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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, April 11, 2024

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

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Michelle Thrush, Gemini Award-winning actor. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(k), I move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practice, for today's sitting, the duration for Senators' Statements be 70 minutes, to be used for the purpose of paying tribute to our colleague the Honourable Senator Mockler, who will retire from the Senate on April 14, 2024, not including the time for his response.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Blaine Higgs, MLA, Premier of New Brunswick. He is accompanied by his spouse, Marcia Higgs.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of numerous residents of New Brunswick and friends of Senator Mockler.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE PERCY MOCKLER

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I stand today to pay tribute to a dear friend, a loyal team player and a great Conservative: The Honourable Senator Percy Mockler. Regrettably, our colleague is about to retire from the Senate of Canada as he celebrates his seventy-fifth birthday. I want to wish him a happy birthday, but I also want to honour him.

Percy has dedicated his life to serving others. Many years ago he made the decision that he would focus on improving the lives of the people of New Brunswick, as well as all Canadians.

His dedication to serving others has been remarkable over the years. His career has been impressive. What stands out the most for me is that, regardless of his 42 years in public life, Percy has remained the same humble guy. My remarks today will focus on that. Let's be honest: There is no way that I can possibly do justice to his career in a few brief minutes.

One of the things I value the most in Percy is his natural capacity to rally people together. We even see them coming in from New Brunswick today. He is someone who reaches out to others and will always be there to help, which is without a doubt appreciated by all who know him. Truth be told, whenever you meet New Brunswickers, whether it is on a beach somewhere in the south, at a political event or at a small town tribute to a dedicated teacher, you will always hear the great stories of situations where Percy Mockler came to help.

• (1410)

Colleagues, that reputation is telling of the life he has lived — a life that started with very humble beginnings, as he and his sister were raised by a single mother, struggling to make ends meet, beginnings where the support and help of the community made a direct impact on his life. But those beginnings left an important imprint on the person and, therefore, on the career of our dear friend Percy, setting the tone on some of his core values of looking out for and helping others.

Percy started giving back to his own community of Saint-Léonard at an early age, but it didn't stop there. His community expanded to the province of New Brunswick and eventually to our entire country.

Colleagues, I was tempted to tease Percy about perhaps never quite understanding that his position in the Senate didn't need re-election, as he never stopped campaigning. But I recognize, for the little guy from Saint-Léonard, it has never been about campaigning or retail politics; it has always been about truly caring for others and hearing out what people are going through. This, my friends, has been Senator Mockler's career-long principle — a principle that has allowed him to be grounded with the reality of so many Canadians.

Percy, on behalf of our entire Conservative team and, furthermore, on behalf of all Canadians, thank you. Thank you for caring so deeply for the people of this country, your community. Thank you for your service toward others. Happy retirement, my friend. I know you and Suzanne will do well in your retirement.

Thank you, Percy.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to the Honourable Percy Mockler, who will be leaving us on April 14.

Senator Mockler has spent his entire professional life in the public service. After graduating from the Université de Moncton, he was elected to the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick in 1982.

Colleagues should be aware that the fabled six degrees of separation also applies to politics. Senator Mockler's only electoral defeat was in the 1987 provincial election, when our colleague, Pierrette Ringuette, walked away with the seat. However, he won it back in 1993 in a decisive victory and again in 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2006.

[English]

The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc asked that I relay his personal thanks to Senator Mockler, along with the following anecdote:

Senator Mockler comes from an era of Progressive Conservatives who were well-admired on all sides of the political spectrum. They knew how to play the game. They were also kind and generous to all their colleagues. While Senator Mockler was a provincial Minister, my father, Romeo LeBlanc, was awarded the Order of New Brunswick. He was too ill to attend any ceremony, so Senator Mockler drove to his home in Grande Digue to personally present the award. His was a very kind gesture for someone who had been on the opposing side, but it speaks to the type of person that the senator is — a statesman who served his country and who admired those who did the same, regardless of political stripe.

[Senator Plett]

[Translation]

Senator Mockler proudly represented his native province of New Brunswick for 15 years. He was rarely seen without a smile. During that time, he advocated and demonstrated his love for his province. He was also deeply dedicated to his Senate committees and colleagues.

[English]

On a personal level, Senator Mockler was always very kind to me, never missing an opportunity to offer supportive and encouraging words. To me, he stands as a model of what it is to be a senator. He is passionate in his convictions, unapologetic in his beliefs and a very proud member of the Conservative caucus. But this is combined with a deep respect for his Senate colleagues. In that, he shows and models a profound appreciation and respect for this chamber, in which he has served so honourably.

[Translation]

Senator Mockler — Percy — on behalf of the Government Representative Office and the Government of Canada, I wish you every success in this new chapter of your life. I know you're looking forward to spending time with your wife, Suzanne, and your family.

[English]

I'm certain you will continue to be involved with your community and with all of the causes that matter to you so dearly, as you have done, really, for 50 years. You were a wonderful colleague and a friend to me. I, indeed, all of us, will miss you greatly.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Dear Senator Mockler, the young boy from Saint-Léonard, New Brunswick, has come a long way, literally. You must be very close to setting a Guinness record for the number of times that you have travelled back and forth between Saint-Léonard and Fredericton, where you served as an MLA and a minister and were given the most demanding portfolios.

Then, we must add to that the number of trips that you have made between Saint-Léonard and Ottawa. During your 15 years of service in the Senate, week after week, you never failed to travel back to Madawaska, and I want to say hello to the citizens of that region who are here with us today for the occasion.

[English]

Special greetings to Premier Higgs.

Today, we say farewell to a great colleague and a gentleman who dedicated his life to the public good. When appointed to the Senate, Senator Mockler's parliamentary credentials were solid assets that would make him a high-performance senator.

Economy and finance, official languages, justice and health — he had served in the New Brunswick government in all of those portfolios and also brought a wealth of expertise in federal-provincial relations.

That explains why his contributions to the Senate are nothing short of impressive.

He chaired and was an executive member of many committees, including, until now, the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance. From my standpoint, he is the exemplary chairperson who would always make room for all senators attending to ask their questions, who would be courteous with all witnesses and would make sure that each one of them, whatever their status or opinions, was respected and free to express their views.

[Translation]

You've always demonstrated your commitment to New Brunswick by strengthening its place and influence within a united Canada. Senator Mockler, you have always been a proud representative of the Senate of Canada in its essential mission of protecting the rights of minorities and the regions, as well as a staunch supporter of official language minority communities and the francophonie. This willingness to act for the common good led you to transcend party lines and to support what you thought to be fair, equitable and in everyone's best interest.

At this difficult time, when cynicism toward elected officials and institutions prevails around the world, you serve as a role model and an antidote to such cynicism. In the 18 years you served as an MLA and a minister in New Brunswick and in your 15 years in the Senate, you have always fulfilled your responsibilities with dignity, maintained the confidence of your constituents and never embarrassed them by behaving inappropriately or unethically.

[English]

In short, Senator Mockler always stayed true to his roots and values. He never forgot where he came from and why he came to the Senate.

On behalf of all members of the Independent Senators Group, I salute your public service and your outstanding work in this institution. Antonine Maillet's larger-than-life character, La Sagouine, would agree that you have earned your laurels. Congratulations and all the best to you and your loved ones, Senator Mockler.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Larry W. Smith: Honourable senators, today, as we reflect upon and recognize the remarkable contributions of the Honourable Percy Mockler, not only during his time in the Senate but throughout his entire career, I also rise to offer brief remarks on behalf of the Canadian Senators Group.

Senator Mockler's list of accomplishments is extensive. Colleagues before me have done an exemplary job of highlighting them, so I will focus my remarks on the man himself.

Over a decade ago, Senator Mockler, or "Percy Brown," as I affectionately refer to him at times, welcomed me to this place as a newly appointed senator. He played an instrumental role in helping me to navigate the inner workings of Parliament Hill, for which I am grateful.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Throughout our years of service, particularly on the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, I personally witnessed Senator Mockler's deep commitment to improving the lives not only of New Brunswickers, but of all Canadians. Constantly and without fail, he reminded us, colleagues, of our common objectives of transparency, accountability, reliability and predictability when it comes to holding the government to account and ensuring that we fight for all Canadians, from coast to coast to coast.

[English]

Senator Mockler is also a key team player in every sense. His leadership style prioritizes inclusiveness and consensus building, ensuring that every voice around the table is heard and accounted for. He listens and then listens some more before making decisions. It is this type of leadership that is needed today more than ever, and it will be sorely missed.

Finally, the humility and compassion in Senator Mockler's approach to people reflect the spirit of his upbringing in New Brunswick. He is keen to acknowledge all support staff, both those at the forefront and those behind the scenes, who make this institution function. His kindness has left a lasting impression on not only senators but the staff throughout the Senate.

[Translation]

Everyone in this place will miss Senator Mockler's leadership, diplomacy and enthusiasm for making Canada a better place for everyone. However, I hope that we can still aspire to implement what he has left us, by working on behalf of all Canadians.

[English]

Thank you for your service to New Brunswick. Thank you for your service to Canada. On behalf of all my colleagues in the Canadian Senators Group, I wish you well in a well-deserved retirement.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

Hon. Clément Gignac: Today, on behalf of the Progressive Senate Group and myself, I'd like to join others in paying tribute to an exceptional colleague who is about to retire, the Honourable Percy Mockler.

My first encounter with Senator Mockler was in the fall of 2021, shortly after I was sworn in to the Senate. We quickly discovered a mutual affinity. Indeed, we had both been active in provincial politics as MLAs and ministers. In addition to that, we had, and still have, a great friend in common, the Honourable

Jean Charest. The former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and former premier of Quebec spoke very highly of Senator Mockler, alluding to his tremendous kindness and generosity, and how right he was.

Over time, a beautiful friendship — a close bond, really — developed between us. Right from that first meeting, I was charmed by his warm welcome, his unpretentiousness and his dedication to his New Brunswick community and his family. Premier Higgs' presence here today is a testament to how much his constituents appreciate his commitment to his community. I know that many of them are also watching us live on SenVu.

When I became a member of the National Finance Committee, Senator Mockler explained to me his role and philosophy as committee chair: a non-partisan, collegial approach. As Chair of the National Finance Committee since 2017, Senator Mockler has led over 300 meetings, called over 1,000 different witnesses, seen many ministers come and go, and tabled 55 reports in this chamber. After 25 years of service, he is one of the longest serving senators, with the exception of Senator Day.

Senator Mockler, I was particularly impressed by your sense of duty when I saw how you kept the work of the National Finance Committee, including the current Liberal government's agenda, moving along well, despite your personal convictions and political affiliation. As one of my colleagues mentioned, you're a wonderful example of respect and political neutrality, two values that should always guide Senate committee chairs. Ever courteous, you always gave your committee colleagues the privilege of asking the witnesses their first questions before you asked your own. As Senator Smith also mentioned, all of my committee colleagues will remember the four key words you used to wrap up your meetings: transparency, accountability, reliability and predictability.

Your departure will be a great loss for the National Finance Committee, and I, personally, will really miss you because you have been a mentor to me on many occasions.

In closing, Senator Mockler, you will leave an indelible mark through your dedication, community involvement and sense of duty.

My dear friend Percy, thank you for your friendship and mentoring. Take care of yourself, your wife Suzanne, your four children and seven grandchildren. Happy retirement.

[*English*]

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a cherished friend, esteemed colleague and truly remarkable individual, the Honourable Senator Percy Mockler, as he prepares to take his official retirement from the Senate of Canada on April 14, 2024.

Prior to the Senate, Percy Mockler was a widely respected political leader as a member of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, having first been elected in 1982 as the youngest MLA in New Brunswick. He served as Minister responsible for

La Francophonie and Minister responsible for Service New Brunswick, to name two of the many leadership roles he has held.

Most of us know him for his public life and service as a Senate colleague, but we also know him to be very passionate about many other organizations and issues, working behind the scenes to help causes near and dear to his heart. He has received numerous awards and accolades, most deserving of his selfless service and great big heart.

In January of 2009, Percy and I — along with several other colleagues — began this chapter of our lives as senators after being appointed by former prime minister Stephen Harper. Fast-forward to 2024. As he prepares to retire from our upper chamber, it is no exaggeration to state that Senator Percy Mockler has had a profound influence in our national and Senate Conservative caucuses, at Senate committees and in this very chamber.

On a personal note, I don't know a life on Parliament Hill without Percy Mockler. Over the years, you have inspired me in so many ways. Your words of encouragement gave me great comfort and assurance, and I always knew how much you cared about the people in your life, including me, your deputy leader. Your confidence in me has always meant so much. Percy Mockler's love of country, politics and people has guided him over the course of his illustrious decades-long career. He often spoke of his humble roots, which certainly shaped his admirably humble character, his deep empathy and compassion for humanity, his work ethic and his steadfast loyalty to the team.

He has created lasting relationships with so many people throughout his career. Percy Mockler has a special way of making each person feel like they matter, as he takes the time to get to know them and show them how much he truly cares, be it with his colleagues, or to staff on or beyond Parliament Hill, as evidenced by the presence of Ian Brown, one of the staff at Sheraton — where we live, Percy, when we are in Ottawa — who wanted to pay respects on behalf of the Sheraton staff to Percy Mockler in person. Senator Mockler, you are one of the greatest champions of your beloved New Brunswick and a model Canadian.

Best wishes as you embark on this next chapter of your life with Suzanne and your loving family surrounding you, and please know that you are leaving behind a lasting legacy that will long be remembered.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I feel a little sad as I rise today to pay tribute to our colleague, Senator Percy Mockler, who is retiring on April 14 after 15 years in the Senate.

• (1430)

I was delighted when Prime Minister Harper appointed Percy to the Senate. The Senate was the forum he deserved to show his parliamentary professionalism on the federal stage.

I'm sure that members of this chamber would agree that his chairing of the National Finance Committee and the many speeches he gave in this place clearly illustrated that professionalism.

Percy is a career parliamentarian devoted to the Progressive Conservative Party. He spared no effort as an organizer to ensure the party's success provincially and federally.

In addition to his 15 years in the Senate, Percy also achieved distinction through his long career as an MLA and minister of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick from 1982 to 1987 and from 1993 to 2009.

I confess, honourable senators, that I was responsible for Percy's brief absence from provincial politics. However, the thing that we disagreed over at the time later brought us together for the greater good of our region's residents.

I'd even go so far as to proudly say that we've become good friends over these past 15 years in the Senate. I'm proud of our friendship and very proud of Senator Mockler's success.

Honourable senators, 36 years as a parliamentarian is a feat in itself — no matter what, it's a feat.

Percy owes his accomplishments to his tenacious advocacy, to his personal value system and to the unconditional support that his wife Suzanne and his children have provided all these years.

I have mixed feelings about his retirement. I'm sad that he's leaving this chamber, but I'm glad that he'll finally get to spend quality time with his family, his grandchildren, and enjoy activities like fishing whenever he feels like it and relaxing at the camp.

I would like to end on a happy note.

You've probably heard Percy say "lâche pas la patate," which means "don't give up," but literally translates to "don't drop the potato." Certainly, anyone in the gallery from New Brunswick has heard him say that.

It's his favourite saying. I actually wonder whether he says this because of the many potato farmers in our region or whether it's a reference to the song by Zachary Richard, a Louisiana Acadian.

I've come to the conclusion that Zachary Richard was the one who borrowed from Percy to write his song, and that the real lyrics go like this.

[*English*]

I would only do this for you.

[*Translation*]

Don't you ever give up, Percy, don't you ever give up
One thing's certain, you're a great parliamentarian
Don't you ever give up
Don't you ever give up, Percy, don't you ever give up
One thing's certain, you've got other things to do
Don't you ever give up

Happy retirement, Percy.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Hon. Krista Ross: Honourable senators, that is quite an act to follow.

Like many of you, I rise today to pay tribute to our colleague Percy Mockler. He is someone who has never forgotten where he came from. Like many of you have highlighted, Percy has an outstanding career, one to be proud of. He has also been a mentor and guide to many of us from the East Coast.

Percy, from one New Brunswick senator to another, I want to bring the voice of your community and of those you have impacted to this chamber.

From Bud Bird, former mayor of Fredericton, former New Brunswick MLA and former MP:

He is, and ever has been, the true "happy warrior" in Canadian politics . . . maintaining good lines of respect and communication throughout the political process and recognizing that all are working to serve the same citizens. His quick wit and enthusiasm is contagious and lifts the spirits of those around him.

From Frank McKenna, New Brunswick's twenty-seventh premier, former MLA and former ambassador to the U.S.:

I remember well the election in 1982 with Senator Percy Mockler. I recall vividly a longtime legislative reporter, Joan Ganong, writing an article talking about the bright political future in store for Percy Mockler and Frank McKenna. Well Percy, that prophecy has come true for you — I'm still a work in progress. Congratulations.

From David Alward, New Brunswick's thirty-second premier and former consul general in Boston:

Percy was a mentor to me and other new MLAs, giving his time to show us the ropes . . . I expect Percy was a bit of a shock to the Chamber when he first arrived, continuing to serve constituents not unlike his role as an MLA.

And from Blaine Higgs, New Brunswick's thirty-fourth and current premier:

Senator Mockler has served New Brunswick for many years — starting from humble beginnings and maintaining that same energy as he fulfilled his service throughout his political career — even as a senator, with no pressure to be elected, he maintained his fervent commitment and dedication to the people he served.

Personally, at the chamber of commerce, when Senator Mockler called, the office was set aflutter, rushing to provide him with input and information on whatever piece of legislation was moving through the Senate.

[*Translation*]

I've always appreciated his willingness to reach out and to listen to the views of the people back home.

[*English*]

The business community has always recognized his concern for their success.

Thank you, Percy, for continuing your legacy of mentorship and freely giving your advice and guidance to me during my adjustment in this place. I would congratulate you on your retirement, Percy, but I'm not really sure you'll be able to sit still long enough to fully retire. Instead, I wish you all the best in your next chapter. Congratulations.

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, I also rise to pay tribute to our colleague Percy Mockler as he takes his retirement from this place.

As others have mentioned, Percy, you came to the Senate in 2009 with a strong — and I mean really strong — background in politics. We often have to be reminded that politics starts local, and you know and understand more than anyone the importance of what it means to be local. You served in the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, so you are also well aware of the direct impact of local politics.

Throughout your time as an MLA you held many portfolios, which exposed you to many aspects of day-to-day life for your constituents — certainly an asset to a big-picture thinker like you. Before that, of course, you were elected as president of your student council at Saint-Léonard. By the way, that was a great picture on Twitter.

I enjoyed working with you on the Agriculture Committee years ago, and I have enjoyed the opportunities we have had to travel together. There were also the many years we spent as neighbours on the fifth floor of the Victoria Building. It was always a pleasure to run into you in the hallways or waiting for the elevator. Your office has always been a warm one, a feeling that has been cultivated by you and your wonderful staff, who have been with you for so long. My best wishes to your staff also, especially Diane — and I don't like to pick favourites — but she's been with you since you first came to the Senate, and who — like you — warmly welcomed everyone who came to your office. Best wishes also to René and Yvon.

• (1440)

Percy often arrived at my office with Conservative MPs from New Brunswick to introduce me to them and tell me how great they were, and we always had a wonderful conversation. They were pretty great.

Percy, you are an example of how all politicians should act — be passionate about your political beliefs, but make friends with your political opponents. It is how you learn to compromise and get things done for Canadians.

Percy, we will miss you in this chamber. You have been so generous in sharing your thoughts and opinions, and I have always appreciated your ability to do so in such a gentle,

[Senator Ross]

measured and always passionate way. Marrying honesty with tact and politics but with a sense of humour is a skill not everyone possesses.

