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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, May 4, 2023

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Hon. Sharon Burey: Dear colleagues, today I rise to draw your attention to Children's Mental Health Week, May 1 to 7, 2023.

Mental health exists on a continuum. Talking about mental health or illness can be stressful because it is so close to home for so many of us. Approximately 1.2 million children and youth in Canada experience a mental health disorder, but fewer than 20% receive appropriate treatment. Early intervention and supports for children, youth and their parents result in significant net cost savings.

The pandemic laid bare the systemic cracks in our public health, social welfare and education systems. Pandemic-spurred investments in mental health services are encouraging, but we will need data and accountability measures.

I devoted my career to some of these very issues. The Mental Health Commission of Canada, which originated from this very body and the work of Senator Kirby — who produced the landmark report *Out of the Shadows at Last: Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada* — continues to provide recommendations and a path forward.

Children with neurodevelopmental, reading and learning challenges are especially vulnerable to mental health problems. That is why as a pediatric community leader, I joined with many other advocates, led by the Ontario Human Rights Commission's inquiry entitled *Right to Read*, to advocate for evidence-based, structured literacy interventions in all Ontario schools. This will reduce the development of mental health problems. This is now part of Ontario's language curriculum. Sadly, this is not the case in every province. We have work to do.

We must reckon with how social policies and racism affect lifelong physical, mental, economic and justice outcomes, and how developing resilience and promoting resilient, safe and nurturing environments will make Canada a place where we can all succeed.

My message to children and young people: We need you. Canada needs you, your ideas, your creativity and your innovation. You are 100% of our future. Thank you.

BATTLE OF HILL 187

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): The Korean War saw more than 26,000 Canadian volunteers cross the Pacific Ocean to the Korean peninsula to protect the people of South Korea. For those brave men who would perish in combat, roughly 5% would come from one of the bloodiest battles for Canadians during the war, the Battle of Hill 187.

Hill 187 would witness the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment's heroic actions to hold their position while faced with a numerically superior force of Chinese assault troops determined to retake the hill. The battle would be one of the last engagements of the war.

Today, the battle is mostly forgotten — a tragedy considering the cost it took to hold Hill 187.

Within a few weeks of landing in South Korea, the 3rd Battalion, under Lieutenant-Colonel K.L. Campbell, would be tested by the enemy. On the evening of May 2, 1953, Lieutenant Gerard Meynell was out on patrol with his unit when they were suddenly under attack. He would be killed, along with half of his men being killed or wounded. The survivors retreated to their position just as the Chinese Advance Guard came upon the Canadians' position.

Throughout the night and into the next day, the Chinese would throw wave after wave of men at the 3rd Battalion, all while under a constant barrage of artillery fire. As ammunition supplies ran low, Canadians were forced to fight in hand-to-hand combat in a desperate bid to hold their position. At one critical point in the chaotic melee, Lieutenant Ed Hollyer would call down artillery on his own position as over 800 Chinese assault troops threatened to overrun his position.

The late Don Sudden, a cherished friend and a hero of the Korean War, had volunteered to serve overseas and would find himself at the Battle of Hill 187 serving as a front-line gunner.

The regiment would do its duty and hold the hill, but it came at a cost of 26 Canadians dead, 27 wounded and 7 taken prisoner. For the soldiers at Hill 187, two Military Crosses, three military medals and five Mention in Dispatches were awarded.

When the battle was over, little press about it made it home to Canada, and only eight weeks later, on July 27, 1953, the armistice ending the hostilities would be signed.

Honourable senators, as veterans like Don Sudden are leaving us, it is more important than ever that we recognize and remember the sacrifices they made to ensure that we never forget the Canadian sacrifice and contributions to the preservation of peace and stability in South Korea. We will remember them.

• (1410)

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Tomasz Grodzki, Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland. He is accompanied by His Excellency Witold Dzielski, Ambassador of Poland to Canada, and a delegation from the Senate of Poland.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, yesterday, May 3, was the thirtieth anniversary of World Press Freedom Day. To mark it, a number of other Parliamentarians and I attended the annual press freedom day luncheon, where we had the pleasure of hearing important words from journalists and news executives about online harassment facing women and marginalized journalists.

I must say, though, that I use the word “pleasure” advisedly, given the stresses, bullying and intimidation our colleagues in the media are currently facing. As many are aware, online harassment and threats against journalists have reached an all-time high in this country, with many members of the press enduring regular hatred, racism, sexism, misogyny and other abusive messaging. Some have even been physically attacked and blackmailed with threats of violence against their families.

This unacceptable behaviour takes place despite the fact that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees freedom of the press. We all know what takes place in nations that don’t have protections such as those that the charter provides.

Ideally, all should engage in respectful dialogue online and in person with the news and members of the media. We should and we can do better because an attack on press freedom in this country is an attack on our right to know.

According to Reporters Without Borders, a new world record of 533 journalists were detained in 2022, 57 were killed, 65 were held hostage and 49 are still missing. Our thoughts are with American reporter Evan Gershkovich, who has been imprisoned in Russia since late March for doing his job to bring news to the world out of an authoritarian state.

These abuses are taking place as news organizations struggle with how to cope with challenges brought about by the ever-evolving digital world. At a time when we need them most, we see more and more outlets forced to close or cut back on staff.

The protection of press freedom in our country is in large part dependent on a strong media infrastructure supporting a wide array of practitioners of the craft. We need more voices, not fewer.

In closing, I wish to thank Canadian journalists and journalists around the world for their hard work and dedication to truth, transparency and accountability. Press freedom is a bedrock of our democracy and needs to be protected.

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 students from the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School at the University of Toronto. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Omidvar.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

AUTISM SPEAKS CANADA

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, while we may have drawn the curtain on the month of autism awareness — or as it is now becoming known, Autism Acceptance Month — the challenges for autistic Canadians and the work to meet those challenges continue throughout the year.

I mentioned the change from awareness to acceptance in the designation of the month of April, and that’s a very importance distinction, as we learned during our study on Bill S-203.

While the word “autism” has become almost commonplace in our vernacular, the understanding of what it means to be autistic and what autistic people are capable of — and capable of contributing to the world around them — remains a challenge. That’s where organizations like Autism Speaks Canada, or ASC, and so many others come in.

Last Sunday, I had the pleasure of attending a morning with Autism Speaks Canada in Toronto, an event highlighting some of the good work being done by ASC and its partners.

One of their guiding principles is enhancing lives today and accelerating solutions for tomorrow. One of the main objectives of that work is building an inclusive Canada where autistic people can reach their full potential.

Autism Speaks Canada is committed to listening and learning from the autistic community and is proud to hold the highest share of voice among autism organizations and is ranked as the most well-liked brand in the non-profit space in Canada.

I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate them on that and to thank them for all they do.

I especially want to thank Executive Director Jill Farber for her relentless efforts and unwavering dedication to autistic Canadians and their families.

I also want to thank Neil Forester and his business partner Xavier Pinto, who head up a jobs fair called Spectrum Works. Neil first approached me last year after he saw a news story about Bill S-203. He reached out to my office to tell me about this incredible project in which they match autistic Canadians with employers.

This job fair started as a small in-person event, but due to the pandemic, of course, they were forced online. Now they're looking at returning to in-person events as well as online and to grow it to a much larger scale.

It's an incredible and vital initiative but it can't always be up to organizations like Autism Speaks Canada or individuals like Neil and Xavier to spearhead these efforts. They need commitments from government, corporate Canada and people of all walks of life.

Finally, I want to recognize the two most special people I had the pleasure of meeting on Sunday: Arjun Goenka, the National Team Up Ambassador, and a young man who spoke about his love for running; and a little girl named Faith Abraham, the Toronto Walk Ambassador, who stole everyone's heart at this particular event.

It's these individuals who inspire me to keep advocating for an inclusive Canada where all parts are united in one voice and one team in building up this great country. Thank you, colleagues.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Ousmanou Ngam and Anaïs Astrid Bytha. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Gerba.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Hon. Gwen Boniface: Honourable senators, I rise today to acknowledge May as the month that recognizes both Mental Health Week and National Police Week. Issues of mental health crisis make up as many as 40% of the calls for police assistance, a significant increase in the last decade.

The social services available to assist people experiencing a mental health crisis have failed to keep up despite the very good intentions of workers. It creates a revolving door of police calls with little assistance and few solutions for those who suffer.

In the police community, they too have been affected. Mental health issues resulting from trauma that they and their fellow first responders experience at work have had a devastating effect on officers right across the country.

An Ombudsman Ontario report found that police officers are more likely to die from suicide than a violent crime. In a study of two Canadian police departments, 88% of police officers reported moderate to severe anxiety. In some services and circumstances in my province of Ontario, 20% of police officers are off work because of mental illness, according to a report by the Chief Coroner.

As these facts move from the shadows to the light, I am grateful for officers who have endured the trauma, advocated relentlessly and succeeded in bringing awareness and resources to their fellow officers.

One such officer joins us today. Retired OPP Constable Dave Blair has volunteered and worked tirelessly to raise awareness and seek assistance for police officers and first responders who suffer from the cumulative effects of PTSD and moral injury. He was instrumental in bringing a California program to Ontario.

