely effective at making sure that the only kinds of mental disorders that are eligible for MAID are those for which there's a long-standing path of care with a psychiatrist and in which all sorts of things have been tried and have failed. It's a very small number of people.

So there is a great deal of disinformation out there, and a number of the reports and surveys to which you are referring, I would put to you, with all humility, that they —

Senator Plett: Minister, I —

Mr. Lametti: If you don't mind, let me answer the question.

The Chair: Senator Plett, let the minister answer the question, please.

Senator Plett: Minister, I have 10 minutes to deal with what I want.

Mr. Lametti: I would put to you, please —

The Chair: You asked a question; the minister is responding.

Mr. Lametti: I will complete the answer, senator.

A number of the studies you are referring to are based on that disinformation: that this is about allowing MAID for suicidal ideation. That is clearly not the case here. These are cases of long-standing psychiatric disorders that have been under the care of a psychiatrist.

The Chair: Senator Plett, we're at four minutes. You have one minute left, if you want to share five minutes with Senator Batters.

Senator Plett: Again, Madam Chair, we will share our time the way we deem to share our time. When I am done, she is the second or third on our list later on, and she will take the balance of what I don't use. Thank you.

Minister, I'm sorry to hear you say that a small number of people is acceptable if we get it wrong. I don't think it is; I think one person is too many.

Minister, I want to discuss the concept of irremediability. Our entire assisted dying regime is founded upon the principle that the qualifying illness must be grievous and irremediable, as stipulated by the Supreme Court. To suggest there is a scientific consensus on the ability to predict a mental illness would be grossly misleading. Several witnesses told a joint committee that this is not possible. Dr. Sonu Gaid, the former President of the Canadian Psychiatric Association, told the committee:

. . . our law does not say grievous and irremediable conditions are determinable by ethical decision. It should be a scientific decision. On that there is no question that we cannot make those predictions in mental illness.

Even your government's expert panel stated in their report that it is difficult, if not impossible, for clinicians to make accurate predictions about the future for an individual patient.

My question, minister — and give a short answer, please — is this: When it comes to irremediability, clinicians would not know if they are getting it wrong 2% of the time or 90% of the time. What percentage would be acceptable to you, minister, and if the only two safeguards of "grievous" and "irremediable" cannot be guaranteed, what value is there in the other safeguards?

Mr. Lametti: Senator, before turning the answer over to my colleague Minister Duclos, if the expert committee has given us a good road map on irremediability, and if there is any doubt as to irremediability, the person is not eligible for MAID.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health: Thank you for pointing to the expert panel. I will summarize what they said.

The expert panel made several recommendations for MAID assessors to guide them in making a determination of incurability for persons suffering solely with a mental illness. This includes reviewing treatment attempts and their outcomes and the severity of the medical condition. They also recommend that assessors obtain collateral information, such as medical records, prior MAID assessments and discussions with family members or significant others. As with many chronic conditions, the

incurability of a mental disorder cannot be established in the absence of multiple attempts at interventions with therapeutic aims.

In terms of the irreversibility of a mental illness, the panel indicated that MAID assessors should establish irreversibility with reference to interventions tried that are designed to improve function, including recognizing rehabilitative and supportive measures that had been tried up to that point, outcomes of those interventions and the duration of decline.

Finally, as Minister Lametti said, if assessors cannot establish irremediability, a person will not be found eligible for MAID.

Senator Plett: I will yield the balance of my time to Senator Batters when it is her time to come forward.

Senator Batters: Minister Duclos, in the 2021 election, your Liberal election platform promised to establish and fund the Canada mental health transfer — a commitment of \$4.5 billion over five years. According to your own platform cost breakdown, your government should have invested \$1.5 billion of that money into mental health care by now, but, in reality, you haven't spent one penny.

Canada's mental health care system is in full-on crisis mode. Canadians with mental illnesses face waitlists of months, even years, for psychiatric treatment. Now the Trudeau government is going to offer assisted suicide to vulnerable people suffering from mental illness who feel as though they have no other options rather than investing in and offering them treatment or hope.

Why is your government breaking this major commitment on mental health? Why is your government offering Canadians with mental illness death before treatment?

Mr. Duclos: In fact, not only are we not breaking that promise, but we are enhancing it. You have probably followed the recent announcement made by the Prime Minister just a few weeks ago in a subsequent letter pointing to agreements in principle on the part of most provinces and territories — 11 out of 13 of them — with an additional investment of federal dollars of \$200 billion over the next 10 years. Those are in addition to the current level of the Canada Health Transfer and tax points transferred to the provinces and territories for the last decade.

Those are very significant dollars.

In particular, this means \$2.5 billion per year over the next few years, which is obviously significantly larger than the number you mentioned earlier. Those dollars will be invested, in part, through better access to mental health care, because we know that mental health is health. It is also in part through better access to primary care, because primary care for most Canadians listening to us is the direct access to mental health care through psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers.

Those are significant investments. More importantly, we expect they will lead to significant health care and mental health care outcomes for Canadians.

[Mr. Duclos]

Senator Kutcher: Ministers, thank you for being here with us today. Your presence is appreciated.

Health misinformation has become a substantial concern since the onset of COVID. Have you, in your work, noticed any frequently promoted misinformation related to MAID MD-SUMD, and, if so, what has been the focus of that misinformation and what is being done to address it?

Mr. Lametti: Thank you for that, senator. It's fair to say that we've heard some already. The main example of misinformation in this particular case is that a person who is contemplating suicide or who is depressed or anxious will have the option to have MAID. That is simply not the case.

The guidelines given by the expert report, again, point to a situation where the typical person accessing MAID, whose sole underlying criterion is a mental disorder, would be someone who has been under the treatment of a psychiatrist for a long period of time — years, possibly even a decade or more — and for whom every type of possibility has been tried, the person is capable of making a decision and decides to make that decision.

If a person is in acute crisis or is contemplating suicide, that person should seek help.

As Minister Duclos just pointed out, we are trying to work with the provinces to make sure we augment those kinds of services, but it's simply not an option that one can get MAID if one is feeling depressed, anxious or is contemplating suicide. That is the kind of argument that is being made, I believe, for mainly ideological reasons or to turn back the whole of the last series of reforms on MAID, so there is a political agenda to it as well.