I wish you a wonderful retirement. I hope that you are able to relax and enjoy your time with your family. You have done so much for Canadians, particularly for the people of New Brunswick, during your tenure in Ottawa. You will now be able to enjoy all that your home province has to offer.

If you are ever in Nova Scotia visiting family, drop by for a visit. Our door is always open.

Thank you.

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, the appointment of Senator Mockler by Prime Minister Stephen Harper is remarkable when you consider that, in 2004, Mr. Mockler promoted Bernard Lord — not Mr. Harper — for the leader of the newly minted Conservative Party of Canada and organized for Belinda Stronach for the leadership contest.

The fact that we are lining up today to pay tribute to him more than 15 years after that appointment is testament not only to the ability of Mr. Harper to set aside any of this history, but to recognize in Percy someone of high character and merit who possessed an unwavering loyalty to the Conservative Party.

When he was appointed by Prime Minister Harper, Senator Mockler said:

I've always embraced the leadership of the prime minister. He has the leadership that I have always subscribed to, having a better Canada, having a Canada that will continue to lead in the world.

Out of the mouth of anyone else who had supported rivals of the prime minister in leadership contests, those words might have sounded disingenuous and expedient. No one could accuse Senator Mockler of that.

The Conservative Party, the Senate and Canada have been fortunate to have had him here for more than 15 years fighting for a better Canada, a Canada that will lead again in the world.

We have heard today — and we will hear again before we are finished paying tribute — about Percy's long, remarkable and accomplished history in New Brunswick politics as a savvy organizer, a hard-working Member of the Legislative Assembly and a respected cabinet minister. When he was appointed to the Senate, his colleagues in provincial politics could not say enough good things about him, but it's what your rivals say that's more interesting and tells you more about the man — and maybe they didn't want you there anymore.

I will quote the Liberal premier of New Brunswick at the time, Shawn Graham, who said:

I want to state publicly that it has been an honour serving with Percy Mockler.

I have to say that, over the years, while we may have had differences of opinion — and he has been a bit of a political conniver every once in a while — his heart is in the right place.

I doubt there's anyone here who has worked with Percy either as a colleague or a rival over the years that has ever doubted where his heart is.

"Irreplaceable" was a word often used by his provincial colleagues when he left there to come here, and now it's our turn to echo that sentiment.

Percy, it's been a privilege and an honour serving with you in the Conservative caucus over these many years. Your even keel, your generous spirit, your complete lack of artifice, your principled and devout loyalty to making your province and our country a better place along with your wisdom and your experience in the political trenches will be truly missed. You exhibit the true leadership qualities that we all respect — that of the highest integrity, wise counsel and a builder of coalitions and consensus.

I wish you and Suzanne all the best in the next phase, and I'm certain that will not be retirement as you have so much more to give.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, it's an honour for me to pay tribute to the Honourable Percy Mockler.

Senator Mockler's political achievements are well known. He was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick in 1982. Yes, I triple-checked the date. It was indeed 1982. Wow! As an MLA, Mockler quickly made a name for himself in New Brunswick's Progressive Conservative Party. When Premier Lord was elected in 1999, Percy Mockler soon became a minister.

Between 1999 and 2006, Percy Mockler served as Minister of Family and Community Services, Minister of Transportation, and Minister of Intergovernmental and International Relations. In 2008, Minister Mockler became Senator Mockler.

[*English*]

Appointed by Prime Minister Harper, Senator Mockler has been serving New Brunswickers, and all Canadians, with distinction in Canada's Upper Chamber.

I've had the honour to serve on the National Finance Committee with Senator Mockler since 2019. A major part of our work is to review the government's proposed spending in order to examine whether it is reasonable, takes into account value for money and will be effective in achieving its objectives. This is work we enjoy, and we both take it very seriously.

The success of our committee rests upon the leadership of our most capable chair. Senator Mockler has been chairing our committee with integrity, fairness and skill since 2017. Our

meetings are always well managed, extremely organized and relevant. If, one day, I have the honour of chairing a committee, Percy Mockler will be the model I look to for inspiration.

As our chair always reminds us, our committee is guided by four major principles or, as he puts it, one common denominator: transparency, accountability, reliability and predictability.

I would argue that Percy Mockler's life and career have also been guided by those same four principles. He is an outstanding parliamentarian, a seasoned politician and, as I understand it, a superstar in his native New Brunswick.

[*Translation*]

A man of the people, Percy Mockler always had his finger on the pulse. His round-table discussions and visits to Tim Horton's to chat with people became legendary and made him an exemplary senator.

[*English*]

Honourable colleagues, Senator Percy Mockler's life is one of unselfish public service. It is a life of great accomplishment, of political triumph and of human kindness. His deep appreciation for and contributions to Canada — from coast to coast to coast — are a testament to his legacy.

[*Translation*]

Dear Percy, after more than 40 years of public life, I wish you a well-deserved retirement. You have many reasons to be proud of the legacy you leave behind. Thank you.

[*English*]

Thank you for all that you have done.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Honourable senators, it is my turn to take a few minutes to bid a fond farewell to my friend, the Honourable Percy Mockler. You may have noticed that I didn't use the word "retirement" and that was intentional because, from what I understand, our friend isn't ready for that stage of life yet.

Given his reputation as an active individual, seasoned politician and great political organizer for the New Brunswick Progressive Conservative Party, neither you nor I would be surprised to one day learn that he has found another way to continue to serve. In any case, that is what I hope for the man who gave me such a warm welcome when I arrived in the Senate in 2012.

Even though we are no longer part of the same caucus, I can say that I appreciated every opportunity that I had to work with the Honourable Senator Mockler, whether on the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance or the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages. Thank you, Percy, for your friendship and advice and for keeping such an open mind about my opinions.

To all the younger and more recently appointed senators less familiar with him, I'd say that the person leaving us has a very uncommon past. Other senators have talked to you about him already, but when Wikipedia includes the moniker "politician" beside your name to describe your occupation, it definitely means that politics has been at the core of your existence, at least for the past 42 years.

Personally, I'm impressed that our friend Percy had the tremendous good fortune to work with some of the greatest prime ministers and premiers, like Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper in Ottawa and Bernard Lord in New Brunswick.

Under the banner of the Progressive Conservative Party of New Brunswick, the Honourable Percy Mockler was elected in 1982, 1993, 1995, 2003 and 2006.

• (1450)

That makes for quite a few campaigns under his belt, and those are just the ones he won. He was an organizer in many others, both provincially and federally, but one doesn't always win in politics. I'm a great example of that.

However, in my friend's case, I can't help but tease him by reminding him that, after his first term as an MLA, he was defeated in 1987 by none other than Senator Pierrette Ringuette, who became the first francophone woman to sit in the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. Let's be honest. Fortunately for Percy Mockler, Senator Ringuette soon decided to enter federal politics under the Liberal banner, and our friend was able to win back his riding. He went on to hold just about every major ministerial portfolio in New Brunswick, including solicitor general.

To sum up, there's been no shortage of special moments, wonderful encounters and high-profile recognition for Senator Mockler's political and social endeavours throughout his political career. In closing, I'd like to remind him that there's life after the Senate. Percy, I won't wish you a happy retirement, because that's not what you want to hear. I'll just say, "See you soon, my friend."

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Michèle Audette: *Tshinashkumitin*, honourable senators.

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

Like everyone else, I rise today to pay tribute to my colleague, Senator Percy Mockler — honourable in this chamber, but also in the heart of this Innu woman and Quebecker. The first time I met you here in the Senate, I could tell right away what a diplomatic and curious person you were.

To me you are a man of diplomacy, loyal to his group, but respectful toward everyone in this wonderful chamber. You're also interested in learning about Indigenous cultures and Indigenous peoples. Every time we would speak on these issues, I could see the spark in your eyes, and that meant a lot to me.

Whenever I needed advice, because we all need mentors, whenever I turned to you, you always listened carefully and were very sensitive and forthright. Thank you. That always helped me to better understand the dynamics of the Senate.

I had the opportunity to stand in for my colleague and friend, Senator Gignac, on the National Finance Committee, which you chair. There again I noticed how your leadership brings people together. You were very attentive to us and very professional. I commend you for that.

I really wish that there were more people like you, that there were many more Percy Mocklers. We need people who really like politics, and I know that we all love what we do, but it is also just as important not to hide behind political lines. You were a good example of that. We need people like you in Canada. People like you help us, and I'm almost not new here any more, to have confidence in the system and to trust people like you.

I hope that trust will be reciprocal. In Innu law, we refer to that as reciprocity. Everyone has talked about what you have done, your major accomplishments, with love and great pride. I won't sing because that isn't my forte. Congratulations for all of that. To me, those things, the big accomplishments in your life, were important, but they leave a legacy that we now have a responsibility to maintain. You always remained a simple, compassionate and humble individual. For me, humility and integrity are very important values in politics, and you are a shining example of them. Thank you, dear colleague and friend. *Tshinashkumitin*. I will send you off with some tea from my home in Labrador and a small wooden pen, which will last a long time. I will also give you a candle, of course, so that we are always enlightened by your wisdom. *Tshinashkumitnau*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Colleagues, it's my turn to say a few words for our friend Percy Mockler, who has had an impressive career, one so long that it makes you wonder whether Percy may have falsified his birth certificate and will really be 95 on April 14, not 75. Percy was appointed to the Senate on January 2, 2009, seven months before I myself entered this chamber. Percy and I became fast friends. With his legendary kindness, Percy welcomed me to the Senate with goodwill and enthusiasm. I realized that it was impossible not to fall under the spell of this pleasant, dynamic, jovial and extremely respectful man. The long list of senators who wish to pay tribute to him is a testament to the fondness many have for this remarkable individual.

Above all, Percy is a unique and outstanding ambassador. His career trajectory is an impressive record of service to his community. Any time he was outside New Brunswick, our friend Percy was always an ambassador for the province he loves so much. Did you know that Senator Mockler received special recognition for his outstanding contribution during the January 1998 ice storm by the cities of Saint-Hyacinthe and Belœil in Quebec? He also received a Canadian Red Cross citation for his involvement during the tsunami crisis in Asia. In December 2005, on the National Day of Romania, he was made a member of the Order of Great Friends of Romania. I personally witnessed Percy's talent for championing his province. In 2011, when the Senate had to sit until after Quebec's national holiday to pass special legislation, I invited Senators Comeau and

Mockler to attend the Saint-Jean-Baptiste festivities in Saint-Eustache. All the festival-goers had Quebec flags draped over their shoulders, and there was Percy, passing out little New Brunswick pins to everyone, singing his province's praises. That day, I realized not only that he had an enormous heart, but that his proud Acadian origin was deeply rooted within it.

Percy Mockler is the ambassador of life lived with zest, of happiness and of New Brunswick maple syrup. Percy has always insisted that New Brunswick's maple syrup is better than Quebec's maple syrup. The fact is, Percy, as I've often told you, the only year that maple syrup sold in New Brunswick was really the best was back in 2012, when 2,700 tonnes of syrup were stolen from Quebec and distributed in New Brunswick. Thanks for everything, Percy. I couldn't let you leave without giving you this little gift to remind you of Quebec's treasures: a can of the best maple syrup in the world, from Saint-Eustache. Thank you, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, sometimes circumstances and situations arise in our lives, or we cross paths with people who, for however long or fleeting our contact, leave us forever changed. When the impact is positive and inspiring, it is tremendous and powerful. This is how I would describe the way I and so many others have experienced our dear colleague and friend Percy Mockler.

Thank you for proudly remembering and reminding us of your roots and earliest memories of a life lived with economic, social and cultural challenges but also incredible opportunity to grow and apply the corresponding wisdom, grace and humility in the service of others and with the objective of not leaving anybody behind, especially those with the misfortune of fewer opportunities.

We gratefully thank you for always reminding us of the love and sacrifice of your mom, whose memory you honour through the vignettes you share, but also the corresponding love, sense of dignity and respect you demonstrate, whether for your wife, Suzanne, or for all other women with whom you interact.

I first met the Honourable Percy Mockler in my previous life, when I would appear before parliamentary committees as a witness. All of us who had such experiences often remarked upon his calm and dignified bearing and kind, compassionate treatment of all who appeared before him, regardless of their position, privilege, power or — even more significantly — lack thereof.

• (1500)

When I entered the upper chamber in 2016, Percy's generosity and kindness were immediate and welcomed. Many times, he took time out of his precious days and weekends to call or write to thank me for particular interventions, whether they were in the chamber, at committee, public presentations or media interviews. He is always extremely generous with his messages and encouragement.

As you have already heard from many others, as Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, he has championed financial accountability and integrity while also providing unflagging support for efforts to create a more just, fair and reliable economic system for all.

Percy, your deep compassion and humility are evident and ever-present. You truly are a man of and for the people, for your community, your constituency and for all of us — our country.

Senator Mockler, dear Percy, we all wish you the best as you venture into the next phase of your amazing life's journey. We wish you much well-deserved time to do all that makes you happy with Suzanne, your children and your immense circle of family, friends and supporters. I hope you count us all among them. *Meegwetch*. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Colin Deacon: Honourable senators, the Honourable Percy Mockler is a bright and unwavering beacon of kindness, respect, loyalty and humanity.

To say that Percy will be deeply missed by us all doesn't even come close. Recently, Her Honour asked Senator Mockler, Senator Cordy and me to join her on a special visit to the British and Irish Parliaments. Percy's inquisitive and unceasingly respectful manner was evident in every meeting, and his insightful questioning of the implications of generative AI in our lives impressed global experts to no end. As an aside, last night, Her Honour hosted an event on AI, and like an Olympic-level athlete, Percy was pushing through the tape, questioning Yoshua Bengio, one of the world leaders on how to use AI responsibly. This man never stops.

This trip with Her Honour provided me a long-overdue chance to learn about Percy's childhood and early career. As an early teen, Percy's first goal was for his mother to have running water and an indoor toilet, because Marie Mockler's one-room house didn't have plumbing.

So, while most kids his age were playing, Percy worked at the local mill on the weekends, and the money he saved went to Cody's Hardware Store in his hometown of Saint-Léonard. Percy made a down payment and negotiated a deal to pay the remaining amount over time. As a result, this young teen delivered a convenience to his mother and sister that the rest of us simply take for granted.

Mr. Cody was so impressed by Percy that he eventually offered to renegotiate the deal so that Percy could pay off the remaining amount working at Cody's Hardware Store on weekends. This enabled Percy to continue to advance his studies in nearby Edmundston and Moncton.

Senator Mockler has spent his life searching for ways to improve the lives of others and deliver dignity to the least fortunate among us. He did this through countless community- and business-building efforts across New Brunswick, but also by championing simple changes in language and program design. For example, some may think that moving away from the concept of welfare and toward that of income support seems inconsequential — but not our colleague. Senator Mockler reflexively respects the dignity of the least powerful among us, as he does with all of the premiers, prime ministers and presidents whom he has met.

Percy, I can only imagine how relieved Suzanne and your family are that your 8-hour, 9-hour, 12-hour drives each way, back and forth, between your hometown and Ottawa each week, are coming to an end. And I can only imagine how thrilled you are to no longer miss cherished activities with your grandchildren. But one thing is for certain: Your presence will continue to echo in this chamber as we continue to ask ourselves, “What would Percy do? What would Percy say?” Thank you, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, it is, indeed, an honour to rise to say a few words about our friend Senator Percy Mockler. Indeed, I have considered him to be the grand gentleman of the Senate.

As a new senator, I received a lot of wise counsel from you on a range of issues, and I see that you have been a mentor to many others. We all thank you for that. You invited me, many times, to come to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, even when I was not a member, and you always ensured that I got to ask a question. More than that, sir, you taught me — you taught us — that one does not have to shout and yell to be effective: You can simply be wise, thoughtful, humble, respectful, kind and encouraging to have your voice heard and, most importantly, to be an effective senator. For this lesson, I thank you enormously.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, in January 2009, when I was summoned to this august place, I was obviously excited, as all of you have been, but not more excited than I was when I saw on the list that the legendary Percy Mockler was being summoned at the same time. I say “legendary” because, as a young political Conservative organizer in Montreal and Quebec, Percy Mockler was larger than life. Indeed, he was a legend.

I remember receiving a phone call from one of my friends, whom you know very well, and he said, “Leo, it is amazing that you are going to be a senator, but it’s more amazing that you will be sitting in that chamber with Percy Mockler.” And I said, “I’m pissing on myself; I can’t believe it.”

So I arrived here, and, of course, the legendary Percy Mockler walked in, and in a very short period of time he became Senator Mockler. He also became “Percy,” and I’m proud and honoured to say that he became a friend, mentor and political confidant. It meant a lot to me, and I learned a lot from you, Percy. Everyone knows this, and I am stating the obvious, but the truth of the matter is that in Quebec and Montreal, when we young Tories got

together after class in university, or after some door-to-door during election campaigns in 1984 and 1988, and we wanted to know where the political winds were blowing, everyone would say, “Has anyone called Percy Mockler?” That stands today.

The other thing that without a doubt has to be highlighted is that I learned a lot from Percy Mockler — the person. We all know about the legend. But he taught me what it means to be a decent senator and a decent advocate for the people you represent. The truth is he has been an unparalleled voice.

[*Translation*]

He has been a strong voice for French Canadians, a strong voice for Saint-Léonard, New Brunswick, a strong voice for this country’s founding language and a strong voice for Conservative principles, which he has faithfully championed for many years.

You were always a role model in all of these things, and I hope to keep working to become a voice for them too.

[*English*]

You also said to me, senator, on many occasions, that you don’t know who a man is until you know what they stand for. Of course, I just highlighted some of the things you stood for, and tributes have been pouring out from everyone with respect to what you stood for, but you taught me something else, and you did not do so through just words and gestures. You did so through action, and you are a model for it. You also taught me that the essence of a man is determined when he does not forget where he comes from. Throughout your time in politics, as a minister at the highest level of government, in this institution, you were the strongest voice for where you came from — for the underprivileged people, the weak voices, the people in Canada who sometimes did not feel that they had a voice in the other place. That is a credit to who you are, and that is a model for all of us of what this institution is all about. I thank you for teaching me that. I will try to carry on that tradition.

I will say this: In my eyes, you came into this place as a legend — Senator Mockler, Percy, a good friend — and I will tell you that the legend of Percy Mockler will live on forever.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Colleagues, today I have the honour of paying tribute to our colleague, the Honourable Percy Mockler, who is taking a well-deserved retirement after 15 years as a senator.

Senator Mockler’s remarkable journey in his home province of New Brunswick is one of the most striking testaments to his dedication to his community. He was first elected to the legislative assembly in 1982. As minister responsible for several portfolios, he left an indelible mark on New Brunswick’s political landscape.

• (1510)

Outside of his government duties, Senator Mockler has also been a pillar of his community, getting involved in a multitude of local organizations and initiatives, demonstrating his deep attachment to his homeland and fellow citizens.

His dedication to public service continued to shine through his work in the Senate. As an active member of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, he worked to promote and protect the country's linguistic diversity. His role as parliamentary secretary to the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* demonstrates his commitment to the French-speaking world and international cooperation.

For my part, I'll always remember my four years alongside Senator Mockler, who chaired our National Finance Committee meetings, where I learned a great deal about the art of running a Senate committee meeting.

At every meeting, like a well-rehearsed refrain, he reminded us of the committee's four sacred principles, which some of our colleagues have already mentioned this afternoon.

[*English*]

I remember his persuasiveness in recruiting me to serve on the committee. I told him that sitting on that committee was like watching paint dry. "Since you know that," he said, "that makes you the perfect candidate." Take that, Senator Marshall.