He and many fellow peer supporters continue to work hard to support those in need of a path of recovery.

Honourable senators, there is a drastic reduction in applicants to police services. Police services are, in turn, experiencing serious staff shortages which further exacerbate the situation: too many calls involving trauma, and too few people available to respond.

This weekend in Toronto, the Ontario Police Memorial will add the names of four officers who have died in the line of duty this year: Constable Northrup, Constable Russell, Constable Hong and Constable Pierzchala.

For those officers who responded to assist after those calls and suffer today, may they have all the support they need. In the police business, you cannot unhear what you have heard, unsee what you have seen or undo what has been done. May their journey forward take them into the light and not into the shadows. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

• (1420)

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dave Blair, a retired constable of the Ontario Provincial Police. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Boniface.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AT THE FRONT STAGE OF CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY—NOTICE OF MOTION TO PLACE TWENTY-SIXTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED DURING THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT ON THE ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the twenty-sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade entitled *Cultural Diplomacy at the Front Stage of Canada's Foreign Policy*, tabled in the Senate on June 11, 2019, during the First Session of the Forty-second Parliament, be placed on the Orders of the Day under the rubric Other Business, Reports of Committees – Other, for consideration at the next sitting.

QUESTION PERIOD

PUBLIC SAFETY

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, today I'm going to return to your response yesterday about foreign interference, as well as your comments about respect.

The official opposition has nothing but respect for this institution. It's the Prime Minister and his incompetent government that we don't have respect for. We have the highest respect for this institution.

When we asked the government questions regarding what even Liberal Warren Kinsella says is the biggest scandal in the Trudeau era, and you, leader, refuse to answer the questions because you don't like them, that is a lack of respect for this institution.

Cherie Henderson, a Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, assistant director, told the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on February 9, 2023:

I can say that we definitely have seen specific cases of hostile activities of states against politicians. In those specific cases, we definitely brief our government on the challenges that are being faced.

Leader, this is the opposite of what the Prime Minister said and, indeed, what you said yesterday. Who, leader, is telling the truth?

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

As I stated yesterday, the Prime Minister stated clearly and categorically that he was not briefed by CSIS with regard to the coercion threatened against the family of member of Parliament Michael Chong; the Prime Minister said it clearly and definitively. He said that he learned about it from *The Globe and Mail* story, and that is what the Prime Minister has said to all Canadians — I believe his words stand for themselves and should be taken as true.

Senator Plett: Well, leader, both comments cannot be true. CSIS said that they brief the government on specific threats against parliamentarians by foreign governments, but you and the Prime Minister say that they don't. I don't know how anyone can square those answers. You are saying one thing; they are saying something else.

Leader, yesterday I asked you if any other parliamentarians or their families were subject to threats. This same question was posed by members of every other party during the House of Commons Question Period yesterday, and they received no answer.

Leader, you may not like the questions. You might even think it is beneath you to answer them, but it is, in fact, my job to hold the government to account, and it is your job to find answers to our questions.

Threats made by agents of foreign governments against parliamentarians and their families is a very serious matter, government leader, and if the Trudeau government cannot answer this question by now, it is, indeed, truly incompetent.

Once again, are there any other parliamentarians or their families under threat — yes or no?

Senator Gold: I have answered every question that you've asked me. You may not like my answers, and sometimes I don't have the answers — and I say so in a spirit of honesty and integrity.

I will repeat this again: I am not aware of, and I have not been made aware of, any other threats, as was also stated yesterday.

Senator Plett, with regard to your assertion that the two statements cannot live together, you will forgive me for being slightly pedagogical in this chamber, but the reference to the CSIS statement was "Any time we receive threats against MPs, we brief the Prime Minister." And unless I misunderstand your assertion — I don't have the transcript to which you were referring — there was not a mention of this particular challenge.

The Prime Minister's answer was with regard to the actions ostensibly taken — or threatened — against the family of Mr. Chong in Hong Kong; that answer was given clearly, and I repeat it here.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu: Senator Gold, on April 29, we learned from Radio-Canada that your government plans to cut \$145 million in funding for the Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale in September.

I spoke to the managers of this network of women's shelters, and they told me that many shelters across the country will have to close their doors or drastically reduce the number of women they take in.

Senator Gold, given that the number of women who were murdered by an intimate partner rose by 20% in Canada between 2019 and 2022, do you think that this decision on the part of your government shows respect for women who are the victims of violence, yes or no?

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

Here is the government's position. The government does a lot in many areas to help women who are the victims of family and intimate partner violence and also to ensure, through bills, that victims' rights are better protected and respected. That includes the measures set out in Bill S-12, which we are going to debate and examine more closely as of next week.

The budgetary decisions that a government has to make to address the many demands and challenges it is facing have nothing to do with this government's respect for and commitment toward victims of violence.

Senator Boisvenu: Senator Gold, not only does your government plan to cut \$145 million in funding this September, but it is also passing legislation that puts women's safety at risk by allowing abusers to be in close proximity to their victims. I am referring to Bill C-5, which was passed.

Will your government commit to cancelling the \$145-million budget cut planned for this September, yes or no?

• (1430)

Senator Gold: I'm not in a position to answer that specific question, but I'll make inquiries regarding the government's intentions in the days and weeks ahead. I will get back to you with an answer shortly.

[English]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DATA

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Senator Gold, alarms are being sounded globally about the hugely potential disruptive — and not in a good way — impacts of generative artificial intelligence, or AI, on the health of individuals and populations, democratic processes and institutions, work and economic development, arts and culture and pretty much every aspect of human behaviour. This does not even contemplate the damage that can be realized if so-called poison data spills into the AI universe. If the disinformation deluge we see in current social media is an example, we should be prepared to see this in AI as well.

My question is this: In the face of activities under way in the United States, which include an AI Bill of Rights and an Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework that reports directly to the White House, and while Bill C-27 awaits committee study in the other place, what is the Canadian government doing now to manage the impact of AI here in Canada?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. AI technology has enormous potential but also enormous risk, and must be used responsibly and regulated appropriately.

With regard to one aspect of your question, Minister Champagne is already actively engaged with leading experts in the field as well as with counterparts in other jurisdictions. Among many aspects of this, Canadians have to have confidence that the regulation is appropriate and that their data and privacy is being respected.

You referred, senator, to Bill C-27. This is an important piece — not the only piece, but an important piece — in addressing the challenges that AI technology poses. This will ensure that Canadians have first-class privacy and data protection and that companies respect those rules, otherwise facing consequences. On the matter of AI, this bill will also put in guardrails to ensure that AI is built and deployed responsibly as well as provide penalties for non-compliance.

Senator Kutcher: Senator Gold, I understand that Japan has created a national advisory committee on AI and that other countries are becoming engaged in learning how to better understand and proactively engage with AI. Japan is chairing the upcoming G7 meeting. Is this issue on that agenda? What other international engagement with like-minded countries is Canada involved with on this file?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the supplementary question. Minister Champagne recently convened an emergency meeting of Canada's Advisory Council on Artificial Intelligence, specifically on the issue of generative AI, to gather expert opinion on paths forward so we can assure Canadians that their use of AI will be done responsibly.

In addition, the government is engaged with G7 partners to ensure that high-risk regulation of AI moves forward. The government is also in discussions with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, and Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence, or GPAI, on artificial intelligence. Indeed, as I alluded to earlier in my response, Minister Champagne is meeting directly with international partners, including Japan, to coordinate on the international responsible regulation of artificial intelligence.

TRANSPORT

MARINE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Senator Gold, since July of 2012, Transport Canada has made it mandatory for vessels of 300 tons and above to report via the Arctic Canada Traffic Zone, or NORDREG, to the Canadian Coast Guard to improve our awareness of ships in Canadian waters to enhance maritime domain awareness. However, a March 8, 2023, letter from the Nunavut Association of Municipalities, or NAM, to former Joint Task Force North commander retired Colonel Pierre Leblanc stated, "... we continue to see more ship activities in northern waters, many unannounced." A 40% increase has been noted in recent years.

In a recent letter to me, Colonel Leblanc raised several reasons for lowering the tonnage requirement to 15 tonnes and above. These reasons include stopping illegal fishing, increased maritime domain awareness, responding to Inuit communities upset by super yachts arriving unannounced and so forth.

My question, Senator Gold, is this: Will your government consider lowering the reporting requirements to 15 tonnes in response to Inuit Nunavut municipalities and defence experts? It can be done by a stroke of the regulatory pen.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Patterson, for your question and for bringing this to my attention. I was not aware of the correspondence.

I would be happy to inquire on this matter, and then perhaps you and I could meet. You could brief me further so that my inquiries with the government will be that much more productive. If it would be helpful to arrange a meeting with the responsible ministry officials, you know my office is always happy to do that for you or for any other senator on a matter of this importance.

Senator D. Patterson: Thank you for that answer, Senator Gold. The sixth Auditor General of Canada flagged that the long-standing issues include incomplete surveillance and insufficient data about vessel traffic in Canada's Arctic waters.