• (1510)

The expert committee has given us a very good road map with which to work. What we're doing is trying to present real information, factual information and to give provinces, territories and universities the time to digest that information in the expert report, to develop the kinds of modules and didactic materials that are necessary so that we are all on the same page a year from now at the very latest.

Senator Jaffer: To both ministers, thank you very much for making time to meet with us today.

Minister Lametti, as you know, for many years, we have told you that you have broken the record for ministers giving gender-based analysis reports. I wrote to your office before you came here to ask if this will be produced. Do you have it here or will you be producing it later?

Mr. Lametti: I do have a copy here, but it will be produced with the caveat that it will be similar to the GBV analysis.

Senator Downe: The motion the Senate approved was very narrow and specific for today's Committee of the Whole. It is on the topic of Bill C-39. Any other question should be ruled out of order. I'm prepared to go into the mind-numbing details of the rules if required, but otherwise we should stick to the topic before us.

The Chair: I agree with you, senator. Please, honourable senators, keep your questions to the issue at hand, specifically Bill C-39.

Senator Jaffer: This is an issue for Bill C-39 in order to see how the bill was put through. So I think I am on topic.

The Chair: Okay.

Senator Jaffer: Minister, in the last bill, we had talked about the different data that was collected for race and disability — the whole list. Is a similar thing happening now, and how is it going to be applied in the future?

Mr. Lametti: Minister Duclos may want to elaborate on this answer, but that data is now beginning. As of the beginning of January, we are beginning to get better data as a result of Bill C-7. Hopefully, that will increasingly put us in a better place with respect to the kinds of information and the disaggregated data that we gather with respect to MAID.

Mr. Duclos: Precisely that. The data is improving in quantity and quality over time. One reason for that is that on January 1 new regulations were passed and are now in existence so that more data on who, how and why can be accumulated for MAID: disaggregated data including gender; disaggregated data on how MAID is administered, the process leading to refusals and to ultimate outcomes; and the underlying factors, including medical factors, that may be leading to MAID being requested and sometimes offered.

Senator Loffreda: Welcome, ministers. My question is for Minister Duclos. There is some concern that medical assistance in dying outside the end-of-life context may become too readily available to those suffering from mental health disorders, especially if they have not had access to all available care. Can you confirm that health professionals, especially psychiatrists, agree that incurability and irreversibility should be central to their psychological assessment of eligibility? How do you envisage standardizing these two criteria?

Mr. Duclos: Thank you. There are two pieces of the answer to that question. First, as I mentioned earlier, if assessors cannot establish irremediability or incurability, MAID cannot be obtained. Second, an additional condition to obtaining MAID is that all relevant and sufficient support, socially and medically, must have been provided throughout a sustained amount of time.

We know that there have been concerns, sometimes perhaps ill-informed, but overall legitimate concerns about what would happen if someone didn't have access to housing or to mental health care. If that is the case, those individuals cannot obtain MAID, because we need to help them and provide them with all the support — the housing support, income support, social

support and medical support — that they need and deserve to live fulsome lives. That's the brief answer I would provide to your important question.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer. I would like you to elaborate, given what we are hearing — and there is a lot of misinformation and disinformation — but I recognize that there is some disagreement amongst the medical profession. Can you elaborate to what extent we can say that they will eventually agree that this is a necessary bill?

Mr. Duclos: One of the reasons assessors and experts acknowledge that it's difficult to assess irremediability is that people are very different from each other. This must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. As we said, and as I think needs to be repeated all the time in order to stop some of the misinformation, if irremediability cannot be assessed for certain for a particular case, that person will not be eligible for MAID. When psychiatrists and others point to the fact that it is sometimes difficult to assess irremediability, that is true, but if it cannot be assessed or checked, that person will not receive MAID.

[*Translation*]

Senator Dagenais: Mr. Lametti, when it comes to MAID, your government still gives the impression that it is trying very hard to either not act or to delay as much as possible the implementation of the rules that were set out by the Supreme Court or by its own experts.

I would have you know that it has been nearly 10 months since you received the recommendations from your panel of experts on amending this legislation to include persons with mental disorders. You knew that you had two years to do this work, specifically until March 17. It even took you from May to December, or seven months, to finally ask for an extension. Between you and me, one might say that taking seven months to make such a decision is unconscionable, especially for those who are suffering and waiting on you.

I would like you to explain the systemic slowness of your actions since 2015 on the MAID file. Who or what is stopping you from proceeding more quickly?

Mr. Lametti: Thank you, Senator, for this very important question.

Clearly, these are moral and ethical issues that are often very personal and difficult to address. The pandemic slowed the implementation of the legislation. We enacted the law two years ago. At the time, we believed that we would have enough time to develop a framework for the law with respect to mental disorders.

The Expert Panel on MAID and Mental Illness did an excellent job, but the creation of educational modules and materials in universities — in the faculties of medicine across Canada — was slowed by the pandemic, among other things. We thought that it was more prudent to slow down the process to provide the time required for everyone to be on the same page.

It is a process. We are moving forward step by step with Canadians. We are moving forward at the same pace as Canadians.

Senator Dagenais: Thank you.

I will yield the balance of my time to Senator Wallin.

• (1520)

[*English*]

Senator Wallin: Obviously, this delay proposed by Bill C-39 has, for many, created an opening to attempt to relitigate access to MAID for those who are not suffering from a mental illness. Do you have a plan? Will you be more public? Will you be more proactive in support of MAID? What assurances can you offer the public that the delay proposed by Bill C-39 will not impact access for the hundreds upon hundreds who are waiting for a clear signal?

Mr. Duclos: Thank you for the question. I would add to the earlier question that some experts believe that we could have moved this March with the extension that was passed two years ago. However, because of the prudence that my colleague alluded to; because we just received the reports from the parliamentary committee on MAID a few weeks ago; because we wanted to give more time to people to access the curriculum which will be completed — it's already in a good draft format and will be completed in 2023 — we also wanted the standards of practice to be well known and easily accessible. These standards will be available in the next few weeks. Since we want both the regulations and the information about those regulations to be increasingly available, we thought that one more year would be appropriate.

It is correct to say that this is a work-in-progress. People who have been suffering for many years are listening to us now and they probably feel challenged by the fact that this is not moving as quickly as some would have liked it to move.

Mr. Lametti: First, Senator Wallin, thank you for your work on this file. I agree with you that a number of people will be disappointed by this, but we do feel this is the prudent way forward. We're not backing down on anything else.