[*Translation*]

Senator Mockler proudly embodies New Brunswick, but above all, he bears a deep love for Acadia. His passion for his province and its culture manifests in everything he does. Everyone in this chamber will miss his vibrant Acadian energy.

His incredible sense of humour and inspiring leadership never failed him, despite his many responsibilities. His style, a blend of seriousness and levity, drew together and inspired everyone who had the privilege of working with him.

Today, as we salute Senator Mockler for his long and illustrious political career, we also want to thank him for his kindness, generosity and dedication. His example will keep inspiring future generations to serve their country with honour and integrity.

Thank you, Percy, for your invaluable contribution to this institution and to our country. May your retirement be filled with happiness, health and serenity.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Hon. David Richards: Honourable senators, he was the first to welcome me into the Senate of Canada when he met me in the lounge of the Fredericton International Airport. He was, of course, a legend in New Brunswick and an accomplished senator. But the first thing that I noticed about the man — as I hadn't met him before — was his quality of graciousness and simplicity, and noticeable easy affection for others around him. It's a

characteristic trait that was sincere and which deepened over time. He has held so many portfolios in New Brunswick that it would be difficult to name them all here.

On the day I first met him, he was already a mainstay in the theatre of New Brunswick and Canadian politics. He was Solicitor General, Minister of Human Resources Development and Housing, Minister of Family and Community Services, Minister of Transportation and Minister of Intergovernmental and International Relations. He was an advocate for Acadian rights, a champion of the French language and — I will say — a champion of the underdog and the forgotten his entire life.

Of course, his work in the Senate includes the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, and he was a member of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*. So many avenues of excellence and so many obligations to the betterment of Canada and his fellow Canadians, and rarely would we hear this from him. His life of service has been underplayed because of his own humility and his hard-won integrity. He worked long hours and used part of his first student loan to put a bathroom in his mother's home. He came from the background of the working poor that never has to be explained to any New Brunswicker.

In the most important ways, he has never strayed from this loyalty, knowing the intrinsic value of all people. In a certain definitive way, Percy Mockler has — all his life — been a patron and a mentor, and it seemed like, from the first day I was fortunate enough to speak with him, in some conclusive way, and for all that he has tried to do, all people will be in his care. Thank you, sir.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, my friend.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, it's raining today in Ottawa because our dear friend, the Honourable Percy Mockler, is leaving the Senate. However, the sun is shining in New Brunswick.

[*English*]

One of the first conversations I had after my appointment to the Senate was with my closest friend from high school. She said to me, "Congratulations, Pat. You always helped me in high school social studies. So, what do you do exactly?"

Well, I'm still learning what a senator does. It may not be instinctive for those of a certain age with some experience in politics to seek advice from others; however, that is what I did. I asked questions and observed. Quickly, I learned that there was no better mentor in this august place than Senator Percy Mockler.

Honourable senators, Percy has always had a certain dignity, a sense of protocol and a quiet presence with which he has conducted himself.

One of my very best experiences here was serving on the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance as a rookie senator under Senator Mockler's leadership. He would always be inclusive and encouraging, and freely offer his guidance. I will forever remember one particular meeting where I asked a question during a discussion about funding for employment programs, linking it with workers' compensation boards and asking about including safety training as part of the employment education curriculum.

Later, in the Senate antechamber, Percy shared with me:

That was a good question, and you got an answer from the witness, *sénatrice*. You should put that on your social media.

I treasured that advice as much as I have treasured it when I have been off track and received his gentle guidance through a slightly raised eyebrow across the room from the chair.

His advice to me shows his essence and that he never lost the perspective of the common people. As Rudyard Kipling said in his poem *If*—:

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch

Percy has never lost his common touch or his ability to walk with and provide sound, wise advice and sober second thought to kings and country.

How could we begin to thank our dear colleague? Expressions of gratitude start with family and friends who have loaned you to us in your service to New Brunswick and to all of Canada.

May I offer my heartfelt thanks to all of them and, most especially, to you, Percy. Senator Mockler, I will forever treasure your sage advice to continue always to seek the wisdom of the people and always to represent my region. Most of all, today, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to your family, your friends and to you, Percy. Your generosity and the gift of your presence and service to our country — like you — will never be forgotten.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much. *Mahsi'cho*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: Honourable senators, I have had the pleasure of serving with Percy Mockler for almost 25 years now, and it has been an honour of a lifetime to have him as a friend.

[Senator Duncan]

When you have someone like Percy Mockler in your corner, you're never alone. Senator Mockler has always made sure that I was never alone for any events in my political and personal life. Thank you, Percy.

Senators, my tribute is going to be a little different because I'm going to read the words of three people who touched Percy's life, and whose lives were also touched by Percy, starting with Premier Bernard Lord, who said, and I quote:

When I first met Percy Mockler, I was immediately impressed by his excellent interpersonal skills, intelligence, and passion for our province. What mattered to him was improving the lives of the people in the community he worked for.

Very few people in Canada have had such a long and varied career in the public service as Percy Mockler has. He is extremely well-respected and a man of the highest integrity. He has served his country, province and community for over 40 years.

I am delighted to join you in thanking Senator Mockler for his contribution and wish him a happy retirement from parliamentary life. Sincerely, Bernard Lord.

• (1520)

[*English*]

And now on behalf of the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, he shares the following:

From humble roots, Senator Mockler's journey through life reminds us all that in Canada, with passion, relentless hard work, and dedication, we are only limited by our imagination.

I can still remember that day in December 2008 when I called Percy to ask him to sit as a Senator from New Brunswick. He responded: "I would be honoured to accept, and let me tell you, from my little house in Saint-Léonard, that I will continuously work to make my country a better place to live, to work, to raise a family and to help the most vulnerable." In the years since he stood true to his word.

Percy, on this day of your retirement from the Senate of Canada, I want to congratulate you on a job well done. You can take great pride in having touched the lives of so many of your fellow Canadians, and contributed to building a stronger country for those who will follow you.

Laureen and I thank you for your friendship and service and wish you and your wife Suzanne all the very best for the years to come.

Sincerely,

Stephen Harper

Finally, for the last one, Senator Mockler's office received the following letter from the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, which is dated February 20. Nine days before his passing, he took the time to salute his very good friend Percy Mockler.

Dear Percy,

During the course of two leadership campaigns, and two general election campaigns, you proved to be a tireless, exceptional organizer, and wise counsellor, crucial to my success in New Brunswick. But, above all else, you are a true, steadfast, and loyal friend, and Mila and I love you and your family enormously.

[*Translation*]

Your service to the Senate has been a credit to you, your country and your beloved New Brunswick. So, Percy, I'd like to pay tribute to you by saying, thank you. Thank you for all you've done for me and for Canada. I'll always be grateful for your friendship and proud of your support. Years go by, but some things are unforgettable, and our friendship is one of them.

My sincere congratulations, my dear Percy, on your well-deserved retirement, and I wish you all the best in this new chapter. Sincerely, Brian Mulroney.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Percy Mockler: Senator MacDonald, you haven't lost your touch at doing a dance.

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Senator Mockler: Your Honour, I want to say this to each and every person here: Don't give up.

Colleagues, this is undoubtedly a special day for me. This is my last speech in a chamber that I love and that I will always love.

I must admit that I am both nervous and emotional. I want to thank the leaders and each and every one of you, honourable senators, for your kindness and comments.

Your Honour, before I begin my speech — which, I must say, was very difficult to put down on paper — please allow me to send a message to a special someone in Moncton, New Brunswick. My granddaughter, Ézakielle, is celebrating her ninth birthday today. Papi and Mamie will come see you dance and will be with you soon.

Your Honour, thank you for the opportunity to acknowledge the many people in the gallery of the Senate of Canada and those listening online. In particular, I would like to thank Lorraine Soucy, Suzanne's sister. The Soucy family has also been

instrumental in shaping my career. Lorraine and family, thank you. I see you with your two children, and I have seen other family members. Thank you for being here.

I would like to share some highlights from the beginning of my journey as a parliamentarian serving the public.

I was born to a single mother in the small town of Saint-Léonard, New Brunswick, on April 14, 1949. My mother had two children, Shirley and Percy. We lived with our grandparents and yes, we were all on what was then called welfare.

I must admit that I never imagined I would be standing before you this afternoon to deliver a speech in the Senate of Canada as a senator from New Brunswick, appointed by Prime Minister Harper, the 874th senator of Canada since Confederation. Colleagues, my mother, Marie, often told me and my sister that, to get off welfare, we had to go to school and get a high school diploma if we could. I think that was her way of telling us that we needed to pursue our education and respect the people around us.

My mother often said that only the good Lord can take away what you have between your ears — to go further you need a diploma.

I have to say that I quickly understood that I needed to build bridges and form friendships and those would be essential tools for the future. They are tools in the toolbox.

I'll also admit that I used my first student loan to bring water and sewer services to our little house. At the time, my mother thought that I had moved on when I went to college.

During the first 18 years of our lives, my sister and I always got food hampers at Christmas and Easter. Our family was very grateful for the generosity of our little town of Saint-Léonard toward the most vulnerable.

What's more, my grandmother and my mother often told us to give back to our community. That message was instilled in us growing up and there's no doubt in my mind that it became the spark that ignited my political and parliamentary career.

I started out on this path very early on. From 1965 to 1969, I was involved in student council at the Saint-Léonard high school. From 1969 to 1972, I served as a member or president of the student council at Collège Saint-Louis in Edmundston.

• (1530)

Between 1972 and 1974, I was at the Université de Moncton campus in Moncton, where I pursued my involvement in the student council alongside an MBA.

[*English*]

Honourable senators, it was 1970 to 1973 when I was asked to put in place an action committee to stop the transfer of our high school in Saint-Léonard to another town. People responded dramatically and remarkably, and the members of our committee knew that it would have been disastrous to lose our high school.

Believe you me, our public demonstrations were very compelling to the new government of the day, and they did change their mind.

[*Translation*]

I'd now like to talk about my life in politics from 1982 to 2008.

Dear friends and honourable senators, it wasn't until 1982 that I said yes and took the plunge into public life. As you've heard, my team ran in seven elections, winning six. I lost one of them. It was with great respect that I accepted the verdict of the people back home in 1987.

Your Honour, esteemed colleagues, I salute the first Brayonne woman elected to represent our northwestern region in the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. Honourable senators, I never would have thought that she and I would both become New Brunswick senators. To my fellow 1987 candidate, let me once again congratulate you on your journey as a parliamentarian. I'm proud to tip my hat to you once again, Speaker pro tempore.

[*English*]

Your Honour, honourable senators, I was reminiscing in the last two weeks and couple of months. I will admit to you that, yes, my political life of more than five decades was certainly shaped by leaders who, one, understood dealing with people; two, understood politics and being independent; and three, understood partisanship. I want to share with you that I have learned to work with some of the best leaders of my time. I think of premier Louis J. Robichaud, premier Richard Hatfield and one of the youngest elected premiers in New Brunswick, premier Bernard Lord, as a Conservative. I think of prime ministers like the late prime minister Brian Mulroney, prime minister Stephen Harper and prime minister Jean Chrétien.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, honourable senators, I also want to thank you for the many touching messages I just heard from so many of you and from the Senate leaders. Thank you so much for your tremendous generosity.

I'm sharing some highlights with you today, and I'm turning the page on another chapter of my public life, which really began over 57 years ago, not to mention that I was only 18 at the time.

To my great surprise, I had the opportunity to meet a premier whom my mother and grandmother greatly appreciated, the honourable senator and former premier of New Brunswick, Louis J. Robichaud, in 1967 in our region, northwestern New Brunswick.

At home, I often heard my grandmother and mother say the following:

You can go to college, Percy, because with equal opportunity for all, you'll be entitled to scholarships to go to college in Edmundston.

That's the path that my grandmother and my mother had envisioned for me.

[Senator Mockler]

I must admit that I never thought this was the beginning of a great career in active politics. Believe me, I have no regrets.

Yes, 1967 was a turning point in the life of Percy Mockler and in my political career.

[*English*]

Your Honour, dear colleagues, before I conclude, before I speak about my journey and life in politics, it is appropriate to begin with a very special thank you that I want to share with you. As I continue to share comments, suggestions or observations in five decades of life in politics, it is now appropriate to recognize and say thank you to many people who have impacted my road map in serving the public.

My first thank you goes to my partner, my spouse —

[*Translation*]

— the love of my life, Suzanne. There is no doubt in my mind: Our family and political pilgrimage over a little more than 51 years of marriage, and counting, wouldn't have been possible without Suzanne.

There is no question that none of this would have been doable without her in my life since our high school days in Saint-Léonard in 1967-68.

Still, I admit that I missed some sports activities, like hockey with the three boys, Shawn, Kevin and Jessy, during their years at home.

I also have to admit that when our daughter Cindy took part in plays or cheerleading and did her best Spice Girls impression, Percy wasn't always there, but Suzanne was.

To my children, thank you for understanding, and thank you for the legacy you gave me when you made me a grandfather. It's the most important title I have, and I'll continue to wear it with pride and love.

I'd like to share a little story with you. On June 24, 1986, Princess Anne of England visited Madawaska Weavers in Saint-Léonard, the same day that Suzanne gave birth to our daughter. That's why Cindy is named Cindy Anne Mockler.

Fifteen years or so later, Cindy said to me:

Pap, I heard you once met Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

That's true. Then she asked me:

If he had been the one visiting Madawaska Weavers, would my name have been Cindy Boutros Boutros-Ghali Mockler?

That, honourable senators, is the kind of conversation and family event that we still laugh about today.

I confess that it is with pride and humility that I say the following to Suzanne: Thank you so much for tolerating my absence and for sharing me with the public. It was hectic from time to time, but, together, we gave it our best shot. Suzanne, for me and our family, you are the Rock of Gibraltar, in other words, a strong, reliable mother, grandmother and wife, an exceptional, extraordinary confidant. As we say in Saint-Léonard whenever I arrive on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday: Thank you, Mamzedoo.

Honourable senators, in the spirit of gratitude, I would be remiss if I did not thank the Right Honourable Stephen Harper for having placed his trust in me by recommending me for appointment as senator for New Brunswick in December 2008.

• (1540)

I always tried to do my best with regard to my responsibilities as a senator. If I may, I'd like to talk about a few of the issues that the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper managed so successfully, issues that influenced and will continue to influence our history.

The people of Canada will always remember the major projects under the Harper government.

[English]

Yes, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada that was officially established on June 1, 2008, with the purpose of documenting the history and lasting impact of the Canadian Indian residential school system.

[Translation]

Second, it's important to remember that it was your government, Prime Minister Harper, that recognized Quebec as a nation.

At the same time, you recognized Acadians as the people of Acadia. These are issues that I followed very closely and that I appreciated enormously under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

In the same vein, I'd also like to acknowledge my good friend, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, who himself managed three major issues of importance to the people of Acadia.

Under his leadership, New Brunswick became a permanent government of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. We will always remember when New Brunswick's Bill 88 was enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, recognizing the equality of the two founding peoples, as debated by Premier Richard Hatfield and Senator Jean-Maurice Simard.

[English]

Let us remind ourselves also, as authentic Canadians, that we will not forget the creation of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, or ACOA, that has since become a magnanimous tool for creating and enhancing our economic development and quality of life in all of Atlantic Canada.

[Translation]

I also want to recognize another man who greatly influenced my political and parliamentary career, and that is Bernard Lord, who served as Premier of New Brunswick from 1997 to 2006.

He made me minister over several portfolios while he was in office. Together, we completed three big projects with the people of New Brunswick.

[English]

Building New Brunswick's Education and Early Childhood Development agenda that produced one of the best programs in all of Canada, building a more caring and compassionate society. An adoption program and a foundation that we entitled "Every child needs a family."

[Translation]

In 2002, we passed a new Official Languages Act in New Brunswick. I am grateful that the now late Louis J. Robichaud, who spearheaded the New Brunswick Equal Opportunity Program, was there with us when the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick passed that legislation.

At the same time, the Lord government gave New Brunswick its first cultural policy, something that our artists really needed.

Honourable senators, as a proud Acadian, Brayon and francophone, it was the greatest privilege of my life to represent my town of Saint-Léonard and Acadia. The Acadian flag is woven from the colours, customs, ways of speaking and stories of every little corner of Acadia and its people.

Through the customs of an Acadian woman from Saint-Louis-de-Kent like my long-time friend Senator Rose-May Poirier, or my friends Senator René Cormier from Caraquet and Senator Réjean Aucoin from Nova Scotia, we all make our own little contribution in this chamber. I'm certain that our Acadia is unique in the world and that it will continue to shine in this illustrious chamber through its representatives and with your help, honourable senators.

As for the work here in the Senate, I must admit that certain debates got a rise out of some of us, but we must never forget that our responsibilities as parliamentarians and senators are enshrined in the Canadian Constitution, while respecting the regions we represent from coast to coast to coast.

Of course, some of the most important debates for me concerned the medical assistance in dying bill, the cannabis bill, and the federal bill on modernizing the Official Languages Act, Bill C-13.

I salute Senators Cormier and Poirier for their leadership.

[English]

Your Honour, I have learned during this period in public life that people do not care who we are until they know what we care for.

I have been blessed in this chamber to have the opportunity to make so many friends and work with senators on both sides of the aisle. I have always said that friendship, loyalty, principle and commitment, you cannot buy that at Costco. It is always a work in progress.

I also remind myself that in public life, the shortest route between point A and point B is not always a straight line.

[*Translation*]

I want you to know that I never could have imagined that I'd be leaving the Senate of Canada as chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance.

I want to commend all the members of the committee for their outstanding dedication. I really appreciated you, and I learned what teamwork meant from you at our meetings, when we had to write reports that reflected our population's needs regarding the budget of Canada.

I'm proud to say that our reports had an impact on the government, which considered our recommendations, our observations and, in some cases, even our amendments to the Canadian budget.

[*English*]

Your Honour, as chair, we tabled 50-plus reports in the Senate Chamber. I constantly witnessed that all the senators on the Finance Committee have a common denominator — I call it "T.A.R.P." or transparency, accountability, reliability and predictability of the Canadian budget submitted by any government. We can improve it; I believe, yes, we can.

Consistently, I want to share with you, Senator Marshall is on the right track when her —

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Mockler: — when her and the committee members require from the government a better time frame to table the budget or table performance indicators, and we gave that message at my last meeting last night. It is about accountability for all at all times and to mitigate government performance regardless who forms a government.

As I conclude, honourable senators, I have been privileged to work with all of you and, no doubt, it is about people and politics. Independent or partisan, we must remember that we work in a democracy.

I have appreciated working with four leaders of my Conservative Party in the Senate: Senator Marjory LeBreton, Claude Carignan, Larry Smith and now Senator — leader — Don Plett. Each has their own style that I respect and have respected.

[Senator Mockler]

• (1550)

As for Senator Plett, my friend, I want to tell you that the toughest job in democracy is being the leader of the official opposition. But for you, Leader Plett, you remind me of the saying of Sir Winston Churchill, who once said:

. . . it is better to be both right and consistent. But if you have to choose — you must choose to be right.

There is no doubt in my mind you are right. Senator Plett, thank you for your leadership and your openness. Even though we all know you are not independent, at times you show us that you are rightly partisan. I respect that, and that's democracy.

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, we all know that we couldn't do the work we do in the Senate without the support of our staff. The exemplary dedication and professionalism of our political staff and those who work in administration are commendable. To all those who are here and who give us the support we need to do our work, I salute you. Thank you so much.

As the chair of two Senate standing committees, I've had the pleasure of working with many clerks, analysts and other support staff. I can't take the time to thank each one of you individually, but I do want to express my sincere thanks for all your advice and exemplary work for Canadians. I salute you. You are proud Canadians.

To all the Senate staff and Library of Parliament staff, thank you very much for your dedication and professionalism.