The need for better Arctic surveillance was also echoed in the House of Commons National Defence Committee's April 2023 report *A Secure and Sovereign Arctic*.

Senator Gold, would you agree that, especially given the current geopolitical realities resulting from the Ukraine war and China's description of itself as a near-Arctic state, Canada should make better efforts to protect its Arctic and improve its maritime domain awareness overall?

Senator Gold: I certainly agree with the defence and protection of the Arctic and its people. It's an ecosystem, and our sovereignty over the Arctic is of fundamental importance. My understanding is — and I've announced it many times, so I'll be general here — that the Government of Canada has made serious investments on all of these fronts, whether it's strengthening NORAD or investing in equipment so that we can actually assert and protect our sovereignty even more.

Again, these are matters I'm happy to discuss with you further, but the government is seriously committed to this. Its investments and engagements both in terms of budgets and in terms of our relationship with the United States and allies is a testament to that engagement.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

CANADA POST

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

[English]

Senator Gold, the budget bill proposes to amend section 41 of the Canada Post Corporation Act. The amendment aims to ensure the constitutionality of inspections of Canada Post parcels by Canada Post inspectors. This is an amendment that will likely fix the problem raised by the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador last year in the Gorman decision.

However, the amendment does not authorize inspectors to open letters that are being delivered by Canada Post even if they have grounds to suspect the presence of dangerous products such as fentanyl. As I said before, traffickers of fentanyl use Canada Post letters as their preferred means of delivery.

Will the government consider amending Division 30 of the budget bill to allow for the inspection of letters by Canada Post inspectors who have reasonable grounds to suspect the presence of fentanyl?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator, for your question and for your engagement on this important issue. As you correctly pointed out, the amendment to which you refer was a direct response to a very specific issue, and, indeed, the amendment already reflects Canada Post's usual practice of only inspecting parcels if there's

reason to suspect prohibited material may be inside. In that regard, the amendment does not change the day-to-day practices, though it does respond to the issue of constitutionality.

That said, in the opinion of the government, a broader reform of how mail is handled and inspected requires careful study and likely more changes than simply one provision in the Budget Implementation Act.

In that regard, I would be very happy to facilitate a meeting between you and the minister to discuss this matter further. I'm just not aware at this juncture and at this stage in the legislative process as to whether your suggestion is one that can be entertained. But it certainly merits discussion. I'd be happy to facilitate that.

• (1440)

Senator Dalphond: Senator Gold, in 2017, Parliament passed Bill C-37, allowing Customs officers to open mail due to the problem of fentanyl imports from outside of Canada.

Don't you think the time has come for Canada Post inspectors to have the same power in connection with domestic letters?

Senator Gold: In my capacity as Government Representative, I can underline the logic of your proposition. I suggest that this is something I would need to discuss further. I would invite you to be part of those discussions.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

VISA APPLICATIONS

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Senator Gold, last Thursday I asked about the unacceptable wait time for visitor visas for Pakistan, which was 638 days. Yesterday, I heard from community members that it has gone up this week to 802 days — this is inhumane.

Leader, that means that family members have to wait for almost two years to be able to visit their loved ones. What is being done to reduce the wait time for visas?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The government has deployed significant efforts and resources to speed up the process, which is unacceptably long for far too many applicants and their families.

The government is processing these applications faster than it did before the pandemic; it's an average — plus or minus — of 200,000 per month over time. This was made possible by digitizing certain processes and hiring new employees.

The figures that you cite are of great concern. I will make further inquiries, senator. We all hope that the situation improves. I hope to have an answer in that regard soon.

Senator Atallahjan: Senator Gold, you talk about the process being faster, and it has been digitized; yet, between last Thursday and this Wednesday, the wait time has gone up to 802 days.

Senator Gold, I want to read to you one of the messages I received:

Why are we suffering the most? We are contributing to the workforce, paying taxes and yet no one is helping us. The Canadian United Arab Emirates visa office is the most painful visa office.

What do I say to this gentleman and others who feel abandoned by this Liberal government?

Senator Gold: Again, senator, I do appreciate your question, and, more importantly, I empathize with those who are waiting.

I have no way of explaining why the data points have changed over this time. I repeat my undertaking to try to find an answer as quickly as I can.

HEALTH

REGULATION OF VAPING FLUIDS

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

In June 2021, Health Canada made a proposal for regulatory changes to vaping flavours, and opened a consultation for input. In their press release, Health Canada noted:

Research shows that flavoured vaping products are highly appealing to youth, and that youth are especially susceptible to the negative effects of nicotine — including altered brain development, which can cause challenges with memory and concentration.

Data from the 2021 Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey shows that fruit flavours are the most used flavours among young people aged 15 to 19.

In a post published on March 12, 2023, Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada lamented:

More than 600 days after federal officials last gave any sign that they intend to finalize these regulations, it now seems prudent to conclude that the flavour ban has been left to die on the vine.

Senator Gold, has the federal government simply given up on banning flavoured vaping products?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The short answer is that I don't know the current status of this, and I will make inquiries.

One can happily celebrate the decrease, and it's a marked one, of people of all ages — but certainly young people — smoking or burning tobacco to inhale it. One should be — and is — concerned about the rise in nicotine-infused vape products, along with the addiction that inevitably entails.

I'll make inquiries, senator. I hope to have an answer as quickly as I can.

Senator Seidman: There's a lot of evidence to show that vaping is a gateway to smoking tobacco, burning tobacco and cigarettes. It is a cause for concern. We have some of the highest rates of vaping among youth in this country.

My supplementary is as follows: On Tuesday, Australia introduced reforms that toughen their already strict vaping law. The country has banned all disposable vapes. Prescriptions will be necessary for the vaping products that remain legal.

My home province — and your home province — of Quebec is also acting. In April, it followed Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and the Northwest Territories in banning flavoured vaping products.

Senator Gold, youth vaping rates doubled between 2017 and 2019. The government has the data, and now it needs to act. When — specifically — will the government finally act to ban flavoured vaping products?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the additional information. My answer remains the same: I'll have to look into it.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CANADIAN OMBUDSPERSON FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTERPRISE

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Senator Gold, I'm following up on my previous question to you when I noted that Chevron, the American multinational energy corporation, recently announced it was selling its 41.1% stake in Myanmar's Yadana gas field to a subsidiary of Edmonton-headquartered MTI Energy Inc.

In contrast, TotalEnergies, a French company, announced in January 2021 that they were exiting the country over human rights abuses and a deteriorating situation with respect to the rule of law.

I asked the following: Why are Canadian companies permitted to invest in this brutal regime? But today, my question is about the Office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise, or CORE. CORE has the mandate to review complaints about possible human rights abuses by Canadian companies when those companies work outside of Canada in the garment, mining and oil and gas sectors, and to promote the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

Senator Gold, what is CORE doing about Canadian companies enabling human rights violations by the brutal Tatmadaw in Myanmar?

[Senator Gold]

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, and for mentioning this aspect of Canada's responsibilities with regard to human rights violations and Canadian companies.

I'm not aware of what the office of the ombudsperson is doing. I'll make inquiries and report back.

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, many incidents have occurred under the Trudeau government that underscored the Prime Minister's shockingly poor judgment and lack of leadership in regard to the dictatorship in Beijing. One of those was his government's reluctance, for years, to ban Huawei from our 5G infrastructure.

Senator Gold, for over two years — since March 30, 2021 — I've had a written question on the Senate's Order Paper asking for information about the contracts given by the Trudeau government to Huawei since 2016.

For over two and a half years — since October 2020 — I've had a question on the Order Paper asking for details about the government's 5G security review.

Leader, why doesn't the Trudeau government want to answer my questions? What are you trying to keep from us?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The government is not trying to keep anything. The government is engaged on all fronts with regard to its relationships, in this case with China — in a responsible and prudent way.

Colleagues, this government is committed to ensuring that our infrastructure and our institutions are free from interference from foreign or nefarious actors of any origin. Our relationships with China are complex. The saga of the two Michaels shows how vulnerable Canadians who reside in China or are doing business in China, or companies doing business in China, are to coercive measures.

• (1450)

What the government is doing very often needs to be done both diplomatically and carefully. That's what the government is doing.

Senator Plett: Well, of course, then they could come back with a written answer saying, "We can't answer your question." Two and a half years, and I have no response, Senator Gold. Yesterday again you indicated we didn't have respect for this institution. How is it showing respect to this institution when, for two and a half years, I have a written question, and you stand here and explain what the government is doing? Why is it so difficult to get an answer?

I also have a written question on the Order Paper regarding the former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada Beverley McLachlin's role as an overseas non-permanent member of the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal. My question asks if the Trudeau government believes former Chief Justice McLachlin's membership on this court lends legitimacy to Beijing's interference in Hong Kong's legal system. Over a year ago, two British judges stepped down from this court. The U.K. government welcomed this decision, saying it was no longer appropriate for British judges to sit on this court, as their presence risked legitimizing oppression. My question, Senator Gold, has been on the Order Paper since last June.