The statistics that are beginning to be generated are showing that the vast majority of cases are end of life. I think the statistics I saw were 500 non-end-of-life cases out of 10,000. That's a fraction of a percentage point. With better and disaggregated data, I think we will be able to assure Canadians who might be skeptical about MAID, and who might be prone to listening to disinformation, that what is really the case is empowering the autonomy of people to live with dignity and die with dignity under certain circumstances and conditions. This is only a one-year delay and we're not backing down on anything else.

[Mr. Lametti]

Senator Wallin: On the COVID point that you raised, rather than suggesting it was reason for delay, COVID allowed the system to open up so that people could use technology to communicate with one another.

Can you ensure that kind of access to people looking for advice and for guidance or for MAID assessors can begin so that process can continue to use technology?

Mr. Duclos: Yes, there has been significant progress in COVID-19. Obviously, I don't want to suggest that COVID-19 was good. It came with enormous damage not only to our health care workers but also to patients who have been waiting for years for surgeries and diagnostics. Perhaps one good thing, as you noted, was a significant increase in access to virtual care and the use of digital health and technology to improve the quality and the safety of care. We believe that access to information overall — that access to technology in particular — will be supportive of all sorts of care, including palliative care, home care, community care, access to medical aid in dying and, fundamentally, primary care, which is the weak cornerstone of our health care system now in Canada.

Senator Wallin: I would like to return to the notion that I raised initially about a campaign. We've had this discussion in the past. Every caregiver, every MAID assessor and people who deal with the issue of mental illness in particular, but not exclusively, have said we need to have a much more public debate about this. Others have suggested that the government has been less than proactive and less than outspoken on this issue. To come back to that issue, could we see more leadership on this issue, not just from ministers such as the two here today but from the government in general?

Mr. Lametti: Thank you, senator. I think that point is well taken. I share some of those thoughts. Working with Minister Duclos — and I see Deputy Minister Lucas behind me — working with the information and working with these people, I think we will accomplish that.

The Chair: You still have one minute.

Senator Wallin: I will forfeit my remaining time. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Senator Cardozo: Thank you, Minister Lametti and Minister Duclos for being with us for this important debate. I have two questions for you.

My first question is this: When the government decided to ask for an extension, did you think about a shorter extension, one of six months, for example?

[*English*]

Mr. Lametti: Thank you, senator, for the question. The short answer to that is yes. As Minister Duclos has mentioned, the group of experts led by Dr. Gupta felt that we would be ready

to go later this month. However, questions were raised by certain medical faculties across Canada and by other groups, provinces and territories, who said they weren't. Both Minister Duclos and I had a number of different discussions, including with senators in this honourable place, as well as parliamentarians and experts across Canada, regarding six months or nine months. At the end of the day, it was felt that a safe period of time, to be perfectly honest, was six to nine months. We have gone with a year to be safe, to ensure that everyone is on the same page and we're prepared as a country to move forward with this next step at the same time — that is, the medical profession, the provinces and the territories. This will give us an adequate amount of time to really be ready together.

Senator Cardozo: My second question is perhaps a bit more philosophical. I ask this from the perspective that when it comes to MAID, I think there is no right or wrong answer. We must respect everyone's perspective. We all get letters, as parliamentarians, from Canadians who are desperate that there not be a delay. We also hear from people who feel that MAID should be scrapped altogether. I ask you to help us with this. It's a struggle for us as lawmakers. What do you say to us and to people who seriously do not want this delay?

[Translation]

Mr. Duclos: You are right. It is a very intimate, difficult and complex issue that people take very personally.

Obviously, by definition, all life and death issues are central to human life. It is understandable that we are divided, at least at first, when we think about these issues, particularly in a society that continues to evolve. More and more, people want to enjoy a certain quality of life while maintaining a certain amount of independence. They also want their choices to be respected, no matter what choices they want to make in life. These are sometimes choices about their personal identity, their religious and other beliefs, their lifestyle or the way they want to end their life. We all know that life will end one day, in one way or another.

There are very personal and very difficult questions that you are carefully considering in this chamber. The work that you are doing is not easy. It is similar to the work that was done in the other place, that of trying to bring together people and perspectives that, at the beginning, almost by definition, are very far apart.

That's why I would like to encourage you to continue. I'm thinking of all the members of Parliament and the senators, in particular, who served on the committee. I'm thinking of Marc Garneau, the committee chair, who announced his departure today. Marc delayed his departure from politics until today. He could have left sooner. At his age and after giving so much to Canada, he could have left us sooner, but he told me at the Quebec caucus meeting this morning — David was there too — that he wanted to see this through. He felt that the work he did with some of you here in the Senate was important, and he wanted to see it through.

• (1530)

Senator Bellemare: Regarding the extension you're asking for in Bill C-39, what will your government do in the meantime to relieve the suffering of people with mental illness? For example, will you grant more section 56 exemptions and provide meaningful access to MDMA- and psilocybin-assisted therapy?

Mr. Lametti: Thank you for the question. My heart goes out to those who are suffering and who were looking forward to March 17, 2023. I want them to know that I sincerely sympathize with what they are going through. Honestly, we have no temporary measures in mind. This is just for one year. I know that some people will continue to suffer for that year, and again, I'm concerned about that, but I believe we need certainty that the law truly can be implemented in a year. In the meantime, we have to focus on implementing the law.

Senator Bellemare: That's all, thank you.

Senator Dalphond: Welcome to the Senate, ministers. I understand why some people are concerned. By allowing access to medical assistance in dying for mental illness, Canada is moving in a direction that is not common throughout the world, but there are countries that do allow it, such as the Netherlands.

Professor Donna Stewart from the University of Toronto testified before the special joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate that she had studied the last 20 years of Dutch statistics on access to medical assistance in dying for mental illness and she noted, for one, that in 2020, 95% of requests had been rejected. She also noted that those who accessed MAID solely for mental illness reasons represented 1.3% of the total number of people accessing medical assistance in dying. I assume that the government is aware of these numbers and that you expect that the experience in Canada will be similar. The reality is that it won't be easy to access and the numbers will be low.

Mr. Duclos: Yes, because the important thing is to take care of people. Protecting vulnerable people is the primary objective, the fundamental objective of everything the government does. We are fortunate to do what you do as well, and it is our objective in life to help people live a better life. That is why the purpose of all the conditions imposed on accessing medical assistance in dying is to ensure that the people have received all the necessary social, economic and medical support to live a full life until a natural end.