As for my staff, Diane Thériault-Michaud, Yvon Long, René "Moe" Sirois and Jean-Paul Soucy, I must admit that, without you, I wouldn't have been able to accomplish nearly as much politically for all Canadians and for New Brunswickers. You're amazing. Thank you for everything. I'm going to miss you so much, but please keep your cell phones on.

Thank you to all those who have played an important role in my journey.

To the people back home listening to us now, thank you for your support and cooperation all these years. You've always supported me, and together, we've always worked to make our region, our province and our country a better place to work, to live, to raise a family and to reach out to society's most vulnerable.

[*English*]

Your Honour, I did walk with the tallest in my political career, on many continents, but I will admit to you that I did work for the smallest in our communities.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, as part of my journey, my political and parliamentary road map, I have one thing to say to the people of Thériault, Sainte-Anne, Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, Siegas, Saint-Léonard, Saint-Léonard-Parent, Saint-André, Côte du Sault — and today, I'm including New Brunswickers in general and Canadians: Thank you for your invaluable support.

[English]

To my Conservative caucus, I will miss you. To all my colleagues, I will miss you, too.

I will miss the Senate, Your Honour. I was honoured and privileged to be here. I am leaving today knowing I have done my best in my work.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, if there is one thing that should never change in politics, it's the teamwork. Like a hockey team, each caucus and political party plays wearing its own team colours. However, the logo on all their jerseys is the Canadian maple leaf. They might be on different teams, but they have to work together, because every politician and every parliamentarian must have the same goal: to improve the quality of life of Canadians across the country.

Finally, Your Honour, thank you very much for everything. I salute you.

Here are my last words: Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Madeleine Antoine, Ghislaine Charles and Eddy Chéry. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Mégie.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the family of the Honourable Senator Oh.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1600)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Judith G. Seidman, Chair of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, presented the following report:

Thursday, April 11, 2024

The Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators has the honour to present its

SECOND REPORT

Your committee, which is responsible on its own initiative for all matters relating to the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators*, pursuant to rule 12-7(3) of the *Rules of the Senate*, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered:

- (a) to travel outside Canada; and
- (b) to engage the services of such counsel, technical, clerical and other personnel as may be necessary.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:05, section 1(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

JUDITH G. SEIDMAN

Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix A, p. 2586.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

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

HAIDA NATION RECOGNITION BILL

SEVENTEENTH REPORT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Brian Francis, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, presented the following report:

Thursday, April 11, 2024

The Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples has the honour to present its

SEVENTEENTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-16, An Act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation, has, in obedience to the order of reference of February 29, 2024, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

BRIAN FRANCIS

Chair

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

(On motion of Senator LaBoucane-Benson, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[*Translation*]

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO ENGAGE SERVICES AND TRAVEL—STUDY ON THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS SECTORS—SEVENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Leo Housakos, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, presented the following report:

Thursday, April 11, 2024

The Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications has the honour to present its

SEVENTH REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Thursday, February 10, 2022, to examine and report on the impacts of climate change on critical infrastructure in the transportation and communications sectors and the consequential impacts on their interdependencies,

respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered to:

- (a) engage the services of such counsel, technical, clerical and other personnel as may be necessary;
- (b) travel inside Canada.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:05, section 1(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

LEO HOUSAKOS

Chair

(*For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix B, p. 2594.*)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

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

[*English*]

QUESTION PERIOD

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, yesterday afternoon, Prime Minister Trudeau told the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference that he does not read memos. He testified that he is briefed verbally, either in person or on a secured phone. He said that's the only way to guarantee he gets necessary information. That's it, leader.

A year ago, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, testified before a House committee that he reads every single document that he is given. Well, it's easy to say that he reads everything when he is not given anything.

Leader, do you read written material? Do ministers read their documents? Is it widespread across the Trudeau cabinet that memos are not read, or is it just this incompetent Prime Minister who doesn't read them?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. With all respect, I think you mischaracterize what the Prime Minister said.

Senator Plett: No.

Senator Gold: Many documents come across the desk of the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister reads them as appropriate. It is also the case, as those of you who have experience in government would know, that security matters require many levels of analysis before they are brought forward to the Prime Minister's Office, much less to the Prime Minister's attention. There are circumstances, depending upon the volume, when it is totally appropriate and normal — not only in Canada but elsewhere — for the Prime Minister to be briefed verbally by his experts.

Senator Plett: He also says we mischaracterize and feel things differently.

We have also learned, through the Hogue inquiry, that the CSIS reports are treated with a grain of salt by the Prime Minister and by his staff and ministers. Our elections and institutions, including Canada's most important laboratory, are increasingly vulnerable to hostile foreign states, especially the Communist regime in Beijing.

Leader, why doesn't the Trudeau government trust its security agencies? Is it because they are telling him things that the Liberal Party does not want to hear?

Senator Gold: The government has enormous respect and trust in our institutions. However, anyone with any experience in security matters, or anyone who has worked within intelligence or taken the time to understand how it works, would understand that pieces of evidence and information that come forward have to be combined with others. Not every piece of information that's gathered by field agents within CSIS is necessarily going to be treated with the same level of seriousness. That's the nature of intelligence and the information that is gathered.

• (1610)

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Denise Batters: Senator Gold, after eight years of Justin Trudeau's leadership, everything is broken, including your judicial appointment process. At least five serious criminal cases were thrown out just in Toronto since last December, "... due to delays caused by the federal government's failure to promptly fill empty spots on the bench."

Those cases included human trafficking and two child sexual abuse cases. Last May, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada took the extraordinary step of warning Prime Minister Trudeau of this exact scenario if his government didn't appoint judges more quickly.

Ontario Superior Court Justice Code's recent ruling called the Trudeau government's seeming inability to appoint judges, "... an embarrassment to the administration of justice ..."

Federal judicial appointments are the one part impacting court delays that the Trudeau government alone directly controls. So when will they finally stop shirking their duty, pointing the finger and do the job that Canadians expect? Appoint judges so justice can be served.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. This government has made more judicial appointments than any other previous government in Canadian history and continues to appoint judges at an unprecedented rate. There are more judges sitting in Canada today than ever before in Canadian history. The Government of Canada made 100 judicial appointments last year, a number never attained by any previous government.

The government cares deeply about filling these positions and in providing justice in our system. That's why it has funded 116 new judicial positions since forming government. That means, of course, there are more positions to fill, but make no mistake, colleagues, there are more judges sitting today in Canada than ever in history. There are, indeed, multiple factors that contribute to court delays, and the government has called upon all players — including provinces and territories — to do their part to assist.

Senator Batters: I have challenged the Trudeau government on this failure for seven years. Judicial vacancies have continued to climb with now 65 positions unfilled. This fake feminist government touts their process and female judicial appointments, but now it is largely female victims being denied justice for the horrific crimes they've suffered. Judges are even ruling that the prime reason for these serious criminal charges being dropped is this government's failure to appoint judges. When will your government fill these vacancies to stop dangerous criminals being freed?

Senator Gold: It is always regrettable that there are vacancies in judicial positions that have the effect of triggering the principles the Supreme Court outlined, but, again, the government has appointed more judges, continues to work diligently and will continue to do so.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

SEAL HARVEST

Hon. Iris G. Petten: My question is to the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, as senators in the chamber are likely aware, our Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is working on a draft report on Canada's seal populations and their effect on Canada's fisheries. Our committee heard from Minister Lebouthillier on ways to promote our sealing industry against the backdrop of misinformation and disinformation spread by some so-called animal rights organizations including by marketing seals as a delicacy as we did previously with lobster.

What is the government doing in order to support this vital industry in my province and to Canada as a whole and to counter the dangerous rhetoric in these campaigns?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question and thank you for the work that the committee is doing to address this important question.

The government understands very well the importance as well as the harm that can come to communities unless the question of how the seal population is managed is done properly and sensitively, mindful of the economic consequences of those decisions, understanding the historical role of the sealing industry to communities, First Nations and others and also mindful of the impact that certain populations may have on fish stocks of other species.

It is a delicate but important balancing act that the government is continuing to work diligently on and looks forward to the report of the committee.

Senator Petten: Senator Gold, this idea to market seals as a delicacy has prompted backlash, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare, or IFAW, has put out a news release stating:

. . . Since the 1990s, Canada has wasted hundreds of millions of dollars trying to revive the commercial seal hunt. Most Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, and they don't want to see their tax dollars spent on harm to native wildlife.

What is your response to this clear misrepresentation of the facts?

Senator Gold: Senator Petten, thank you for your question. I am really not in the position to offer the government's response to that, but, once again, I think the government looks forward with interest to this study that the committee will be doing. As a former member of the committee, I can vouch for the quality and seriousness of its work and the government looks forward to receiving all of the recommendations.

PUBLIC SAFETY

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA— MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Hon. Kim Pate: Senator Gold, on February 26, I asked how Correctional Service Canada, or CSC, spent some \$46 million earmarked for external mental health beds given that no new beds were contracted and that CSC had not responded to Senate committee questions about this funding. On February 28 and 29, barely two weeks after appearing to reaffirm the existence of this funding to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, CSC wrote to the Legal and Finance Committees that they had actually received no such funding.

Thank you, Senator Gold, for the inquiries that you made. They are well appreciated. But given that CSC has only further obfuscated this situation, will you inquire again to resolve this apparent contradiction?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, senator, for your question and, importantly, for your continued advocacy on this matter. I will return to the minister and make further inquiries with dispatch.

Senator Pate: When Bill C-83 passed, the government pointed to Budget 2018 funding for additional mental health beds in the community to dissuade senators from insisting on the necessity of our amendments that would have broadened access to community-based mental health treatment for prisoners. How will the government be ensuring prisoners can be transferred to the community for mental health treatment and assessment given that these external mental health beds have actually not materialized?

Senator Gold: Again, thank you for the question. It is a good question, and I will certainly add this to my questions when I speak with the minister. Thank you.

Senator Pate: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

FINANCE

PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Last August, Canada's outlook was so bad that the President of the Treasury Board asked the various departments to cut \$15 billion in spending. In the last 15 days, the Prime Minister, likely panicking because of the polls, announced over \$10 billion in investments, even before the next budget has been tabled. Justin Trudeau's economic judgment has always been a cause for concern.

Leader, where is this new money coming from? Canadians are already paying nearly a billion dollars a week in interest on debt racked up by the Liberals. Can you tell us where the money is coming from?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The investments that were announced are targeted to ensure that Canadians who need help facing cost of living challenges and housing shortages get the assistance they need.

As for the question of funding for these new programs, or indeed anything else that will be in the budget, we will have to wait until Tuesday for details.

Senator Dagenais: Your Prime Minister's pre-budget announcements pertain to housing, education, health and municipal infrastructure. All of these areas fall under provincial jurisdiction. The Constitution is not a piece of paper to be used for wiping one's feet. When a prime minister openly says that he will not respect the Constitution of his country because that is not something the general public is concerned about, can you explain to us how this man still has the legitimacy to govern Canada, from a legal perspective?

Senator Gold: When the Government of Canada spends money to help Canadians and calls on the provinces and territories to work with it to ensure that the programs run smoothly and meet the needs of the provinces, that is an illustration of constitutional partnership within our federalism that is well known and appreciated by not only the provinces, who receive the money, but also Canadians, who are the beneficiaries of these programs.

• (1620)

[English]

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. It is regarding the government's affordability agenda. This agenda goes back to 2016 with the Canada Child Benefit and the enhanced Canada Pension Plan. In the past year, there has been the national child care program, dental care, Pharmacare, the disability benefit and housing.

Over the past year, I've been having a conversation with a citizen by the name of Jeffrey. Yesterday, he asked me to ask you this question: Given that the Canada Disability Benefit Act was passed in June of last year, when will the legislative funds start flowing?

Could you provide this information for Jeffrey and others who might find the federal system rather opaque with respect to understanding how these things happen? Speaking generally, once an act is passed, how do you begin making the funds flow?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and, through you, to Jeffrey for his interest.

On several occasions, I have answered in this chamber that I am not in the position to provide information with regard to the disability benefits under the act that we passed. As senators know and for whomever is watching, many steps are involved. In some cases, it includes the regulatory process; in other cases, it includes work with stakeholders or the provinces and territories. Generally speaking, though it may appear opaque to observers, it is important that when legislators pass laws, they be implemented carefully, responsibly and prudently. That is what this government is doing and what all governments ought to do.

Senator Cardozo: My supplementary is on another aspect of affordability — namely, housing. The Premier of Alberta has said that when the federal government signs contracts with the municipalities, it is overreaching.

Senator Gold, do you see a path to making these contracts with municipalities while working with provinces in doing so?

Senator Gold: Again, here, we confront the challenges of cooperative federalism. Some provinces are less allergic to having municipalities and the federal government enter into agreements in areas of municipal jurisdiction, such as bylaws; others are like Alberta and my province of Quebec. At the end of the day, the Government of Canada and the provinces will work together in the best interests of Canadians.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Gold, when reports first surfaced that the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service, or CSIS, had briefed Justin Trudeau about Beijing's interference in the previous two elections, he returned to one of his favourite phrases. He claimed that the story in *The Globe and Mail* was false. He repeatedly denied, including on the chamber floor in the House of Commons, knowing anything or even having been briefed by CSIS. However, this week, at the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference that the Prime Minister was shamed into calling for, it was revealed that his office was briefed by CSIS on foreign interference, at least 34 times between June 2018 and December 2022, and that the Prime Minister himself was briefed on at least two occasions during that time.

My question is simple, Senator Gold: Why did the Prime Minister lie about those briefings? Why did he lie to the Canadian people? Why did he lie on the floor of Parliament? What else has he lied about in regard to this file?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Housakos, thank you for your question, but you are not stating facts that are correct.

Again, the Prime Minister testified under oath. There is a difference between the Prime Minister's Office being briefed and the Prime Minister being briefed. That came out very clearly in the public inquiry, which is an important institution in the Parliament of Canada. We heard from Ms. Charette. I do not have time to quote her, but it is in the public record. We heard from Jeremy Broadhurst.

It does a disservice to our democracy and this chamber — and, frankly, does no honour to your party — when you do not speak accurately about the public record.

Senator Housakos: I guess *The Globe and Mail*, the *National Post* — all of them — cannot speak English; they do not understand the testimony that they heard. Thank you for clarifying that.

Senator Gold, during a previous appearance at a House of Commons committee, the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, Katie Telford, testified that the Prime Minister reads every document that he is given. However, during his testimony yesterday, the Prime Minister said that he does not do much reading and that the only way to make sure he is aware of something is to tell him verbally.

Who is telling the truth, Senator Gold, and who is not telling the truth? Is it Justin Trudeau who is lying about this or is it someone else? Someone is not telling the truth.

Senator Gold: There is no inconsistency between the two statements. You can continue to hammer this point to your heart's content and to the pleasure of those on your social media feed. However, the fact remains that the Prime Minister's

statements stand. His words stand for themselves, as do those of Katie Telford. There is no inconsistency between the two, as I tried to explain earlier in response to Senator Plett.

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

INTEREST COSTS ON FEDERAL DEBT

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, the Department of Finance reports that between April and December of last year, public debt charges went up by an incredible \$9.2 billion. This represents an increase of more than 35% compared to the previous year.

The total amount spent in that time frame by the Trudeau government just to service their debt was \$35 billion. This fiscal year, Canadians will see more of their tax dollars spent to pay the interest on the Trudeau government's massive debt than on health care.

Leader, why does the Trudeau government think that is appropriate? Why not just fix the budget and get your spending under control?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. As I have said on numerous occasions for years in this chamber, this government believes that the investments that it has made and continues to make to help Canadians, whether it is in housing, the cost of living or other areas, are appropriate and necessary in order for Canada to continue to prosper.

In that regard, the facts do speak for themselves: The inflation rate in Canada is down from a high of 8.1% less than two years ago. Close to 1 million more Canadians are employed than before the pandemic. We have recovered 130% of the jobs lost and our credit ratings are strong. This approach to the economy — though not shared by your government — is one that puts Canadians' best interests first.

Senator Martin: I'm surprised that you and Prime Minister Trudeau think this is appropriate. He has added more to the national debt than all previous prime ministers combined. Only four months ago, the Fall Economic Statement said the cost to service the debt this fiscal year will be \$52.4 billion. Is that projection still accurate, leader, or has it become even higher?

Hon. Leo Housakos: They don't read numbers either.

Senator Gold: I am not in a position to comment on the accuracy of the prediction. We will know more after the budget is presented.

Again, it is the position of this government that the investments it is making and its management of the economy are serving Canadians well. The facts demonstrate that in terms of our performance on the world stage.

PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION

Hon. Claude Carignan: We have a Prime Minister who, over the last few days, has been making announcements affecting areas under provincial jurisdiction, including youth mental health, a renters' bill of rights, dental care and food aid in schools and child care centres.

If the Prime Minister is so interested in provincial jurisdictions, shouldn't he be thinking about running for leader of the Quebec Liberal Party?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. There are two sides to every coin. In answer to questions from the opposition leader in the other place and even here, when the Prime Minister pointed out that he had to accept that housing falls under provincial jurisdiction, he was accused of denying his responsibilities. Cooperative federalism involves a partnership between the two levels of government. In the circumstances you described, this is the spending power that the federal government uses to help Canadians, in partnership with the provinces.

• (1630)

That's why we have a national health care system, why we have child care services across Canada and why the provinces have signed agreements with Canada. It's normal and healthy for things to be done this way.

Senator Carignan: Leader, the Prime Minister's justification for interfering in provincial jurisdictions is that people don't care about the Constitution, as he put it. Since people apparently don't care about the Constitution, the Prime Minister has decided that he doesn't care about it, either. Is that really his justification?

You are a former professor of constitutional law. Is that worthy of the head of government of a country like Canada, which is a constitutional state?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question, Senator.

The Government of Canada is not trying to legislate in those areas of jurisdiction. This is about leadership and spending power that enable the federal government to create a dynamic that the provinces and municipalities can be part of to help the people thanks to federal government support.

[English]

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, a reporter recently asked Prime Minister Trudeau about Erin O'Toole's testimony before the Hogue inquiry about how the Conservative Party and its candidates were targeted by Beijing in the 2021 federal election. The Prime Minister said:

I can understand where someone who lost an election is trying to look for reasons other than themselves why they might have lost an election.

Leader, what a disgraceful comment for a prime minister of Canada to make. He didn't care enough to read any memos about foreign interference, and he doesn't care now. Prime Minister Trudeau benefited from Beijing's interference, and he knew it. It was aimed against Conservatives. That's why he doesn't care, isn't it, leader?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): No is the answer. It is clearly established in public testimony that there were divergent opinions.

Were there efforts to interfere? Clearly, there were. The inquiry is bringing to light important lessons that I hope this government and future governments will learn about how to process information and ensure we have a system in place. This is the first government to put into place a system to properly assess this information and brief it.

Can it be improved? Of course. Again, however, it is not factually correct, with all respect, Senator Plett, to assert that the Prime Minister doesn't read, doesn't care or the like.

Senator Plett: Isn't it factually correct, leader, that the Prime Minister defied the House four times and sued the Speaker of the House to keep documents in? He brushed aside Beijing's donations to the Trudeau Foundation — factually correct. He fought tooth and nail against a public inquiry — factually correct. He made up a rapporteur to legitimize his cover-up — factually correct.

Is this how a prime minister concerned about foreign interference acts? It is not. He's not worth the cost of democracy.

Senator Martin: Absolutely.

Senator Gold: Clearly, in the competition between slogans and rhetoric, repeated over and over again, I cannot compete with facts except to say, again, that this government put into place an inquiry and systems. Canadians and Canadian democracy will benefit from the steps that have been taken.

