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Thursday, May 2, 2024

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

CONTENTS

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THE SENATE

Thursday, May 2, 2024

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, there has been an agreement to allow brief remarks to Mr. Lafrenière.

THE SENATE

GÉRALD LAFRENIÈRE—TRIBUTES

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I want to join with my colleagues in thanking Gérald Lafrenière for his many years of service, especially those dedicated to the Senate.

His career on the Hill began 30 years ago as a legal analyst in the Library of Parliament, where he put his bachelor's degree in law from the University of Ottawa to excellent use. He then joined the Senate 20 years ago as a procedural clerk and went on to work within various directorates.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lafrenière has served as deputy principal clerk at the Committees Directorate, principal clerk at the International and Interparliamentary Affairs Directorate, and director of Governance and Strategic Planning. He became a table officer in 2008 and was subsequently appointed as the sixteenth Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments on an interim basis in December 2020, in which capacity he has served us admirably for over three years.

[*English*]

This position is one of three executive positions that oversee the overall management of Senate administration, supports all aspects of the legislative process and oversees the legislative services provided by the Senate — no simple task.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lafrenière has provided procedural advice to the Speaker of the Senate and her predecessor, the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, other standing committees, as well as several individual senators. His 30-plus years of experience have always been apparent, and he has been a real source of support in the Red Chamber.

[*English*]

We senators often take for granted how this chamber operates and we have come to expect everything to run smoothly — whether at 2:00 p.m. or at midnight. The fact that we take this for granted is testament to the skill and professionalism of Mr. Lafrenière and his staff.

On behalf of the Government Representative Office, Gerry, I want to thank you for your dedication, for your advice and for always setting an example of the highest professionalism as is befitting the Senate of Canada. We wish you every success in your future endeavours.

• (1410)

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, as has already been said, today we are honouring and thanking Gérald Lafrenière, the Interim Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments and Chief Legislative Services Officer, for his dedication to this institution.

Gérald was appointed, as was said, on an interim basis on December 31, 2020, to serve as the sixteenth Clerk of the Senate of Canada. Although the position was meant to be on an interim basis, this did not mean that his term was going to be a walk in the park. Amongst the various challenges he faced, one in particular comes to mind as the most dominant and unexpected: the global pandemic.

I am grateful to you, Gérald, for having steered this institution through those difficult times as you always had the best intention and vision while we faced uncharted waters, which is expected from a guy from rural Manitoba.

Colleagues, I want to share with you that Gérald and I share a personal connection. First of all, Gérald's father, Dr. Lafrenière, was my personal physician and that of my father-in-law. But although Dr. Lafrenière cared about my well-being, his son along with some of his friends — the Chaputs and the Simards of Ste. Anne — are responsible for many of the back and neck problems that I have due to the many cross-checks and elbows I got. I think there were days Dr. Lafrenière asked me when I went to see him, “Did my son do this to you?”

It may be hard to believe when you look at us today, but several decades ago, we were fierce competitors on local rinks back home. And for young men who lived just eight miles apart between the communities of Ste. Anne and Landmark, our rivalry was tremendous. Little did we know that although we fought hard back then we would find ourselves working together in the Senate of Canada.

Gérald, I have tremendously enjoyed working with you, much more than having played hockey against you. I look forward to our continued relationship, and congratulations on all you've done for us. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Interim Clerk, my colleagues, the Government Representative and the Leader of the Opposition spoke eloquently about your expertise and

professionalism. I wholeheartedly agree with them, and I want to thank you for your wise and thoughtful advice, your unstinting generosity with your time, and your strong sense of duty.

I want to pay tribute to you as a manager, one who was very attentive to senators, our teams and his employees. I know that you were and still are very proud of the team that you managed, and with good reason. Every member of that team, at all levels, thinks very highly of you. By way of evidence, I want to tell you about an interaction I had with Ms. Francine, who is a maintenance worker on the fourth floor of this building. One morning, not too long ago, she came into my office and said, “Mr. Lafrenière’s frames aren’t there anymore. What’s happening?”

I said, “He’s changing jobs, so he’s moving out of his office.”

Then she said to me:

He’s such a great guy. He gave me a gift card to thank me for dusting his frames. I’m really going to miss him.

I wanted to share that story because I think it’s a wonderful example of what a considerate manager you are and how you care about recognizing all employees and expressing gratitude to them.

These frames she was telling me about also include the ones that hold photos of your family, the five women in your life. I know that you are very proud of them. It’s another one of your great accomplishments.

As a professional, as a manager, as the person who was at the helm of this institution during the pandemic and who successfully ensured that the Senate could continue to operate, as well as from a family perspective, you are the pride of the five women in your life: your four daughters, Mélanie, Katrina, Gabrielle and Annika, and your wife, Danièle.

Today you are leaving this chair, but you are not leaving the Senate. On behalf of all the members of the Independent Senators Group, I congratulate you, I thank you and I want to tell you how happy we are to continue working with you under a different title. Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Tannas: Honourable senators, I rise to mark the departure of Gerry Lafrenière as our Interim Clerk of the Senate and the sixteenth individual to hold the title.

My leadership colleagues have mentioned your accomplishments, both here in the Senate, the Library of Parliament — all the achievements. I want to focus a little more closely on one important trait that I certainly have observed that Gerry has and which has been of enormous benefit to the Senate.

Throughout his career on Parliament Hill, Gerry exhibited this really uncanny ability to gather people and find solutions to complex problems. During the four years he was here, we had the pandemic. He kept the chamber running through the pandemic; hybrid sittings; a return to normal operations, more or less; the ever-changing sizes of caucuses and groups and how they needed

to be dealt with. So, Gerry, we’re grateful for the hard work you did and the way in which you reassured us during often uncertain times.

Colleagues, I want to share something that many of you may not know, but in the Clerk’s office you will find a framed piece of sandpaper. You may wonder, as I did, why he has a framed piece of sandpaper in the Clerk’s office, and the reason is simple. To be successful in Senate management, which Gerry excelled at, you need the ability to put a square peg in a round hole, and you definitely need sandpaper for that.

To our chief problem solver with sandpaper, Gerry, we’re glad you’re not going away, at least not yet. There are still many more square pegs to be smoothed, no doubt. From your Senate family, we also thank your family for sharing you with us. On behalf of the members of the Canadian Senators Group, I thank you for your long service, and we are grateful that it will continue. We wish you the best.

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Honourable senators, on behalf of the Progressive Senate Group, I’m pleased to join my colleagues to thank Gérald — we call him Gerry during in camera meetings — and to pay tribute to Gérald Lafrenière who has been serving as the sixteenth Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments on an interim basis since 2020. It almost became a permanent basis.

Thank you, Gérald.

[*Translation*]

A permanent appointee will be officially starting full time on Monday, so Gérald will be occupying a different seat, but he’ll still be at our table, and that’s what matters. He’ll still be part of the Senate family.

[*English*]

Our institution is best able to succeed when we have the steady and capable work and advice of professionals, such as Mr. Lafrenière, functioning both behind the scenes and also directly in front of us during our time in the chamber.

[*Translation*]

I, personally, have benefited from his sage advice, and I know we all have. What I admire about Mr. Lafrenière, and have always admired, is his poise. He’s always smiling, even in the face of the worst crises. He looks us in the eye, smiles, lays out the options and reassures us, and we carry on.

Gérald, thank you for your opinions, your comments and your experience. You’re a wise person in a chamber full of wise people, but even those wise people benefit from time to time from the wisdom of those who have been here longer.

In closing, I, like my fellow leaders, am very glad to know that he’ll just be moving to a different seat at the table. To his family members who are here today, know that we’re happy he’ll be staying with us. He won’t be with you full time next week.

• (1420)

We're happy. At the subcommittee of the Internal Economy Committee this morning, we made the necessary decisions to ensure that he'll be sitting comfortably at our table with his new hat and in his new chair on Monday morning. Thank you.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of our Clerk's family: his wife, Danièle, and his daughters Mélanie, Katrina, Gabrielle and Annika. Let me also note the presence of Pogo, the family pet.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

BATTLE OF KAPYONG BATTLE OF HILL 187

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, this year marks the seventy-third anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong and the seventy-first anniversary of the Battle of Hill 187 during the Korean War. As we pay tribute to our heroes on this day, we take a moment to honour the sacrifices made by these courageous men in defence of freedom and democracy.

The Battle of Kapyong — April 22 to 25, 1951 — stands as a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Canadian soldiers who faced overwhelming odds with unwavering resolve. In the face of a relentless enemy onslaught, they displayed extraordinary courage, resilience and determination.

Kapyong was a textbook example of disciplined, courageous soldiers holding their ground against a numerically superior offensive. It showcased the strength of international cooperation and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

At Hill 187, on the night of May 2 to 3, 1953, Charlie Company of the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment was overrun by Chinese forces, resulting in heavy casualties.

The Chinese suffered heavy losses, but continued their attack. After fierce resistance, however, they eventually withdrew, and the Canadians reoccupied their positions.

Through their selfless actions, they upheld the noblest traditions of the Canadian Armed Forces and safeguarded the principles for which our nation stands.

[Senator Dalphond]

As we reflect on the significance of these historic battles — the Battle of Kapyong and the Battle of Hill 187 — we must remember the sacrifices endured by those who served. Many Canadian soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice, laying down their lives on the battlefield. Others returned home, bearing the physical and emotional scars of war — their lives forever altered by the experiences they endured.

It is our solemn duty to ensure that the legacy of these veterans lives on in our collective memory. Theirs is a legacy of service and sacrifice that inspires us to strive for a better world — one marked by peace, justice and freedom for all.

We will remember them. Lest we forget.

[Translation]

RED DRESS DAY

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

Colleagues, I am rising today to talk about Red Dress Day, which is observed on May 5.

This day is an opportunity to pay tribute to the thousands of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people who are victims of disproportionate violence in Canada and to raise public awareness about this issue.

This is, of course, a time to raise public awareness about this issue, but it's also an opportunity to remind all levels of government across Canada that immediate action is needed.

As you know, in the wake of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Senate has been talking about human rights violations. The evidence is there. Indigenous women and girls make up less than 5% of the Canadian population, but they account for 24% of female homicide victims. That's a lot, right here in Canada.

As the Assembly of First Nations has said, we need to breathe life into the Calls for Justice.

In May 2023, the House of Commons unanimously supported a motion declaring the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls a Canada-wide emergency. The motion also called for funding for a new system to alert the public when someone goes missing.

Yes, it is still an emergency here.

In December 2023, the federal government launched consultations on the creation of a national red dress alert system. The 2024 federal budget proposes to develop a regional system before a national one.

A budget of \$1.3 million over three years to address an emergency is too little, too late, considering the pressing need for concrete action.

For us, the families, and the people who have lost loved ones, our patience has reached its limit. People have no more patience. They're tired and they're feeling all sorts of emotions.

The emergency has been going on for decades, but the government is still not acknowledging it in a tangible way. We want prevention now. We want to break out of reaction mode in the face of all these tragedies.

Every minute counts. Imagine if it were your daughter, your mother or your sister.

Tshinashkumitnau.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Hon. Gwen Boniface: Honourable senators, National Police Week will be observed this month from May 12 to 18, and yesterday was First Responders Day. All Canadians are invited to reflect on the contributions and sacrifices of those who serve on the front line, as well as their families who support them, especially in these divisive times.

This year, police services in Canada will be recognizing 50 years of women in policing. In early 1974, Ontario's Solicitor General published a report on policing that included a recommendation to increase the diversity of skills, culture, gender and age represented in the province's police services. That recommendation was adopted, and it changed the face of policing. In May 1974, 15 women walked through the doors of the Ontario Provincial Police Academy to become the first female police officers on the force.

Courageous and confident, they faced a very mixed reaction, but those 15 women broke down the barriers and shattered the glass ceiling, overcoming tremendous challenges.

In the first few months, their issued uniform was a skirt, and — of course — how would they carry their gun but in a purse? Fortunately, wiser minds prevailed. The skirts were gone within the year, and the guns took their rightful place on their hips.

Some of those women stayed; some moved on to more receptive employment. But they opened the path for today's female criminal investigators, patrol officers and emergency response officers, and, yes, they opened the door for the first female commissioner. The RCMP followed suit in September of that year, and we are privileged to have one of their first female officers and the first female commissioner in the chamber: Senator Busson.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Boniface: I want to salute the courage, tenacity and overwhelming success of these trailblazers.

On a sombre note, the twenty-fifth Ontario Police Memorial Foundation Ceremony of Remembrance takes place this weekend in Toronto. On Sunday, police officers and their families will honour those lost in the line of duty in Ontario. The names of four fallen officers are being added to the wall of honour, including Sergeant Eric Mueller, to whom I paid tribute in this chamber last May, and Detective Constable Steven Tourangeau of the Perth County Ontario Provincial Police. Two additional names that are historical in nature will also be added.