However, as you said, there are terrible circumstances where for years or decades, as Minister Lametti also said, people experience incredible and intolerable suffering, suffering that cannot be reduced, that is irremediable and is in no way alleviated by any form of treatment whatsoever. These people are absolutely capable of making that choice and can give clear and informed consent. These people want to be independent until the end of their life and it is in these rare cases that access to medical assistance in dying would be granted and will be granted in Canada, as is the case in other countries that are already doing this.

Senator Dalphond: Recommendation 13 of the special joint committee's report stated that, five months before March 2024, the committee should be re-established to ensure that the required measures have been put in place, that the provinces and territories are ready and the training and guidelines are ready. Do you agree with this recommendation?

Mr. Lametti: We just received the report and naturally have read it. I thank Senator Martin, our honourable colleague, Marc Garneau, and all the members of this committee for their work. I have to say that, personally, I'm not against this recommendation. As I just pointed out, I'm certain that in six or seven months, we will be in a good position for the committee to review this issue.

[English]

Senator Batters: Minister Lametti, your own gender-based analysis for Bill C-39 is devastating. It shows that women will be disproportionately adversely affected by the expansion of assisted suicide to people with mental illness. It notes:

It can be expected that should MAID be made available in Canada for individuals whose sole underlying condition is mental illness, we would see an increase in women seeking MAID for psychiatric suffering, and at younger ages.

It also notes that it can be expected that controversial MAID deaths similar to those seen in Benelux countries ". . . would emerge in Canada under this option."

The analysis notes that, currently, men are three times more likely to complete suicide. But with access to assisted suicide — a 100% lethal means of suicide — women may even those odds. That's hardly the kind of gender parity that we want.

Minister Lametti, on International Women's Day, please tell us why, with all of these dire warnings, your government is putting Canadian women at risk by pushing ahead with this expansion of assisted suicide.

Mr. Lametti: Thank you, senator, for the question. I appreciate the very good place from which your question comes, and the sincerity with which you are posing it.

As my colleague Minister Duclos pointed out, the experience in Benelux countries has been a very tiny percentage of people who seek MAID with the sole underlying criteria of mental disorder or mental illness. We expect that to be the case here. The guidelines that will be put into place — which have been recommended by the expert committee — are very strict. They will not allow for a large number of cases to be accepted.

As for the difference between men and women, we're putting stress on the autonomy of the individual here — where the criteria have been met, and where the criteria can be met. In the tiny number of cases — the fractional number of cases — where someone meets that criteria, we are empowering the individual to choose to not suffer anymore if that's what they want. We think that's an important part of it.

But these are difficult situations, as you know.

Senator Batters: Minister Lametti, as you have tried to sell the concept of psychiatric MAID to the Canadian public, you have, occasionally, implied that extending assisted suicide to people with mental illness has been mandated by the courts. Minister, as you know, that is not correct. You recently received a substantial letter on this matter from many notable Canadian law professors — and they stated that neither the *Carter* case nor the *Truchon* case ruled on the constitutionality of expansion for mental illness, and neither plaintiff requested MAID based on psychiatric grounds.

Minister, if the courts have not required the expansion of assisted suicide to people with mental illness, and science cannot prove that mental illness is irremediable, why are you and your government so determined to forge ahead with it?

Mr. Lametti: Thank you for the question, Senator Batters. I know most of the people who signed that letter personally, having been a law professor for most of my adult life.

In 2016, I felt that the original MAID package was unconstitutional because it did not allow for access to MAID in a non-end-of-life scenario, and, sadly, the *Truchon* case pointed out that I was correct.

• (1540)

While you are right that neither case — *Carter* nor *Truchon* — studied the question of mental illness as a sole underlying criterion directly, I do feel that eventually we will get there, as happened in 2016. That was certainly the opinion of many senators in this honourable place two years ago, and it was one of the reasons why this particular institution pointed us in that direction with the old Bill C-7.

I'm pretty confident, senator, that we're moving in the right direction in accordance with the principles underlying the Charter, and I think it's important that we empower Canadians who meet the criteria to have access to the possibility to end suffering.

The Chair: Senator Batters, you have 30 seconds.

Senator Batters: I will yield my time to Senator Martin.

Senator Martin: Minister, you said there were questions raised by some schools, but I know for a fact that, in December, the chairs of all 17 schools raised those concerns in question. We have this one-year extension with Bill C-39, but one year is not a lot of time when you look at the vastness of our country, the jurisdictional challenges and the great disparities between rural and urban Canada. In spite of all the well-intentioned good work, I feel like we're going to be back here in a year's time looking at further potential delays.

Minister, the Canadian public is also expressing great concern. A recent Angus Reid poll indicated that more than half of Canadians oppose MAID for mental illness as a sole underlying condition.

Considering the fact that we don't have consensus among the experts and that there is such a lack of support among Canadians, why would your government not table legislation to stop this expansion rather than simply delay it for a year? In fact, if the government is certain that we will eventually have a professional consensus that would justify this expansion, why not table legislation if and when such a time arises? I just feel one year will not be enough.

Mr. Duclos: I would start by saying that there are some people — and you have heard from them — who believe that we would be ready by the end of this month. The reason for that is because substantial work has been done over the last two years, partly thanks to your own work and the work of many other experts.

I would add that, as a federation, we know that provinces and territories will not always be exactly on the same page on every matter of health care and health in general. That is all right because in a federation we need to respect the level of heterogeneity and the responsibility that needs to exist with provincial jurisdictions.

That being said, this is a very prudent path. If provinces are not ready, they don't need to move forward. If people are not eligible, they will not have access to MAID. The criteria to access MAID are very strong and strict, involving, in part — as I mentioned earlier — irremediability. People will not be able to obtain MAID if the following cannot be certainly assessed: an irreversible state of decline, advanced and progressive decline, unbearable suffering and informed and continuously informed consent.

These are strict criteria that are there to protect the most vulnerable, as you rightly point out, which we should always be mindful of and working towards.

Again, there are some who believe we are ready now. We will be even more ready in the next few months with the upcoming curriculum, which are the standards of practice that will be issued in a few weeks from now along with the regulations in place and input from your work and the work of the parliamentary committee of which many senators contributed to in the last year.