Senator Plett: It's hard to compete with facts.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

PERMANENT RESIDENCE PATHWAYS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, common-sense Conservatives stand in solidarity with the people of Hong Kong and against the erosion of their democracy and civil rights by the People's Republic of China, or PRC. A petition is being delivered today to the Trudeau government by the Hong Kong pathway applicants. They are deeply concerned about the long delay in processing permanent residency applications. As of January, the backlog stood at over 8,000 cases. As a direct result, some individuals have already lost their jobs and health care, children have been unable to attend school, and some spouses have been forced to return to Hong Kong.

Leader, Canada promised to help these people. What is the Trudeau government doing to address this backlog before it's too late for these families?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): This is a serious problem, and I thank you for the question. The government, as you would know, extended the deadline for applications. My understanding is that they have put in place additional resources in order to address the question of backlog.

Senator Plett: I have questions on the Order Paper about Hong Kong that have gone unanswered for almost two years. Is anybody reading them? These individuals can't wait that long for the Trudeau government to do its job, leader, and process their applications, especially as the situation in Hong Kong continues to deteriorate.

Leader, do you commit to tabling in the Senate a real answer from Minister Miller to my questions and to do so quickly?

Senator Gold: I will certainly make inquiries as to the status of your question the next time I speak to the minister.

DELAYED ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table the answers to the following oral questions:

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on March 31, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Boisvenu, concerning the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — National Defence.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on March 31, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Boisvenu, concerning the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on June 9, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Martin, concerning affordable military housing.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on November 22, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Plett, concerning the operational capability of the Armed Forces.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on December 15, 2022, by the Honourable Senator Gerba, concerning the development of soccer in Canada.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on March 9, 2023, by the Honourable Senator McPhedran, concerning Sport Canada.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on March 21, 2023, by the Honourable Senator Marshall, concerning defence policy review.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on May 10, 2023, by the Honourable Senator Klyne, concerning support for Indigenous children.

Response to the oral question asked in the Senate on December 15, 2023, by the Honourable Senator Plett, concerning the procurement process.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu on March 31, 2022)

Canada is unwavering in its commitment to the NATO Alliance, to the defence of Euro-Atlantic security, and to the rules-based international order.

Canada remains committed to making defence investments in the strategic areas identified in our defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE). Under SSE, annual Department of National Defence spending is expected to grow from \$18.9 billion in 2016-17 to \$32.7 billion by 2026-27 — an increase of more than 70%.

Canada is also a reliable operational Ally, contributing to NATO maritime operations, NATO Mission Iraq (NMI), NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR), and leading the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Battle Group in Latvia. In July 2023, the Latvian Minister of Defence and the then Canadian Minister of National Defence signed a Roadmap for scaling the eFP Battle Group to a Brigade, which will see up to 2200 Canadian Armed Forces personnel persistently deployed as part of this operation.

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu on March 31, 2022)

Insofar as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is concerned:

IRCC has been providing provinces and territories with regular updates on the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) and other measures through the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration (FMRI).

The department has also established the Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven — National Secretariat, which includes provincial and territorial governments and key settlement organizations, to coordinate settlement-related issues and programming.

IRCC has communicated to provinces and territories details of the CUAET. With the invasion of Ukraine by Russian armed forces and the deteriorating security situation, a quick and simple process was needed to support Ukrainian nationals and their families seeking temporary residence in Canada. In response, IRCC introduced the CUAET. This program was launched on March 17, 2022; it streamlines visa and travel requirements, eliminates most application and processing fees, and offers accelerated processing. The CUAET is a pathway for temporary residence with no cap on application numbers. Being a temporary pathway, it is not a refugee stream or permanent resettlement effort, for which the Government of Canada sets out planned admissions in the Immigration Levels Plan, including input from Québec.

The Government of Quebec also receives regular updates on the immigration response to the situation in Ukraine, including on the CUAET.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Yonah Martin on June 9, 2022)

National Defence manages a portfolio of 11,648 Crown-owned and leased housing units and will be investing \$475 million over the next decade to renovate and build approximately 600 new housing units at Bases and Wings across Canada. Since 2017, we have constructed 147 new housing units.

In fiscal year 2022-23, National Defence invested \$66 million to renovate existing housing units and construct 12 units in Comox, British Columbia — to be completed March 2024 — and 14 units in Shilo, Manitoba — now completed. Through this investment and planned maintenance programs, the Canadian Forces Housing Agency also renovates units at all locations, ranging from roof and heating systems replacements, to whole house renovation.

Pre-construction planning and development work is also underway at locations where the housing requirement is greatest. Construction is planned in Borden, Esquimalt, Kingston, Trenton, and Edmonton. Regarding the latter, National Defence anticipates that the construction of 12 units will begin in Edmonton later this calendar year.

In addition to building more units, other initiatives such as leveraging the private sector and compensation and benefits programs will also play an important role in supporting members.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY OF ARMED FORCES

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Donald Neil Plett on November 22, 2022)

The Interim Fighter Capability Project (IFCP) procured 18 operational F-18 Hornet fighter aircraft from Australia and two additional non-flyable aircraft for testing, training, or spare parts.

Thirteen IFCP aircraft are currently in service. The remaining five aircraft are being harvested for spare parts to support the entire CF-18 fleet incremented by IFCP from 76 to 89 operational aircraft. These aircraft ensure that Canada maintains its operational commitments to the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) while contributing to training and logistic gaps.

The IFCP is projected to cost a total of \$246.6M. This includes aircraft acquisition, transport, modifications, inspections, and other logistical elements. An additional \$132.2M will ensure compliance with regulatory and interoperability requirements.

All regular maintenance costs for the CF-18 fleet are covered under the annual National Procurement budget. The fleet will be upgraded through the Hornet Extension Project (HEP), including up to 88 aircraft in phase one, costing approximately \$500M, and up to 36 of these aircraft in phase two of HEP at an approximate cost of \$800M.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCCER IN CANADA

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Amina Gerba on December 15, 2022)

Sport Canada's funding to Canada Soccer is aimed at grassroots development, long-term player development, Canada Soccer's Program of Excellence, the women's national team program, coaching and officiating, as well as national championships and international sport events.

Due to the success of the women's national team, it receives incremental targeted excellence support from the Government of Canada based on recommendations from *Own the Podium*.

Soccer is one of Canada's most played sports with close to 800,000 members.

Sport Canada's funding does not support professional soccer leagues as professional and semi-professional soccer falls outside of the Sport Canada's mandate.

The Government of Canada is committed to developing and supporting a sport system in which women and girls are actively engaged and equitably supported in a full range of roles.

SPORT CANADA

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Marilou McPhedran on March 9, 2023)

The Government of Canada is proud to provide equitable support to Canada's female national team athletes as they strive to achieve podium success at Senior World Championships, and Olympic and Paralympic Games. Through Budget 2018, the Government of Canada committed to gender equality in sport at every level by 2035 with an initial investment of \$30 million over three years. In October 2022, this Government announced a further investment of \$25.3 million over three years to continue investing in data, research, and systemic changes to improve equity and equality for Canadian women and girls in sport. With respect to non-disclosure agreements, it is clear that these types of agreements and clauses cannot be used as a vehicle to undermine athlete voices and the principle of safe sport.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

DEFENCE POLICY REVIEW

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Elizabeth Marshall on March 21, 2023)

In Budget 2022, the Government of Canada committed to conduct a defence policy update to our 2017 policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE). Though SSE correctly identified multiple defining global security challenges and set ambitious targets to meet them, the international security environment has changed faster than expected. As a result, the Defence Team is reassessing the priorities and needs required to face the changing threat landscape. Reviewing and updating Canada's defence policy is vital to ensuring that the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have the necessary direction, resources, and future-ready capabilities to adapt to an increasingly dynamic and complex operating environment. The Defence Team has undertaken a comprehensive review of DND/CAF's missions, roles, activities, policies, and plans. We conducted a broad consultation process with stakeholders, including parliamentarians, other government departments, industry, defence experts, our allies and partners, as well as the Canadian public. National Defence continues to move through the review and consultation results, with Government consideration of Defence's proposals in due course.

INDIGENOUS SERVICES*[Translation]***SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN**

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Marty Klyne on May 10, 2023)

Jordan's Principle responds to the unmet needs of First Nations children no matter where they live in Canada. Between July 2016 and February 28, 2023, more than 2.56 million products, services and supports were approved under Jordan's Principle.

Jordan's Principle is aimed at those unmet needs. In particular, in 2021 with extra supports being provided due to the pandemic, many requests were "denied" by Jordan's Principle but were in fact covered by other programs. Therefore, while this shows a larger denial rate, First Nations children did receive the supports and services they needed. For example, in British Columbia the majority of the group requests submitted were for laptops, and some of these requests were fulfilled by other programs and marked as denied under Jordan's Principle.

In British Columbia, the 70% denial rate is based on only 52 group request submissions. This is very small relative to other regions.

Therefore due to the small size of requests, the percentage of denials seems much larger.

FINANCE**CANADA EMERGENCY BUSINESS ACCOUNT**

(Response to question raised by the Honourable Donald Neil Plett on December 15, 2023)

Export Development Canada (EDC)

In order to ensure Canadian small businesses received the support they needed during the pandemic, Export Development Canada (EDC) partnered with Accenture and its subsidiaries. As of November 2023, there is a team of 105 people in Canada and 3 people in the United States working on the front-line delivery of the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) program. This essential work at EDC and Accenture is supported in part by One Financial through a separate contract. This 46-person team in Brazil is working on the configuration of the supporting loan accounting system. Only the delivery teams at EDC and Accenture handle the data of Canadian small businesses.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ADJOURNMENT****MOTION ADOPTED**

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of April 10, 2024, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1640)

[English]

**DEPARTMENT FOR WOMEN AND GENDER
EQUALITY ACT****BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED**

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator Mégie, for the second reading of Bill S-218, An Act to amend the Department for Women and Gender Equality Act.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, I'd like to take adjournment for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

**HEALTH-CENTRED APPROACH TO SUBSTANCE
USE BILL****BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING**

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Boniface, seconded by the Honourable Senator Hartling, for the second reading of Bill S-232, An Act

respecting the development of a national strategy for the decriminalization of illegal substances, to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Boniface, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.)

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF CORRUPT FOREIGN OFFICIALS ACT (SERGEI MAGNITSKY LAW)

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 Martin, for the second reading of Bill S-247, An Act to amend the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law).

Hon. Leo Housakos: With leave, I would like to adjourn the motion in my name for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

HELLENIC HERITAGE MONTH BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Loffreda, seconded by the Honourable Senator Moncion, for the second reading of Bill S-259, An Act to designate the month of March as Hellenic Heritage Month.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, with leave, I'd like to adjourn for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

CRIMINAL CODE INDIAN ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Tannas, seconded by the Honourable Senator Verner, P.C., for the second reading of Bill S-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Indian Act.

Hon. Paul J. Prosper: Honourable senators, this item is adjourned in the name of Senator Martin, and I ask for leave of the Senate that, following my intervention, the balance of her time to speak to this item be reserved.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: So ordered.

Senator Prosper: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support of Bill S-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Indian Act.

By way of background, in 1985, Parliament amended the Criminal Code to enable and expand provincial jurisdiction over lotteries and gaming. At that time, no thought or consideration was given to the inherent jurisdiction that First Nations had over lotteries and gaming on their respective reserve lands.

Bill S-268 seeks to right this historical wrong by proposing to amend section 207 of the Criminal Code and section 81 of the Indian Act. In essence, it will provide the governing body of a First Nation with the option to exercise exclusive authority to conduct, license and manage a lottery scheme on its reserve as defined by the Indian Act. To exercise this authority, a First Nation must first provide the federal government and the relevant provincial government with notice of their intention to exercise this authority.

I would like to recognize Senator Tannas and his team, particularly Mehek Noorani, for all the work they have put into this important piece of legislation.

Colleagues, I have direct knowledge of and experience with the value that gaming revenues can bring to a First Nations community. During my tenure as Chief of Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation, I can attest to the reliance First Nations communities have on profits generated from VLT gaming revenues generated on-reserve. These revenues help provide much-needed programs and services to support community health and well-being.

On-reserve gaming, as with most First Nations throughout Canada, is administered through provincial agreements. Within Nova Scotia, these agreements are largely outdated and do not reflect the growing population trends and the evolving needs of First Nations communities, nor do they respect the inherent right that First Nations have to govern their affairs in accordance to their own customs, values and traditions.

I am currently finishing up a listening tour throughout Mi'kma'ki. Mi'kma'ki is the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people. It spans from Newfoundland to the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec and parts of Maine. Incidentally, "Gaspé" is the name of the Mi'kmaq district that means "last land."

While I served as chief and regional chief, I didn't want to presume that I knew all the issues that First Nations leadership and organizations are facing. I have visited many communities, tribal councils, traditional leadership and Indigenous organizations to hear directly from them about the issues, challenges and concerns that are most important to them. Throughout this tour, I have heard from several communities about the importance of gaming as a resource-revenue generator.

Colleagues, Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by disabilities, addictions, mental health and health challenges at a higher rate than any other Canadian communities. I realize this is a general statement, so I would like to provide you with some further context.

During my tour, a council member from Sipekne'katik community shared that the life expectancy in his community was 54 years. His community of roughly 3,000 members faced 29 deaths last year. He also mentioned that over a few short years, they have dropped from 100 to 37 residential school survivors.

Colleagues, Bill S-268 provides an option for First Nations to administer, license and manage First Nations gaming in their communities in a responsible, accountable and transparent manner. It places First Nations governments on equal footing with their provincial counterparts. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians is well documented, and there will never be enough government funding to fully close that chasm.

Our Peace and Friendship Treaties, which were recognized and affirmed by the highest court in this country, the Supreme Court of Canada, were signed by two nations. Before the arrival of the Europeans, First Nations were governed by their own customs, values and traditions. This fact informs the basis of our inherent right to self-government in Indigenous, domestic and international law — a right that is recognized and affirmed by the highest law in this country, the Constitution Act, 1982.

- (1650)

If First Nations are truly in a nation-to-nation relationship with Canada, as Prime Minister Trudeau stated in 2015, and as has been reinforced by his ministers time and time again, then the Mi'kmaq, like other First Nations, need to be treated as nations. That means we should have control over our lands and resources. First Nations should have the ability to generate own-source revenue without any reliance on Canada or the provinces.

[Senator Prosper]

Own-source revenue, colleagues, is crucial given the chronic underfunding of Indigenous programs and services for decades. That is why control and jurisdiction over revenue-generating activities are so integral to the survival of First Nations people across this country. When First Nations people are properly resourced, success stories emerge — stories of hope for what First Nations can achieve when we are treated as nations.

We have seen that when First Nations begin to get a bit too successful, there are those who would exploit every loophole and raise every technicality to avoid that success from continuing.

Colleagues, let's not contribute to this limited way of thinking. Let's embrace the concept of economic reconciliation in a manner that respects the laws in this country. Let's set the example for future generations to follow.

To conclude, I would like to again applaud Senator Tannas for his work on this bill. I wholeheartedly support Bill S-268 and the underlying principle of restoring Indigenous jurisdiction over our lands and resources. I would urge my colleagues to support moving this bill forward to committee. *Wela'liog*. Thank you very much.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: This motion is adjourned under the name of Senator Martin.

(Debate adjourned.)

CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS DYKELAND SYSTEM BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Quinn, seconded by the Honourable Senator Verner, P.C., for the second reading of Bill S-273, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15, so I move the adjournment of the debate for the balance of my time.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Seidman, that further debate be adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate.

Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

BALANCING THE BANK OF CANADA'S INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Bellemare, seconded by the Honourable Senator Klyne, for the second reading of Bill S-275, An Act to amend the Bank of Canada Act (mandate, monetary policy governance and accountability).

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, this item is adjourned in the name of Senator Martin, and I ask for leave of the Senate that, following my intervention, the balance of her time be reserved.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: So ordered.

Senator Woo: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak to Bill S-275, An Act to Amend the Bank of Canada Act (mandate, monetary policy governance and accountability), introduced by our colleague Senator Bellemare.

Let me start by observing that even though Senator Bellemare retires in October, she is working as hard as ever, and on many fronts. As Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, she has been guiding the committee on important rule changes that will improve the way we operate, especially in committees. She is also the sponsor of Bill S-244 on the creation of an employment insurance council, and has made remarkable progress in getting major stakeholders in Canada to support that initiative.

These are complicated and serious issues, but Senator Bellemare is a serious legislator, and she is not afraid of complexity. She is, of course, a PhD economist who has taught graduate-level economics, and served on the Economic Council of Canada. She is a bona fide policy wonk, and the Senate is so much better off because we have wonks like her in our midst.

Bill S-275 is perhaps one of her wonkiest initiatives, and I mean that as a compliment. Her bill seeks to amend the act that governs an institution that has immense power over the lives of Canadians, whose operations are carried out in relative secrecy, and for which a special, often unintelligible, language has been created.

Central banks are a kind of modern-day ziggurat, and central bankers are the high priests who are allowed into the inner sanctum of that holy place. They pore over arcane sacred texts, usually in the form of mathematical models; debate a sort of theology, epistemology and phenomenology; conduct holy rituals that double as press conferences and speeches; and make annual pilgrimages to shrines such as Jackson Hole in Wyoming and Basel, Switzerland.

They are also a little like us in that they have unelected power. Nobody voted for Mr. Macklem, or Mr. Poloz before him, or any of their predecessors; and yet, the governor has an awesome power over the Canadian economy which, in turn, affects every facet of the lives of Canadians. It is in the very design of modern central banks that the governor is appointed by the government of the day, but makes decisions on monetary policy independent of, and possibly contrary to, the government's wishes. As senators, we also have an awesome power in our ability to amend or defeat government legislation from the House of Commons, but we exercise this power rarely because of the framework within which we operate — that is the Constitution.

The analogous framework under which the Bank of Canada operates is the Bank of Canada Act. The act was passed in 1934, and the Bank of Canada was created the following year — first as a privately owned entity, but it was nationalized by 1938. As Senator Bellemare reminds us, the act has not been amended since 1985, and a lot has changed since that time.

Senator Bellemare is proposing to modernize the Bank of Canada Act by, on the one hand, codifying some of the things that the bank is already doing and, on the other hand, by introducing some new governance features that improve the transparency and accountability of the institution, while protecting its independence.

For example, she would repeal the preamble of the current act, which has hitherto served as a mandate for the Bank of Canada. The preamble states:

... it is desirable to establish a central bank in Canada to regulate credit and currency in the best interests of the economic life of the nation, to control and protect the external value of the national monetary unit and to mitigate by its influence fluctuations in the general level of production, trade, prices and employment, so far as may be possible within the scope of monetary action, and generally to promote the economic and financial welfare of Canada

Did I not tell you that central banks often use unintelligible language?

Instead of this preamble, Senator Bellemare would create an explicit mandate for the bank to be written into the act as follows:

The mandate of the Bank is to ensure the financial stability of Canada and of Canadian financial institutions and to promote sustainable and equitable prosperity and the well-being of all Canadians.

The novelty in her proposal is the introduction of the words “sustainable and equitable prosperity and the well-being of all Canadians,” as opposed to the preamble's more generic goal to “. . . promote the economic and financial welfare of Canada” By doing so, she is codifying what might be called a “dual mandate” for the bank. One might even argue that she has gone beyond a dual mandate by introducing the terms “equitable and sustainable,” which are somewhat elastic in their meaning.