If you are in Toronto this Sunday, please join in the ceremony and support families who continue to grieve the loss of their loved ones.

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 William and Marion Dasko Adams, Senator Dasko's children.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1430)

BANKING FRAUD

Hon. Colin Deacon: Honourable senators, customers at Canadian banks are increasingly the victims of fraudulent activity that is occurring at record levels and growing at an alarming rate. There are countless heart-wrenching stories of individuals and small businesses having funds stolen because fraudsters have presented fake identification at a bank branch, sent a fraudulent wire transfer request to their bank or re-dated and reused their cheques, among countless other scams.

Increasingly, sophisticated global criminals profit from systemic weaknesses in our banking system due to outdated policies and a chronic under-investment in new technologies. This will only get worse as digital technologies advance. Nationally, our governments and regulators need to act so that our banks are compelled to implement state-of-the-art risk mitigation measures and provide restitution when those measures are breached.

Quantifying the scale of the problem is difficult. One reason is that fewer than 10% of fraud victims report the crime, according to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre. Despite that low reporting rate, they estimate that reported fraud cost Canadian consumers \$530 million in 2022, a 40% increase from 2021.

Canadians have shared stories with me in which one of the big five banks did not stop fraudulent acts where their customers had no way to intervene and prevent the crime, yet the bank still refused to take any responsibility. A big five bank even failed, on two occasions, to report the same crime to their internal fraud department.

The Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments, whose purpose is to help bank fraud victims, has victims sign an NDA before agreeing to investigate. If the bank has followed its internal policies, it seems that the ombudsman has no authority to challenge demonstrably ineffective policies and force the bank to provide the victim with restitution.

In a world where the identity verification processes used by our banks are easily defeated by criminals, no one is reliably protecting the victims of fraud — not our banks, not the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada and not the Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments.

Solutions exist, like comparing physical identity to the information and photo in provincial databases. In two thirds of OECD countries, digital identity platforms provide their citizens with greater control, security and privacy when accessing private and government services. Advanced technologies can be used to constantly scan account activity to rapidly identify exceptional or unexpected transactions and hold them for secondary verification by the customer.

Colleagues, global criminals are increasingly targeting the savings of Canadians. It's only going to get worse if our regulators, through our banks, don't begin to aggressively fight back. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Andrew Bedford and Kerry Wells. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Ross.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

THE HONOURABLE PERCY MOCKLER

CONGRATULATIONS ON HONORARY DOCTORATE

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: Honourable senators, it took less than a month for our former colleague, Senator Percy Mockler, to make a mark outside of this chamber. On April 22, three days after his seventy-fifth birthday, the Université de Moncton announced that our dear Percy will receive a honorary doctorate in political science in recognition of his distinguished career.

As a proud ambassador of Acadia and the Université de Moncton, Percy will be recognized by his alma mater for his 42 years of service to his community, his province, his country, his Acadia.

[Senator Deacon (Nova Scotia)]

He will have a permanent place in the history of the university, together with Acadian trailblazers, such as Justice Michel Bastarache, Louis J. Robichaud and Bernard Lord, and with artists who shaped Acadian history, such as Édith Butler, Herménégilde Chiasson, Phil Comeau and our colleague here in this chamber, Senator René Cormier.

It bears repeating that Senator Mockler grew up on welfare with his single mother, his sister and his grandparents. He went on to devote his entire career to giving back to the community that had done so much for him.

Senator Mockler dedicated his life to giving back to his neighbours and fellow citizens, and now it is his turn to be thanked by his community.

It's important to appreciate his trajectory from poverty to the Université de Moncton, to MLA and provincial cabinet minister, to senator, always a leader everywhere he went. Senator Mockler was an astronaut, so it's only fitting that the Université de Moncton should grant him this accolade to recognize him as one of Acadia's shining stars.

Throughout his 42-year career, Senator Mockler inspired both his own and younger generations with his dedication to his community, his work ethic, his determination and his desire to help people.

Senator Mockler's story will continue to inspire generations to come. Honourable senators, please join me in congratulating our former colleague, Senator Mockler, on receiving an honorary doctorate.

We are all proud of you, Percy, and we're grateful for your work, as are all the Brayons of Madawaska County back home.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Alice Wu and Danny Huang of Groupe Boda. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Oh.

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 members of The Sashbear Foundation. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Woo.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, May is Borderline Personality Disorder Awareness Month.

BPD is a serious and complex mental health disorder rooted in chronic emotional dysregulation. People with BPD have ongoing difficulties with regulating emotion, and as a result are emotionally sensitive and reactive. They experience extreme emotional pain and very high rates of suicidality. Between 1% and 2% of Canadians have BPD.

I want to introduce honourable colleagues to The Sashbear Foundation, an organization devoted to raising awareness of BPD. Since its founding in 2012 by Lynn Courey and Mike Menu, this grassroots, volunteer-based charity has given hope, skills and community to over 10,000 Canadians, who are members of families seriously impacted by their loved ones' mental health issues, which include chronic emotional dysregulation and borderline personality disorder.

Every year, The Sashbear Foundation organizes the Sashbear Walk. It is the largest event of its kind in Canada for chronic emotional dysregulation and BPD, bringing together hundreds of supporters in cities across Canada to create a sea of orange to help break stigma and raise public awareness of this disorder and our national mental health crisis.

I was pleased to be part of today's Sashbear Walk in Ottawa — its very first — and I will also join the walk in Vancouver on May 11. I encourage everyone to go to Sashbear.org to learn more about BPD and how you can support The Sashbear Foundation's work on mental health and suicide prevention. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

TWELFTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Honourable senators, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the twelfth report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, which deals with the *Senate Administrative Rules*.

(For text of report, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 2693.)

• (1440)

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

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

[English]

CANADA-UNITED KINGDOM INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

BILATERAL VISIT TO UNITED KINGDOM, NOVEMBER 13-17, 2023— REPORT TABLED

Hon. Tony Dean: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association concerning the Bilateral Visit to the United Kingdom, held in London, England; Cardiff, Wales; and Edinburgh, Scotland, from November 13 to 17, 2023.

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry be authorized to meet on Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 6:30 p.m., even though the Senate may then be sitting and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

QUESTION PERIOD

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Leader, yesterday Canadians who are unable to find a home that they can afford got more bad news from this NDP-Trudeau government. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's spring outlook says that housing starts will decline this year, even though we are in the midst of a housing crisis. Next year, new housing starts will not reach 2021 levels, and we were not building enough homes then either.

Leader, having the Prime Minister fly all over the place for photo ops isn't a plan to fix the crisis that he has created. Isn't this report from our very own housing authority more proof that Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh are not worth the cost? Thank you. You know the line.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Yes. The answer is no.

The challenge to build more housing in Canada, as we all know — I will simply make the point — is a function of a partnership between the federal government, which has the power of the purse; the provinces, which have jurisdiction; the municipalities, which are responsible for zoning; and, of course, the private sector. It is a challenge. Canadians are facing the challenge, and the government is very aware of, sensitive and responsive to it.

It is regrettable, however, that the projects that have already been put in place, or at least the federal part, are not progressing as they could. Let me cite one example. In the province of Ontario, in order to receive up to \$357 million in funding to reimburse investments in affordable housing, the Government of Ontario committed that they would have a plan to build tens of thousands of homes. They have announced that they are only going to be able to build 23%. That is one example of failure, and not the federal government's failure.

Senator Plett: Leader, an Ipsos poll last week showed that 80% of Canadians believe that owning a home is only for the rich, and among our youth that figure rises to 90%. This is dreadful.

Senator Gold, you've often claimed that the NDP-Trudeau government has done more than any other on housing. Don't blame the Ontario government.

In my view, spending more money and getting the absolute worst results is pure incompetence, leader. What do you call it?

Senator Gold: I'm pointing out facts to this honourable chamber.

The Government of Ontario promised that they would have a plan to show how they would create 19,660 new affordable homes by 2028 and repair over 25,000 homes. Their plan now only reaches 28% of that target. They refuse to show how they would ultimately meet it. They have voided that agreement with the federal government, and the residents of Ontario are the ones who are the losers.

FINANCE

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Leo Housakos: Senator Gold, Fidelity Investments Canada just released a report that shows that the majority of Canadian retirees, 60%, are financially supporting their adult

children. The same report shows that a whopping 82% of Canadian retirees indicate that inflation is negatively impacting their retirement. Almost half of pre-retirees say that the cost-of-living crisis created by this incompetent Trudeau government is delaying their scheduled retirement. More and more Canadians are having to work longer to pay for your wacko policies and mismanagement.

Senator Gold, are you going to tell Canadians and this chamber that it is just a coincidence that bad fiscal decisions by this government over the last eight-and-a-half years have nothing to do with retirees struggling and being pumelled by the policies of this government?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): We are all concerned about the difficulties that Canadians are facing during these difficult times.

What I am going to tell this chamber, however — and my answer to you, you will understand, does not agree with any of your allegations — is that this government's management of this economy during these difficult times has provided the following results: The net debt-to-GDP ratio is well below that of the G7 peers, deficits are declining, and Canada is only one of two G7 countries rated Triple A by at least two of the three independent credit experts.

With regard to inflation, notwithstanding the talking points and this, let us be clear: Independent analysts have shown that the price on pollution does not have an impact on inflation and, most recently, the Governor of the Bank of Canada said that the federal budget will not have much of an effect on inflation. This is responsible management.

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, your government must have some special kind of blinders on. The only people in this country with blinders on is this Trudeau government. Everyone else knows the level of incompetence that we're dealing with here. We have chaos on our university campuses, crime and chaos growing in our streets, more and more Canadians having to work longer and more and more young people turning to their parents for support. But, no, the Trudeau government has nothing to do with any of this. It is all a myth, according to your answers. The question is simple: Today's generation of Canadians have no hope of doing as well as their parents —

• (1450)

Senator Gold: You are very correct to point out the challenges, although the way in which you lumped them all together as a fault of this government is misleading, incorrect and, frankly, irresponsible.

I have confidence in Canadians, and I have confidence in Canadians to understand the difference between the federal government's responsibilities, for example, and those of university presidents on campuses within the jurisdiction of the provinces.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Senator Gold, our political leaders have stated that Canada will stand with Ukraine. Unfortunately, that may not include providing sufficient support for the military supplies it so desperately needs.

Indeed, Canada is spending less and less over time. For example, the amount spent in 2023 was 40% less than the previous year. Budget 2024 identified a five-year military aid spending window that amounts to only about \$320 million per year. This is a very small amount, especially considering the stakes involved. Senator Gold, why is Canada saying one thing and doing the opposite?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, although, respectfully, I do not believe Canada is saying one thing and doing the opposite.

I want to be clear. Canada has been unwavering in support of Ukraine as it defends its sovereignty and territorial integrity, protects its people and rebuilds its economy for the future. Canada has already committed over \$13.3 billion in funding to support Ukraine since 2022, with a commitment of \$3.02 billion in critical financial and military support to Ukraine in 2024. This is not insignificant. This is Canada doing its part with an important democratic ally.

Senator Kutcher: The military aid for Ukraine announced in the 2024 budget is well below that of our international allies. For example, Denmark, which is five times smaller in population, is providing \$1.94 billion U.S. while the Netherlands, about two times smaller, is providing \$2.18 billion U.S. Why are we not stepping up to match our allies? Does the government plan to increase the amount of military assistance to Ukraine beyond that which is earmarked in the budget?

Senator Gold: As I mentioned, the budget measures are not the only measures that the government is taking to support Ukraine. Earlier this year, President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Trudeau signed a new historic agreement on security cooperation between our countries to establish a strategic security partnership, and in this agreement, as part of it, the government has committed to \$3.02 billion in critical financial and military support to Ukraine this year, 2024.

HEALTH

CANADIAN DENTAL CARE PLAN

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Senator Gold, I would like to raise this important issue and concern once again. As you know, the Canadian Dental Care Plan started rolling out and now offers dental coverage to 1.7 million Canadian seniors over the age of 70. That is great news.

My question is on the rollout of the program itself and the ability for the government to quickly react, remain agile and adjust in order to ensure its success. Can you assure us that the

government is closely monitoring the rollout of the program and collecting the necessary data regarding planned enrolment and utilization so the dental plan can be responsive to the evolving needs of Canadian patients?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The answer is yes. I want to thank you, senator, for highlighting this important program.

Access to health care should not be a function of Canadians' ability to pay, and the Canadian Dental Care Plan will help ease the financial barriers to that care for up to 9 million Canadians.

My understanding is that the government has had numerous constructive conversations with the various dental associations across this country. This has led to the government making changes to the program in response to their input and their requests. I am also advised that the government will continue to have these conversations as the program rolls out.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you, Senator Gold.