Leader, you recently indicated that your problem with providing answers back to this chamber was not related to lack of resources. So what is the cause? Why won't your government — why won't you — answer simple questions rather than just defending their actions in here? Why can't we not get questions answered, written questions, in over two and a half years?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. I continue to endeavour to get answers to all questions, and the answers will be forthcoming when this chamber and I are provided with them.

SENATOR'S STATEMENT

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Leave having been given to revert to Senators' Statements:

Hon. Colin Deacon: Honourable senators, this Mental Health Week, I'd like to speak to how digital entrepreneurship is not just crucial to our collective prosperity; it is also a tool to improve mental health. I've seen this first-hand. Twenty-five years ago, I was the CEO of a start-up that developed sophisticated science-based programming to address severe reading disabilities, like dyslexia. In this highly technical field, we expanded access, reduced costs and improved outcomes. These are not mutually exclusive factors.

Allow me to offer some more recent examples. Rise, a national program based in Toronto, provides loans, business coaching and mentoring to individuals who are starting businesses, in particular, individuals with mental health and addiction challenges. Over the past 10 years, Rise has loaned over \$3 million to clients who have launched over 700 diverse businesses. One of those entrepreneurs told CTV that Rise not only helped him launch a successful business but also helped to improve his diagnosed depression and anxiety, especially at the height of the pandemic. Providing access to resources that support people's passions and create additional sources of income might not be exactly what the doctor ordered, but there's no denying that its impact is helping people to thrive in spite of their mental health conditions.

Think also of busy families. Whether they're in an urban or rural community, families struggle to access mental health supports. Strongest Families Institute is an organization built on

research conducted at Dalhousie University and the IWK Health Centre in Nova Scotia. Over the past decade, they've worked to increase access to their specialized mental health and developmental disability services. Today, their data-driven e-mental health delivery platform remotely delivers customized care to children and families in most of our provinces and territories.

Lastly, think about parents whose child is showing signs of neurodevelopmental disabilities. The gateway to receiving any support is a formal diagnosis. Just imagine their anxiety and despair when they realize that simply accessing a diagnosis is years away. Alternatively, they can access the Parents Empowering Kids program, which remotely delivers evidence-based strategies and tools that empower parents to better support their children and improve life at home. Over 400 families in rural Atlantic Canada have accessed this evidence-based mental health care and support from home.

Honourable senators, I ask that you please encourage the development of innovative mental health program delivery models, enabling more Canadians to lead more productive, joyful and healthy lives. We have to think outside the box and leverage unconventional tools, like entrepreneurship, technology and paraprofessionals, if we're to create the capacity necessary to meet the growing need. Thank you.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FIGHTING AGAINST FORCED LABOUR AND CHILD LABOUR IN SUPPLY CHAINS BILL

MESSAGE FROM COMMONS

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons returning Bill S-211, An Act to enact the Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act and to amend the Customs Tariff, and acquainting the Senate that they had passed this bill without amendment.

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-13(3), I would like to inform the Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate will address the items in the following order: second reading of Bill C-29, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Audette, seconded by the Honourable Senator Mégie, for the second reading of Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Congratulations, Senator Miville-Dechéne.

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-29, the national council for reconciliation act, as the official critic. This bill is the government's attempt, after nearly seven years, to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action numbers 53 through 56.

Bill C-29 provides a framework for the implementation of a national council for reconciliation, a framework that was flawed when presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. The committee worked hard to repair Bill C-29, yet two issues remain that will require the close attention of senators here. I speak to the composition of the board of directors, specifically clause 10(1), and to the inclusion of the recognition of the importance of economic reconciliation as a driver for Canada's overall efforts to reconcile with Indigenous peoples.

The bill sets aside directions for the construction of the council's board of directors. The board will be composed of a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 13 directors. Originally, the board was to consist of three guaranteed seats, one each for the Assembly of First Nations, or AFN; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, or ITK; and the Métis National Council.

Through witness testimony, it was heard that these three groups do not represent all the First Nations, Inuit or Métis in Canada. It was through the interventions of the Conservative members of the committee that two other national organizations were considered for these guaranteed seats: the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

The Native Women's Association of Canada gives voice to Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people in Canada, inclusive of First Nations — on and off reserve, status and non-status, disenfranchised — Métis and Inuit. The Native Women's Association works on a variety of issues, including employment, labour and business; health; violence prevention and safety; justice and human rights; environment; early learning child care; and international affairs.

• (1500)

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples represents the interests of Métis, status and non-status Indians and southern Inuit Indigenous people living off-reserve in Canada. The congress works collectively with its 11 provincial and territorial organizations across Canada to improve the socio-economic conditions of their constituency living in urban or rural areas.

Thankfully, through the advocacy of Conservative members and with support from other opposition parties, the bill was amended at committee stage to include guaranteed seats for the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, along with the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council. However, at report stage in the House of Commons, the Liberal government introduced a motion to specifically remove the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples from clause 10(1) of Bill C-29.

The Liberal government along with their coalition allies, the NDP, voted together to ensure that the motion would pass, effectively silencing the voices of over 800,000 Métis, status and non-status Indians and southern Inuit Indigenous people living off-reserve in Canada.

Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 53 set out the conditions for the establishment of the council. Call to Action 53 called on:

... the Parliament of Canada, in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to enact legislation to establish a National Council for Reconciliation. The legislation would establish the council as an independent, national, oversight body with membership jointly appointed by the Government of Canada and national Aboriginal organizations, and consisting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members.

Of note, there is no condition that limits the government to provide a guaranteed seat, nor is there a condition to specify which organizations should be on the council. The only condition present in the Call to Action is that the legislation would establish the council that contains "national Aboriginal organizations, and consisting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members."

There are five recognized Indigenous national organizations, yet only three were part of the original bill. While, thankfully, the latter two were added at committee, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, a nationally recognized Indigenous organization, was removed by a Liberal amendment in the House.

One of the most glaring issues with Bill C-29 was the lack of representation for largely urban status and non-status Indigenous peoples in this country. Conservatives advocated to address this serious oversight, but the government has chosen to deny a large swath of disenfranchised people.

Senator Brazeau stated, as a former elected Indigenous leader of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples:

If there is an exclusion of one recognized Indigenous organization, I fail to see how there is any respect, cooperation or partnership here.

Furthermore, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, or ITK as it is commonly known, has raised its own concerns regarding clause 10(1), going so far as to withdraw its support from Bill C-29. ITK President Natan Obed fears the council created by the bill could undermine ongoing Inuit work to build a direct relationship with the federal government and advance Inuit rights

and interests, adding that the bill as it stands also does little to make the federal government accountable for fulfilling its obligations on reconciliation.

According to ITK, the proposed council would force Inuit — who have constitutionally protected Indigenous rights — to sit with organizations that are not rights holders, and that the bill could compel the government to pick and choose the people it listens to and how it does its work.

ITK has now officially withdrawn their support from Bill C-29, stating that the Liberal government's claims that this legislation was co-developed are wrong. As President Obed stated:

It has been debatable on the Inuit side on whether or not we would describe how we've interacted with the federal government as co-developed.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief RoseAnne Archibald has stated that Bill C-29 is “not within the spirit and intent of reconciliation, and it's very paternalistic.” The AFN is very concerned that the federal Crown-Indigenous Relations minister would get to appoint the majority of the proposed national council for reconciliation's first board of directors.

This issue was raised by Conservative members at the committee, asking how independent this council will be if members of the board are picked by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. While the bill does state that directors will be chosen by the council and not the minister, Bill C-29 does stipulate that the first board of directors will be selected by the minister in “collaboration” with the transitional committee. But let's not forget that the transitional committee was also selected by the minister in December of 2021.

Why is this important? The first board will have the vital task of establishing the articles of incorporation and other founding documents that set aside how future boards will be elected and who will constitute a member. In other words, the minister and his hand-picked transitional team will determine the future of this “independent” council whose job includes taking the minister to task over their failed record on reconciliation.

The other flaw in this bill that I would like to draw senators' attention to is the lack of economic reconciliation as a factor of true reconciliation inherent in the bill.

What is economic reconciliation? According to Reconciliation Canada, an organization that, through partnerships and community outreach programs, delivers reconciliation workshops across Canada, economic reconciliation:

Aims to create meaningful partnerships and mutually beneficial opportunities based on a holistic, values-driven approach to attaining community economic prosperity.

This shared-prosperity approach draws on the values of the community to inform the structures, processes and environments to stimulate action toward community resilience.

The Assembly of First Nations says that economic reconciliation is a process wherein First Nations benefit from the resources extracted from their lands and waters to build their own wealth and have access to the wealth derived from those resources.

The First Nations Financial Management Board, an Indigenous-led organization that aims to provide the tools and guidance that will instill confidence in First Nations' financial management and reporting systems to support economic and community development, says that Indigenous economic reconciliation creates pride in Indigenous ownership, nation building and Indigenous individuals' self-actualization.

Article 20 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.

Simply put, economic reconciliation is about free, prior and informed consent, and about partnerships that create opportunity for Indigenous peoples for their benefit that support pride and individuals' self-actualization.