Senator Martin: The provincial differences are something that also came to our attention at the committee.

Speaking of provinces, the National Assembly of Quebec, after wide consultation, tabled Bill 11 and ultimately decided not to allow MAID for mental illness. The government acknowledged the lack of professional consensus when asked about this decision.

How will this work logistically? If the eligibility criteria is narrower in Quebec, what set of criteria will Quebec clinicians have to follow? How will you prevent mental health patients from doctor-shopping across jurisdictions?

Mr. Lametti: Thank you, senator, for that question. First of all, we're following the legislative process in Quebec carefully, and we will wait to see what the final bill looks like after the legislative committee and all of the various steps of the legislative process happen.

What we do at the federal level is we work with the criminal law and establish the parameters, if you will, of responsibility. There is a certain margin of manoeuvre that a province can have, as Minister Duclos has pointed out, with respect to what they choose to implement. They may not immediately choose to implement the mental disorder possibility as a sole underlying criterion for MAID.

Let's wait to see what the final outcome of that legislative process is. There will certainly be information. There is an interest for both the federal and provincial governments — in this case, Quebec — to harmonize regimes as best as possible in order to ensure that health care professionals in particular are clear that they are following the law and working within legal parameters.

[Translation]

Senator Dupuis: Minister, welcome to the Senate.

As you said, minister, medical assistance in dying is a very serious issue. The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, of which I am a member, considered the matter very seriously and heard from a significant number of witnesses during its study of the bill. The autonomy of the individual who is making such an important decision and his or her capacity to make that decision are two underlying principles of what is now in the Criminal Code governing this medical practice. That is why I think it's urgent that your government move forward and consider the possibility of allowing individuals to formulate advance directives. This would enable individuals to maintain their autonomy and dignity before illness takes away their ability to make decisions.

You said earlier that you had two reasons to request delaying the coming into force of eligibility for MAID in circumstances where the sole underlying medical condition is mental illness. Giving more time to establish procedures and safeguards is one thing. What worries me — and I would like some clarification from you on this, Minister of Justice — is that you said your government needed more time to examine the report submitted by the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, a committee made up of members of the House of Commons and the Senate.

That report addresses at least five different subjects, including mental disorders. Are you saying that the delay you are asking for, the one-year extension before this part of the law comes into force, will enable the government to examine just the part of the special joint committee's report that deals with mental disorders or will you also consider the issue of mature minors and other subjects? Do you think one year is enough? Could you specify how long the government needs to review the report? Are you talking about the time required to examine only what the report has to say about mental illness and MAID?

Mr. Lametti: Thank you for the question. The report we just received from the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying did cover several subjects. The one-year extension we're requesting would be used to study just the issue of mental disorders. Of course, we will also consider the report and its recommendations. As for the other subjects, there will be well-established processes. The government will provide a formal response to the report, and after discussions, all that could lead to other steps.

• (1550)

I know that many people in this chamber, in the other place and in Canadian society would like advance directives to be available for such cases. The vast majority of Canadians would like to have access to advance directives, and that subject was mentioned in the report and addressed in the Quebec bill as well.

We will —

The Chair: Minister, we need to move on to Senator Boyer's questions.

[*English*]

Senator Boyer: Thank you, ministers, for being here. During the Senate's pre-study and study of Bill C-7, as a member of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, it was important to me to ensure our studies considered the viewpoints of First Nations, Métis and Inuit witnesses. It's imperative that we do not forget what those witnesses told us.

How will Bill C-39 and the delay it creates be used to specifically address the community concerns around the inadequate provisions of culturally appropriate mental health resources and supports for Indigenous peoples, especially those with a disability?

Mr. Duclos: Thank you for the question.

You're entirely correct. Not only is mental health care inappropriately and, in some cases, unsafely and culturally inappropriately provided in many Indigenous communities, but mental health care is as well. There is a mental health care crisis in many Indigenous communities, impacting Indigenous peoples.

That is why, through Minister Hajdu's department and with my assistance and the assistance of Minister Bennett, we are going to invest significantly more in supporting the mental health and the mental health care of Indigenous peoples, in part through the announcement that the Prime Minister made a few weeks ago, which was the \$2-billion additional investment in an Indigenous health equity fund. That will be directly supportive of the abilities and capabilities of Indigenous communities to invest directly, as they wish, in the mental health and care of their people.

The needs are immense and the traumas are significant, so we need to be there to support Indigenous peoples.

Senator Boyer: Thank you, minister.

I will pass to Senator Woo.

Senator Woo: Thank you, ministers, for your presence in our chamber today.

I would like to go back to the question of irremediability, which is the triggering criterion for MAID. As far as I can tell, and I think you have confirmed it, there is no consensus in the medical community on the irremediability of mental illness. That means each request for MD-SUMC will have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Regardless of the protocols being developed during this period of hiatus, that effectively means individuals with mental illness who seek MAID will gravitate to assessors who are inclined to agree that their condition is irremediable. Indeed, it is likely that all MAID assessors will be predisposed to the view that some mental illnesses are, in fact, irremediable because they wouldn't be assessors otherwise.

What scope is there in the law for medical professionals who have knowledge of the patient but who are not part of the MAID assessment team to intervene in a MAID request because it is their professional opinion that the mental illness in question is not, in fact, irremediable?

Mr. Lametti: I will speak generally to the safeguard before asking Minister Duclos.

In the so-called track 2, a second opinion is required from somebody not on the medical team or who is not giving care to the patient. That is there as a specific safeguard, and the expert report has elaborated on that.

I'm confident, again, that this will be a small number of cases requested in the grand scheme of things and an even smaller number of cases actually accepted for MAID. Perhaps Minister Duclos will add to that.

Mr. Duclos: I have a list of eligibility mechanism criteria for MAID in front of me. I summarized some of them earlier when I spoke about irreversibility, irremediability and incurability, but the criteria are strict. As mentioned, they involve that the request should not be the result of external pressure; that it has to be informed consent, before and during the process; the requesters have to have a serious and incurable illness, be at an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability and of enduring intolerable physical or psychological suffering that cannot be alleviated under conditions the person considers acceptable; and then there are a strong number of safeguards for the process itself — a number of independent doctors and nurse practitioners, complemented by others, if they are not sufficiently well prepared or equipped to handle the request appropriately, with all sorts of other safeguards and mechanisms that, as you said, are there to protect vulnerable Canadians in a manner that is under the Criminal Code.