What is the government doing from a communications perspective to further encourage dentists, denturists and hygienists to enrol in the program? It was reported yesterday that many dentists are reluctant to register for the program because it is overly complex and there is too much paperwork. According to a CBC article, only 16% of oral health care providers have signed up. Many Canadian patients will likely struggle to find eligible oral care providers.

Senator Gold: The government hopes and expects that increasing numbers will sign up over time. The government is, indeed, making it easier for oral health providers to participate in this program. As of July 8, every single oral health care provider will be able to care for patients either by signing up officially or by submitting claims individually, making it easier for dentists to participate. Again, this is in response to the ongoing conversations with the dental associations.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator, there are several items before Parliament, both here and in the other place, that concern veterans' benefits and veterans' health care. I have to tell you that I am hearing concerns from veterans that all this talk is not being followed by action. In particular, they are actually beginning to wonder if "lest we forget" is becoming "we will forget."

For example, within the budget coming up, there are a mere two line items related to veterans, and in the Notice of Ways and Means, there isn't the word "veteran" at all.

Secondly, there is a study being done by the House Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs about women's health, and there is growing concern that this study will not be tabled and not be adopted quickly enough. Women veterans continue to need help.

Senator Gold, can the government reassure women veterans that the report will be tabled and adopted and that dedicated funding will follow to implement the changes veterans so desperately need?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question and for underlining the importance that we at this government continue to support our veterans as they unquestionably deserve.

I am not in a position to comment on any additional funding that has not been announced, as you will understand.

With regard to the report, I will also make inquiries of the minister. As colleagues will know, it is not simply the prerogative of the government to unilaterally make possible the tabling of the report and the like. I will certainly inquire as to what steps are being taken to move that forward.

Senator Patterson: Here in the Senate, I know from my colleagues across the way, that there are up to 700,000 people who watch our deliberations, and we know many of them are veterans as well. We even have a report here in the Senate — a subcommittee report on psychedelic use for veterans' mental health — that has been waiting months for adoption by the Senate. What is more important is if the adoption of that report will trigger the government to respond and commit to veterans. Is the government willing to see this report get adopted, and are they prepared to respond to the issues raised in the report?

Senator Gold: Thank you. This is a very easy question. The Senate does important work. If there is a Senate report not yet put before Parliament for adoption, you can be sure that we in the Government Representative Office will be happy to support the adoption of this report and then the Government of Canada will respond appropriately to the Senate's recommendations.

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS SERVICES

INDIGENOUS HOUSING

Hon. Michèle Audette: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

The government's budget allocates a total of \$918 million over five years to address a housing crisis that has affected Indigenous communities across the country for far too long. In March 2024, the Auditor General of Canada said that she was completely discouraged to see how few improvements had been made to fix the inadequate housing in our communities over the past two decades. People have been talking about it for 20 years. The Liberals even committed to ending the First Nations' housing crisis by 2030. Do you think that this kind of annual budget announcement will get us there?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. It's an important question. I also want to thank you for stating your case so forcefully.

[Senator Patterson]

Decades of underinvestment and discrimination have led to an abysmal lack of safe and affordable housing and housing assistance for Indigenous populations. The government is prepared to implement all of the Auditor General's recommendations. Resolving this crisis is a priority for the government. For example, it has increased funding for on-reserve housing by 1,000% since 2016. That has made it possible to support the construction, renovation and improvement of over 34,000 housing units in First Nations communities. However, there is still a lot of work to be done. The government is determined to address this crisis by creating meaningful Indigenous-led solutions to close the housing gap.

• (1500)

Senator Audette: Thank you, Senator Gold.

In Budget 2023, the government announced \$4 billion in funding over seven years starting in 2024-25 for the implementation of the Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy and the creation of a national Indigenous housing centre.

Has that strategy come into effect? Why create a new organization when we already have the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc., where there is a Quebec First Nation that speaks French?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. The government has announced measures to advance a strategy that includes establishing a "for Indigenous, by Indigenous" national Indigenous housing centre. I've been informed that, once a proponent is selected, the government will finalize an agreement with it to establish the centre I mentioned.

[English]

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Hon. Denise Batters: Senator Gold, you claim that Government Motion No. 165, a sweeping omnibus motion to change our Senate Rules, was purely your own initiative. This motion aims to destroy the Conservative opposition in the Senate by significantly diluting our powers.

Can you please tell us how many times you, your government deputy leader, your government whip liaison or any of the staff in those three Senate government leadership offices met or had discussions with anyone from the Prime Minister's Office or the office of Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, about the content in or planning of the Trudeau government's Motion No. 165?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I'm not going to answer your question about how many times we met, because the conversations that I have with the Prime Minister's Office or any other office are not appropriate for —

The Hon. the Speaker: Order, order.

Senator Gold: But I am pleased to clarify, as I have before, the facts that have been misrepresented deliberately in debate.

The initiative to reform the *Rules of the Senate* originated with our office. We are the Government Representative Office. Once we decided what we thought was appropriate, of course, it was shared with the government. We sought a mandate to proceed, and that took time. We did receive that mandate.

This is a government motion that was initiated by my office and has the support of the Government of Canada. Can I be any clearer than that?

Senator Batters: Senator Gold, you're a member of the Trudeau government's Cabinet Committee on Operations, which, according to the Prime Minister's website, provides "... day-to-day coordination of parliamentary planning ...". You just told us you have a mandate for this. Please tell us how many times you have attended those cabinet committee meetings during and since the planning and creation of Government Motion No. 165.

Senator Gold: First, to correct the record, which I actually corrected in response to an answer to your question, I am a regular attendee, although I am technically not a member. To be a member of a cabinet committee, as honourable senators who have been in government would know, you have to be a member of cabinet, and I am not. But I attend each and every Cabinet Committee on Operations meeting, with the exception of those on Jewish high holidays, since I was named to this position.

So you can do the math. I've been at each and every one, save for those on Jewish high holidays.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

FIREARMS BUYBACK PROGRAM

Hon. Claude Carignan: My question is for the Leader of the Government. Radio-Canada recently reported that the federal government was hoping Canada Post offices could be used for the program to buy back 144,000 military-style weapons. Canada has 6,000 post offices, so that's around 24 military weapons each. Leader, who gave that crazy idea their "stamp" of approval?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): You like using words that can't be used in the other place, and you're obviously not following the guidelines.

It's important to give Canadians who own firearms that are no longer legal the opportunity to turn them in for a certain period of time.

The Government of Canada wanted to do this in the most efficient way possible for Canadians, at post offices.

As you know from reading the papers, Canada Post has some concerns, and the government will continue to work to find a way to ensure that Canadians have access to a safe place to turn in these firearms.

Senator Carignan: You said some Canada Post officials had some concerns. I would say those folks at Canada Post have common sense. Don't forget that half the post offices in Canada are in pharmacies. Imagine 24 people walking through the pharmacy with their AR-15s to bring their guns to the post office. There's no other word for that but crazy.

Senator Gold: You are again using language that is unacceptable in the other place, so I'll ignore your choice of words.

The government will find an appropriate way to ensure that the firearms buyback program can be implemented as soon as possible.

[English]

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Hon. Mary Coyle: Senator Gold, Nature on the Hill was held this week, with representatives of Nature Canada speaking with many of us parliamentarians about the upcoming Canada's 2030 National Biodiversity Strategy and the nature accountability bill. Canada has long been a leader in nature protection and restoration, having taken a leading role in the development of the Global Biodiversity Framework at COP 15 held in Montreal.

The nature accountability bill is expected to be tabled this year. One of the main concerns Nature Canada has raised is that the bill will not have the teeth it needs, and there won't be sufficient enforcement mechanisms built into it.

Senator Gold, could you tell us when the government is planning to introduce the strategy and the nature accountability bill? What consequences and course-correction provisions will the government include in the bill to ensure that the act will be effective in protecting Canada's biodiversity?

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

Canada is one of the first countries in the world to announce its intent to enshrine nature and biodiversity commitments into law. I've been informed that the bill will be focused on providing concrete steps from now until 2030 to implement the commitments the federal government has made. I'm advised that the bill will also include clear and accessible reporting that will enable progress to be assessed and, where necessary, course corrections to be made to stay on track with nature and biodiversity commitments.

However, due to the rules around parliamentary privilege, I cannot speak to specifics in a bill that has not yet been tabled.

Senator Coyle: Thank you, Senator Gold. We look forward to that, and hopefully, it will have steps like the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act did.

Nature Canada also highlighted the importance of developing a National Biodiversity Strategy that includes everyone, and which incorporates Indigenous knowledge especially to ensure that Canada's biodiversity strategy is an equitable plan that makes nature accessible for all. Senator Gold, how has the Government of Canada consulted with Indigenous groups across the country to ensure their knowledge, experiences and wishes are accounted for in the strategy?

Senator Gold: Thank you.

As you know, the Milestone Document, which lays out the strategy, has been released. It recognizes that Indigenous governments and peoples are rights holders and landowners, and honours their responsibilities for lands, waters and ice through stewardship and the keeping of Indigenous science. They are essential leaders, experts and partners in land, marine and wild species conservation and stewardship.

• (1510)

To your specific question, a series of bilateral meetings has already been held and will continue through the process.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CONFLICT IN GAZA STRIP

Hon. Rosemary Moodie: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, in mid-March the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, or UNRWA, reported that since the beginning of the Israeli offensive in Gaza, about 13,000 children have been killed as a result of the conflict. In addition to the thousands dead, there are many more children now dealing with malnutrition and starvation. Children in Gaza are facing a calamity few can begin to imagine.

Senator Gold, could you provide us with an update on what the Government of Canada is doing to provide relief for the support of children in Gaza?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, thank you for your question. As you know, Canada was the first G7 country to provide support to Gaza and is one of the world's largest donors of assistance to address the current crisis, not only for the children but for their families and communities.

Canada has announced \$60 million in funding for humanitarian assistance to address the acute needs of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and neighbouring areas, while ensuring and doing its best to ensure that none of the money goes into the hands of Hamas. This funding will help provide food, water, emergency medical assistance, protection services and other life-saving assistance.

Senator Moodie: Senator Gold, we know of the efforts of the American military to build a port in Gaza to bring in aid. What support is the Government of Canada providing to our American partners to support their efforts to get aid to the people of Gaza?

Senator Gold: Thank you. In addition to the \$60 million that I announced, the government has provided an additional \$40 million in funding to provide for humanitarian assistance. These funds are being allocated among many organizations: the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization and others. It is my understanding that the UN and humanitarian aid organizations will be using the temporary pier to which you referred to assist in the distribution of aid in Gaza — aid that the government is helping to fund.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Hon. David Richards: Senator Gold, my question is for you. My friend's nephew was in Afghanistan. As so many did, he came home with PTSD. For a long time, he was living on prescribed drugs and opioids until almost losing his life. Then he decided he must do something, so he started an outreach program, and he has helped save lives and rehabilitate himself and others. Still, 33 people he served with have committed suicide since the program started three years ago — servicemen and servicewomen who now live in the shadows of our world.

Senator Gold, these men and women are our forgotten heroes, as Senator Martin aptly explained today. With so much concern about drugs in B.C. and other major Canadian cities, is there any help available for those people who find themselves on those horrendous and deadly streets?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, thank you for that tragic and horrifying story. Our hearts go out to all those — and their families — who have taken their lives and those who are suffering so much that they are considering it.

The government has a commitment and an obligation to our veterans. My understanding is that it is reviewing all mental health programs and services to ensure that veterans, their families and their primary caregivers receive the best support for the mental health challenges they face, including timely access to service.

The federal government will continue to fund those services as well as the clinics. The clinics are almost always operated by the provinces. This is something the government is committed to. Thank you for raising that very sad situation.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-13(3), I would like to inform the Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate will address the items in the following order: third reading of Bill S-16, followed by Motion No. 165, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

[Translation]

RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

MOTION TO AMEND THE *RULES OF THE SENATE*—
MOTION IN AMENDMENT—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson:

That the *Rules of the Senate* be amended:

1. by replacing the words “Leader of the Government” by the words “Leader or Representative of the Government” in rules 2-4(2), 3-6(2), 4-3(1), 4-8(1)(a), 5-7(m), 6-5(1)(b), 12-5(a), 12-23(2) and (3), and 14-1(2);
2. in rules 3-3(1) and (2), 4-2(8)(b), and 7-4(2), by replacing the words “6 p.m.” by the words “7 p.m.” in the marginal notes, as appropriate, and the text of the rules;
3. in rule 4-2(2), by replacing the number 15 by the number 18 in the marginal note and the text of the rule;
4. in rule 4-2(8)(a), by replacing the words “At the request of a whip or the designated representative of a recognized parliamentary group” by the words “At the request of a whip, liaison, or the designated representative of a recognized party or recognized parliamentary group”;
5. by:
 - (a) replacing rules 4-9 and 4-10 by the following:

“Delayed Answers and Written Questions

Delayed answers to oral questions

4-9. (1) When responding to an oral question during Question Period, a Senator may indicate that a delayed answer will be provided in writing pursuant to the terms of this rule.