Unlike other central banks, such as the Federal Reserve Bank in the United States, the Bank of Canada is generally understood as having a single mandate of price stability. Interestingly, the current act doesn't actually say "price stability" and, in fact, can be interpreted as already having a dual mandate through its reference to "production, trade, prices and employment." Senator Bellemare's amendment, however, spells out a dual mandate in clearer terms. To this extent, her amendments are not radical.

In fact, the bank enters into renewable five-year agreements with the Government of Canada to determine the monetary policy framework for that period. The most recent "Joint Statement of the Government of Canada and the Bank of Canada on the Renewal of the Monetary Policy Framework" stated that they believe the best contribution of monetary policy to the well-being of Canadians is to continue to focus on price stability. But they also agreed that monetary policy should continue to support maximum sustainable employment.

• (1700)

Hence, while the current monetary policy framework of the Bank of Canada says, "Focus on price stability, but keep an eye on employment," Senator Bellemare's amendments would have the bank focus equally on financial stability and on sustainable and equitable prosperity.

The idea of a dual mandate is not a new one. It has been debated by economists and central bank watchers for many years. During the period of low economic volatility for the roughly 20-year period since the mid-1980s, which is known as the "Great Moderation," this debate did not generate much enthusiasm because it seemed like macroeconomic management in industrial economies had achieved a sweet spot in smoothing out business cycles. But this complacency was disrupted by the great financial crisis of 2007 and 2008, which laid bare the hidden leverage of some advanced economies due to the excessive financialization of real assets — which even the banks and investment houses did not properly understand, let alone the regulators.

The world's central banks at that time had a good, long look at the precipice and only barely managed to stop the economies from falling into it. They did so through a massive expansion of liquidity, including taking debt directly onto their balance sheets in an unprecedented way. This meant lowering reference interest rates that were already low in real terms and, in some cases, going as far as offering negative interest rates. This phenomenon became known generically as quantitative easing or, more euphemistically, as unconventional monetary policy.

We should be thankful that the high priests of central banking broke their own vows and rewrote their sacred texts to accommodate these unconventional policies and, in so doing, saved the world economy from a catastrophic depression. But in so doing, they sowed the seeds for an explosion of borrowing and created expectations among borrowers that ultra-low interest rates were here to stay. Indeed, there was a sense in financial markets and among borrowers that the Great Moderation had been extended through brilliant policy intervention.

What they did not anticipate, nor could they have, was the black swan of a global pandemic that was COVID-19. The pandemic caused an instant global economic downturn that was not due to a failure of aggregate demand but rather a failure of aggregate supply or production. This was, once again, a new kind of macroeconomic shock that the modern world was not accustomed to and for which novel policy responses had to be improvised. In Canada, this meant Canada Emergency Response Benefit, or CERB, Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, or CEWS, Business Credit Availability Program, or BCAP, Canada Emergency Student Benefit, or CESB, Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance, or CECRA, Canada Emergency Business Account, or CEBA, and Large Employer Emergency Financing Facility, or LEEFF, as well as adjustments to the Canada child benefit, or CCB, and Old Age Security, or OAS. Never in the history of Canadian economic policy have so many acronyms been conjured up in so short a period of time.

By and large, the policy response worked. The basic theory of dealing with the supply-side recession caused by an inability to produce due to health restrictions was to preserve the capacity of businesses to continue operating when conditions allowed them to do so. This was the right strategy. But even so, some businesses could not withstand the prolonged period of inactivity and had to close. Other businesses that survived nevertheless lost some of their productive capacity through the loss of workers or machinery or because suppliers had disappeared or gone into other lines of work. It was thus inevitable that when the economy reopened, industry could not return quickly to pre-COVID levels of activity — and certainly not as quickly as the pent-up demand for their goods and services.

This is why when inflation went on the uptick about two years ago, many economists believed it was, in large part, due to businesses struggling to ramp up production after a period of dormancy only to find that many of their suppliers faced the same problems, leading to shortfalls in production relative to demand hence creating inflationary pressures. This became known as the transitory inflation hypothesis, which was much derided but may, in fact, explain what we have witnessed in the last two years.

In any case — and returning to the theme of my speech — the Bank of Canada responded in the only way it knew how to, which was to raise interest rates. Canadians who did not come of age until the late 1980s, of course, reacted with horror that interest rates could go up hence the gnashing of teeth about whether the bank was doing the right thing and a lot of gratuitous criticism of the governor from politicians and pundits whom John Maynard Keynes would have described as "practical men who . . . are . . . the slaves of some defunct economist." We see the appeal of defunct economists by some political leaders on another important public policy debate that is currently raging, but that is for another speech.

The point of this pointed economic history is to say that monetary policy and the role of central banks in formulating monetary policy has been in new territory for at least 15 years, and that it is appropriate for the Senate to instigate a reflection on whether the act governing the bank needs to be updated. For that, we have Senator Bellemare to thank.

The centrepiece of her amendments is the creation of a monetary policy committee, which she dubs as the permanent committee on monetary policy. The Bank of Canada already has what is called a governing council that makes decisions on interest rates, but there is currently only one external member on this council. In any case, the accountability rests with one person, the governor. Other central banks have monetary policy committees, notably the U.S., New Zealand and the U.K., albeit using different governance and decision-making approaches.

Senator Bellemare is not overly prescriptive about the permanent committee, but she proposes that it consists of three internal and six external members, and that external members are appointed for renewable three-year terms. Also, Senator Bellemare does not spell out the decision-making protocol for the permanent committee, but she implies that it will be based upon majority voting. In any case, there are important questions about group dynamics and the way meetings are structured as well as the willingness of members to share information that will affect the quality of the decisions taken by the committee as a whole.

Further, Senator Bellemare does not spell out the extent to which the external members can speak publicly about their positions, as is the case in the U.S. and the U.K. But I think her intent is that they should be able to speak openly about how they see the economic situation in relation to the prescribed dual mandate of the bank. In the U.K., external members are individually accountable to Parliament and can be invited to give testimony.

However, an individualistic committee that also happens to be fractious in communicating different views on the state of the economy or the path of interest rates could create confusion among the public, not to mention skewing monetary policy decisions.

Needless to say, the appointment of external members with the requisite expertise is extremely important. Senator Bellemare would delegate this task to the governor, in consultation with the Deputy Minister of Finance, with a third person to be selected by the governor and the deputy minister. She has constructed a very demanding set of criteria for qualification, which includes being recognized as an expert in at least three of the following five categories of technical knowledge: open economy macroeconomics, the financial system, the labour market, supply chains and risk management.

Your Honour, may I have three minutes?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Do we have an agreement for three additional minutes?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Woo: Thank you, honourable senators.

It may prove challenging to find individuals who are recognized experts in three of the five fields. It would certainly take a lot of self-confidence for anyone to put in a CV that they are recognized experts in more than one or two of these fields, but she is right to set the bar high and keep politics out of the appointment process.

I am a little puzzled by one of her proposals, which is to mandate the publication on an annual basis of the cost-benefit model that the bank uses in its decision making. I'm all in favour of cost-benefit analysis, but forcing the bank to reveal its internal economic modelling could be tantamount to giving an advantage to market players who can reverse engineer the model to predict the path of interest rate changes by the bank. One could argue this is simply a more elaborate form of what is called forward guidance, but I think that there are risks to it as we have seen with forward guidance itself.

There is no doubt that the bank relies on a variety of economic models to assist in its decision making and that these models are constantly tinkered with. For the public, and even for highly trained economists, these models are black boxes, and the bank intends for them to be that way because of the proprietary value that comes with the knowledge of what is inside that black box.

• (1710)

If there is one thing that is unifying the recent calls for a review of monetary policy and the work of central banks around the world, it is that the once-stable relationships captured in economic models used to predict output, prices, employment and so on are no longer stable. As a result, central banks, I believe, have become more promiscuous in their use of economic modelling and hence less able to tell a consistent story about transmission mechanisms of external shocks to key economic variables.

All of this reinforces Senator Bellemare's case for Parliament to take a fresh look at the Bank of Canada Act. There is already a conversation happening among the high priests and theologians of central banking and monetary policy, but in the spirit of theological reform — and betraying my Protestant instincts — I think it is worthwhile for the broader priesthood of all believers also to participate in this discussion.

The original Bank of Canada Act came about because of the work of the 1933 Royal Commission on Banking and Currency. A fresh royal commission on the mandate of the bank would be overkill and, in any case, royal commissions are rather out of fashion these days. It is unlikely that the Bank of Canada itself would take the lead on proposing legislative amendments, nor can we have much hope that the House of Commons would be able to pursue amendments in its current mode of hyper-partisanship.

Senator Bellemare may well be right that our institution is the best place for a fresh discussion on the mandate of the Bank of Canada. I want to commend Senator Bellemare again for her initiative. While I don't know that we will be able to adopt amendments to the Bank of Canada Act before she retires, I want her to know that she has colleagues in this chamber who share her perspective about the value of reviewing the mandate and structure of the bank.

I hope others in this chamber will join this debate, and I look forward to hearing your views. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(Debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

**NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN
CANADA BILL**

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Moodie, seconded by the Honourable Senator Boehm, for the second reading of Bill S-282, An Act respecting a national strategy for children and youth in Canada.

Hon. Sharon Burey: Honourable senators, I rise today in support of Bill S-282, An Act respecting a national strategy for children and youth.

As a pediatrician, mother, grandmother and now senator, I would like to thank Senator Moodie for introducing this bill. It is particularly relevant now, at this time, in this place, at this point in our history, as the country faces various global shocks such as the recovery following a historic pandemic whose long-term effects are now revealing themselves to us, as we grapple with climate change, economic instability, wars and security threats, declining productivity, a crisis of innovation and affordability, the widespread impact of the internet, social media and artificial intelligence, a national housing crisis, declining learning, growing school absenteeism, child poverty and food insecurity, record numbers of children and youth struggling with anxiety and depression, and the ongoing crisis in our health care systems, including those affecting children.

[English]

This speech is dedicated to my granddaughters, who are twin girls, Hope and Faith. The hope is that we as a country — as parliamentarians and as senators — will continue the vision and the promise of the work of others, especially another great Canadian, Senator Landon Pearson, the children's senator. And the faith is that as a society, we will do the necessary substantive work to unleash the promise and potential of this country of ours.

This is a critical period in Canada's development as a country. It was Nelson Mandela who said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

Canada made significant gains in its commitment to the goals for outcomes for children and families; however, we are off track, and we have lost our focus. We have lost ground.

Bill S-282 is about getting us back on track and refocusing our energies on our goals, objectives and outcomes when it comes to children and families. At its core, it is about who we are as a nation.

Dear colleagues, we are called to enshrine in law our values, as we did with our Constitution and *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Make no mistake: Our words become worlds. What we write, say and do matters, and it shapes our reality and our collective future.

Yes, we still must continue the work of perfecting our co-operative federalism, being mindful of the division of powers and responsibilities at the federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous levels of governing bodies, and of becoming a more inclusive society. We have to retool our focus, as this bill sets out in the preamble, respecting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; upholding our commitment to truth and reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples; addressing vulnerable, marginalized, Black and racialized youth; two-spirit and LGBTQIA+ youth; children and youth living with disabilities; and, I would add, respecting our commitments to official language and minority language rights.

The legislative journey of Bill S-282 builds on Bill C-371 when, in 1993, the Government of Canada passed the national Child Day Act, which led to National Child Day being celebrated on November 20 and marked the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified in 1989. It builds on the life and policy work of Senator Landon Pearson and the various provincial, territorial and Indigenous partnership tables' shared objectives and Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy.

What we need now, colleagues, is to enshrine into law these ongoing policies and programs that represent our values. We have all of the ingredients.

In making the case for this bill, I propose to share with you some of the work, again, of Senator Landon Pearson, findings from UNICEF Report Card 18, data trends that are emerging from the Statistics Canada Sustainable Development Goals Data Hub, a recent report from the Conference Board of Canada and anecdotes from my own professional experience. I hope to show that the lack of a cohesive strategy and plan is harming our children and costing us trillions of dollars.

Dear colleagues, in 2004, Senator Landon Pearson spearheaded the work and release of the landmark report called *A Canada Fit for Children*. The report set out a road map towards a common Canadian vision for children, a plan of action and how to create a Canada fit for children. It set strategies, goals and actions.

The report also pointed out what metrics and outcomes could monitor progress and keep us on track, and it ended with an impressive summary of Government of Canada investments and commitments to children.

But colleagues, we are off track. Let me share some sobering statistics with you. UNICEF Report Card 18 compares levels of child poverty in the richest countries, the progress they have been making to end child poverty and how well the policies protect every child from poverty. Canada ranked 19 out of 39 countries

on child poverty. Over 1 million children are growing up in poverty. These are 2021 figures, and we know that these numbers are increasing.

Children had the highest rates of food insecurity among all groups in 2022, which translates to 1.8 million children. Get this, colleagues: Under-five mortality ranks thirty-fourth, which slipped from twelfth place in 2013.

I would also underscore that all of these parameters are magnified in vulnerable, Black and Indigenous children and youth. Suicide among Indigenous youth is among the highest in the world. Canada is struggling and failing to fulfill its commitments to Jordan's Principle and fully fund child and social welfare for Indigenous children.

Colleagues, according to Statistics Canada SDG Data Hub Goal 3 — ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages; and targets and indicators for adopting healthy behaviours, for example, that by March 31, 2022, 30% of Canadians report eating fruits or vegetables five or more times per day — targets show we are in the red zone and deteriorating. This is where the recently announced National School Food Program may be helpful. So far, research has shown that these types of interventions work and improve academic performance and nutrition indicators, and may reduce obesity in children.

• (1720)

Regarding the prevalence of vaping, another target is that by 2030, less than 10% of students in grades 7 to 12 will have used a vaping product in the past 30 days. Targets and indicators again show we are in the red zone and deteriorating. With regard to the prevalence of harmful alcohol use by those 12 to 17 years of age, again, we are in the red zone and deteriorating.

As Senator Greenwood noted in her speech a few weeks ago, Canada has access to a Child Rights Impact Assessment tool, but there are no mandatory requirements for governments to use it. This tool has been developed to help governments and non-governmental organizations assess whether policy proposals will improve the well-being of children and youth. It is grounded in a child's rights approach.

Senator Greenwood remarks that:

... if the Government of Canada can mandate gender equality, privacy and environmental protection in its decision-making processes, then it is time for us to include a child rights impact assessment.

Thank you, Senator Greenwood. It is truly an honour to be working alongside you.

Recent reports point to rising rates of school absenteeism in elementary and high school. Having said that, there is no nationally collected data set for school absenteeism in Canada.

According to a CBC article from just a few weeks ago, Maria Rogers, a child psychologist and Canada Research Chair in Child and Youth Mental Health and Well-Being at Carleton University, said:

If we don't have the data to show that our children are missing tremendous amounts of school, far more than they have in the past . . . then it's easy to look the other way . . .

She went on to say that, “. . . academic achievement, broadly speaking, is one of the top predictors worldwide of a healthy adulthood.”

Colleagues, the data and trends are overwhelming. What we are doing is not working. We are at an inflection point, a crossroads, and we must decide how we are going to meet this challenge and meet the moment.

Important recommendations from UNICEF Report Card 18 are worth reading. I want to highlight one of these recommendations: institute a child-focused budgetary tracking system for the allocation and use of resources through the budget.

Let me share a few anecdotes from my own experiences.

Having dedicated my career to the well-being of children, as many of you have, and having worked in the area of children's mental health for most of my career as a pediatrician, understanding the social determinants of health inclusive of an ecological paradigm, an ecological, biological and psychosocial approach, helped me navigate the best path forward with patients and families.

If a child was referred to me for behavioural issues, it was important to understand that there were various factors contributing to the child's presentation. Was it a hearing or vision issue? Was it a learning issue, or perhaps ADHD, along with child poverty, inadequate housing and/or a parent struggling with mental health challenges? This understanding is what allowed me to advocate for the best interests of the child.

It was extremely complex because we are dealing with silos of systems within silos of care, as well as the intersection of health, education, social and justice systems.

The situation continues to exist across agencies, organizations and federal, provincial and territorial governments, despite calls for action and partnership agreements.

Finally, colleagues, let me just draw your attention to a report from the Conference Board of Canada, *Nurturing Minds for Secure Futures*, released in December 2023, and the cost of not having a whole-of-society strategy. Key findings include that 1.6 million children and youth in Canada are estimated to have a mental health disorder.

It also states:

Without timely investments, the lifetime cost of just one cohort of children with onset of anxiety and/or depression at the age of 10 is close to \$1 trillion.

It also finds that investments in children's mental health today, with a focus on accessible, inclusive programming for vulnerable populations, can save \$28 billion annually.

Colleagues, think about this for a minute. Further reports show the positive impact on GDP over time. A key recommendation is to develop and fund a pan-Canadian child health strategy with mental health as a key pillar, investing in evidence-informed, outcomes-based programs, and creating a national data strategy.

In closing, I want to thank Senator Moodie for her vision in bringing this bill forward and her team for working on it so diligently.

Our children are our most precious gifts and resource. Without vibrant, healthy youth, our society and country will face existential threats. Bill S-282 is the next step in the journey to codify in our laws what we have been trying to do in truly making Canada a country fit for children.

We have the chance, all of us sitting here right now, to take the baton from Senator Landon Pearson in the relay race in the life of our country and ensure that all our children have the brightest future possible — no child left behind.

I end where I began, with my granddaughters, Hope and Faith. As you think of your own children and grandchildren, grandnieces, grandnephews, remember that it takes a village to raise a child. They are depending on us. I urge you, dear colleagues, after careful consideration and further debate, to vote to move this bill to the committee stage. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—VOTE DEFERRED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gerba, seconded by the Honourable Senator Klyne, for the second reading of Bill C-282, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management).

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I will be brief. I rise to speak to Bill C-282, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management).

This will be the eighth speech this chamber has heard on this bill, with four senators speaking in favour of the bill and three speaking against.

[Senator Burey]

I note that we are expecting additional senators to speak, including new critic Senator Harder. I do not think that the 4-3 split can be taken as an indication of how this chamber is going to vote on the bill. It does, however, underscore the diversity of viewpoints and polarization of positions.

My own position on the bill is simple yet, I would say, nuanced. That's perhaps not something that you are used to coming from me. But it is the case with this bill for reasons that I will explain.

At its heart, Bill C-282 is a far cry from a supply management sector of agriculture of stability and security.

In a world which is changing rapidly, with a future marked by uncertainty, the desire for predictability is very understandable, especially in the agricultural industry. In her speech on this bill, Senator McCallum gave a compelling overview of the history of supply management, outlining the challenges and difficulties of the day, which were addressed through the introduction of marketing boards, quotas and import restrictions.

Overproduction, fluctuating prices and inconsistent income for farmers had been causing significant market instability and disruptions in the domestic market for decades. As described in *The Canadian Dairy Commission: A 40-Year Retrospective*, these difficulties faced by farmers before the creation of supply management systems were very real.

• (1730)

Increasing discontent about prices and income across the whole farm spectrum boiled over in Quebec and Ontario, resulting in the 1967 march on Parliament Hill. As many as 10,000 Quebec and Ontario dairy farmers protested over low milk prices and the lack of a federal dairy policy. The headlines of the day tell the story: "Angry words exchanged at farmer-Cabinet talks," "Parliament locks out farmers," "Irate farmers storm House to climax milk price battle." . . .

"The doors of Parliament were damaged yesterday as hundreds of farmers tried to get inside to make their case for higher milk prices," read the lead story in *The Globe and Mail* on May 25, 1967. It was hailed as the largest protest gathering ever seen on Parliament Hill and marked one of the first times the doors of the Centre Block were locked against Canadians.

Yet, colleagues, even through all of this, the then Liberal prime minister, Lester B. Pearson, managed to navigate the turmoil, the protests and the anger without having to invoke the War Measures Act, which is what the current Prime Minister does when he doesn't want to meet angry people.

