



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION



43rd PARLIAMENT



VOLUME 151



NUMBER 15

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

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

[*Translation*]

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TIM HORTONS BRIER 2020

CONGRATULATIONS TO TEAM GUSHUE

Hon. Norman E. Doyle: Honourable senators, it is with pride that I stand here today and offer my congratulations to Team Gushue of Newfoundland and Labrador on winning the 2020 Canadian curling championship, the 2020 Brier.

This is not the first time that I have invited all of you to join me in congratulating Team Gushue. In 1995, a much younger Team Gushue won the provincial junior curling championship, and went on to win it five more years in a row. In 1999, they won a bronze in the Canadian junior curling championships, a silver in 2000 and a gold in 2001.

After his career as a junior, Brad Gushue quickly became very competitive in men's curling. In 2005, his team won the Olympic trials and in 2006, he represented Canada in the winter Olympics in Turin, Italy. To the surprise of the international community, and to the sound of overwhelming joy at home, Team Gushue won an Olympic gold medal for Canada.

Anyone else might have been tempted to take a break and return to civilian life, so to speak, but not Gushue. He continued to build and lead teams on the men's curling circuit. He had multiple grand slam victories. Over the years, Gushue had also participated in more than a dozen Briers, but Brier gold had eluded him. He rectified that shortcoming by winning the 2017 Brier, made all the sweeter as the contest was held at home in St. John's, Newfoundland. To add icing to the cake, Team Gushue then went on to win the 2017 World Men's Curling Championship.

Since winning the provincial junior curling championship 25 years ago, Brad Gushue has continued to represent his province and his country on the curling circuit with grace and skill. This past weekend saw Team Gushue win its third Brier and as a result, the team will represent Canada at this year's world championship in Scotland. I'm sure my colleagues will wish them well as, once again, they represent Canada overseas.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Renée Dupuis: It's natural for women to want respect.

It's natural to assert our rights.

It's natural to demand that our fundamental rights to life, safety, equality and dignity, which have been enshrined in the Charter for decades, finally be enforced in real life.

It's natural to refuse to be harassed.

It's natural to speak out against the discrimination we face, because it's a form of violence against women.

It's natural to speak out against the harassment we experience, because it too is a form of violence against women.

It's natural to demand that society protect us from all forms of violence against women.

It's natural to demand that perpetrators of violence against women be brought to justice.

It's natural to demand that women get support from legal counsel and other advisers when dealing with the police and the justice system.

As a new decade dawns, March 8, 2020, needs to mark the start of a new era, one where we respect women's right to true equality and celebrate their unique contributions to society.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

NURSING HOMES WITHOUT WALLS

Hon. Carolyn Stewart Olsen: Honourable senators, medical infrastructure is struggling in small provinces like New Brunswick, and nowhere are the problems more pronounced than in our rural areas. One of the distinct challenges that our health care system as a whole is struggling to deal with is aging. There are no easy solutions, but there are some who have taken the extra step to develop new and innovative approaches to how we manage these issues.

Nursing Homes Without Walls is a jointly funded pilot project supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Government of New Brunswick. The project primarily serves Port Elgin — my area — and the surrounding rural communities, but it is quickly showing what a model it could be for services in other parts of New Brunswick and in Canada. Nursing Homes Without Walls links senior citizens with the support services they need to remain in their homes. They help seniors with housekeeping, foot care, transportation, meal preparation, home

maintenance and all the other little things. When seniors don't know who to call, they can call the line to set it up for them. More than that, they support the caregivers who are often overlooked when we think about caring for our seniors. Nursing Homes Without Walls engages seniors to ensure that they stay active and involved in the community. As they say themselves, "connecting with others is good for all of us." Aside from the financial support, Nursing Homes Without Walls also benefits from an engaged volunteer base.

Pilots like this are a model for where health care should be going. We need to empower our local communities to respond to the needs of our aging population. We need to counter the social isolation and loneliness among seniors and caregivers, and we need to ensure that our seniors can retire with dignity.