Written questions

4-9. (2) Subject to subsection (5), a Senator may submit a written question to the Government relating to public affairs by sending it in writing to the Clerk if either:

- (a) a written answer is requested; or
- (b) the question seeks statistical information or other information not readily available.

Publication of written questions

4-9. (3) Upon receipt of a written question, the Clerk shall have it published in the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* on the day following receipt and subsequently on the first sitting day of each week until the earlier of the following:

- (a) an answer is tabled;
- (b) a written explanation why an answer has not been provided is tabled;
- (c) the question is withdrawn; or
- (d) the expiration of the 60-day period provided for in this rule for an answer or explanation.

Withdrawal of a written question

4-9. (4) The Senator who submitted a written question may subsequently withdraw it by writing to the Clerk, who shall have a note to that effect included in the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* the next time the question would have been published there.

Limit on number of written questions

4-9. (5) A Senator shall not submit a written question if they already have four such questions that are to be published in the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* under the provisions of subsection (3).

Answer within 60 days

4-9. (6) Within 60 calendar days of the Leader or Representative of the Government, or a Senator who is a minister, indicating that a delayed answer will be provided to an oral question pursuant to the terms of this rule, or of a written question first appearing in the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*, the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government, shall table either the Government’s answer to the question or a written explanation why an answer has not been provided.

Tabling

4-9. (7) An answer or explanation to be provided under this rule may be tabled either during Delayed Answers, which shall be called at the end of Question Period, or by being deposited with the Clerk. A copy of any such tabled document shall be provided to the Senator who asked the question, and the

delayed answer to an oral question shall be printed in the *Debates of the Senate* of the date the tabling is recorded in the *Journals of the Senate*.

Failure to respond or provide explanation

4-9. (8) If the Government has tabled neither an answer nor an explanation of why an answer has not been provided within the 60-day period provided for under this rule, the absence of an answer shall be deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament for consideration and report, with this referral being recorded in the *Journals of the Senate* as soon as possible thereafter.”; and

- (b) renumbering current rules 4-11 to 4-16 as rules 4-10 to 4-15;

6. in current rule 4-13(3), by replacing the words “such sequence as the Leader or the Deputy Leader of the Government shall determine” by the words “such sequence as the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government shall determine”;

7. by replacing rule 6-3(1) by the following:

“Time limits for speakers

6-3. (1) Except as otherwise provided:

Certain Leaders and Facilitators

(a) the Leader or Representative of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, and the leader or facilitator of the recognized party or recognized parliamentary group with the most members, other than, if applicable, the recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups to which either the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Leader of the Opposition belongs, shall be allowed unlimited time for debate;

Other Leaders and Facilitators

(b) leaders and facilitators, other than those provided for in paragraph (a), shall be allowed up to 45 minutes for debate;

Sponsor of bill

(c) the sponsor of a bill, if not one of the Senators provided for in paragraph (a), shall be allowed up to 45 minutes for debate at second and third reading;

Critic of bill

(d) the critic of a bill, if not one of the Senators provided for in paragraph (a), shall be allowed up to 45 minutes for debate at second and third reading;

Designated Senators

(e) one other Senator designated separately by the leader or facilitator of each recognized party or recognized parliamentary group, except for the

recognized party or recognized parliamentary group of the sponsor and critic, shall be allowed up to 45 minutes for debate at second and third reading; and

Others

(f) other Senators shall speak for no more than 15 minutes in debate.”;

8. by replacing rules 7-1(1) and (2) by the following:

“Agreement to allocate time

7-1. (1) At any time during a sitting, the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government may state that they have reached an agreement with the representatives of the recognized parties and the recognized parliamentary groups to allocate a specified number of days or hours either:

(a) for one or more stages of consideration of a government bill, including the committee stage; or

(b) for consideration of another item of Government Business by the Senate or a committee.

Motion on agreement to allocate time

7-1. (2) The Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government may then, without notice, propose a motion based on the agreement.”;

9. by replacing rules 7-2(1) and (2) by the following:

“No agreement to allocate time

7-2. (1) At any time during a sitting, the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government may state that they have failed to reach an agreement with the representatives of the recognized parties and the recognized parliamentary groups to allocate time to conclude an adjourned debate on either:

(a) any stage of consideration of a government bill, including the committee stage; or

(b) another item of Government Business.

Notice of motion to allocate time

7-2. (2) After stating that there is no agreement on time allocation, the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government may give notice of a motion to allocate time for the adjourned debate, including the committee stage of a bill. The motion shall specify the number of days or hours to be allocated.”;

10. by replacing rule 7-3(1)(f) by the following:

“(f) Senators may speak for a maximum of 10 minutes each, provided that the Leader or Representative of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, and the

leader or facilitator of any other recognized party or recognized parliamentary group may each speak for up to 20 minutes.”;

11. in rule 7-3(2), by deleting the words “at 6 p.m.” and the words “at 8 p.m.”;
12. in rule 7-4(5)(d), by replacing the words “the Government Whip” by the words “the Government Whip or Liaison”;
13. by replacing rules 9-5(1) to (3) by the following:

“(1) The Speaker shall ask the Government Whip or Liaison, the Opposition Whip, and the whips or liaisons of the three recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups with the most members, other than, if applicable, the recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups to which either the Government Whip or Liaison, or the Opposition Whip belongs, if there is an agreement on the length of time the bells shall ring. If a whip or liaison is absent, that whip or liaison’s leader or facilitator may designate a Senator to act for this purpose.

(2) The time agreed to shall not be more than 60 minutes.

(3) With leave of the Senate, this agreement on the length of the bells shall constitute an order to sound the bells for that length of time.”;

14. by replacing rule 9-10(1) by the following:

“Deferral of standing vote

9-10. (1) Except as provided in subsection (5) and elsewhere in these Rules, when a standing vote has been requested on a question that is debatable, the Government Whip or Liaison, the Opposition Whip, or the whip or liaison of any of the three recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups with the most members, other than, if applicable, the recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups to which either the Government Whip or Liaison, or the Opposition Whip belongs, may defer the vote.”;

15. by replacing rule 9-10(4) by the following:

“Vote deferred to Friday

9-10. (4) Except as otherwise provided, if a vote has been deferred to a Friday:

(a) the Government Whip or Liaison may, at any time during a sitting, further defer the vote to 5:30 p.m. on the next sitting day if it is on an item of Government Business; and

(b) the Government Whip or Liaison, the Opposition Whip, or the whip or liaison of any of the three recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups with the most members, other than, if applicable, the recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups to which either the Government

Whip or Liaison, or the Opposition Whip belongs, may, at any time during a sitting, further defer the vote to 5:30 p.m. on the next sitting day if it is on an item of Other Business.”;

16. by replacing rule 10-11(2)(a) by the following:

“(a) by the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government, at any time during a sitting; or”;

17. by:

- (a) replacing rule 12-3(3) by the following:

“Ex officio members

12-3. (3) In addition to the membership provided for in subsections (1) and (2), and subject to the provisions of subsection (4), the Leader or Representative of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, and the leaders or facilitators of the three recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups with the most members, other than, if applicable, the recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups to which either the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Leader of the Opposition belongs, are ex officio members of all committees except the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, and the joint committees. For the purposes of this provision, in case of absence, the Leader or Representative of the Government is replaced by the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition is replaced by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and the leader or facilitator of any other recognized party or recognized parliamentary group is replaced by that Senator’s deputy leader or deputy facilitator.

Ex officio members voting

12-3. (4) Of the ex officio members of committees provided for in subsection (3), only the Leader or Representative of the Government, and the Leader of the Opposition, or, in their absence, their respective deputies, shall have the right to vote.”; and

- (b) renumbering current rule 12-3(4) as rule 12-3(5);

18. by replacing rule 12-8(2) by the following:

“Service fee proposal

12-8. (2) When the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government tables a service fee proposal, it is deemed referred to the standing or special committee designated by them following consultations with the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and the leader or facilitator of any other recognized party or recognized parliamentary group, or the designate of such a leader or facilitator.”;

19. by replacing rule 12-18(2) by the following:

“Meetings on days the Senate is adjourned
12-18. (2) Except as provided in subsection (3) and elsewhere in these Rules, a Senate committee may meet:

(a) when the Senate is adjourned for more than a day but less than a week, provided that notice was given to the members of the committee one day before the Senate adjourned;

(b) on a Monday the Senate does not sit that precedes a Tuesday on which the Senate is scheduled to sit; or

(c) during other periods the Senate is adjourned and that are not covered by the above provisions, provided that the meeting was either:

(i) by order of the Senate, or

(ii) with the agreement, in response to a request from the chair and deputy chair, of a majority of the following Senators, or their designates: the Leader or Representative of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, and the leaders or facilitators of the three recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups with the most members, other than, if applicable, the recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups to which either the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Leader of the Opposition belongs.”;

20. by replacing rule 12-26(1) by the following:

“Appointment of committee
12-26. (1) As soon as practicable at the beginning of each session, the Leader or Representative of the Government shall move a motion, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, and the leader or facilitator of the recognized party or recognized parliamentary group with the most members, other than, if applicable, the recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups to which either the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Leader of the Opposition belongs, on the membership of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators. This motion shall be deemed adopted without debate or vote, and a similar motion shall be moved for any substitutions in the membership of the committee.”;

21. in rule 14-1(1), by replacing the words “Leader or Deputy Leader of the Government” by the words “Leader or Representative of the Government, or Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government”;

22. in rule 16-1(8), by replacing the words “Leader or Deputy Leader of the Government” by the words “Leader or Representative of the Government, or Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government”, both times they appear; and

23. in Appendix I:

(a) in the definition of “Critic of a bill”, by replacing the words “Leader or Deputy Leader of the Government” by the words “Leader or Representative of the Government, or Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government”;

(b) by replacing the definition of “Deputy Leader of the Government” by the following:

“Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government

The Senator who acts as the second to the Leader or Representative of the Government and who is normally responsible for the management of Government business on the floor of the Senate. The Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy is also generally responsible for negotiating the daily agenda of business with the Opposition and other recognized parties and recognized parliamentary groups. In the absence of the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy, the Government Leader or Government Representative may designate another Senator to perform the role. The full title is “Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate” or “Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate”. (*Leader adjoint ou coordonnateur législatif du gouvernement*)”;

(c) in the definition of “Evening suspension”, by replacing the words “between 6 and 8 p.m.” by the words “between 7 and 8 p.m.”;

(d) in the definition of “Government Business”, by replacing the words “Leader of the Government or the Deputy Leader” by the words “Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government”;

(e) by replacing the definition of “Government Leader” by the following:

“Government Leader

See “Leader or Representative of the Government”. (*Leader du gouvernement*)”;

(f) by replacing the definition of “Government Whip” by the following:

“Government Whip or Liaison

The Senator responsible for ensuring the presence of an adequate number of Senators of the Government party in the Senate for purposes such as quorum and the taking of votes, and to whom the Leader or Representative of the Government normally delegates responsibility for managing the substitution of Government members on committees as appropriate. The Government Whip or Liaison may be responsible for outreach on Government Business in the Senate. (*Whip ou agent de liaison du gouvernement*)”;

- (g) by replacing the definition of “Leader of the Government, or Government Leader” by the following:

“Leader or Representative of the Government

The Senator who acts as the head of the Senators belonging to the Government party, or who is appointed by the Government to represent the Government in the Senate without affiliation to a Government party. In modern practice, the Leader or Representative of the Government is normally sworn in as a member of the King’s Privy Council for Canada and can be a member of Cabinet. The full title is “Leader of the Government in the Senate” or “Government Representative in the Senate”. (*Leader ou représentant du gouvernement*);

- (h) by replacing the definition of “Ordinary procedure for determining the duration of bells” by the following:

“Ordinary procedure for determining duration of bells

The Speaker asks the Government Whip or Liaison, the Opposition Whip, and the whips or liaisons of the three largest recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups, other than, if applicable, the recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups to which either the Government Whip or Liaison, or the Opposition Whip belongs, if there is an agreement on the length of time, not to exceed 60 minutes, the bells shall ring. With leave of the Senate, this agreement constitutes an order to sound the bells for the agreed length of time, but in the absence of either agreement or leave, the bells ring for 60 minutes. In some cases provided for in the Rules, this procedure is not followed, with the bells ringing for shorter periods of time. (*Procédure ordinaire pour déterminer la durée de la sonnerie*);