This is not a light matter for assessors and practitioners.

The Chair: We have 30 seconds remaining.

Senator Woo: What if the dissenting voice is a recognized medical professional who knows the patient but is not part of the assessment team or even part of the second opinion that is mandatory under the rules? Does that person have any standing to intervene in the MAID request?

Mr. Duclos: That is all part of the fundamental criteria to be able to have access to MAID. It is under very —

The Chair: I must interrupt you, minister.

We have two minutes left for a question and answer.

Senator McCallum: I'm going to ask that this be done in writing, since I don't think they will have time.

Indigenous peoples have high rates of disability, mental illness, premature mortality and morbidity tied to intergenerational trauma and government policies that do not favour them. There is a different form of suffering that occurs when you're scared of being offered death after generations of genocide.

Current evidence suggests we cannot predict when someone with mental illness will not recover; most do with the right care. Further, we are failing to provide timely care and supports, which can impact decisions to die, as we are already hearing about in cases of people and as I have heard from many people.

The message that death can be a solution to suffering from mental illness seems to fly in the face of suicide prevention efforts, and the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention has been vocal about those concerns.

While I welcome a one-year pause, what will really change in one year if there is no room for reconsideration of the actual issues at hand for marginalized groups?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Minister, the senator asked that you respond in writing, so I would ask that you respond to this question in writing.

Honourable senators, the committee has been sitting for 65 minutes. In conformity with the order of the Senate, I am obliged to interrupt proceedings so that the committee can report to the Senate.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, the Committee of the Whole, authorized by the Senate to examine the subject matter of Bill C-39, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), reports that it has heard from the said witnesses.

(At 4 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on September 21, 2022, the Senate adjourned until 2 p.m., tomorrow.)

APPENDIX

**Address
of
Her Excellency Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
to Both Houses of Parliament
in the
House of Commons Chamber,
Ottawa
on Tuesday, March 7, 2023**

Her Excellency Ursula von der Leyen was welcomed by the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, by the Honourable George J. Furey, Speaker of the Senate, and by the Honourable Anthony Rota, Speaker of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

Hon. Anthony Rota (Speaker of the House of Commons): Your Excellency President von der Leyen, Prime Minister, Speaker Furey, party leaders, parliamentarians and honoured guests, let me welcome you to this extraordinary event.

[English]

It is a day marked by firsts: the first official visit by President von der Leyen to Canada; Her Excellency's first address to Canada's Parliament; and, on the eve of International Women's Day, an address by the first woman president of the European Commission. As Speaker of the House of Commons, I have had the great honour, Madam President, to be among the first to welcome you to Canada's Parliament.

[Translation]

I would now like to invite the Right Honourable Prime Minister to speak.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, parliamentarians, dear friends and colleagues, thank you for being here this evening for this very special moment in time.

[English]

It is my honour to welcome the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to address our Parliament.

Almost a year ago, I addressed the European Parliament in Brussels, and it is our profound privilege to host you here at the seat of our government in Ottawa tonight. It is a testament to how deep and strong the bonds between Canada and Europe have become.

[Translation]

In March of last year, I addressed the European Parliament. It was a few weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine, disrupting international stability.

Vladimir Putin started a war in Europe on a scale not seen since the end of the Second World War. He thought the world was divided. He thought his invasion would weaken the European Union, NATO and ties among the world's democratic friends and allies. A year on, we can see just how wrong he was.

[English]

President von der Leyen, you are here as an inspirational leader who has been central to galvanizing support for Ukraine and its people, not only across Europe but around the world. You are a defender of democracy, of freedom and of peace. You are dedicated to helping the most vulnerable. You embody the values we cherish as Canadians, and our government and all Canadians are proud to call you a friend.

As the Speaker pointed out, tomorrow is International Women's Day. It bears pointing out that President von der Leyen is only the sixth woman to address Canadian Parliament like this and the first woman elected to be President of the European Commission. She is one of many women around the world who have become the face of resistance to autocracy. These are women like Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who just yesterday was sentenced in exile to 15 years in prison, or the women of Iran, from schoolgirls to grandmothers, who took to the streets demanding to live their lives free of persecution. They started a movement that has resonated around the world, with the rallying cry of "*Zan, Zendegi, Azadi*", or "Women, Life, Liberty".

With women around the world facing threats to their right to choose, it is more important than ever that their voices ring loudly from every corner of society, because when women have strong voices and hold positions of leadership, it makes our democracies stronger. The world is facing challenges, and we need strong, principled and responsible leadership from people of all backgrounds, so thank you, Ursula, not just for being a strong example of that leadership, but also for putting forward policies, decisions and solutions that are empowering important voices across Europe and around the world.

[Translation]

Together, we will build a better future and grow a resilient economy that is focused on the well-being of all Canadians and Europeans. We will build a future fuelled by clean energy and clean growth, a future where Canada's critical minerals provide the foundation for clean technologies around the world, a future where we fight climate change and create good jobs for the middle class on both sides of the Atlantic.

In 2017, it was here in the House of Commons that the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement was ratified. In just five years, trade between Canada and the European Union has gone up by two thirds.

[English]

The partnership between Canada and the EU is stronger than ever. It is built on our shared belief in gender equality, in human rights, in international law, in a strong and growing middle class

and in growth that creates opportunities for everyone. Fundamentally, it is built on a belief in strong and lasting democratic institutions like the one we are in today.

Without further delay, I am pleased and honoured to welcome President von der Leyen for her joint address to Parliament.

Her Excellency Ursula von der Leyen (President of the European Commission): Prime Minister, dear Justin; Mr. Speaker of the Senate; Mr. Speaker of the House; Excellencies; senators; members of the House of Commons; distinguished guests; people of Canada, thank you very much for welcoming me to the heart of Canada, the home of Canadian democracy.

They say that hard times reveal true friends. This is what the European Union and Canada are, true friends. The histories of our democracies are tied together. So many Canadians have their family roots in Europe. Many of your parents and grandparents fought in Europe during two world wars. They were sent to faraway places on the other side of the ocean. Tens of thousands of them lost their lives in the trenches of Belgium, in the heat of Sicily and on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day.