Economic reconciliation is an important pillar in overall reconciliation. It represents Canada's efforts to reverse the Indian Act's deliberate purpose to remove First Nations from the national economy. The Indian Act contained specific restrictions on education, on how one could leave a reserve and how to obtain permission to do so, severely hampering efforts at trade and commerce. It shrank resource-rich areas to tiny reserves, and it prevented First Nations from hiring lawyers to fight for their rights. While Indigenous people fell into poverty and squalor, the rest of Canada grew and prospered — yet the principle of economic reconciliation is completely left out of the bill.

To right the 155 years of policy failure for Indigenous peoples that have contributed significantly to socio-economic gaps in housing, infrastructure, water and much more, economic reconciliation must be considered.

• (1510)

Indigenous peoples want to address their own issues with their own resources and to return to a sense of self-sufficiency and honour that has been stripped away by the paternalistic, archaic and irreparably broken Indian Act.

Conservatives recognized this and attempted to rectify this through proposing an amendment to clause 12 by adding, “(f) Indigenous organizations that focus on economic reconciliation and prosperity as the path to self-determination.”

Clause 12 outlines the representatives of the council's board. It includes such categories as Indigenous elders; First Nations, Inuit and the Métis; youth, women, men and gender-diverse persons; and Indigenous organizations as defined in section 2 of the Department of Indigenous Services Act. Yet it does not include organizations that promote economic reconciliation.

The silencing of over 800,000 Indigenous voices and the discounting of the importance of economic reconciliation do nothing but hamper our efforts to support true reconciliation in this country. With the concerns raised by the AFN and the withdrawal of support by the ITK, I urge all honourable senators to seriously consider when deciding to support this legislation or not.

Reconciliation must be centred on the future of Indigenous peoples, not what is in the best interest of the current government.

Honourable senators, there is more work that needs to be done on this bill and this important issue. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues who have contributed to the debate at the second reading of this bill and for their thoughtful analyses, consultations and efforts thus far. Senator Anderson stated:

As parliamentarians, it is our duty to examine, question and use sober second thought to ensure that when we are considering a bill that not only arises from TRC Calls to Action but impacts Indigenous peoples, we are not repeating the historical wrongs of Canada in the guise of reconciliation.

I agree. It is also our duty to carefully review and re-examine bills from the House when there are glaring gaps and issues identified. I am confident the Indigenous Peoples Committee will do just that, and we, as a chamber of sober second thought, will do what is in the best interests of all those whom this bill will affect.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Thank you, Senator Martin, for your excellent speech. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate our colleague Senator Miville-Dechéne for the passage of her legislation into law.

I want to thank you for drawing our attention to governance because governance and, as we know, misgovernance have a serious impact on reconciliation, in this case.

You pointed out that the transition team and the first board are necessarily political because they will be appointed through a political process. I can't disagree with you. What is the solution, or do you think this whole matter of independent governance should be something for the committee to study?

Senator Martin: Thank you for the question, Senator Omidvar.

Not being an expert, and this topic being of such importance, I was very careful in what I raised as my concerns. The concern of who is represented on this board and the fact that over 800,000 voices represented by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples are missing are to be considered.

If members of the committee want to explore the importance of that economic reconciliation pillar, that is something the committee will need to look at carefully.

[Senator Martin]

I know we have a robust draft plan that has been in the works. There are many witnesses who will be called. Being on the Indigenous Peoples Committee, I have a sense of confidence in the work of the committee. We will aim to look at that carefully at committee.

[Translation]

Hon. Renée Dupuis: Would the senator agree to answer a question?

Senator Martin: Yes.

Senator Dupuis: Thank you. Senator Martin, I listened closely to your intervention and I thank you.

Regarding your second point, you say that there is no mention of economic reconciliation. When I look at the definition in clause 12, since you referenced it, it reads as follows:

(c) *Indigenous organizations*, as defined in section 2 of the *Department of Indigenous Services Act*, to reflect the diversity of arrangements that govern relationships between Indigenous communities and the Government of Canada;

In section 2 of that act, an Indigenous organization is defined as an "Indigenous governing body or any other entity that represents the interests of an Indigenous group and its members."

Do you think the current wording of clause 12, which refers to section 2 of the Department of Indigenous Services Act, is not broad enough to include organizations that deal with economic reconciliation?

Thank you.

[English]

Senator Martin: I don't have the answer to whether we need to make the language broader, but I think, as a committee, we can look at whether having representation of a group that focuses on economic reconciliation — one or two perhaps — would be suitable. Again, that's something we will consider carefully, and perhaps amendments will be put forward by me or by someone else.

Senator Plett: Good answer.

Hon. Mary Coyle: Thank you very much to our colleague Senator Martin for all her work and for acknowledging our colleagues for the work everyone has contributed thus far. I am pleased to hear that you are encouraging us to get this to committee because it clearly needs everybody's attention at the Indigenous Peoples Committee for us to tease out all of the issues that you have raised.

My question is to make sure I understand what you were saying: The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is a recognized national Indigenous organization, yes? That's one point. The point you are making is that just like the Native Women's Association of Canada — due to that recognition as a national Indigenous organization — it should have a place at that table. I heard that; I think that's what you were saying.

You also said that there were 800,000 Indigenous people in Canada who would not be represented if — I believe you were drawing the link between those and that group?

Senator Martin: Yes.

Senator Coyle: Okay. That's where my question is. I do not question that the organization is a recognized Indigenous organization. The issue around representation of 800,000 people — and I think you are talking mostly about urban Indigenous people. We heard at the Indigenous Peoples Committee how the other national Indigenous organizations are working hard, in their ways, to represent the interests of their people who do not necessarily live in their territories — who live in other parts of the country — and that there may be some issues, and we know there are, with that.

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

Senator Coyle: There is the National Association of Friendship Centres that services many urban Indigenous people in Canada.

My question is this: Are you saying that if we want this new council to represent those 800,000 voices, the way to do that is to get this group on the national council? Is that the answer?

Senator Martin: Yes. My answer is “yes.” We have heard from the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples that they have a large membership and they have the provincial and territorial bodies they work with. So yes, absolutely. This is something I hope our committee will look at very carefully and that all the recognized national organizations will be represented on this council.

• (1520)

Senator Coyle: I have just a quick question this time. I need to ask this in terms of the framing. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, according to your understanding, is an elected body that represents those 800,000 Indigenous people who are living in territories other than the territories that the other national organizations represent. Is that your understanding?

Senator Martin: Yes. I am not the expert in this chamber, but this is based on my conversation with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and I know that Senator Brazeau represented the group — he was an elected leader. The organization has been established for decades, and they should equally have a place on the council. I think that they represent all those who are off-reserve, as well as Métis, status and non-status Indians and southern Inuit Indigenous people living off-reserve in Canada.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

[*Translation*]

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Audette, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples.)

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of May 3, 2023, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 9, 2023, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

FOREIGN INFLUENCE REGISTRY AND ACCOUNTABILITY BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Housakos, seconded by the Honourable Senator Wells, for the second reading of Bill S-237, An Act to establish the Foreign Influence Registry and to amend the Criminal Code.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

ENACTING CLIMATE COMMITMENTS BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Galvez, seconded by the Honourable Senator Gignac, for the second reading of Bill S-243, An Act to enact the Climate-Aligned Finance Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Hello. *Tansi.* As a senator for Manitoba, I acknowledge that I live on Treaty 1 territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. I also want to acknowledge that the Parliament of Canada is situated on unceded and unsurrendered Algonquin Anishinaabe territory.

[*English*]

Honourable senators, today I rise in support of Bill S-243, An Act to enact the Climate-Aligned Finance Act and to make related amendments to other Acts. Senator Galvez has advised that her bill is complementary to our government's current action plan, the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act — serving the dual purpose of addressing barriers to achieving our climate crisis commitments and protecting our nation's financial system from climate-related risks.

Just days ago, we learned of the dubious distinction of the Senate's banker, the Royal Bank of Canada, or RBC, leaping ahead of J.P. Morgan into the top spot as the biggest financier of the fossil fuel industry. The annual *Banking on Climate Chaos* report by the Rainforest Action Network — endorsed by 624 organizations from 75 countries — found that RBC funded fossil fuel companies in 2022 to the extent of \$42.1 billion, including \$4.8 billion for tar sands.

Also, the updated list of the top 10 such financiers includes another Canadian Big Five: Scotiabank. The study found that Canadian banks have provided \$862 billion — that's C\$1.13 trillion — to fossil fuel companies since Canada signed the Paris Agreement.

Climate breakdown is claiming the livelihood and lives of millions globally. Vulnerable communities and — to use Senator McCallum's term in her bill on environmental racism — "vulnerable environments" are disproportionately impacted negatively by climate change. Through her bill, Senator Galvez encourages the consideration of vulnerable communities and ecosystems, and sets particular safeguards for Indigenous communities. Although Indigenous people have contributed the least to this ever-growing problem, they face some of its worst consequences.