- (i) in the definition of “Public bill”, under “Bill”, by replacing the words “(introduced by a Cabinet Minister or in a Minister’s name) or a non-Government bill (one introduced by a Senator who is not a Cabinet Minister)” by the words “(introduced by a Cabinet Minister, in a Minister’s name, or by or on behalf of the Leader or Representative of the Government if that Senator is not a minister) or a non-Government bill (one that is not a Government bill)”;
 (j) by replacing the definition of “Senator who is a minister” by the following:

“Senator who is a minister

A Senator who is a member of the Cabinet. The Leader or Representative of the Government is generally sworn in as a member of the King’s Privy Council for Canada and may be a member of Cabinet. (*Sénateur-ministre*);

- (k) in the definition of “Sponsor of a bill”, by replacing the words “the sponsor will typically be a government member” by the words “the sponsor is designated by the Leader or Representative of the Government”; and

- (l) by adding the following new definitions in alphabetical order:

(i) **“Deputy Leader or Deputy Facilitator**

The Senator who acts as the second to the leader or facilitator of a recognized party or recognized parliamentary group, other than, if applicable, the recognized parties or recognized parliamentary groups to which either the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Leader of the Opposition belongs. (*Leader adjoint ou facilitateur adjoint*);

(ii) **“Government Liaison**

See “Government Whip or Liaison”. (*Agent de liaison du gouvernement*);

(iii) **“Government Representative**

See “Leader or Representative of the Government”. (*Représentant du gouvernement*);

(iv) **“Leader of the Government**

See “Leader or Representative of the Government”. (*Leader du gouvernement*);

(v) **“Legislative Deputy of the Government**

See “Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government”. (*Coordonateur législatif du gouvernement*); and

(vi) **“Representative of the Government**

See “Leader or Representative of the Government”. (*Représentant du gouvernement*);

That all cross references and lists of exceptions in the Rules be updated as required by these changes, but otherwise remain unchanged;

That, in relation to the amendments to current rules 4-9 and 4-10, provided for in point 5 above:

1. new rule 4-9(5) not apply to any written question submitted before the adoption of this motion, so that only written questions submitted after the adoption of this motion are counted as if subject to that provision;
2. the provisions of the new rules have effect from the time of the adoption of this motion in relation to questions arising from that time forward, subject to point 3 below; and
3. the provisions of the new rules relating to the 60-day period for answering written questions, tabling, and a failure to respond or provide an explanation take effect, in relation to written questions submitted before the adoption of this motion, on the date that is six months after the adoption of this motion as if that were the date on which these questions were submitted, provided that

if the current session ends before the expiration of this six month period, these elements of the new rules take effect on the last day of the current session; and

That, within 30 days that the Senate sits after the adoption of this motion, the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators present a report to the Senate proposing changes to the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators* to take account of the amendments to rule 12-26(1) provided for in point 20 above.

And on the motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Quinn, seconded by the Honourable Senator Smith:

That the motion be not now adopted, but that it be amended:

1. by replacing proposed new rules 4-9(3)(b) to (d) by the following:
 - “(b) the question is withdrawn; or
 - (c) the expiration of the 45-day period provided for in this rule for an answer.”;
2. in proposed new rule 4-9(6), by:
 - (a) changing the number 60 to 45 everywhere it appears, including in the marginal note; and
 - (b) replacing the words “either the Government’s answer to the question or a written explanation why an answer has not been provided” by the words “the Government’s answer to the question”;
3. in proposed new rule 4-9(8), by replacing the words “tabled neither an answer nor an explanation of why an answer has not been provided within the 60-day period” by the words “not tabled an answer within the 45-day period”; and
4. in point 3 of the paragraph beginning with the words “That, in relation to the amendments to current rules 4-9 and 4-10”, by replacing the words “the provisions of the new rules relating to the 60-day period for answering written questions, tabling, and a failure to respond or provide an explanation take effect” by the words “the provisions of the new rules relating to the 45-day period for answering written questions, tabling, and a failure to respond take effect”.

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Colleagues, yesterday I began these comments with my analysis of Motion No. 165. I started by saying I agreed with Senator Quinn that the government currently takes far too long to answer questions and that something needs to be done.

I pointed out that at this very moment, we have 97 written questions on the Order Paper that remain unanswered, some of which have been pending for several months, or in some cases for a year or more.

That being said, when it comes to written questions, Government Motion No. 165, which is before us, represents a major step forward, because it establishes a 60-day deadline for the government to provide an answer, something not previously specified in our Rules. It requires the government to explain and publish its reasons for not responding on time. It also provides for a special process to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament in the event of a failure to respond within the specified period. This committee, I would point out, is mandated to examine any question of privilege referred to it by the Senate, and we know that questions of privilege can sometimes lead to significant sanctions.

[English]

Therefore, colleagues, not only does the government motion propose a tight deadline of 60 calendar days, but it also stipulates that the government must explain itself and incur a sanction if the deadline is not met. The sanction in question is quite serious: a referral to the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament for consideration and report, which is similar to what would happen in the case of a breach of privilege — a process that would be more robust and clearer than the one in the House of Commons.

As Senator Batters and I noted yesterday, Senator Quinn’s amendment would also withdraw the obligation for the government to explain the reasons for failure to comply with the 60 days or, in the case of his amendment, the 45-day time limit. This would make the proposition, in my opinion, far less efficient and the government far less accountable.

I acknowledge that the House of Commons has a 45-day delay for response. However, we must understand that our reality in the Senate is far different. In the House, the Prime Minister, the ministers and the parliamentary secretaries can answer questions on the floor. They have access to resources from all their respective teams. In the Senate, this is the sole responsibility of the Government Representative Office, and we must take this into consideration and be flexible. In this light, I believe that the 60-day delay is realistic and fair.

Furthermore, I believe that the amendment motion underestimates a key aspect. It doesn’t take into consideration the nature and complexity of questions often asked to the government by senators. On this aspect, let me point out some of those complex questions I’m referring to. They’re all relevant questions; don’t get me wrong.

I refer first to a six-part question by Senator Plett, asked on November 23, 2021, “Regarding classified or protected documents . . .” that required thoughtful consideration and inquiry from our security and intelligence services. We know how delicate those questions can be. This question, if you want to have more details, was Question No. 38 that was on our Order Paper last Tuesday, April 30. As you know, every Tuesday all written questions are published in our *Order Paper and Notice Paper*.

The second question is from June 21, 2023. It was a question in 30 parts from Senator Moodie, “Regarding the Calls to Action on combatting racism and advancing equity and inclusion within the Public Service . . .” It’s Question No. 236.

The third example — I could have chosen many — was a series of questions from Senator Downe on fiscal measures for British nationals or medical coverage for members of the Canadian Armed Forces. They are all relevant questions that would require sound answers, research and analysis. Those are the types of multi-faceted questions that demand thoughtful consideration and can’t be answered in a rush.

• (1520)

Given this context, from my standpoint, Motion No. 165 is reasonable and realistic. It brings great progress from our current situation, and it is not worth spoiling for such an ill-advised amendment.

I made some calculations. With Motion No. 165, there is an opportunity to simultaneously have 404 written questions for the government to consider. I subtracted questions coming from the Speaker of the Senate and the members of the Government Representative Office, or GRO. This would explain the number of 101 once all senators are appointed.

In conclusion, at last, after more than eight years of efforts to adopt the regulations, this house is presented with a reasonable and realistic motion. Here, we have a short-sighted amendment, an amendment with its nose glued to the tree rather than its eyes open onto the forest.

Colleagues, let’s not be short-sighted. Let’s see the bigger picture and move forward with the motion as presented by rejecting this amendment.

Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Batters, do you have a question?

Hon. Denise Batters: I do.

Senator Saint-Germain: I will not accept questions, because I believe this amendment is a distraction from our discussions on the main motion. I believe my speech is comprehensive, and I won’t accept any questions.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I will be brief. I only have a few handwritten notes.

First, I need to add some context to what we are discussing today. The first order of business of the day, from my perspective, is to thank Honourable Senator Woo and Honourable Senator Tannas for the continuous efforts they’ve made to modernize our *Rules of the Senate*.

My hat is off to you, gentlemen.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Ringuette: The second order of business, in my perspective, is to thank Senator Bellemare as Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament for her adequate and accurate speech that she delivered to us this week on the issue.

It is true, honourable colleagues — I’m a member of the Rules Committee — that the Rules Committee has done a pre-study of these issues. As a matter of fact, all leaders appeared before the Rules Committee to talk about these proposed changes that we call the “Woo-Tannas Motion.” They were all invited.

Senator Plett was there. I remember him saying — and I was very happy about this — that he agreed with a one-hour dinner break. That was progress.

I also remember asking him at the Rules Committee if he, as an experienced parliamentarian, agreed that regulation always follows legislation. His answer was, “Yes, of course.” You can look at the minutes of the meeting.

Colleagues, the regulations that I was talking about and that are relevant to our discussion today we passed unanimously in 2022. That was two years ago. We tried at the Rules Committee to bring forth the coordinating regulations that follow legislation, but we were unsuccessful.

Maybe there is a God because, at the end of the day, if we had managed to vote on these regulations at the Rules Committee and table a report in this chamber, how long would we have had to wait for the current discussion that we’re having to occur?

Look at the Order Paper today. Look at the list of committee reports that have been tabled for quite a while and are still there. Can you imagine the majority of us — 80% of us — trying to move to a vote on regulation changes by our Rules Committee? Honestly, it would have been mission impossible.

On that, I have to say thank you to Senator Gold.

Thank you, Senator Gold, for having the courage to put Motion No. 165 before us so that we can have a holistic discussion.

Moving to the issue at hand, which is the amendment by Senator Quinn, I believe that the amendment that Senator Quinn is proposing is somewhat misinformed in regard to how it works in the other place, where each and every written question is reviewed by a group of people — including the Clerk of the House of Commons — as to whether it meets a certain set of criteria to be put on the Order Paper. The other place has had a vetting system in place for decades with criteria for Question Period and what questions are to be answered that are in a written format.

Senator Quinn is assuming that all questions are somewhat kosher, and that is not the case. I’m happy that Senator Saint-Germain has provided some examples.

I agree with the proposal in the main motion that questions should be answered within 60 days, and for those that are not, if there is a problem, that it be referred to the Rules Committee. That will allow the Rules Committee, after a period of time — of course, there is the disciplinary measure in it — to establish a

vetting process to make sure that there is a frame within which written questions can be put on the Order Paper. If not, have a discussion with the senator to see how it can meet these criteria, as is what's happening in the other place.

• (1530)

Because of what I have just said and as the government is imposing on itself new restrictions in regard to adopting a 60-day time frame to answer the questions, I believe that it will also allow us at the Rules Committee to ascertain data in regard to the number of days that the answers have been provided. That will provide us, in the medium term, the ability to develop in the Senate our own vetting process. That is needed. That is needed in order to have adequate answers in a decent time frame.

It was also mentioned this week that we are members of Parliament. Yes, we are, but we operate in a different context and in a different time frame. They operate on a time frame of four years maximum. We do not have any restriction on our time here. I would say that the average of a senator present in this institution would be between 12 and 15 years. That is a guesstimate on my part.

The members of Parliament in the other place risk losing their jobs every four years. That is not our situation.

The members of Parliament in the other place sit for five days a week. We sit for three.

The members of Parliament in the other place sit in committees at the same time that their chamber is sitting. That is certainly not the case for us.

Members of Parliament represent a very limited constituency. They are 338, while we are, at most, 105.

The members of Parliament in the other place have hybrid sittings. That is certainly not the case for us.

Last, but not least, the members of Parliament in the other place embrace change. We are extremely reluctant to it. We are, in the words of today's generation, definitely laggards.

The Senate is, in general, always pushing back on any kind of change. It took ten years of discussion for this place to have televised proceedings. The other place had it 60 years before us.

Our *Rules of the Senate* only changed in 1968 in regard to recognizing an opposition and having Question Period. The other place had Question Period and an organized opposition in the early 1900s.

Do you see the time frame I am putting forth here? It is no wonder that Canadians are somewhat distant from our institution. We create that with how we operate, how we communicate. They are very uninformed about who we are and what we do.

Colleagues, I realize that the majority of senators in this place are relatively new. Internalizing the processes that we have and being able to compare them with the process that is happening in the other place, it requires a lot of time. I am fortunate that I am

able to understand and compare both and try to relate that understanding and information to you. However, it is time that we become more holistic and pragmatic in our approaches.

One needs to understand the unintended consequences of such an amendment. Therefore, I will not be supporting this amendment.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you so much, Senator Ringuette, for letting us know whether or not you are going to support that. I really was listening, and I was very unsure if you were going to support this amendment or not until the very end. Now, at least, we are sure of that. We appreciate your directness there.

I also have a few words to say on the amendment, and, like the previous speech, I will sidetrack to speaking about other things in the amendment because that is what we just heard. Thirteen out of the 15 minutes that we just heard was giving us a history lesson as opposed to speaking to the amendment.