I am a European of German nationality. It was German Nazism and fascism that brought death and destruction upon Europe and the world, but it was allied forces who brought liberty back to all of us. The united democracies freed us from dictatorship. Thus, we owe our democracy also to you, the people of Canada, and we will be forever grateful for the sacrifices your parents and grandparents made and for the invaluable gift of freedom.

Today, almost 80 years after the end of World War II, the values of freedom and democracy are still a strong bridge between the two shores of the Atlantic. You, the people of Canada, have built this country as a community that is open to all, beyond ethnicity, language or religion, a true community of values. It is the same spirit that brings us Europeans together: 27 proud countries and 24 official languages in one union of almost half a billion people, the European Union. Today, we are a community of values and together we are a community of destiny.

The more painful it is that the very values that unite us are challenged today like never before. One year ago, Russia sent tanks, drones and missiles over the borders and against a sovereign and peaceful country. Since then, countless lives have been shattered and countless families separated. Hundreds of thousands of young Ukrainians had to kiss their loved ones goodbye as they left to go to the front to fight for freedom. Millions more had to leave not only their homes but also their dreams behind.

All of this is because President Putin refuses to recognize their freedom and their independence. This we can simply not accept. We will never accept that a military power with fantasies of empire rolls its tanks across an international border.

We will never accept that Putin denies the very existence of Ukraine as a state and as a nation. We will never accept this threat to European security and to the very foundation of our international community. I know that Canada's commitment is just as adamant as ours.

Canada and the European Union will uphold the UN Charter. We will stand up for Ukraine to be the master of their own future. Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine. We will keep supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Canada has a very special connection to Ukraine. Many proud Canadians are also very proud of their Ukrainian heritage. You understood the gravity of events in Ukraine before many others, including many Europeans.

In 2014, Putin invaded Ukraine for the first time. Already back then, Canada decided to set up a training mission for the Ukrainian military. Operation Unifier has trained over 35,000 Ukrainian soldiers. This has proven to be vital in the hours that followed the full-scale Russian invasion of last year.

Putin believed that he would get Kyiv within three days. What a strategic mistake. Ukraine's resistance has stunned the world. That was primarily, of course, because of the courage of the Ukrainian people, but it was also, and crucially, because of the professionalism of the Ukrainian soldiers, many trained by Canada. I cannot overstate this: Canada saved Ukraine in the first days. I want to thank everyone involved in Operation Unifier for your amazing service.

Canada's response to the war in Ukraine has gone above and beyond the call of duty. I am so grateful, dear Justin, for your constant, close co-operation during this year. Everything we did for Ukraine, we did it together, because we believe that Ukraine and the values that it strives for must prevail in this war.

First, we believe that Ukraine deserves our steadfast military and economic support. The support package that Europe has put together, worth almost \$100 billion Canadian, is unprecedented in living memory. Canada is also contributing well beyond its fair share. Now European military trainers are working side by side with Canadian trainers.

Second, we believe that Russia must pay for its crime of aggression. Our sanctions have been closely aligned since day one of the invasion, and now, because of our common price cap on oil, Russian proceeds from crude oil and petroleum products have plunged by 48% in February from a year ago.

Third, we believe that Ukrainians must be the masters of their own future. They have a right to choose their association, and Ukraine has made its choice. They want to be a member of the European Union, but Putin wants to force Ukraine to be part of Russia.

He has achieved exactly the opposite. Today, Ukraine is a candidate country to join the European Union, and Europe is leading the effort to help Ukraine rebuild the country. Canada is a key partner for this, focusing not only on infrastructure but also on healing the physical and mental wounds of Ukrainian victims. We cannot ease their pain and suffering, but we can ease their healing, and I thank you for that.

This is what it means that Europe and Canada are like-minded partners. We share the same purpose, the same belief, and this is true not only for our governments but also for our people.

Think about the way Canadians and Europeans welcomed Ukrainian refugees. When Ukrainian refugees knocked on our door, Europeans and Canadians did not hesitate for one moment. Today, four million Ukrainians live and work inside our union. The people of Europe have opened their hearts and their homes and the same is true for the people of Canada. You are now hosting more than 165,000 Ukrainians, an incredible amount for a country on the other side of the ocean.

Beyond the numbers are the stories, your stories, stories of heart-wrenching separation, dangerous flights to safety and, finally, a warm embrace here in Canada. I know that some of you are with us today in the gallery, so please join me in honouring all of them, all of the Canadians who make this country a country of solidarity and hope.

[*Translation*]

Ladies and gentlemen, the war has also brought Canada and Europe closer for another reason. Before the invasion, Europe was heavily dependent on Russian gas, something which Putin tried to use to blackmail us.

Russia cut its gas supply to Europe by 80% in eight months, sending energy prices in Europe soaring. Last summer, our energy bills rose by 300%.

However, Putin's blackmail was unsuccessful. We replaced the shortfall in Russian gas by increasing imports from reliable suppliers. Canada played an important role by increasing its liquefied natural gas production.

We have since increased our energy efficiency, reducing our consumption by 20%. Most important of all, we have invested massively in renewables. These are clean, generated locally and offer us independence.

However, our work does not end there. As renewable energy is the future, our partnership with Canada is crucial for speeding up the transition to clean energy. Canada and Europe are world leaders in the fight against climate change. We have written our climate targets into law. We have set carbon prices, and we have proven that it is possible to grow the economy and reduce emissions.

New challenges await us, however. The global race for clean technology is on. There is growing competition to attract investment and to control the most important links in key supply chains. In this more competitive environment, Canada and Europe must be on the same side. These vital chains must not be controlled by autocratic regimes.

We Europeans learned this the hard way. Democracies must work together to keep risks at bay. It is a matter of national security but also of being true to our values. Take raw materials. Canada is a natural partner for us due to the minerals you exploit and also because of how you exploit them. Environmental protection, workers' rights — these are important to us

Europeans. We want local, indigenous communities to benefit from our investments, and this is exactly what is happening in Canada.

When it comes to values, Canada and Europe speak the same language. Let us therefore join forces for the climate, for our economies and to end our dangerous dependencies.

[*English*]

Ladies and gentlemen, after the two world wars, the world declared that all human beings are entitled to equal and inalienable rights, but today some powers are explicitly trying to destroy this basic principle.