Northern communities are in the forefront of the assault of climate change. Melting ice caps and permafrost affect traditional food sources while driving up the costs of imported alternatives, and increase the risk to humans and wildlife. Food security continues to deteriorate, especially in isolated communities. The effects of climate change are not uniform in impact; however,

one constant remains: Climate changes brought to our land, our water and our weather systems imperil long-established ways of life.

In other words, the climate crisis threatens ecosystems and human rights. Honouring our climate commitments means more than not exacerbating or contributing to the effects of climate change. It also means respecting human rights, including the rights of Indigenous peoples set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The declaration states that Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of traditionally owned lands which hold strong spiritual and cultural significance.

The declaration also states that countries must recognize the contribution of Indigenous knowledge when formulating sustainable and equitable protection of our environment.

In line with this, Bill S-243 allows for the integration of the Indigenous perspective into decision making in two distinct ways: First, it proposes that certain boards of directors, including Crown corporations, have climate expertise — having knowledge of Indigenous ways of life and ways of being qualifies a person for this position. Second, it requires reporting on implementation to enable the cooperation between the Bank of Canada and representatives of Indigenous peoples.

Honourable colleagues, positive advancements toward a cleaner future are in the new Canadian action plan. These include increasing the price of carbon to \$50 per tonne and facilitating the transition to electric vehicles.

• (1530)

These infrastructure investments are essential to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030, crucial steps along Canada's path to net-zero emissions by 2050.

This goal can only be attained if decarbonization takes place across all sectors and industries. After all, the effects of decarbonization in one sector can easily be offset by emissions in another. The current action plan fails to address this elephant in the room — the identification and restriction of investments into high-emission activities.

These investments not only put our financial system at risk with millions of dollars worth of capital invested into this unpredictable sector, but they also contribute to the negative impacts of climate change.

If only the more than \$1 trillion of Canadian funds had been invested by our big banks into decarbonization.

As the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or the IPCC, issued its sixth assessment report in February 2023 with the unequivocal conclusion that fossil fuels must be made extinct and never revived. The IPCC is clear: To stay below 1.5 degrees of warming as called for in the Paris Agreement, we need to slash CO2 emissions by 45% in the next seven years — by 2030.

Colleagues, in the best sense of the call from the Inter-Parliamentary Union for parliamentarians to become champions for legislative initiatives to make real changes that will mitigate the damage of climate change, Senator Galvez has given us a substantive opportunity to be changemakers by supporting and facilitating this bill, which has gained international attention in finance circles worldwide.

In last year's report, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*, the IPCC highlighted that investments in high-emitting infrastructure would act as a barrier to achieving Canada's greenhouse gas reduction goals. Funding and subsequent development of green technology may be hitting record heights, but high-emission sectors continue to thrive and undercut progress being made. In other words, the default setting in our current legislative approach prioritizes the traditional polluting economy. Climate commitments are still on the back burner.

When thinking critically of Canada's progress, we must be wary of greenwashing. For example, the thirteenth edition of the annual *Banking on Climate Chaos* report noted that investors in the tar sands increased their financing by 51%. That same year, however, these banks had vowed to become net zero by 2050, as their vow year after year.

One of the key goals of the act is to address the disconnect between financial institutions' net-zero pronouncements and their continuing investments into high-carbon industries. Have no doubt: This bill will enhance accountability of the reporting entities which are subject to the act.

Colleagues, you may be quietly wondering why an engineer and a human rights lawyer think they are qualified to assess our economic system. Let me encourage you to recast that question, because our economic system is exacerbating our planet's climate crisis. Indeed, if you are quietly questioning the qualifications of an engineer and a human rights lawyer, let's add to that list a dentist with Senator McCallum's bill on environmental racism.

We're qualified because we're mothers and grandmothers and global citizens and senators.

New voices must be heard in the financial world — voices from the world not insulated by wealth. Finance leaders in the financial system have lost touch with the reality of a planet with limits we must respect in order for human life — all our lives, colleagues, and those of our generations to come — to flourish.

This bill follows the money, addressing the reality of financial choices that wound Mother Earth and reduce capacity to sustain life. Abstracted numbers on a balance sheet help financial leaders to ignore crucial dimensions of the value of life on this planet.

The Greek root of the word "economy," *oikos* and *nomos* — with all due apology to Senator Housakos if I have mispronounced those terms — literally translates as "good

household management." In this time of multiple crises where we have not managed our global household all that well, it is high time that divergent outside voices come to be heard by those who hold the reins of our collective purse — the select, highly paid, elite few who control billions of public and private dollars who seem to be having difficulty grasping the reality that our shared future is in peril now.

This bill rightly recognizes what experts in the scientific community have been saying for a long time. This climate crisis is unconstrained by geographic boundaries. This means that Canadian reporting entities have to account for their causally linked emissions wherever they occur.

As occupants of positions in the top 10 of fossil fuel funders, the Royal Bank of Canada and Scotiabank have demonstrated how Canadian financial institutions are investing globally and that what they do abroad is just as important as what they do within Canada.

This bill defines an entity that is aligned with climate commitments as one that respects the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The bill does not restrict the definition of Indigenous peoples to Canadians, meaning that the rights of Indigenous peoples have to be respected wherever they are.

This bill is as science-based as it is equity-based.

Honourable colleagues, aligning with climate commitments also means not fostering or exacerbating food insecurity or inequalities in society, and not causing significant harm to social and environmental obligations recognized already by Canada. That means we hope for a future where a low-carbon project does not run roughshod over human rights like we have seen with too many fossil fuel extractive and transportation projects.

Since women — especially poor women — are the primary victims of climate change, we would do well to add them as primary stakeholders in developing solutions worth investing in.

Since this bill was introduced a year ago, it has generated a bit of a buzz in Canada and beyond. Canada's Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions published a climate guideline and the Bank of Canada just issued its first annual climate risk report.

But beyond our financial regulators finally using the buzzwords of the moment, significant change still seems to elude us. With a Canadian bank becoming the world's top fossil fuel financier and backing a pipeline project which is turning the ancestral lands of the Wet'suwet'en — who are opposed to the project — into a militarized zone, this bill is more necessary than ever.

Colleagues, escalating environmental calamities are a time-sensitive issue. Canada has, to date, never successfully hit any of its emissions targets since 1990. We simply cannot afford another decade of failed targets, measures and ambitions. We must address this concern as soon as possible to ensure that we reach our climate targets by the end of the decade.

By mandating a yearly public review process on the progress of the implementation of all provisions, Bill S-243 allows for iterative learning. It will allow us to learn from our mistakes in real time and adapt our approach to the results produced. We have to stay flexible to emerging research. As a leader in many other sectors, Canada must step up.

Honourable senators, the acceleration of climate change and its consequences is a human-induced problem. It requires human-led and innovative solutions to transition towards a cleaner and more sustainable economy.

• (1540)

As lawmakers acting in the public interest of all current and future Canadians, it is up to us to consider and implement research-backed and ambitious solutions to maintain a livable earth for our generation and those to come.

Senator Galvez, with her Bill S-243, gives us an excellent opportunity to do just that. Let us accept her invitation and support this life-saving bill. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Seidman, debate adjourned.)

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Brazeau, seconded by the Honourable Senator Housakos, for the second reading of Bill S-254, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (warning label on alcoholic beverages).

Hon. David Richards: Honourable senators, I waited until Mental Health Week to read this. I'm rising today in support of Senator Brazeau's Bill S-254, first because I am obligated to do so, for I've been down the same road, have seen the same results and been witness to the same outcomes. I am also speaking in support of the bill because, although some warning label will not solve the problem of alcoholism or all harm related to and because of alcohol, it might well in some way aid those who will take heed and may mitigate the suffering that many go through daily because of alcohol abuse — the shame and degradation alcohol can cause not only to the one afflicted but to his or her family, the loss of jobs, income and self-respect and the illnesses apart from all else alcohol consumption can foster.

So I, too, would like to see a label attached to alcohol being sold that indicates the serious health risk, fetal development and the link to disease that may arise from overconsumption. I would be the last to say "preach" but the first to say "inform." The label

should inform us that excess drinking could well be hazardous to our well-being and to the well-being of our family. Just as true is the retardation of fetal development and the devastating affliction of fetal alcohol syndrome.

I know this has been seen but it can be a horror if experienced in your own family. I will not go into any long story here, but I have seen much destruction because of alcohol and I doubt there are many in this chamber who haven't seen that.

The warning label attached could be a good thing. I know it won't be a cure-all, for youngsters are youngsters and rebellion is key to a youngster's growth. And this, too, has to do with drink. I also believe that personal individual responsibility is tantamount to an individual's life.

Without getting into a great deal about my own story, I began to drink when I was 14, and by 20 I was a daily drinker. It is useless to go into. Nor will I ever parade my afflictions onto others in this chamber.

Will these warning labels help? I cannot say. But I know they won't hurt. I know this is a bill crafted out of experience and personal struggle, and I commend Senator Brazeau for this.