Colleagues, I am happy to rise on debate on Senator Quinn's amendment. I will also preface, as Senator Ringuette did, that I will be brief.

I support the amendment. As I said on Tuesday, I don't see why the government should have more time to answer questions than the questions of the members of the House of Commons.

I say "members of the House of Commons" as compared to "MPs" because I agree with Senator Quinn. We are all MPs. We are all members of Parliament. I don't really see how letting the government not answer our questions by simply tabling a document saying they cannot answer the question is any good.

I want to take this opportunity as well, colleagues, if I could, to correct just a few things that were said on Tuesday and Wednesday.

First, I said a few times in my speech on Tuesday that Pierre Poilievre had opened up a 20-point lead over the Liberals. Three polls released this week from Abacus, Nanos and Léger show that this lead is now, in fact, 21 points.

An Hon. Senator: Twenty-two.

Senator Plett: So I stand corrected. I apologize.

In fact, I will note that the Trudeau Liberals have lost ground since Senator Gold tabled Motion No. 165. Clearly, Canadians are not as enthusiastic as some senators think that they are about this Trudeau Senate.

• (1540)

In fact, since this new Senate has been in place, there were two general elections: in 2019 and 2021. In both of those, Conservative leaders — Mr. Scheer and Mr. O'Toole — promised to reverse the course of those changes, and they both received more votes than Justin Trudeau did. Pierre Poilievre, who has the same policy, is now leading by 21 points. Let me take all of those arguments about Canadians supporting the changes to the Senate with a grain of salt.

Second, Senator Downe asked me on Tuesday if I would be open to negotiations with the government on the changes, and I said, “Yes, I would be.” I want to report to this chamber that I have been open ever since, but there has been no offer made to have those negotiations — none. That door has been firmly closed. We are not negotiating this. We are pushing this through.

Third, Senator Saint-Germain said the reason for the longer delay in the government answering Senate questions was the ability to create an enormous number of questions with the help of artificial intelligence, or AI. I want to reassure Senator Saint-Germain of the following: Number one: My office is churning out a large number of questions, and we use human intelligence. You don’t need AI. Number two: In Motion No. 165, senators are limited to three questions. Whatever AI may help you with, it won’t do a lot. Number three: Members of the House who have access to the same tools as senators have to wait 45 days instead of 60 like Senator Gold wants us to wait.

Fourth, there has been mention of the House of Lords as a model for these changes. Let me correct the record on two things about that: The crossbenchers will never have a majority in the Lords. That would be against the law. No one disputes the fact that the Lords can belong to parties represented in the House of Commons. In 2017, the Lord Speaker’s committee on the size of the House of Lords recommended that the appointments to the Lords would be linked to the general election results.

Fifth, Senator Dalphond mentioned the changes made to the Rules in 1991 as proof that the use by the government of a motion to unilaterally push changes to the Rules — as Motion No. 165 — is not precedent-setting. It is true that the changes were adopted by a vote of 40 to 30. But the vote was on a report by the Rules Committee, not on a motion from the government. We have no issue with the Rules Committee.

On June 18, 1991, senators voted on the report of the committee. The Liberals voted against. Yes, the senators appointed under section 26 of the British North America Act, 1867 — also known as the “GST senators” — participated in that vote. They had been members of the Senate for nine months before that vote. Senator Dalphond’s amazement that these senators voted on a Rules Committee report in 1991 is surprising. I hope he is not saying that our colleagues who joined the Senate in the last nine months — or maybe even in the last month and a half or two months — should not now vote on Motion No. 165, because that is what I heard.

The committee report was adopted after one week of debate. The Liberals had plenty of ammunition to do a long filibuster; they did not. They could have presented amendments; they did not. They had 52 members in their caucus. Only one spoke on the motion, and then more than 40% of their members did not vote. That shows that there was not unanimity; there was consensus — strange.

The Standing Committee on Standing Rules and Orders — as it was then known — had 28 hours of meetings on the changes to the Rules. There was no strong discussion, but a lot of work on the language of the new Rules. That is exactly what we have been saying. Why not let the Rules Committee do its job like they did in 1991? This is something Senator Dalphond should certainly support.

Finally, I want to be clear on one thing: The argument that having a so-called non-partisan Senate is somehow a return to the original Senate is false. Let me repeat that: It is false.

You can present the Trudeau Senate as a new Senate, a modern Senate, a 21st century Senate — I don’t agree. But at least there is an argument there. To present Motion No. 165 and the other changes made to the Senate by Justin Trudeau as somehow going back to 1867 is a complete lie, and it has to stop.

You will never find a period in Canadian history where the Senate was not a partisan chamber. This supposedly golden age where gentlemen were quietly attending to the nation’s business while smoking cigars and sipping whisky without any link to the raucous debates going on in the House never existed. It is a fabrication.

Resolution 14 of the Quebec Conference, 1864 stated clearly that appointments to the Senate should be made “. . . so that all political parties may as nearly as possible be fairly represented.”

That bears repeating: “. . . so that all political parties may as nearly as possible be fairly represented.”

In essence, the refusal by Justin Trudeau to appoint partisan senators goes directly against what the Senate was supposed to be, according to its founding fathers. Let me quote James Bowden in an article entitled, “The Founders’ Senate — and Ours: Canada’s Upper House was (and is) supposed to be partisan,” published in 2019:

As the minutes of the Quebec Conference, the *Quebec Resolutions*, and the *London Resolutions* demonstrate, the framers took the partisanship of their provincial Legislative Councils and the Senate of Canada for granted; indeed, they considered partisanship integral to the functioning of upper chambers — *that* was never up for debate at all. They all accepted the principle and merely haggled over the most efficient means of securing the partisan character of the Senate of Canada from the moment that it first met.

Of Quebec’s first 24 senators, 16 were Conservatives or Liberal-Conservatives, and 8 were Liberals. Ontario sent 14 Conservatives or Liberal-Conservatives and 10 Liberals to the Senate. This reflected the will of the electorates of Canada East and Canada West. In addition, the first 12 senators for New Brunswick maintained partisan balance between 6 Liberals and 6 Conservatives. Of the first 12 senators for Nova Scotia, however, 8 were Conservatives and 4 were Liberals.

As Canada’s second prime minister Alexander Mackenzie said:

The Senate must necessarily be composed of gentlemen holding the political views of one or the other of the two great parties into which political society is divided. . . .

Let me repeat: The argument that having a so-called non-partisan Senate is somehow a return to the original Senate is false.

I need to go off track here for a second. When someone like Senator Ringuette — for whom I have a lot of respect as a good parliamentarian and a good Liberal senator for so many years —

stands in this chamber and all of a sudden says that we should be a non-partisan chamber, when she is probably — aside from myself — the most partisan senator in this chamber, I cannot understand how that can be.

• (1550)

Well, I guess “non-partisanship” means “let’s not be Conservative.”

Senator Cuzner, at least, is sitting where he is sitting — though not often talking; I’m a little disappointed about that. Nevertheless, he will catch his second wind at some point. But I know he is a Liberal through and through, and he is proud of it. He is not giving up on that. He is a Liberal. He knows that.

But you cannot have your cake and eat it too. You cannot say that what Justin Trudeau is doing is a revolution, that this is novel and he is such a visionary — and then claim that those very same changes are us going back to 1867. It is one or the other. You cannot be revolutionary and reactionary at the same time.

I have a fair bit more to say on this amendment. I am supporting it, but I need to collect my thoughts on this. I will adjourn the debate for the balance of my time. Thank you, colleagues.

(On motion of Senator Plett, debate adjourned.)

TIME ALLOCATION—NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I wish to advise the Senate that I have been unable to reach an agreement with the representatives of the recognized parties to allocate time for the consideration of Motion No. 165 under Government Business.

Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, pursuant to rule 7-2, not more than a further six hours of debate be allocated for the consideration of motion No. 165 under Government Business.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION NO. 168 ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of May 1, 2024, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 2 p.m.

[Senator Plett]

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

A Clerk at the Table: Senate public bills.

Hon. Leo Housakos: I’d like to move the adjournment of the Senate.

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

Some Hon. Senators: No.

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

The Hon. the Speaker: Leave is not granted.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Your Honour, I think that if there is a motion, you need to ask for a vote. Leave might not be granted, but we would certainly like to have a vote on this.

The Hon. the Speaker: I didn’t hear any — I only heard —

Senator Plett: Well, yes, you did say we granted leave, and you simply heard no leave.

The Hon. the Speaker: I asked, and I only heard noes.

Senator Plett: Your Honour, you asked if leave was granted, which means unanimous —

The Hon. the Speaker: Rule 5-13(2) reads as follows:

A motion to adjourn the Senate may only be moved by a Senator who is recognized to speak in a debate, and may not be moved on a point of order.

Senator Housakos: I didn’t rise on a point of order. I rose on an item. I never said I was rising on a point of order. I never rose on a point of order.

The Hon. the Speaker: May I ask which item?

Senator Housakos: It was the item on the report, Your Honour, that the clerk was going through. As soon as you go through the items for debate — it was clause 1, item 1, section 1. It is Other Business. I can easily ask for the adjournment of the Senate.

The Hon. the Speaker: Was that No. 1, Other Business?

Senator Housakos: Correct.

The Hon. the Speaker: That has not been moved for debate. It is Senator Cardozo’s item.

A Clerk at the Table: Senate public bills, third reading. No. 1, Bill S-244.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION NO. 193 NEGATIVED

Hon. Leo Housakos moved:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

The Hon. the Speaker: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Housakos, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, that the Senate do now adjourn. Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Senators: No.

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

The Hon. the Speaker: I think the nays have it.

And two honourable senators having risen:

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

An Hon. Senator: One hour.

The Hon. the Speaker: The vote will be at 4:58 p.m. Call in the senators.

• (1650)

Motion negatived on the following division:

YEAS

THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Black	Richards
Dagenais	Ross
Greene	Seidman
Martin	Tannas
Patterson	Verner
Plett	Wells—13
Quinn	

NAYS

THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Al Zaibak	Hartling
Arnot	Kingston
Bellemare	Kutcher
Bernard	LaBoucane-Benson

Boniface	Loffreda
Burey	MacAdam
Cardozo	McCallum
Clement	McNair
Cordy	Mégie
Cormier	Miville-Dechéne
Cotter	Omidvar
Coyle	Pate
Cuzner	Petitclerc
Dalphond	Petten
Dasko	Ravalia
Deacon (<i>Nova Scotia</i>)	Ringuette
Dean	Sorensen
Duncan	White
Gerba	Woo
Gold	Yussuff—40

ABSTENTIONS

THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

• (1700)

**DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT
EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Bellemare, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dalphond, for the third reading of Bill S-244, An Act to amend the Department of Employment and Social Development Act and the Employment Insurance Act (Employment Insurance Council), as amended.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I move the adjournment of the debate.

The Hon. the Speaker: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Plett, that further debate be adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate. Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

• (1800)

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

Motion negated on the following division:

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

YEAS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

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

Black
Carignan
Greene
Manning
Martin
Patterson
Plett

Quinn
Ross
Seidman
Tannas
Verner
Wells—13

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned, on division.)

A Clerk at the Table: No. 2, Bill S-252.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION NO. 194 NEGATIVED

NAYS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition) moved:

Arnot
Bernard
Burey
Cardozo
Clement
Cordy
Cormier
Cotter
Coyle
Cuzner
Dalphond
Dasko
Dean
Duncan
Gerba
Gold
Kingston
Kutcher

LaBoucane-Benson
Loffreda
MacAdam
McCallum
McNair
Mégie
Miville-Dechêne
Omidvar
Osler
Pate
Petitclerc
Petten
Ravalia
Ringuette
White
Woo
Yussuff—35

That the Senate do now adjourn.

The Hon. the Speaker: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Plett, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, that the Senate do now adjourn. Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Senators: No.

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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 the “nays” have it.

Nil

And two honourable senators having risen:

• (1810)

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

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is after six o'clock and pursuant to rule 3-3(2), 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.

An Hon. Senator: An hour.

Is it agreed to not see the clock?

The Hon. the Speaker: The vote will take place at 6:05. Call in the senators.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, leave was not granted. The sitting is, therefore, suspended, and I will leave the chair until eight o'clock.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (2000)

JURY DUTY APPRECIATION WEEK BILL

THIRD READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Moncion, seconded by the Honourable Senator Sorensen, for the third reading of Bill S-252, An Act respecting Jury Duty Appreciation Week.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION NO. 195 NEGATIVED

Hon. Donald Neil Plett moved:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

He said: Honourable senators, it has been a long, tough day. I think we should probably reflect on that, so I would move the adjournment of the Senate.