Senator Harder, you knew I would find a way.

The truth is that any attempt to summarize the struggles of farmers over this time period is going to fall short. The challenges stretched over decades — not weeks, months or years — as farmers wrestled with a market system that they did not fully understand and felt they had no control over.

According to the Canadian Dairy Commission, or CDC:

In the 1960s, there were nearly 175,000 dairy farmers across the country. Most had limited knowledge about prices and pricing systems. They knew little or nothing about what was happening across the industry.

Former CDC vice-chair Carl Harrison said:

Chaos is a great word to describe the 1960s. The market weight between processors and producers was tilted significantly towards processors. Processors were competing vigorously for market position, so much so that producers were often caught in between and became almost 'pawns'...

In their 2018 publication *Canada's Supply Management System*, the Library of Parliament summed it up this way:

During the 1960s, price instability and interprovincial trade disputes were a source of major concern for the poultry, egg and dairy industries. At that time, the Canadian agricultural sector experienced overproduction caused by technological advances, resulting in low, unstable prices and disputes between farmers and processors.

Faced with this difficult economic situation, farmers sought to strengthen their bargaining power by asking their provincial governments to create marketing boards. It was this situation — price instability and fluctuations in farmers' incomes — that led to the creation of the supply management system.

Colleagues, although controversial at the time and even now, supply management brought an undeniable level of stability to the sector. The industry would naturally like to see that protected, consisting of dairy, eggs, chicken and turkey. The supply management industry today contributes \$30 billion a year to Canada's GDP, supports 339,000 jobs and provides \$6 billion in tax revenue to governments across the nation. As a whole, the entire agricultural sector contributes \$144 billion to the economy and employs 2.3 million people. This, colleagues, is worth protecting.

But the agricultural sector's significance in Canada transcends mere economics, positioning it as a foundational pillar of our nation's food security. This sector guarantees that Canadians from all walks of life have consistent access to a variety of safe, nutritious and affordable food options. In doing so, it not only sustains the physical health and well-being of the population but also stabilizes and supports the economy by ensuring that the food supply chain remains robust against the backdrop of global uncertainties. This role is critical in a world where food security is increasingly threatened by factors such as climate change, geopolitical conflicts and supply chain disruptions.

Furthermore, the significance of the agricultural sector extends beyond economics and food security into environmental stewardship, playing a critical role in managing land, water and natural resources sustainably.

Public policy that prioritizes and supports this sector is not just beneficial but essential. Policies that ensure stability also foster innovation, sustainability and resilience against the challenges posed by climate change, market fluctuations and international trade tensions.

I draw your attention to these things, colleagues, to underscore that stability in the agricultural industry is paramount. It is crucial that our public policy strive to pursue this stability amidst the myriad challenges the agricultural sector faces. Bill C-282 must be considered with this objective in mind.

However, any consideration of the importance of stability in the agricultural industry would not be complete without acknowledging the immense pressures being faced by our farmers today and the impact that these play on their mental health. In 1993, the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry tabled an interim report entitled *Farm Stress: Its Economic Dimension, Its Human Consequences*. In the report's conclusion, the committee stated the following:

The present levels of stress reported by farm communities is unacceptable. The recognition that stress creates ill-health and contributes to injury, accidental death and illness makes it a serious concern of national significance.

Colleagues, that report was tabled in this chamber on June 21, 1993, almost 31 years ago. At the time, Brian Mulroney was the Prime Minister of Canada, and Jean Chrétien was the Leader of the Opposition. Federal government revenues were a third of what they are today. The average price of gasoline was 54 cents per litre, the average cost of a new house was \$150,000, and I was a much younger man.

In other words, 31 years ago was a long time ago. Even then, it was clear that those who worked in our agricultural sector were facing significant stresses, which were leading to serious mental health challenges. Adverse economic conditions, fluctuating weather, long work hours, lack of information, and isolation were all contributing to an alarming rate of mental illness in the agricultural sector, so much so that the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry decided there was a need to look into the matter. A final report was never released by the committee because the committee's work ended with the dissolution of Parliament when the thirty-fifth general election was called.

However, in their interim report, they made some important observations that are still relevant today. The first was that unstable and adverse economic conditions were the most significant source of stress for producers. The committee reported:

The economic conditions in the agricultural industry are a major source of stress for Canadian farmers and their families, and affect almost every facet of farm lives. . . .

Unstable economic conditions within the agricultural industry have been around since the beginning of time, but in 1993 the committee noted that these conditions were being accentuated by “. . . high input costs, low market returns, uncertain markets and unfavourable weather conditions.” In turn, they were impacting farmers’ incomes, debt and asset values.

The second observation made by the committee was that when taken together, these challenges were having a serious effect on the mental, emotional and physical well-being of Canadian producers.

• (1740)

Over 25 years later, in December 2019, researchers at the University of Guelph and the University of Alberta released a scoping review entitled “Research trends in farmers’ mental health.” This was the first scoping review to examine mental health in farming communities worldwide. The objective was to identify studies that examined mental health outcomes in farming populations in order to analyze what work had been completed and what the findings were.

Their review found that, prior to December 2017, the U.S. had conducted 118 studies on the issue of farmers’ mental health. Australia had completed 64; India, 43; the U.K., 25; and Canada, 16. Only 19% of the research had been conducted prior to the year 2000, with 81% taking place since the year 2000 and almost 50% being published in the last seven years, between 2010 and 2017.

In 1993, the Senate was tackling an issue which was only beginning to register in the consciousness of the Canadian public. Today, colleagues, things have changed. There is a broad, growing awareness that farmers operate under a burden of unique challenges that pose substantial risks to their mental health because their occupation includes significant components that are beyond their control.

The stories are different from one sector to another, but the challenges are the same. From grain to cattle to hogs to poultry to dairy to eggs to horticulture, producers have to contend with market volatility, extreme weather, financial pressures, isolation, excessive government regulation, long work hours, machinery breakdowns, animal rights activists and more. It is not hard to understand that farmers cope with unusual levels of stress, uncertainty and anxiety. This is the reason why we must carefully consider the bill before us today.

For producers in the supply management sector, these anxieties include the outcome and impact of trade negotiations. Since the emergence of global trade liberalization in the 1980s, farmers have found themselves in an ongoing struggle to protect the supply management system from being negotiated away by politicians eager to strike international trade agreements. Beginning with the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1986 and the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in 1989, the supply management sector has fought for 40 years to protect the stability that the system brought to farmers and has been very successful.

I want to note that, over this time, the sector was well represented and well protected by our negotiators and the government. Although some concessions have been made under the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP, and the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, the system continues to receive strong support from Parliament and the government.

Both the Conservative government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper and today’s Liberal government have openly supported supply management, and the House of Commons has unanimously affirmed its support for supply management on several occasions. I believe that this political support may be the best protection available for supply management, and I am concerned that Bill C-282 may erode that support rather than strengthen it.

Like many of you, I have had representatives from the agricultural sector come to my office to make their case in favour of this bill. I have had representatives from the agricultural sector come and make their case against this bill. I want everyone to understand that I stand with the agricultural sector.

As noted by Senator Black in his speech, the agricultural community is badly divided on this bill. The reason for that is because, as pointed out by Senator Simons, this is not an agricultural bill — it’s a trade bill — and this, colleagues, is where much of my concern lies.

In October 2023, an open letter was sent to all senators from 19 individuals described as the finest trade negotiators to have represented Canada over the past decades, including our own Senator Harder. In that letter, they urged senators to not approve Bill C-282 and state that, if passed into law, Bill C-282 would seriously handicap Canadian governments and their trade negotiators to accommodate the give and take of future trade negotiations, to open up new markets and secure valued access for Canadian products, services and investments.

These concerns were echoed by the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, which contends that Bill C-282 will hurt, not help, the Canadian agricultural sector. The organization notes that agri-food exporters exported \$92 billion in agri-food products in 2022 and supported over a million jobs in urban and rural communities across Canada, all of which could be threatened and reduced by Bill C-282.

They go on to state that the bill will hurt Canada’s ability to make trade decisions. It will tie the hands of trade negotiators, resulting in less ambitious outcomes. It will jeopardize our trade with our biggest export market, the United States. It will harm other sectors that depend on trade and contradicts Canada’s commitment in recently signed declarations on food security at the G7, the G20, the World Trade Organization, or WTO, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, or APEC.

Colleagues, I find this concerning. These are not claims that we should or can dismiss lightly. They need to be carefully examined at committee to ensure that the decision made with respect to Bill C-282 is in the best interests of both farmers and all Canadians.

I know there was talk about sending this bill to the Agriculture Committee, but, colleagues, that would not have been the right decision. Although the issues under consideration impact agriculture, they specifically — very specifically — pertain to trade policy as is indicated by the fact that the bill is entitled “An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management).” We have other legislation that governs the supply management policy framework, and this bill does not amend or alter that legislation.

As a bill that specifically addresses trade, I support this bill going to the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade for a thorough and robust review. I urge all of the committee members to give it serious, sober thought because, although it is well intentioned, I fear that it will not yield the outcomes that the sponsor is hoping for.

Thank you, colleagues.

Hon. Peter Harder: Honourable senators, perhaps I’m out of fashion. I believe in moderation, not polarization; in pluralism, not populism; in climate action, not climate denial. I believe in experts, not slogans; in the rule of law, both domestic and international. I believe in politics of country and free trade, not politics of region and protectionism. So I come to this debate knowing how unfashionable it is to oppose Bill C-282.

As a reminder, this bill seeks to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act. It would bar the Minister of Trade from concluding negotiations that open access to our supply-managed sector. It makes supply management non-negotiable.

As critic of this bill, I’d like to make a few key points. The first is that this bill isn’t about supply management. In the debate, we’ve heard emotional support for supply-managed farmers. We’ve heard about the benefits of supply management and why it should be protected.

If this were a substantive debate about supply management, we would have heard justification of why, in the year to July 2023, the cost of chicken rose 23.7%, far outpacing general food price increases that rose 7.8%, or we would have heard about the price of eggs, which have risen more than 22% in two years, or milk, which the Canadian Dairy Commission raised three times in the 12 months to February of last year, by a total of 13%.

There have been studies showing how supply management consistently keeps the costs of supply-managed goods above the rate of inflation, which affects the poorest of us the most.

• (1750)

This is why Senator Woo called supply management “regressive.” Yet, we have heard barely a word in speaking up for the consumers of these products — just emotion.

No one should dispute that Canada is a trading nation. We rely on trade. This is a vast country with a relatively low population. It’s also indisputable that Canada’s stature as a trading nation began after the advent of supply management in the early 1970s. Times change, and policies change in response. What has been described as a Soviet-style cartel system, supply management — it can be argued — appears to be antiquated when associated with our trading nation status.

The argument of “protecting the family farm” has also been raised, but what we haven’t heard is how the number of dairy producers has continued to dwindle after supply management was implemented.

In a 2017 report from the Canada West Foundation, they state:

In the 1970s, when supply management was brought in, there were approximately 145,000 dairy producers; according to Statistics Canada, there are now only about 9,000 — a staggering drop of more than 93%.

If it were a substantive debate about supply management, we would have heard not just the benefits but the hesitations and the outright criticisms as well. I would welcome and happily participate in such a debate. But this isn’t the time nor the bill for that, because Bill C-282 is not about supply management.

This brings me to my second point. Is supply management at such a risk that it requires legislative protection? The answer again is a resounding “no.” Here’s what Statistics Canada has to say on the issue: If we look at the cash receipts for dairy producers from 2010 to 2021, these were \$5.5 billion in 2010, and these were \$7.39 billion in 2021. This is an increase in revenue of 40%. The 2021 figure was after the so-called problematic trade agreements had been negotiated, namely the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA; the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP; and the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA.

If we look at actual milk production from 2014 to 2021, there were 78 million hectolitres produced in 2014, and 95 million hectolitres produced in 2021. We’ve heard that supply management is at risk, but, according to these numbers, it’s flourishing.

Moreover, a decision from an expert panel convened under the auspices of CUSMA issued findings back in November that were very much in Canada’s favour. Canada celebrated what it is calling an absolute victory in its latest trade dispute with the United States over dairy imports.

This is the second dispute process, with the first having been a toss-up for both Canada and the United States.

In this second dispute, the United States triggered it to consider four issues: first, Canada's exclusion of retailers from tariff rate quota eligibility; second, Canada's use of different metrics to calculate the market share for its different categories of applicants, like processors, further processors or distributors; third, Canada's requirement that importers demonstrate monthly activity in their markets for each of the 12 months of a specified period; and, fourth, Canada's lack of a mechanism for returning and reallocating unused import permit volume in a timely and transparent manner so that importers fully use what's available.

The second panel's report found that Canada's practices were consistent with the language in the trade deal, ensuring no further changes would have to be made on Canada's part.

Colleagues, this is a process of transparent protection of the supply management sector. After this decision, I expect the language in the trade deal will be of utmost concern during the 2026 mandatory review of the CUSMA.

We have all heard the promise from the Prime Minister that no further access would be granted to the supply management sector. Obviously, this wasn't a throwaway line, as the U.K. stepped away from trade negotiations with Canada in large measure over their lack of access to our supply-managed markets, especially as they relate to cheese. The U.K. is Canada's third-largest trading partner. I fear that this is a premonition of things to come, yet it is another example of the steps that are being taken to protect supply management.

Finally, compensation in the billions is being given to supply-managed sectors because of the market loss created by the CETA, CPTPP and CUSMA. Tom Rosser, Assistant Deputy Minister for the Market and Industry Services Branch at the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, stated the following at the House Standing Committee on International Trade hearings on Bill C-282:

The Government of Canada is also fully and fairly compensating producers and processors with supply-managed commodities who have lost market share under the three agreements. As announced this past November —

— that is November of 2022 —

— dairy, poultry and egg producers and processors are expected to share more than \$1.7 billion in direct payments and investment programs in response to the impacts related to CUSMA. This is in addition to the over \$3 billion in direct payments in investment programs for CETA and CPTPP. These programs will help drive innovation and growth in the supply-managed sectors.

The Government of Canada is investing north of \$4.7 billion into supply-managed sectors — because of negotiated access to these free trade agreements — simply so the system doesn't suffer. It is yet another layer of protection, and this time the protection is coming at the expense of the taxpayer. I won't call this a bailout per se, but you can see why my mind is wandering here.

[Senator Harder]

Now the consumer is paying twice for supply management — once on the inflated price of goods at the source, and once in taxpayer dollars to ensure supply management's livelihood after negotiated agreements. I'd call this a double whammy.

So if this bill isn't about supply management, and supply management isn't at risk, what is this bill really about? Colleagues, this bill is all about politics — especially Quebec politics — and it is fuelled by one of the best lobbies in the country. It appears to be another case of an unrealistic public and an overpromising political class.

In recent years, supply management has enjoyed religious-like devotion. This is particularly true in the dairy sector where, you could say, it has become a sacred cow. We've seen unanimous resolutions in the National Assembly of Quebec and in the Parliament of Canada in support of this sector. Access to supply management in the three recent free trade agreements is seen as a threat to the system and its three pillars, so something more must be done to protect against this threat. Simple support for supply management through resolutions is no longer the acceptable political bar. You see, resolutions are easy to accept circumstantially, because they are non-binding. There was no real consequence to voting for such a motion at the time because it was a show of support for farmers, mostly from my province of Ontario and in Quebec, where most of the votes for re-election are found or sought after.

The minister and trade negotiators can certainly take a resolution vote into consideration, but they are ultimately able to move forward — to ensure the best result for all Canadians — without it. It's a low-stakes vote unlike, say, a vote on a piece of legislation.

Then the Bloc Québécois introduced this bill in the other place as a shrewd political gesture of one-upmanship. All of a sudden, the stakes became much higher, and the previously inconsequential votes to resolutions meant something more. Do they remain consistent with their previous voting record, or vote against a system they claim to protect? The result is the bill we have before us, where there is a prohibition against the inclusion of supply-managed sectors in any future trade negotiations.

The sad reality is that the Bloc Québécois threat has been politically successful in seducing Conservative, NDP and Liberal support. Again, a minority Parliament does have its price.

But I suppose congratulations are also in order for the strong dairy lobby because they played no small part in this. It's the same dairy lobby that is financed and operated on the backs of Canadians through supply-managed goods themselves — interesting. All of this is happening during a period of economic uncertainty, where Canadians are required to extend a dollar to purchase the bare essentials; where pocketbook issues and the economy are under the microscope; and where words such as “greedflation” are used to demonize grocery CEOs and others.

I understand why a majority of MPs voted for Bill C-282 — the 2025 election is looming — but it remains somewhat baffling that there is such a dogmatic determination to back supply management under the circumstances that we face. But this can be boiled down to sermon over substance.

Ryan Cardwell, a professor of agricultural economics at the University of Manitoba, also doesn't put much stock in what elected officials have to say on supply management. He stated for The Canadian Press in March, "On one hand, they talk about food affordability, and (on) the other hand —"

• (1800)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is now six o'clock and pursuant to rule 3-3(1), I am obliged to leave the chair until eight o'clock, when we will resume, unless it is your wish, honourable senators, to not see the clock.

Is it agreed to not see the clock?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Harder: Let me resume:

On one hand, they talk about food affordability, and (on) the other hand, they have a government-sanctioned cartel in staple foods.

So, it's talk. I don't give it much credence.

I have certainly heard whispers from MPs, even some who have voted to pass the bill, asking the Senate to dispose of it quietly. I have an inkling others may have heard the same thing. Politics wins — Canada loses.

For all of these reasons, I believe that Bill C-282 is both reckless and dangerous and, if passed, will do significant harm to Canada's interests. For Canada, foreign and trade policies are existential, and they need to be understood as such.

This recklessness is best expressed in a letter from luminaries — some of whom Senator Plett quoted, and I exclude myself from that list, although I signed it — including former ministers, deputy ministers, trade negotiators, entitled "Canadian Senators Should Not Approve Bill C-282." I would like to read that letter in full:

As individuals who have devoted many years of public service and policy advocacy directed to negotiating beneficial international trade agreements and to assisting Canadian firms to develop international markets, we are profoundly concerned about how counterproductive Bill C-282 (Act to Amend the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade and Development Act) stands to be to Canada's interests. We urge Senators not to approve the Bill.

We do not comprehend how the Bill will benefit Canada, nor the dairy sector which it is apparently designed to favour. The Bill includes serious and troubling provisions which we believe will be extremely damaging to Canada's vital international trade and business interests, including those of the dairy sector. Correcting the deficiencies of the proposed Bill cannot be achieved through further amendment or redrafting. Rather, Senators should not approve the Bill, either as presented or in any other formulation seeking to deliver similar intents.

If passed into law, Bill C-282 would seriously handicap Canadian Governments and their trade negotiators to accommodate the give-and-take of future trade negotiations to open up new markets and secure valued access for Canadian products, services and investments. It should be added that, once negotiated, international trade agreements already require legislation to fully implement them, thereby providing the House and Senate with a critical role in the implementation of each agreement.

Additionally, rather than supporting Canadian dairy farmers, as seems the Bill's and its proponents' intent, any legislation that exempts the sector from all future trade negotiations and agreements could, counterproductively and detrimentally, end up making the dairy sector and supply management an explicit priority negotiating target for Canada's trading partners — and therefore be an unwelcome target and stumbling block in critically important future negotiations, including notably, for example, when the renegotiated Canada-US-Mexico Free Trade Agreement (CUSMA) comes up for mandatory unanimous agreement to renew by all three parties before July 1, 2026, not to mention current negotiations with the United Kingdom among others.