• (1410)

Colleagues, I'm proud that New Brunswick, with its Home First strategy, has been a leader with this project. I urge you to look for similar programs and encourage and support them as they seek funding at the federal level. Thank you.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, 494 Canadian municipalities have declared states of climate emergency. We hear about big cities' efforts to respond to the impacts of climate change, but small rural communities like Antigonish are also important climate action leaders.

Recently, Antigonish town and county, Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation and St. Francis Xavier University formed a regional climate partnership. The partnership focus is awareness, mitigation and adaptation. The partners' individual efforts include Paqtnkek's three renewable energy projects: two solar, and a community wind project with 12 other Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq bands.

The Town of Antigonish is a member of the Alternative Resource Energy Authority, which owns the Ellershouse Wind Farm, and is exploring an investment in solar gardens, as well as plans to install electric vehicle charging stations. The authority currently provides our town with 63% renewable energy, but the goal is to reach 96%.

Antigonish County, a founder of the Antigonish Community Energy Cooperative, and Antigonish Climate Resilience, has focused on solar infrastructure for its buildings, and is planning other carbon emission reductions through infrastructure improvements.

StFX University is, of course, focused on its own emissions reductions and contributes to local, national and international efforts to respond to climate change.

StFx Professor Dave Risk's FLUXLAB website says:

Whether by foot, truck, drone, robot, or satellite, we work to improve the measurement of greenhouse gases . . . we work in the Arctic to measure the emission of gases associated with permafrost decay. But . . . we're largely

focused on energy sector emissions, where we aim to provide information and solutions that will help Canada's energy sector achieve methane emission reductions.

StFX's Climate Services and Research Centre educates future climate professionals, provides independent and impartial information and develops knowledge-based best practices for climate change adaptation.

Professors at the new centre include Hugo Beltrami, expert on energy transfer and regional climate modelling; Andrew MacDougall, expert on long-term climate change and carbon budgets; Lisa Kellman, expert on greenhouse gas exchange processes in aquatic and soil environments; Patrick Withey, expert on evaluating the economic impact of climate change; and Corrine Cash, of the Coady Institute, who is working on remote community renewable energy power generation.

Colleagues, StFX, the Antigonish and Paqtnkek communities punch above their weight in climate leadership. This rural climate partnership is exemplary and deserving of our praise and encouragement.

Thank you, *wela'liog*.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Honourable senators, across Saskatchewan and Alberta, we are living through an economic and social crisis. Companies in the natural resource sector, which provide real jobs for families, and are often leaders in innovation and research, are now running up unsustainable debt, have lost investors, have left the country, or are simply closing their doors. People have no jobs and no reasonable alternatives. Cenovus, Teck, even Sagueneay LNG, their fates all echo the same fear — political uncertainty in Canada.

Another key driver of Canada's economy is also in trouble — agriculture: the still unresolved trade dispute with China that compromised 70% of our canola exports at a cost — or should I say a loss — of \$1 billion; the passing of Bill C-69 with all its unintended consequences; the rail strike and then the blockades have led to a backlog of 10,000 carloads of grain exports, and now COVID-19's impact on international supply chains. The situation in the Prairies is dire.

So it should be no surprise that we are seeing Western separation movements gain support. This is very troubling. We all know what separatism cost Quebecers: investment fled, businesses closed, and real estate, people's savings and retirement funds, devalued or evaporated.

So this is becoming a lose-lose proposition. I know the thinking; Alberta and Saskatchewan didn't vote for the government so, too bad, so sad for you. But we can't keep a country together when attitudes are hardening. I can only plead that the government be realistic about the transition process. We can't just kill whole sectors, key to the Canadian standard of living, without a realistic plan B in place.

The Superintendent of Financial Institutions, Jeremy Rudin, has warned that the government's climate change policies can pose "significant new risks." Energy, transport and utilities will be fundamentally disrupted and then a second round of risk follows, as declines in profits and employment in those disrupted industries ripple through the whole economy.

Rudin says we do not yet have the facts we need. So let's do the prudent thing and prepare for a transition that will be sharply negative.

Please let us heed his advice and make change, but only when we are ready in all parts of the country to do so. Thank you.