The Hon. the Speaker: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Plett, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, that the Senate do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Senators: No.

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

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 the “nays” have it.

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker: I see two senators standing. Do we have agreement on a bell? One hour. The vote will be taken at 9:01 p.m. Call in the senators.

• (2100)

Motion negatived on the following division:

**YEAS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS**

Dalphond
Manning
Marshall
Martin

Oh
Patterson
Plett
Seidman—8

**NAYS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS**

Arnot
Burey
Cardozo
Clement
Cormier
Cotter
Cuzner
Dean
Duncan
Gerba
Gold
Kingston
LaBoucane-Benson

Loffreda
MacAdam
McNair
Mégie
Omidvar
Osler
Pate
Petitclerc
Petten
Ringuette
Ross
White
Woo—26

**ABSTENTION
THE HONOURABLE SENATOR**

Al Zaibak—1

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Downe, seconded by the Honourable Senator Quinn, for the third reading of Bill S-258, An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (reporting on unpaid income tax).

(On motion of Senator Seidman, debate adjourned.)

INCOME TAX ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): moved third reading of Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons).

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I would like to say a few words on this bill. First, I want to salute the contribution of our great member of the House of Commons Chris Lewis, Member of Parliament for Essex. Bill C-241 is a product of the great work of MP Chris Lewis.

Before getting into my speech, let me tell you a little story about Chris Lewis's late mother. This is quite personal. She declared herself the leader of my cheerleading squad. She obviously had a different opinion of me than do a few members of this august chamber. She baked me cookies on a fairly regular basis and sent them to Ottawa with her son. It was really precious to have that. I have fond memories of that. I never met Chris's mother in person, but she watched some of my rants on YouTube and on my Facebook page. I want to pay tribute to Chris's mother who passed away — much too soon — a few months ago.

Honourable senators, Essex is one of those great regions of Canada where people work hard. They have been finding it more and more difficult under this inept government of Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau. Food in Essex is costing more and more. Housing in Essex is costing more. People have to work harder, sometimes taking on two or three jobs at the same time just to feed themselves and their families. A poorer Canada — a poorer Essex — is all the result of Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau.

• (2110)

Chris Lewis — more than anybody — knows his people. He is one of them. He has grown up there. He knows the people of Essex and the hardships they're going through. Chris Lewis is a common sense Conservative who will fight hard for the people of Essex. He will fight hard for Canadians and for Canada because he believes in a better Canada. He believes that there is more than what we have now. He believes in what we used to have under a vibrant country before Justin Trudeau came to power. He wants to axe the tax. He wants to build more homes. He wants to fix the budget. And Chris wants to stop the crime.

It is in this context, colleagues, that Chris Lewis came up with the bill that we have in front of us today: Bill C-241. For those of you not familiar with the bill, let me read you the summary:

This enactment amends the *Income Tax Act* to allow tradespersons and indentured apprentices to deduct from their income amounts expended for travelling where they were employed in a construction activity at a job site that is located at least 120 km away from their ordinary place of residence.

It's a common sense Conservative plan.

Simply said, the trades workers' bill — Bill C-241 — is an act to amend the Income Tax Act, specifically to add a deduction. This would not be a tax credit but a deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons. Some people like to call it the "fair travelling tradesperson's bill."

It's a very simple bill, colleagues, and I have a lot of sympathy for it. You all know that I'm a tradesperson. I have a Red Seal certificate. When I retire from the Senate in a year and a week from now, I might just strap on my tool belt and go do what I really enjoy doing: fixing people's toilets — very similar to what I've been doing in the Senate for 16 years. Maybe I can continue. Even with this government, when they're trying to not let people do the work that they've been trained to do, they can't take that away from me.

This bill talks about three things. The bill reads:

... where the taxpayer was employed as a duly qualified tradesperson or an indentured apprentice in a construction activity at a job site that was located at least 120 km away from their ordinary place of residence, amounts expended by the taxpayer in the year for travelling to and from the job site, if the taxpayer:

(i) was required under the contract of employment to pay those expenses,

(ii) did not receive an allowance in respect of those expenses that is not included in computing the taxpayer's income for the year, and

(iii) does not claim those expenses as an income deduction or a tax credit for the year under any other provision of this Act

To draft this bill, Chris Lewis spoke to a number of trade associations and trade unions, and he spoke to the managers and the workers. He did a thorough job of speaking to the people that this bill affects — the people who would benefit from this legislation.

By 2025, Ontario alone will need an additional 350,000 tradespeople to fill the current need, as is often the case. Tradespersons can be expected to travel long distances from one job to the next, far from home. With inflation at a 30-year high, and during the ongoing cost of living crisis, this bill is a common sense proposal for hard-working Canadians.

Colleagues, when it comes down to it, this legislation is basic fairness for tradespeople, and, in my opinion, this bill is, quite frankly, so simple. First and foremost, colleagues, I want to speak to and about building trades unions.

Canada's Building Trades Unions, or CBTU, represents members who work in more than 60 different trades and occupations, and generate 6% of Canada's GDP. Their industry maintains and repairs more than \$2.2 trillion in assets. Their work is not just done on-site, but also in facilities that provide modules or other components that are incorporated into the larger structure they work on. Once those structures are built, they are employed in renovation, maintenance and repurposing.

Depending on private and public investments, at different times, certain regions will have more employment opportunities than others. These conditions lead to the necessity for skilled trades workers to temporarily relocate or travel long distances for a project to meet the needs of the market. As projects are completed, workers will then return to their permanent residence.

Colleagues, this is something I did on a regular basis when I was in the trade. I travelled hundreds of kilometres to go to the place of work. I left the office or I left my home very early in the morning, and I would travel for a few hours to go to a job site and do the work at that job site, and then travel home late in the evening, or maybe even spend the week on a job and come home on the weekend. My wife and I did a calculation one time after we had been married for about 10 years. I had spent about 5 of those 10 years away from home in the industry, working and making a living for my family. This is what tradespeople do every day of the week.

With families to support, temporary relocation costs can prove burdensome for workers, contributing to increased reliance on programs like Employment Insurance and exacerbating labour shortages in certain regions.

As the Canadian economy transitions to net zero, the federal government needs to implement travel supports for workers in the traditional oil and gas sector. In its current form, the Income Tax Act is an inequitable tax policy. This is a very important point, colleagues. Today, salespeople, professionals and Canadians in other industries can receive a tax deduction for their cost of travel, meals and accommodations when travelling for work. But this very same option is denied to skilled trades workers who work on job sites that are in different regions or different provinces from their primary residence.

Again, bear in mind, a Red Seal certificate allows you to travel from one province to another to work, and yet it prevents them and denies them from the tax deductions for their cost of travel.

• (2120)

The following example is an apprentice that Mr. Lewis talked about. His name is Theo. As a carpenter's apprentice, Theo travelled from Windsor to Timmins to work on construction projects in remote parts of northern Ontario for several months. I have spent a lot of time in northern Ontario and know exactly where he went. He spent thousands of dollars on gas, food and hotels, and was not able to get any assistance for that. He also put thousands of kilometres on his car during that time, and it wore out and depreciated, which affected his ability to get ahead. He gave up a lot of time with family and friends in order to work.

There are a lot of work opportunities in remote parts of Canada, and a tax deduction on travel expenses would help apprentices like Theo travel to better work opportunities. Theo is hoping that the Senate of Canada will give him a hand up and help him by passing Bill C-241.

There is no reason not to adopt this bill right now — this evening — none.

Yesterday, May 1, was International Workers' Day. What better gift could we possibly give tradespeople than to adopt Bill C-241 this evening?

Tomi Hulkkonen, President of the Essex and Kent Building Trades Council, said it best:

Canada provides excellent opportunities for construction workers on projects that are often far away from places they call home. Canada has been built by skilled trades people that have left families and communities to travel to opportunities to work on projects that may not be available close to home. . . .

Remember, colleagues, it is tradespeople and construction workers who have built our country, from coast to coast to coast, putting in hours and hours building our infrastructure.

Canada is experiencing record labour shortages, and it is crucial to remove the barriers to travel that currently exist for Canada's assets with workforce mobility.

Tomi went on to say:

Please note that the Carpenter's Union, Local 494, fully endorses this bill, as well as is willing and able to speak on this bill if asked if it goes to committee.

Tradespeople are not asking for a payday, handout or pay raise. All they are asking for is fairness. Our country can have the skilled workers needed. If the shackles regarding mobility can be released for Canadian skilled workers, their numbers will increase.

Colleagues, we've spoken about the price of fuel and the carbon tax. I pay around \$1.60 for gas in Winnipeg, and the price is higher in most parts of the country; deputy leader, last week, I said \$2 and some cents in British Columbia.

We know about the price of hotels; we are having a hard time meeting the targets we are afforded by the government for our own hotels right across the street.

Regarding the price of food and inflation — my wife and I have four boys, and not that many years ago, we paid in one month for groceries what my wife and I now need to pay for just the two of us. There is no end to the increases.

The inflation is all on the backs of the very tradespeople who have built and are building this country, and who will continue to be the builders of this country in the future. To put that extra burden on them is absolutely unfair, colleagues.

Bill C-241 is a fair bill that would leave money in the pockets of tradespeople and give back to the skilled trades that have been walked past and ignored for many years. These workers are expected to travel across our great country to build our bridges, roads and homes — which we all know we have a major shortage of in this country — and, indeed, to keep our electrical system moving.

The great thing about this bill is that it covers tradespeople from coast to coast to coast, from St. John's in Newfoundland and across Canada. It would not just help one area but the entire country.

Colleagues, every one of your provinces, ridings and cities would benefit from this bill.

Bill C-241 received thorough study in two committees in the House and Senate and was adopted in both places without amendments. There were no amendments to the bill because it is such a simple one.

We continue to talk about the lack or shortage of homes across the country. We know the cost of a house is out of this world, but that is purely because we do not have enough.

My wife and I had a home built in Steinbach, Manitoba, two years ago. I couldn't believe the cost of the house we have. We have a very simple two-bedroom house. It is unaffordable for most Canadians.

We are far past there being a stigma around the skilled trades. We now understand it is not only okay to be a plumber, boilermaker, iron maker or electric worker — thank goodness — but a fantastic living that brings home a lot of money and puts a ton of food on the table for Canadian families.

Now that we are past that, the next question is this: How do we get people to the jobs? How do we support those folks to get them to those jobs?

The point is that this is as simple as doing what every one of us talks about all the time: building our economy, building our infrastructure and being fair.

I realize there has been a tax deduction for mobility expenses by the government for \$4,000. That's a great start. However, a businessperson can jump on a plane in Windsor, fly back and forth to Calgary, Vancouver or St. John's as many times as they want and write off the expenses — such as hotels, meals and travel — no problem. To suggest that a skilled tradesperson can write off only \$4,000 of travel expenses, or maybe a couple of months' worth of work, is putting a price on the heads of those in our skilled trades that is totally unacceptable and certainly does not go far enough.

Colleagues, in closing, this truly is a common-sense bill for the hard-working common people. Similar legislation was introduced in the past, and now is the time to finally get it done. Colleagues, let's bring it home. Let's expedite this process so we can get the proper folks to the proper places.

Colleagues, this is a common-sense bill for common-sense Canadians. Let's help our tradespeople. Let's give them the hand up that they want. They don't want a handout; they want a hand up. They want to be able to claim the tax deduction that is rightfully theirs.

Therefore, colleagues, I would like to call the question on this bill this evening. Thank you.

Hon. Brent Cotter: Will Senator Plett take a question?

• (2130)

Senator Plett: Certainly.

Senator Cotter: Senator Plett, let me begin by saying that I wholeheartedly support this bill for nearly all of the reasons you articulated, including the relative unfairness of tax deductions for hard-working Canadians trying to earn livings for their families. I think you would agree with me that it is a good thing tonight that we defeated the motions to adjourn so that this bill could get further consideration tonight. Indeed, as you yourself noted — though perhaps not the dates — the member of Parliament who introduced this bill did so in November 2021. Therefore, it has now been two and a half years of getting this bill across the finish line, and tonight is one more step forward.

I have only one little question for you, because you did identify the inequity in the bill. For example, in my case, occasionally people hire me to do professional work, and I travel by plane — as you identified — and I can write it off. It seems unfair that people who sometimes do more meaningful work than me are not advantaged in that same legitimate way. You described this as an inequity.

Would I be right in my understanding that this inequity existed prior to 2015 as well? I think it is a yes-or-no question, which you are good at asking, and I am trying it out on you.

Senator Plett: Let me first of all say that because of my age, Senator Cotter, I am probably not practising to be the Leader of the Government in the Senate, because I have a feeling that Jagmeet Singh will support Trudeau beyond my retirement age. Therefore, I do not really need to practise the short answers because I will not be there to give them, as we have been hoping the Leader of the Government would.