I will tell you one story. Years ago, a friend of mine wanted me to go drinking with him. He was my brother's best friend. We hunted and drank together. He was a Mi'kmaw kid and one of those so close to us that he could enter our house without knocking. We would turn around and there he would be in our kitchen smiling at us. He pleaded with me to go out that night. I told him I had to finish the book I was working on. It was six months overdue and the publisher was waiting for it. Besides, I said, "Every time you and I go drinking together we seem to get into trouble." "That's what makes it fun," he said. Those were the last words he ever spoke to me. An hour later he was dead in a car accident that ruined my brother's legs. I often thought that going back home, determined to work on my book, kept me alive, so I dedicated the book to him. It was called, strangely enough, *Lives of Short Duration*. He was one of the 17 kids I grew up with who did not reach adulthood.

For him and for the dozens of others I knew and know; for those kids I grew up with, filled with love and charity as much as anyone, dead by car accidents or suicides or by someone else's hand; and to others who, through alcohol, have lost their health and their way, I support Senator Brazeau and I support this bill and I ask you to allow it to go to committee. Thank you very much.

Hon. Patrick Brazeau: Will the senator take a question?

Senator Richards: Yes.

Senator Brazeau: Senator Richards, thank you very much for your speech and for your personal story. I know you mentioned you didn't want to go into it in detail, but I think there's enough detail there to give us all a very clear picture of what you and your family went through.

This place is a place of partisanship; whether we like it or not, it is about partisanship. However, Bill S-254 is a non-partisan bill. It's a bill about the health of Canadians and it's a bill about the right of Canadian consumers to know what effects and consequences could come with the consumption of alcohol.

We are here in this chamber. It would be my dream for this bill to at least see the light of day in a committee room so that we can have the experts come and testify and answer questions that we all collectively have. We went through this fight with the tobacco companies several years ago, so I'm asking you: What would you have in terms of a suggestion for us to really push for this bill to get into a committee room as soon as possible?

Senator Richards: I just stated how I feel. I feel it should go to committee and be examined. I feel that a warning label on alcohol is not a bad thing. If anything, it's a good thing. It's absolute common sense that it could be done, a committee could study it and my speech explicitly gives the reasons why I think that. That's about all I can say, senator.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

NATIONAL STRATEGY RESPECTING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator Boisvenu, for the second reading of Bill C-226, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy to assess, prevent and address environmental racism and to advance environmental justice.

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, I rise to speak in support of Bill C-226, a bill sponsored by Senator McCallum. The legislation proposes a requirement for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to create a national strategy to help promote efforts to address the harm caused by environmental racism. This is Parliament's second attempt at passing this legislation after its predecessor Bill C-230 died on the Order Paper at the conclusion of the Forty-third Parliament. I hope that together we can get this version of the bill across the finish line.

I support this bill because environmental racism is an issue that successive governments have failed to address, and because efforts to address this issue are overdue and it's time to come to terms with this problem. Bill C-226 is an important component of reconciliation, not just with Indigenous peoples but with all people who have had their lands or waters poisoned, their air quality worsened and their lives harmed because of this type of discrimination — a form of high-handedness, if you will.

• (1550)

There's no universally accepted definition of "environmental racism." As we know from Senator McCallum's speech, one definition refers to it broadly as discrimination in environmental policy-making. To that I add, "or lack thereof." This can mean making decisions without due care and attention in spite of impacting an overrepresentation of racialized or marginalized communities for waste facilities and related infrastructure, by allowing life-threatening pollutants to exist at high levels in communities mainly populated by minority groups or by excluding minority voices from leadership positions in the environmental movement. While exact definitions will differ, the problem is straightforward.

While racism is widely recognized and understood, the concept of environmental racism is sometimes questioned. So what are we talking about?

For generations, governments and civil societies have made decisions on the environment that had disproportionately negative effects on racialized and marginalized communities. Oftentimes, those decisions were made without input or consultation from the affected communities. One only need look at Canada's record on environmental policy to conclude that environmental racism is undeniable. I'll share some examples in a few moments.

Perhaps senators may have heard another phrase that can be confusing: that climate change has a racial aspect. However, this is common sense when we consider that Western industrialized countries have built-up their economies by disproportionately burning fossil fuels, which at the same time has caused disproportionate harms to less developed regions of the world. Indeed, at COP26, the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, leaders from Africa argued that the continent would require \$1.3 trillion in funding over the next two decades to provide for climate adaptation and mitigation.

The effects are already being seen. A report from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies noted that climate-related disasters and extreme weather events were responsible for the deaths of more than 410,000 people, mostly in lower-income countries.

One of the biggest challenges when discussing environmental racism stems from the fact that the conversation tends to be closely associated with jobs and economic development. When we discuss environmental racism, we tend to think about things like paper mills, manufacturing plants, waste treatment plants and mining operations, all examples of businesses that can have a large environmental impact and that are usually located away from the typical suburban downtown. These facilities often employ many people, and they support significant economic activity across Canada. Often, the jobs found in these types of facilities pay good salaries, offer benefits and allow people to plan for retirement. We cannot, and should not, discount any of those things.

Yet, when we call upon the government to address environmental racism, that often means asking government to have difficult conversations with the companies which employ our friends, family and neighbours. It's no easy task for elected officials to decide to close a local mill or to tell a large employer it must do more to address environmental concerns. It's even more difficult to tell those companies that their actions have disproportionately affected racialized peoples. Often, those companies will fight back and governments will back down, preferring to let the status quo remain rather than fight for what's right.

That's why I support this bill because it will help the federal government make a positive change — at the very least, make a change going forward, even when that may be difficult to do.

Allow me to share some examples of what environmental racism looks like in Canada. I'll begin with a story from my home province. As we all know, rural Canada is dotted with small towns and settlements. Northern Saskatchewan is no different. It's a large space with few people but plenty of natural beauty. Many who live in northern Saskatchewan are Indigenous and their connection to the land is sacred. However, northern Saskatchewan is also well-known for uranium mining. In fact, northern Saskatchewan is home to the largest high-grade uranium deposits in the world. As with most resource extraction industries, uranium mining can have an impact on the environment. Sadly, this impact seems to have fallen disproportionately on the Indigenous peoples who have lived on those lands since time immemorial.

One such example is Uranium City. It's a small settlement located just below the border that divides Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories on the traditional territory of the Chipewyan Dene people. As Uranium City's name would suggest, the town was once a hot spot for uranium mining and its population exploded into the 1950s. For a short time, the town and others like it boomed as the mines carried out their operations. Today, the city as it was known, Uranium City, a small settlement, no longer exists other than stranded remnants.

While uranium mines were profitable, the Dene and other Indigenous peoples were often not able to share in the economic prosperity the mines created. Not only were they subject to racism and discriminatory hiring practices, but they were subjected to dangerous radioactive dust and tailings that were created by mining activity. Many Indigenous workers were not told about the dangers associated with working at the mining sites, and many would later die of cancer or experience other health issues.

The mining operations near Uranium City closed in the 1980s. Sadly, little was done initially to remediate the land. Cleaning up former mining sites has taken decades and has been mired in legal disputes and jurisdictional challenges. Meanwhile, those who worked in and around mines like these often suffered from high rates of lung cancer and other health issues years after their employment ended.

The voice of the local Dene people wasn't heard when the mines were being built. Their voices weren't heard when their health began to fail. And their voices weren't heard when governments and corporations alike left the land to decay after the mines closed.

Sadly, the uranium mines of Northern Canada are not the only example of environmental racism in our country. I would be remiss if I didn't say that today these mines are very mindful of environmental, social and governance issues and corporate responsibility. Let's face it, most of these mines, mills, cement plants and the like can't simply pick up their power lines, gas lines and deposits, and then move elsewhere and leave a stranded community behind.

Nonetheless, we've heard similar examples of environmental racism in places like Boat Harbour, Nova Scotia, where effluent has been dumped into the waterways that Pictou Landing First Nation has relied on for decades. Another example can also be found here in Ontario on the lands of Grassy Narrows First Nation. There is a story of poisoned water and the impact it has had on generations of families.

For generations, there has been a paper mill in Dryden, Ontario. A mill is still in operation to this day. Yet, its history is stained. In the 1960s and 1970s, the mill's chemical plant dumped 9,000 kilograms of mercury into the English-Wabigoon River. The mercury poisoned the river, which the people of Grassy Narrows depended on to catch fish. Health problems related to mercury poisoning have persisted in the community ever since. At first, neither the company nor the provincial government would accept responsibility for what had happened. It would be years before a legal settlement was reached, but by then it was far too late.

For a final example, I turn to Nova Scotia. It's a story about a community from the past whose legacy lives on. Decades ago, in what is known today as North End Halifax, there existed a community called Africville. It was a small, predominantly Black community, and former residents have called it a happy place with vibrant community connections and a sense of family. Yet the community was treated poorly by the City of Halifax. The city neglected to provide Africville with services it had given to other neighbourhoods over the years, such as street lights, garbage pickup and even indoor plumbing. To make matters worse, the city would often use Africville and the surrounding area as a dumping ground for services that would never have been well received in other communities, such as a fertilizer plant, a prison, a slaughterhouse and, yes, a dump — all located inside or in close proximity to a community of 400 people, people whose voices were ignored.