2020 ARCTIC GAMES

Hon. Marty Deacon: Honourable senators, today I rise to speak on the Arctic Winter Games. As many of you know, the games were cancelled on Saturday because of the threat posed by the COVID-19 virus. While we work closely with public health, while we wish to carry on daily business, sometimes things can just not happen. There is a great amount of disappointment, of course, but I think I can speak for all involved when I say that public health trumps all and we understand why these games were cancelled.

I want to take the time to acknowledge the athletes for the countless hours they put into training and representing their countries and communities. Athletes from Alaska, northern Alberta, Northwest Territories, Sápmi, Alberta north, Nunavik, Quebec, Yamal, Greenland, Nunavut and the Yukon would have been arriving today.

Volunteers in their bright new uniforms would be there to greet all of the athletes, coaches and families, as they travel from their homes, in many cases for the first time. Sponsors, political leaders and partners would be there to host and meet many Canadian and international visitors.

Sunday would have been the opening ceremonies. Athletes representing the sports of skiing, archery, Arctic sports, badminton, biathlon snowshoe, the Dene games — check what those are — dog mushing, futsal, hockey and speed skating would proudly march into the opening ceremonies arena. The flag bearers and the athletes would march in and take the oath, while the City of Whitehorse would put on a truly wonderful show.

Events would continue with a very special reconciliation ceremony on Tuesday. Along with three other senators, I would have been there in Whitehorse in a variety of senator capacities. I was truly looking forward to several meetings, an opportunity to

meet with many from the Arctic, in the Arctic, in their house, and of course give out the gold medal for dog mushing on Tuesday afternoon, with the hopes of going dog mushing myself.

I would also like to point out that these games would have been an economic boon for the Yukon and the City of Whitehorse. In the face of the threat COVID-19 poses, many Canadians will be avoiding international travel. This is an evolving situation, of course, but if you can, and if it's deemed okay by your public health authorities to travel within Canada, might I recommend you pay a visit to Whitehorse on your next vacation. The city and its surroundings are so beautiful, and I know they would be happy to have you anytime. Thank you.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Richard Logan, Mace Bearer in the Senate of Canada, from 1999 to 2003.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

SURTAXES ON STEEL, ALUMINUM, AND OTHER GOODS: ISSUES FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS—REPORT TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled *Surtaxes on Steel, Aluminum, and Other Goods: Issues for Parliamentarians*, pursuant to the *Parliament of Canada Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. P-1, sbs. 79.2(2).

• (1420)

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, March 24, 2020, at 2 p.m.

[English]

COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

MOTION FOR APPOINTMENT ADOPTED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(j), I move:

That pursuant to rules 12-1 and 12-2, the Honourable Senators Woo, Saint-Germain, Omidvar, Duncan, Ringuette, Plett, Stewart Olsen, Downe and Cordy be appointed a Committee of Selection to nominate:

- (a) a senator to preside as Speaker pro tempore; and
- (b) the senators to serve on the several committees, except the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, during the present session; and

That the Committee of Selection report with all convenient speed the names of the senators so nominated.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

THE SENATE

MOTION IN RELATION TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP ADOPTED

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(j), I move:

That, for the remainder of the current session, and notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practice:

- 1. the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence have a membership of twelve senators, other than the ex officio members, provided that if the Senate has adopted a report of the Committee of Selection nominating the members to serve on the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence before the adoption of this order, the Committee of Selection be authorized to present a new report to nominate the three additional members to serve on the committee;

- 2. except in the case of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators:

- (a) except as provided in sub-paragraph (b), if a senator ceases to be a member of a particular recognized party or recognized parliamentary group for any reason, he or she simultaneously cease to be a member of any committee of which he or she is then a member, with the resulting vacancy to be filled by the leader or facilitator of the party or group to which the senator had belonged, following the processes established in rule 12-5;
- (b) if a senator ceases to be a member of a recognized party or recognized parliamentary group because that party or group ceases to exist, he or she remain a member of any committee of which he or she was a member, subject to the provisions of sub-paragraph (c); and
- (c) if a non-affiliated senator joins a recognized party or recognized parliamentary group, he or she thereby cease to be a member of any committee of which he or she is then a member, with the resulting vacancy to be filled either by order of the Senate or the adoption by the Senate of a report of the Committee of Selection;