Senator Cotter, I agree with you. It is a good thing that we got to this bill tonight, and that is why we refused when we were offered the agreement that we didn't have a vote on the adjournment motion. We insisted on having a standing vote when we were offered to just accept adjourning without a vote about 15 minutes ago. I fully concur with you there. It was a good thing we did not do that. It allowed me this opportunity to say this.

Having said that, without question, Senator Cotter, this is an inequity that has been there for a long time. Before that, it was an inequity that was probably there when I was in the trades. That only provides more reason to move it forward as quickly as we can, and tonight would be a wonderful time.

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Senator Plett, I'm delighted to hear that the Conservative Party is in favour of this bill, because if I can add some more information to what Senator Cotter has said, in fact, the real credit goes back to the NDP and — I hate to tell you — the NDP-Liberals. You see, it was Chris Charlton, the

former NDP Member of Parliament for Hamilton Mountain, who, during the Harper years, put forward a private member's bill on this matter on two occasions, and the Harper government voted it down and did not allow it to go through. Historically, the Conservative government was against it.

The Liberals came into office with this push from the NDP —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Question, question.

Senator Cardozo: My question is this: Are you aware that it was an NDP-Liberal plan that put this together, with the Liberal government bringing it in a few years ago with the support of the NDP, with a level of \$4,000. In fact, Canada's Building Trades Unions, or CBTU, had asked for that level of \$4,000.

That being said, I think my question is this: Are you prepared to accept the NDP-Liberal connection to this bill, and do you have any sense of how much this will cost the treasury when it is not limited to \$4,000, and whether we should be concerned about that?

Senator Plett: Somewhere in there, I read three or four questions. I am not regulated by time quite as much as you are with asking your question.

I have always worked on the premise, Senator Cardozo, that there is no end to what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit. I have believed that most of my life. I am not here trying to defend what the Harper government did. I am here trying to advance good legislation.

I am wondering whether you are suggesting to me that because Stephen Harper opposed it, you need to oppose it. I would suggest — knowing you and knowing Stephen Harper — that you should be climbing all over this, saying this has to be good legislation if Stephen Harper opposed it. Yet you, here, seem to be reluctant to accept it because Stephen Harper didn't accept it. That would mean that you are probably a bit of a Harperite. Let's agree with what Stephen Harper did.

Stephen Harper has retired from this chamber for quite some time. Chris Lewis is a wonderful common-sense Conservative. I worked through the Senate bill that many senators here know about, which is the prompt payment legislation for contractors. I did that together, Senator Cardozo, with Member of Parliament Judy Sgro. We worked hand in glove because we saw a problem. It is a bill that I started with in the Harper government and didn't get done in the Harper government, and we continued to work together into the Trudeau government. Eventually, the Trudeau government accepted it and put it in their budget bill because they could not allow a Conservative to get the credit for it. I was okay with that because I got my legislation that I thought was important.

Whether Stephen Harper and his government opposed this is entirely irrelevant. It is either good legislation, Senator Cardozo, or it is not good legislation. It has nothing to do with what previous governments said. To me, that is entirely irrelevant. We are not in a Stephen Harper government. We are in a Justin

Trudeau government and soon — very soon — it will be a Pierre Poilievre government. Right now, Pierre Poilievre is supporting this. I'm supporting it.

Do I know the exact cost of this? No, but I know the exact benefits. That is what I'm concerned about, Senator Cardozo. That is what I care about. I care about the benefits to the tradespeople. There is no cost because the benefits will outweigh the costs. People will be able to put food on the table. These tradespeople will be able to put food on their tables, and they will be able to feed their youngsters. That is what I care about. That is what this bill will do.

Senator Cardozo: Thank you. I won't go into the words of mine that you twisted, only to say that I think the richness of this bill is that it is an NDP plus Liberal and now plus Conservative support for this bill. I think it is good to know the history. It is good to know that all parties have come onside. I have been working on it for years, even when the said government was against it. I am delighted to see this carry on, and I am glad to hear your support.

Senator Plett: Thank you, Senator Cardozo, and I'm sure Chris Lewis would be more than happy to accept your endorsement and even say on his Facebook page that Senator Cardozo supported good, common-sense policies. He would maybe even leave out the word "Conservative" if that meant you would vote for it tonight.

Senator Cardozo: I would love that. I would just add the name of Chris Charlton, the former NDP MP who really started this all. I think she deserves the most credit tonight.

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Would Senator Plett accept a question?

Senator Plett: Yes.

Senator Dalphond: Senator Plett, you said this bill came out of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance unamended. I think that is very true.

Do you say that it is fully supported by the committee?

Senator Plett: Senator Dalphond, today without — no, it was an in camera meeting, so I'd better be careful what I say.

Every so often, you see a report come out, and it says that it was adopted unanimously, which basically means nobody voted against it. That does not mean that there is unanimous support.

• (2140)

I'm saying that the bill came out of the committee unamended, so I have to believe that the committee supported the bill because it came out of there unamended.

Senator Dalphond: My recollection is that there was an agreement that the bill would be debated at third reading, and there was not unanimity behind the bill. Are you aware of this?

Senator Plett: Again, the bill was unamended, and we are now debating it. I am not sure where you are going. We are here. I would encourage you to get up on debate and debate the bill right now.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: I move adjournment of the debate.

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

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

Some Hon. Senators: No.

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

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

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I see two senators rising. Do we have an agreement on the length of a bell?

Some Hon. Senators: Now.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Now?

Senator Plett: One hour. Not now, one hour.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: The vote will occur at 10:41 p.m.

Call in the senators.

• (2240)

Motion agreed to on the following division:

YEAS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Al Zaibak	Loffreda
Arnot	MacAdam
Burey	McNair
Cardozo	Mégie
Clement	Osler
Cormier	Pate
Cotter	Patterson

Dalphond	Petitclerc
Dean	Petten
Duncan	Ravalia
Gerba	Ross
Gold	White
Kingston	Woo—27
LaBoucane-Benson	

NAYS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

ABSTENTIONS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Ataullahjan	Martin
Manning	Plett
Marshall	Seidman—6

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SIXTEENTH REPORT OF LEGAL AND
CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE—DEBATE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Cotter, seconded by the Honourable Senator Ravalia, for the adoption of the sixteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (*Bill S-212, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation, with amendments*), presented in the Senate on September 26, 2023.

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable Senators, I rise to speak to the report of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs tabled on September 26, 2023, regarding Bill S-212, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation, with amendments.

Continuing to prevent us from voting now, at the report stage, prevents us from determining whether Bill S-212 proceeds to third reading with or without amendments that I moved at the Legal Committee, to respond to concerns that police agencies raised about being assured of having access to expired records for investigative purposes.

I want to acknowledge and thank the members of the Legal Committee for their rigorous and focused review of Bill S-212 and their work on the amendment.

I also want to thank the witnesses, committee clerks, Library of Parliament analysts, committee and senators' staff teams, including Emily, Andrew and the fabulous legal interns in our office in particular, not to mention the countless experts — many with lived experience — with whom we consulted during the development and study of the bill.

I am very grateful to all who invested energy, work and time in the weeks of sustained study of Bill S-212. We heard from 29 witnesses, including representatives of the Parole Board of Canada and other members of Public Safety Canada, police organizations, legal and academic experts, those with lived experience of criminalization and victimization, as well as organizations advocating with and on behalf of these groups.

The different perspectives at the committee table enriched our study. The committee reviewed available data, dispelled common myths and misconceptions and enabled diverse voices with experience and expertise to be heard.

The evidence and data presented at committee reaffirmed that requiring people to go through protracted administrative application processes to obtain record relief does not enhance public safety. Numerous professionals, including police authorities, reminded us that after a relatively small number of crime-free years, people with records are no more likely than anyone else to commit another crime.

These findings align with recent incremental work on criminal records by the government and Parliament, which, as the Legal Committee heard from Public Safety Canada, has recently led to public consultations on an automated expiry process. A final report published in August of 2022 confirmed that almost all participants “. . . strongly support the development of an automated system.”

The committee responded by agreeing to my amendment creating an exception that would continue police access to expired records for investigative purposes, as they requested.

That is the substance of why we have to accept this report. I ask you, senators, to please accept the report at this stage, allow us to proceed to third reading and call the vote now on the report.

Thank you.

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): I move adjournment of the debate, please.

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

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say “yea.”

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

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

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I see two senators rising. Do we have agreement on a bell? One hour. Call in the senators for a vote at 11:49 p.m.

• (2350)

Motion negated on the following division:

YEAS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Ataullahjan	Martin
Manning	Plett
Marshall	Seidman—6

NAYS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Al Zaibak	Loffreda
Arnot	MacAdam
Burey	McNair
Cardozo	Mégie
Clement	Osler
Cormier	Pate
Cotter	Patterson
Dalphond	Petitclerc
Dean	Petten
Duncan	Ravalia
Gerba	Ross
Gold	White
Kingston	Woo—27
LaBoucane-Benson	

ABSTENTIONS
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: On debate, Senator Cormier.

Hon. René Cormier: Thank you, Your Honour.

POINT OF ORDER NEGATIVED

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition) moved:

That the Honourable Senator Seidman be now heard.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, this is a process that does not often happen, so I will read the following. Hopefully the translation is good on this.

The motion is called a motion that a senator be now heard. Honourable senators, the motion that was just moved is governed by the terms of rules 6-4(2) and (3). Normally the senator recognized by the Speaker has the floor. If, however, two or more senators rise to seek the floor, another senator can — before the senator who was recognized starts to speak — rise on a point of order to move that another senator do now speak or be now heard. That motion is not debatable.

If the motion is defeated, the senator originally recognized has the floor. If the motion is adopted, the senator identified in the motion has the floor.

Do honourable senators understand?

That said, it is moved by the Honourable Senator Plett, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, that the Honourable Senator Seidman be now heard.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “yea.”

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

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

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I see two senators rising. Do we have an agreement on the vote?

An Hon. Senator: Four minutes.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Four minutes? Do we have agreement on a four-minute bell?

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Some Hon. Senators: Now.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Do we have agreement on a four-minute bell? Honourable senators do understand that if there is no agreement it is a one-hour bell. Is there consent that we have a four-minute bell?

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Dalphond: No.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Call in the senators. The vote will occur at 12:57.

• (0050)

Motion negated on the following division:

YEAS

THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Ataullahjan
Manning
Marshall

Plett
Seidman—5

NAYS

THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Al Zaibak
Arnot
Cardozo
Clement
Cormier
Cotter
Dalphond
Dean
Gerba
Gold

Kingston
Loffreda
MacAdam
McNair
Mégie
Pate
Petitclerc
Petten
Ross
Woo—20

ABSTENTIONS

THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Osler

Patterson—2

(At 1 a.m., pursuant to rule 3-4, the Senate adjourned until Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 2 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, May 2, 2024

	PAGE		PAGE
Veterans Affairs		Adjournment	
Support for Veterans		Motion No. 194 Negatived	
Hon. David Richards	6138	Hon. Donald Neil Plett	6150
Hon. Marc Gold	6138		
<hr/>			
ORDERS OF THE DAY		Jury Duty Appreciation Week Bill (Bill S-252)	
		Third Reading—Debate Continued	6151
Business of the Senate			
Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson	6139	Adjournment	
		Motion No. 195 Negatived	
Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament		Hon. Donald Neil Plett	6151
Motion to Amend the <i>Rules of the Senate</i> —Motion in			
Amendment—Debate Continued		Canada Revenue Agency Act (Bill S-258)	
Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain	6144	Bill to Amend—Third Reading—Debate Continued.	6151
Hon. Denise Batters	6145		
Hon. Pierrette Ringuette	6145	Income Tax Act (Bill C-241)	
Hon. Donald Neil Plett	6146	Bill to Amend—Third Reading—Debate Adjourned	
Time Allocation—Notice of Motion		Hon. Yonah Martin	6152
Hon. Marc Gold	6148	Hon. Donald Neil Plett	6152
		Hon. Brent Cotter	6154
Adjournment		Hon. Andrew Cardozo	6154
Motion No. 168 Adopted		Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond	6155
Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson	6148	Hon. Bernadette Clement	6156
Hon. Leo Housakos	6148		
Hon. Donald Neil Plett	6148	Criminal Records Act (Bill S-212)	
		Bill to Amend—Sixteenth Report of Legal and Constitutional	
Adjournment		Affairs Committee—Debate	
Motion No. 193 Negatived		Hon. Kim Pate	6156
Hon. Leo Housakos	6149	Hon. Donald Neil Plett	6157
		Hon. René Cormier	6157
Department of Employment and Social Development Act		Point of Order Negatived	
Employment Insurance Act (Bill S-244)		Hon. Donald Neil Plett	6158
Bill to Amend—Third Reading—Debate Continued			
Hon. Yonah Martin	6149		