Previous trade negotiations have respected the importance of Canada's dairy sector and Canada's supply management system, while also being able to gain access for a broad range of Canadian products, including agriculture and food products.

We count on Canadian Senators to understand how damaging Bill C-282 could be to the national interest and specifically as well to the dairy sector and therefore not to approve it.

That's the end of the letter. It was signed by the following: Stewart Beck; Ian Burney; Donald Campbell; Thomas d'Aquino; Leonard Edwards; Martha Hall Findlay; Jonathan Fried; Robert Hage; myself; George Haynal; Lawrence Herman; Deanna Horton; Peter MacKay, former minister; John Manley, former deputy prime minister; John Tennant; John Treleaven; John Weekes; David Wright; and Robert Wright. Many of you will recognize some of these names, if not all.

If Bill C-282 makes it as far as committee, we will have an abundance of witnesses and experts to be called upon who are actually subject-matter experts, which is how we need to face this bill should it get to committee.

This letter is only bolstered by the many reports that have been written on the effects supply management would have on trade. One such report comes from the C.D. Howe Institute, where they state the supply management system hurts the interests of Canada as a trading nation by undercutting “. . . Canada’s potential role as a positive force in multilateral trade liberalization talks.”

It isn’t just bilateral trade at issue but multilateral agreements as well. The institute goes on to say:

. . . the need to maintain quantitative limits and prohibitive tariffs has neutralized Canada’s traditionally pro-liberalization stance in international trade negotiations, hampering our pursuit of other national interests. Even within Canada, the federal government’s devotion to these programs has inhibited it from supporting provincial initiatives to remove barriers.

Canada’s fierce protection of supply management at the federal level will hamper not only international trade agreements but also our internal domestic trade.

We are already seeing some omens coming to fruition that this letter and these reports prophesize. I have spoken about how the U.K. has stepped away from the negotiating table. When it comes to the CUSMA review in 2026, certain senior U.S. trade officials have already put supply management in their sights. After the CUSMA panel decision I spoke of earlier was announced, which found in Canada’s favour, Katherine Tai, the U.S. Trade Representative, issued a statement, and I would like to read it in part:

We will continue to work to address this issue with Canada, and we will not hesitate to use all available tools to enforce our trade agreements and ensure that U.S. workers, farmers, manufacturers, and exporters receive the full benefits of the USMCA.

The U.S. response did not stop there. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, added the following:

We will continue to voice deep concerns about Canada’s system. We remain focused on securing the market access we believe Canada committed to under the USMCA and we will continue exploring all avenues available to achieve that goal.

Senators, these are representatives of the democratic Biden administration. Should the election later this year result in a different configuration, we should be very concerned about the CUSMA’s current standing. Supply management is enemy number one to our neighbours down south, and the panel ruling in Canada’s favour has only reconfirmed this stance. We duped them — as indicated by Senator Woo in his speech — and I expect they are not the type to bear a grudge easily.

Just don’t take it from me.

[Senator Harder]

Our resident U.S. expert, who has dealt with the previous tumultuous U.S. administration, has commented on this issue. In a piece by John Ivison in the *National Post*, Senator Boehm said:

The Americans have consistently tried over the years to eliminate the trade impacts of Canada’s supply-management programs. They have not succeeded, but putting up legislation that they would see counter to their interests would have them raise the bargaining stakes. In fact, one could see a future in which, no matter who is in the White House after 2024, a U.S. president would only extend the CUSMA if supply management was terminated, given America First proclivities on both sides of the political aisle.

Thus says Senator Boehm.

Senators may not be surprised, but I am in full agreement with my colleague. This is the level of consideration that needs to be given to Bill C-282. This bill is like handing the United States a hand grenade, and passing it would be akin to pulling the pin.

I cannot say enough about Canada as a trading nation. A piece was authored by Juan Navarro and published on Open Canada, an online magazine published by the Canadian International Council. In it, he stresses:

. . . one in six jobs across Canada is supported by international trade. Consequently, shutting the door to negotiations in a specific sector, even one considered strategic or of national interest, is not the most conducive approach to facilitate greater participation of Canadian companies in export activities. . . .

• (1810)

He continues:

. . . Bill C-282 appears inconsistent with Canada’s role in guiding the international trade agenda alongside like-minded economies. Indeed, approving this bill can be perceived as a protectionist measure and a shift in Canada’s trade policy values, which up until now have been characterized by principles of openness, fairness, and sustainability.

I can’t see Bill C-282’s approach as anything but dichotomous to Canada’s trade values. Where Canada needs to rely more on trade liberalization, we are intensely protectionist of one sector of our economy as it stands. To further this protectionist approach using a departmental act is simply beyond the pale.

Moreover, the brief to the House International Trade Committee from the Canadian Cattle Association indicates that legislating this protection could have a precedent-setting effect. The cattlemen’s brief states that Bill C-282:

. . . sets a dangerous precedent that certain industries and sectors would have their trade interests protected through legislation. Further, this bill could see a domino effect around the globe with further protectionist actions from our

trading partners. This risk is not worth the economic risk to Canada's economic sectors that rely on trade and the broad interest of Canadians. Market access losses will be counterproductive to Canada's wider economic interests.

The cattlemen go on to say, and this is important:

While many other countries have trade-sensitive sectors, we understand that no other country has chosen to legislate the work of their trade negotiators. Bill C-282 is unprecedented in terms of global trade principles.

Colleagues, this isn't some mere scare tactic. This was verified by Aaron Fowler, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. For context, Mr. Fowler was at the table for the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, negotiations and told the committee:

Countries deploy a variety of tools and policies to protect and advance the interests of their agricultural sectors. In some cases this includes subsidization, and in some cases it's tariff protection for the domestic market. When we negotiate with these countries we try to secure concessions from them that respond to interests that are brought to our attention by Canadian agri-food stakeholders and other stakeholders.

Canada currently deploys these types of tools and policies to protect and advance its interests, in this case with supply management. Mr. Fowler concludes this thought by saying:

It has been suggested that other countries have legislation in place that is similar to the bill that is before the committee. I must say that to the best of my knowledge, I am not aware of any Canadian trading partner that has a legislated prohibition on the negotiation in a specific area.

Beyond the negotiating realities this bill aggravates, we need to look internally, to our agriculture community itself. At a time when the community should be working in tandem to provide food security to Canada and elsewhere, we should not be giving reasons to divide the agriculture community itself. Unfortunately, that is exactly what this bill has done.

This is apparent when looking at the testimony given at the House committee: The industries that are supply managed love the bill and those that are not are opposing the bill. This shouldn't be perpetuated.

There are two outcomes of barring any negotiations over supply-managed access. First, as was already discussed, it could have the effect of crashing negotiations completely, which is bad for all sectors.

Second, it encourages our trade partners to go after the other sectors more ferociously, such as other agricultural and agri-food products like canola, beef, pork and pulses, or beyond these to steel, aluminum or auto parts. With one item off the table, all other items become more heavily favoured in the negotiations.

How is this fair to them or to Canadians who want the best deal? It is hard for me to comprehend.

I now turn to the idea that since the House of Commons has spoken, we should follow suit. We have heard from proponents of Bill C-282 that it was not just the House but also party leaders who voted in favour of this bill, and that we must give some importance to this consideration. Senators, a leader of a party is still an elected MP who is as prone to, and often more prone to, considering the political weight of their decisions.

Politically speaking, it is clear why the party leaders voted in favour of this bill. It is the same for any MP. That still doesn't make it good policy or require the Senate to adhere to this decision of the House. I, for one, don't have a party leader and won't be influenced by this argument.

Further, this is a private member's bill. This is not government policy. This is not a government bill. There aren't any Salisbury convention implications. I know that there are senators who are not sold on the Salisbury convention in any case, but for those who are, including myself, rest assured that it does not apply in the context of private members' bills.

Senator Simons, during her debate on Bill C-282 — and indeed on Bill C-234, as she was quoting herself — said:

. . . private members' bills require more thought and study, because they don't always receive such scrutiny in the other place where partisan politics can play more of a factor than they sometimes do here. Just because a private member's bill wins enough votes to pass in the other place doesn't mean we should rubberstamp it here.

I align myself with every word of that statement. Indeed, this is the process that was carried out regarding Bill C-282. Not only does the House allow for quicker consideration and quicker passage of private members' bills through their Standing Orders, but the committee consideration was, in my opinion, farcical. For a bill about trade sent to the International Trade Committee, there was an obvious lack of trade representatives or experts speaking to the trade implications of the bill.

Senator Simons also pointed out that “. . . it is not the job of the Senate to accept and pass private members' bills without study and possible revision. . . .”

I would even be so bold as to go further and say that a private member's bill as fatally flawed and beyond repair as Bill C-282 should not be accepted or passed — no study needed. A vote to send legislation to committee is a vote on a bill in principle. I'm in principle against this bill and believe it doesn't deserve more consideration in our chamber.

Bill C-282 is a solution in search of a problem. It is not about supply management. It is political, plain and simple. Supply management is not at risk. Therefore, it is not in need of further protection. What is at risk is our negotiators' ability to reach agreements on free trade beneficial to Canada and Canadians as a whole. We're risking deals that create opportunity, choice and prosperity.

Sylvain Charlebois, Senior Director of the Agri-food Analytics Lab and professor in food distribution and policy at Dalhousie University, recently encapsulated much of my opinion on this matter in the following excerpt from the *Toronto Sun*. He says:

In essence, Bill C-282 represents a misguided initiative driven by farmer boards capitalizing on the ignorance of urban residents and politicians regarding rural realities. Embracing further protectionism will not only harm consumers yearning for more competition at the grocery store, but also impede the growth opportunities of various agricultural sectors striving to compete globally, and stifle the expansion prospects of non-agricultural sectors seeking increased market access.

Professor Charlebois is an expert on these issues. His knowledge was shared with the Senate Prosperity Action Group, which some of us may remember.

On that point, colleagues, I urge you to vote against Bill C-282 at second reading, so it cannot see the light at committee. The approach of putting politics before pragmatism that was taken in the elected chamber requires us to impart our duty as the appointed body of further reflection. It is in the national interest to do so now.

Throughout this debate, I was reminded of a familiar quote by H. L. Mencken, the great American journalist. It reads, “There is always a well-known solution to every human problem — neat, plausible, and wrong.”

Truer words have never been spoken. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

The Hon. the Speaker: Are senators ready for the question?

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say, “yea.”

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

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

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker: I see two senators standing. Is there an agreement on a bell?

Senator Seidman: I move the vote to the next sitting of the Senate.

The Hon. the Speaker: The vote will be held at 5:30 at the next sitting of the Senate.

• (1820)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Marshall, for the second reading of Bill C-288, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act (transparent and accurate broadband services information).

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Martin, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO STRIKE A SPECIAL SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN CAPITAL AND THE LABOUR MARKET—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Bellemare, seconded by the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C.:

That a Special Senate Committee on Human Capital and the Labour Market be appointed until the end of the current session, to which may be referred matters relating to human capital, labour markets, and employment generally;

That the committee be composed of nine members, to be nominated by the Committee of Selection, and that four members constitute a quorum; and

That the committee be empowered to inquire into and report on such matters as may be referred to it by the Senate; to send for persons, papers and records; to hear witnesses and to publish such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, I would like to take adjournment for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

RCMP'S ROLE AND MANDATE

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C., calling the attention of the Senate to the role and mandate of the RCMP, the skills and capabilities required for it to fulfill its role and mandate, and how it should be organized and resourced in the 21st century.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, I note this item is at day 15. Senator Busson wishes to speak to it. Therefore, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 4-15(3), I move adjournment of the debate in the name of Senator Busson.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONCLUDED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Woo, calling the attention of the Senate to the one hundredth anniversary of the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, the contributions that Chinese Canadians have made to our country, and the need to combat contemporary forms of exclusion and discrimination faced by Canadians of Asian descent.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Your Honour, I would like to exercise my right of final reply.

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to inform the Senate that, if the Honourable Senator Woo speaks now, his speech will have the effect of closing the debate on this inquiry.

[English]

Senator Woo: Honourable senators, I rise to offer concluding remarks on my inquiry calling attention to the hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act. I would like to thank Senator Jaffer, Simons, Omidvar, Oh, Kutcher, McCallum, Ravalia and Mégie for their contributions to the inquiry. Each of them offered fresh perspectives on the Chinese immigrant experience in this country as well as the broader story of immigration to Canada and the unfinished task of fighting prejudice, discrimination and exclusion of newcomers.

On June 23, 2023, Senator Oh and I, together with Action, Chinese Canadians Together, organized a national remembrance ceremony in this very chamber to mark the hundredth anniversary. The meeting was graced by Her Excellency the Governor General and Speaker Gagné. Nearly 200 Chinese Canadians and friends of the community filled this chamber. Thousands more watched a livestream at some 400 registered viewing parties across the country.

The ceremony included the designation of the Chinese Exclusion Act by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada as a national historic event and the commissioning of a bronze plaque. Here is the inscription on the plaque:

On 1 July 1923, Canada prohibited Chinese immigration. The Chinese Immigration Act, 1923 (Chinese Exclusion Act) was the culmination of anti-Chinese racism and policies, including the head taxes which it replaced. All Chinese persons living in Canada, even those born here, had to register with the government or risk fines, detainment, or deportation. The Act impeded family reunification, community development, social integration, and economic equality. Chinese Canadian men and women successfully challenged this law, leading to its repeal in 1947. Still, their fight to dismantle racist immigration restrictions continued.

The repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act ended the prohibition on Chinese immigrants, but Canadian immigration policy continued to be racially biased with the intake of newcomers almost exclusively focused on European settlers. This bias meant that Chinese who were already in Canada were largely unable to sponsor their family members in China to enter the country.

Worse, Chinese Canadians were subject to investigations by the government, which continued to harbour suspicions about their bona fides and loyalties. The recent release of previously restricted C.I.44 records by Library and Archives Canada has shone a light on the pervasive anti-Chinese sentiment that lingered well past 1947.

Archival researchers have so far been able to access only a small fraction of the Chinese immigration records from the exclusion period and its aftermath. Many of these documents remain restricted and are very difficult to navigate because of the complicated filing system used by government departments at the time. I am calling on Library and Archives Canada to make more records available and to invest in the development of finding aids so that historians and researchers can paint a more complete story of Chinese immigration both during and after the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The remembrance ceremony in the Senate of Canada was followed the next day by a rally on Parliament Hill attended by more than 3,000 Chinese Canadians who came from across the country. They were here to mark the Chinese Exclusion Act and to pledge opposition to ongoing discrimination, stigmatization and prejudice against Chinese people and other minorities.

The hundredth anniversary has also been remembered by community groups and educational institutions at dozens of events across Canada. It has mobilized the Chinese community in ways that I have not seen before and has forced the community to have some difficult conversations about the place of Chinese people in Canadian society and the ongoing challenges faced by the community.

It has also forced me to reflect more deeply on some contemporary public policy issues that impinge on Chinese Canadians, several of which have already found their way to this chamber. As these issues surface, I will be asking questions about justice, fairness and the rule of law that I wish my predecessors of 100 years ago had asked of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The fact that the Chinese Exclusion Act passed the House and the Senate with little opposition suggests that there was popular support for the bill and that MPs and senators were able to come up with rationalizations that fit with the dominant ethos of the time. Back then, it was about racial purity, economic security, cultural superiority and a protection of a way of life.

It is unlikely that anyone today would argue for a law based on racial purity and cultural superiority. We can take some solace in the fact that we are more enlightened than our forebears when it comes to foreigners, but we would be deluding ourselves if we thought that nativist and xenophobic attitudes have been expunged from the collective Canadian consciousness.

• (1830)

One of the controversies aroused by the centenary of the Chinese Exclusion Act is the question of whether a form of modern exclusion of Chinese Canadians is happening in our country now. Those who deny it often suggest that claims of modern exclusion are a sign of disloyalty and subversion.

A particular source of friction is the proposed foreign influence transparency registry that the government plans to introduce. A discussion paper on the proposed registry, as well as private members' versions of the bill introduced in the House of Commons and the Senate, suggest that anyone with links to legally constituted entities in the People's Republic of China, or PRC — universities, business associations, cultural groups, sporting bodies, et cetera — could be required to register. Further, anyone who espouses views that are in line with a foreign government and who has had contact with a foreign official could be required to register because that person is deemed to be a source of malign foreign influence.

Colleagues, I support an expanded registry of lobbyists that fully captures agents of foreign states, but what we could be getting instead is a registry of foreign influence. Think about it — a registry of Canadians who are deemed to be subject to influence from foreign governments, even if they are not in the

employ or under the direction of that government. For Chinese Canadians, it would mean having to disavow professional, cultural and — in some cases — familial ties in China or run the risk of having their names on a registry. Is there any wonder that I and many others worry about modern Chinese exclusion?

It is not only in the proposed foreign influence registry that we see such signs. We also see warning lights in the heightened immigration screening of students from China, the oversecritization of research collaboration at our universities, claims of foreign interference and disloyalty that focus on politicians of Chinese ethnicity, forcing Chinese Canadians to dispose of their assets using extraordinary powers of the state, police investigations of Chinese cultural organizations that are threatening their very survival — and the stigmatization of anyone who questions these troubling trends as a foreign agent.

This is not to minimize the importance of national security or the suffering of Canadians who are subject to transnational repression. It is also not about defending human rights abuses or militarism in the People's Republic of China. But we only harm ourselves by embracing a sweeping definition of a "China threat," and we harm our reputation as a country that sees itself as progressive, fair-minded and open to the world. The rhetoric of an all-encompassing China threat propagated by politicians who are trying to out-hawk each other sets a tone for how we see and treat Canadians who have ties to the PRC. Let's be very clear: We are talking about protecting the rights of Canadians, not foreigners. Canadians who deserve all the rights and privileges of fellow citizens, including the right to not be stigmatized because of their links to China.

I think about the senior Chinese Canadian official who was advised by bosses to not attend the remembrance ceremony in the Senate because it might "send the wrong message"; the Chinese Canadian academics who are treated with suspicion because they work with colleagues in China; users of Canada-based Chinese-language social media platforms, who are assumed to be unable to think for themselves and accused of being dupes and vectors of foreign interference; and Chinese scientists in Canada who are punished for their past work with Chinese research institutions. How many more Chinese Canadians will be subject to this kind of modern exclusion? How long before we wake up to the injustice of such actions? Not, I hope, as long as the 24 years it took to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act.

I will end on a more positive note. I have already lamented the complicity of Canadian parliamentarians in making possible the Chinese Exclusion Act of 100 years ago. The Senate of Canada was part of that shameful past, and it was senators from British Columbia who delivered some of the most repugnant speeches. But the Senate also played a role in making the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 less harmful than it could have been. By amending the bill that came from the House of Commons, the Senate removed the requirement for a language test to apply to Chinese already in Canada. The original provision would have led to mass deportation of Chinese who were deemed to not be sufficiently fluent in English. Perhaps the thought of having to transport tens of thousands of Chinese across the Pacific prompted this outburst of sober second thought, but it was, in any event, a slim lining of silver in an otherwise very dark cloud that hung over the Chinese community for more than two decades.

That is why, honourable colleagues, my inquiry on the one hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act is as much an inquiry about our institution as it is about Chinese Canadians. For us, the remembrance of the act must be about being alert to modern exclusion and preventing it from spreading — because when modern exclusion rears its ugly head, it will not come in the exact same form of the exclusion act. Rather, modern exclusion will be constructed around a set of contemporary fears and phobias fed by political and populist pressures from within

and without. It will not be the same as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 100 years ago, but it will be just as seductive, just popular, just as “politically necessary” — and just as wrong. Thank you.

(Debate concluded.)

(At 6:38 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at 2 p.m.)

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