When we think about environmental racism, I don't think we should think about things like paper mills or uranium mines, nor should we think about the economic activity those facilities can generate. When we think about environmental racism, we should think about the Dene men who worked in those mines and who died of cancer. We should think about grandmothers living in Grassy Narrows First Nation who are worried that the mercury poisoning that destroyed their health will one day affect their granddaughter's health too. We should think about a small Black

community, ignored by its city and used as a dumping ground. That's what environmental racism looks like, and they are who we should be thinking about when considering Bill C-226.

• (1600)

A national strategy will help in very specific ways. First, we need to ensure that the marginalized communities are consulted and their voices are heard and included in decision-making processes related to their environment. These communities should have a say in what happens in their neighbourhoods. With a national strategy, we can learn from past mistakes and move forward in a more inclusive way. Also, a national strategy will help to determine what future steps and targeted investments are necessary for sustainable development in marginalized communities and, I will add to that, with much resilience.

A national strategy is an important first step toward planning for a better tomorrow and for ending environmental racism.

Personally, I find little in this bill that can be objected to. I was surprised to learn that the bill had not been agreed to unanimously in the other place, so I'd like to address some of the concerns that were raised during the debate.

Issues were raised regarding the effectiveness of creating another national strategy. To me, hard or easy has got nothing to do with it. And others stressed the importance of recognizing regional differences and provincial jurisdiction. Let's "step forward." Let's "step up." I appreciate those criticisms, but I believe that a legislative tool like a national strategy is required to address the challenges faced by those who are experiencing environmental racism.

While I appreciate the concern that this is yet another national strategy and that it adds one more piece to Canada's complicated environmental policy regime, the evidence is clear that such a strategy is needed to address issues being experienced by racialized peoples. They have as much of a right to a healthy environment as other Canadians and, as of 2023, they're being denied that right.

When we vote on this bill, I hope that senators will think about the communities most impacted by environmental racism. These communities can't wait any longer, and this is an issue we can no longer ignore. I hope that senators will lend their support to Bill C-226 so we can move it to committee and take one more step on the path towards making Canada a more equitable place for all people. Thank you. *Hiy kitatamihin.*

(On motion of Senator Audette, debate adjourned.)

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Boniface, calling the attention of the Senate to intimate partner violence, especially in rural areas across Canada, in response to the coroner's inquest conducted in Renfrew County, Ontario.

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Boniface's inquiry calling the attention of the Senate to intimate partner violence, especially in rural areas across Canada, in response to the coroner's inquest conducted in Renfrew County, Ontario. I thank Senator Boniface for introducing this important inquiry and for asking me to reflect specifically on the epidemiology around this particular group of women who live in rural and remote regions of Canada and are affected by intimate partner violence.

In this case, I take it to mean "from the population health vantage," that is, the attempt to understand determinants or causation, specifically social determinants of their health outcomes. Social determinants are sometimes called the causes of the causes of health outcomes. They are very upstream from the outcomes; thus, true causation is challenging to establish.

An explanation put forward by the World Health Organization and often cited by other population health agencies explains that social determinants of health are:

. . . the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.

The Public Health Agency of Canada identifies 12 social determinants of health: income and social status; employment and working conditions; education and literacy; childhood experiences; physical environments; social supports and coping skills; healthy behaviours; access to health services; biology and genetic endowment; gender; culture; and race/racism.

As Mandana Mardare Amini writes in a 2022 report for Statistics Canada entitled *Statistical Portrait of Women and Girls by the Relative Remoteness of their Communities, Series 3: Health and Well-being*:

Living in a rural area remains a significant determinant of health disparities for women, both worldwide and in Canada

While rural locations themselves do not necessarily lead to poor health . . . living in a rural setting may not only limit access to health services, but also influence other socioeconomic, environmental and occupational health determinants

The report indicates that women and girls who live in very remote areas self-report the lowest perceived health, the lowest activity level, the highest proportion of women and girls without a regular health care provider, poorer mental health and significantly higher all-cause mortality and suicide-related mortality.

The report also found that suicide or intentional self-harm was a leading cause of death in very remote communities only and that health inequalities were more pronounced for Indigenous women and girls in both rural and urban areas. This 2022 Statistics Canada report indicates that the risk of poor health outcomes increases with more remote living conditions.

In *Epidemiology: Principles and Methods*, Brian MacMahon and Dimitrios Trichopoulos explain:

. . . the existence of an exposure-response relationship, that is, an association in which the frequency of the effect increases or decreases as the exposure to the putative cause increases, is usually thought to favour a causal relationship.

However, extensive efforts must be made to validate associations thought to be causal, and in the absence of direct experiment, the interpretation of the evidence is complex. Thus, from these Canadian statistics, we might suspect a causal relationship between the remoteness of one's community and one's health outcomes.

Although criminology is not my area of expertise, I note a similar trend in the data on spousal and intimate partner homicide. In the past 10 years, a higher proportion of spousal and intimate partner homicides in Canada have occurred in rural communities compared with urban areas.

• (1610)

In a report entitled *Homicide in Canada, 2021*, Jean-Denis David and Brianna Jaffray from the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics found that homicides involving a spousal or intimate partner relationship between the victim and the accused accounted for 23% of homicides in rural areas, compared to 17% of homicides in urban areas. So we can suspect that there may be a relationship between intimate partner violence and residence in rural and remote areas of Canada. Unfortunately, much more data is needed.

[Senator Seidman]

As Eve Valera, an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, told *The Globe and Mail* in December, "Women in general . . . have been understudied in lots of scientific endeavours."

For example, the *Globe* article reported on work being done at the Canadian Concussion Centre in Toronto. That facility has over 100 athlete brains that scientists can study to find out more about the impact of repeated concussions, but it has only one brain of a victim of domestic violence. This is a problem.

As the article notes, researchers estimate that approximately one in eight Canadian women is likely to suffer from an unrecognized brain injury related to domestic violence, but we know little about the impact of these injuries.

In a June 2021 *JAMA Network Open* article entitled "Analysis of Female Enrollment and Participant Sex by Burden of Disease in US Clinical Trials Between 2000 and 2020," Dr. Jecca Steinberg and her colleagues describe the historical under-representation of women in clinical research:

Medical research has historically focused on male health. Female individuals were often excluded from clinical trials, supposedly to ensure homogeneity of treatment effect and reduce potential maternal-fetal liability. Sex bias persisted, even after research reported sex differences in diagnostic test results, disease progression, treatment response, drug metabolism, and surgical outcomes. Studies have associated this lack of female inclusion with suboptimal health care and adverse medical outcomes.

Steinberg and her colleagues found that female participants are still under-represented in oncology, neurology, immunology, urology, cardiology and hematology relative to their disease burden. Yet, male enrollees are under-represented compared with their disease burden in eight disease categories, including mental health and trauma research. Therefore, sex bias in clinical trials may have negative implications for both sexes.

In her speech, Senator Boniface reminded us of another inquest that happened after an intimate partner femicide in Ontario, the May-Iles inquest of 1998. Senator Boniface asked, ". . . how do we find ourselves in a similar position 24 years later?" Perhaps the answer to her question is that a lack of data and bias in the data likely contributes to this ongoing challenge.

A June 2021 study by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women entitled *Challenges faced by women living in rural, remote and northern communities in Canada* found that a lack of transportation services; difficulty accessing services for women survivors of violence; a lack of reliable, affordable and adequate internet services; a lack of access to education options locally; difficulty finding stable employment; and difficulty accessing or a lack of local services, including child care, mental health and counselling services, were intersecting factors that affect the safety, economic security and well-being of women living in rural, remote and northern communities. Thus, research to better understand and investments to address health challenges for rural and remote women may also help us understand and address violence against these women.

In this regard, Canada is taking steps in the right direction. In recognition that “Geographic proximity to service centres and population centres is an important determinant of socio-economic and health outcomes,” and that, “Consequently, it is a relevant dimension in the analysis and delivery of policies and programs,” in April 2020, Statistics Canada released its Index of Remoteness dataset. This new tool has already facilitated important research, including the Statistics Canada report by Mandana Mardare Amini, which I cited earlier.

Further, the federal government has recognized that:

. . . our health system has not always understood the factors which influence the health status of women, trans women, girls, and gender-diverse communities . . .

In October of last year, it launched the National Women’s Health Research Initiative. As a first step, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Women and Gender Equality Canada will partner to invest in a Pan-Canadian Women’s Health Coalition. I hope that this investment will lead to tangible improvements in health research and delivery for women.

We must continue to address the historical under-representation of women in research so that we can better understand and ultimately improve outcomes for women in rural and remote communities and women in general. Women’s lives depend upon it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO EXTEND DATE OF
FINAL REPORT ON STUDY OF THE CANADIAN FOREIGN SERVICE
AND ELEMENTS OF THE FOREIGN POLICY MACHINERY
WITHIN GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter M. Boehm, pursuant to notice of May 3, 2023, moved:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in relation to its study on the Canadian foreign service and elements of the foreign policy machinery within Global Affairs Canada be extended from September 29, 2023 to December 29, 2023.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(At 4:19 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, May 9, 2023, at 2 p.m.)

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