I was in Bucha right after its liberation by Ukraine's army. I saw the body bags lined up by the side of the street. I heard the stories of rape, of executions in cold blood carried out by Russian troops, and Russia continues to commit atrocities, bombing civilians, striking the most vulnerable. The United Nations says Russia is using rape and sexual violence as part of its military strategy in Ukraine. This is not only a war on Ukraine; it is also a war on human rights, and it is a war on women's rights.

But Ukrainian women are fighting back. They have been fighting back ever since 2014. When the first Russian invasion happened, women were not allowed to carry out combat duties, but they did not care and they started joining the army.

Let me quote Lieutenant-Colonel Melanie Lake of the Canadian Armed Forces, who led Operation Unifier and is with us here today. She said, "Ukrainian women did not wait for doors to be open for them to serve in all capacities. They broke the doors down." These women also smashed a glass ceiling right over the head of the Russian invaders.

Since the start of the war, the number of women serving in the military has more than doubled. However, it is not just about women in the army. Millions of Ukrainian women are standing up for their children's future and freedom. One Ukrainian woman above all has become a global symbol: the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska. She stayed in Kyiv in the darkest hours. Together with her husband, she is emblematic of the courage of the Ukrainian people. I saw her in action on the global stage as an advocate for her people, especially those most vulnerable; she was an unbreakable force for good.

These women are an inspiration for all of us. I want to honour them on the eve of International Women's Day.

At war or in peace, we need all our talents to live up to the big challenges of our time. Canada knows this well. Eight years ago, when asked why he appointed a gender-equal cabinet, Prime Minister Trudeau replied, "Because it is 2015." As simple as that.

I am proud to lead the first gender-balanced college in the history of the European Commission. Before the end of my mandate, 50% of all managers of the European Commission will be women. Like Canada, Europe knows that men and women bring different perspectives. Diversity leads to better decisions and better societies.

Gender equality does not just happen, not even because it is 2023. It requires day-to-day attention and commitment to ensure that women and girls can be free from violence, to ensure that women earn as much as their male colleagues because they deserve it, to ensure that women as well as men can have a career and a family and to ensure that women can reach the very top levels because they are qualified. We have a duty to set an example to society and the economy of what a world of fair chances looks like, and this duty counts every day, not just on International Women's Day.

My dear friends in this august House, no democracy is perfect, but all democracies are perfectible. This is our mission, and this is what brings us together. It is the mission that has moved generation upon generation of great Canadians and Europeans.

They had the audacity to look beyond the imperfection of what is and to see the beauty of what could be, the generations that brought Europe together after two world wars and after the fall of the Soviet Union and the generations that made Canada the inclusive and welcoming country it is today, a country that is proud of its heritage and open to the future, the home of indigenous people, as well as newcomers, a place of traditions and innovation, where it does not matter who you are, how you pray and who you love, Canada, where you can make the most of your life and the best of your community.

This is also my vision of Europe. This is what I work for every single day, so Canada and Europe, let us walk this path together.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Madam President.

[English]

Now I invite the Hon. George Furey, Speaker of the Senate, to say a few words.

Hon. George J. Furey (Speaker of the Senate): President von der Leyen, Prime Minister Trudeau, Speaker Rota, fellow parliamentarians, members of the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen.

[Translation]

On behalf of all parliamentarians and invited guests in the House, it is my honour, Your Excellency, to thank you for your visit and your address to the Parliament of Canada. Your remarks made it clear that you are a great friend of Canada.

[English]

It is fitting that you are here today, Madam President, following President Zelenskyy's address to this House a little under one year ago. Your words today remind us of the depth of our shared values and of the importance of defending them.

With war tragically having returned to Europe following Russia's barbaric and illegal invasion of Ukraine, protecting the values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law is now more important than ever. They are the values that we must never take for granted. They are the values that Ukrainians have found themselves fighting for each and every day.

In recent years, the world has witnessed a rise in protectionism and populism that threatens to undermine the rule-based world order and indeed erodes the fundamental values of democracy itself.

Madam President, I know I speak on behalf of all Canadians when I say that we value your strong leadership and your outspoken support of Ukraine as it defends itself against Russian aggression. You have demonstrated that your response to this crisis has been guided by the principles of democracy and respect for human rights. Madam President, we applaud your efforts in every way in this regard.

Indeed, it is these very principles that make Canada and Europe an integral part of the global family of democracies. Canada and the European Union have a common vision for meeting our collective long-term challenges, and we stand together in defending peace, territorial integrity and the rule of law. And though these are troubling times, these are also times when people look to great leaders, such as you, Madam President, for your hope and for your courage.

In your state of the union address to the European Parliament last fall, you invoked the inspiring words of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II when she said, at the height of the pandemic, "We will succeed — and that success will belong to every one of us." Reflecting on those words, you added a very thoughtful insight when you said, "our future is built on new ideas and founded in our oldest values." Your words resonate now, Madam President, more than ever before.

As well, on this eve of International Women's Day, I wish to take a moment to acknowledge the vital role that women play in shaping our societies and our economies. Canada and Europe must continue to lead the way in promoting gender equality by ensuring access to education, health care and economic opportunities.

In closing, I would once again highlight the importance of the Canada-Europe partnership and reaffirm our shared commitment to peace and prosperity around the world.

Thank you, Madam President, for sharing with us your vision for the road ahead. Please be assured of the solidarity of the people of Canada as you continue on this most important journey.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Speaker Furey.

Madam President, thank you for your address. Your leadership inspires us all. Throughout your remarkable career, you have worked tirelessly to defend human rights, to ensure equal opportunities and to strengthen peace, international security, democracy and the rule of law.

These efforts have further enhanced the European Union's reputation as a beacon of hope for stability and equality.

[*English*]

These values which Canada shares provide the foundation for dynamic economic growth that will steadily move the European Union and Canada towards a better future for our nations and our planet.

The European Union and Canada have a long history of friendship, and for many of us, including me, family ties that bring us even closer together. In a world where differences lead

to conflict, Canada and the European Union stand together on common ground; together in support for Ukraine; together our efforts to build a better, more prosperous future; and together always to defend and strengthen democracy.

[*Translation*]

As I said, it is a remarkable achievement to be the pioneer that you are, Madam President. I have no doubt that your words and actions throughout your career will be an inspiration to those who follow in your footsteps.

[*English*]

Thank you for being here today and thank you for your address. Thank you also to all the parliamentarians and distinguished guests who attended this historic address to Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Many thanks to you all.

[*Applause*]

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