- 3. the following committees be empowered to elect two deputy chairs:

- (a) the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration;
- (b) the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament;
- (c) the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade; and
- (d) the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence;

- 4. if a committee has elected two deputy chairs:

- (a) the reference to the deputy chair in rule 12-18(2)(b)(ii) be understood as referring to both deputy chairs of that committee acting together;
- (b) the reference to the deputy chair in rule 12-23(6) be understood as referring to either deputy chair of that committee; and
- (c) any reference to the deputy chair of a committee in any policy or guideline adopted by the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration be understood as referring to both deputy chairs acting together, until the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration decides otherwise;

5. if a committee establishes a Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure, the members of the subcommittee other than the chair be authorized to direct the clerk of the committee to convene a meeting of the committee for the purposes of considering a draft agenda by sending a letter to the clerk, signed by all the members of the subcommittee other than the chair, upon receipt of which the clerk of the committee shall convene a meeting of the committee at the committee's next meeting time, during a week that the Senate sits, according to the agreed upon schedule for committee meetings that is more than 24 hours after the receipt of the letter;
6. for greater certainty, if a meeting of a committee is convened pursuant to the terms of paragraph 5 of this order, and the chair is absent, a deputy chair or acting chair preside over the meeting; and
7. the Committee of Selection be a standing committee.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: Accordingly, it was moved by the Honourable Senator Woo, seconded by the Honourable Senator Plett, that for the remainder of the current session — may I dispense? Anything on debate? Senator Munson, did you have a question?

Hon. Jim Munson: Yes, please. Thank you very much for that, senator. I appreciate it. I would just like to know the rationale behind why a few of the committees will have two deputy chairs and why a committee, for example, as prominent and prestigious as Social Affairs, Science and Technology would not have two deputy chairs.

What made the difference, in terms of the argument that Foreign Affairs, National Security and others will have two deputy chairs? What happened?

Senator Woo: Thank you for your question, senator. In all negotiations, there is an attempt to try and be fair to the various groups and to make the necessary trade-offs so that we can come to a satisfactory agreement. It was felt that it was important for the third recognized parliamentary group, the Canadian Senators Group, to get a number of deputy chairs. The way in which we were able to accomplish this was by creating a sufficient number of additional deputy chairs so that our colleagues in the CSG would be able to occupy them.

Senator Munson: I have a supplementary question. In what role do you see those who are non-affiliated in this new Senate in the selection of being on committees or having an opportunity to run as deputy chair or chair?

Senator Woo: Senator, you may be aware that there are many discussions already happening as we speak and which have been ongoing for the last 48 hours and more, whereby all the recognized groups, the caucuses, are making best efforts to accommodate non-affiliated senators in committees.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

The Hon. the Speaker: It was moved by the Honourable Senator Woo, seconded by the Honourable Senator Plett, that for the remainder of the current session — may I dispense?

Hon. Senators: Dispense.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

QUESTION PERIOD

NATIONAL DEFENCE

AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question today is for the government leader in the Senate.

Leader, in 2015, the Liberal Party vowed not to purchase the F-35 stealth fighter aircraft and stated in their election platform, “We will immediately launch an open and transparent competition to replace the CF-18 fighter aircraft.”

• (1430)

Here we are, almost five years later, and still no fighter jets. Not only that, but last month, the government pushed back the deadline for preliminary proposals from the industry from the end of this month to the end of June. Somehow, the Minister of Public Services believes this is an aggressive timeline. I would hate to see what they think a normal timeline would be.

Leader, your government claims the delay was at the request of the industry. But Lockheed Martin and Boeing say they didn't ask for it, so who did? Also, does your government still plan to sign a contract for new fighter aircraft in 2022, or is that now delayed as well?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, senator. I am advised that the extension to the deadline was, in fact, at the request of the industry partners. The government continues to work and make its best efforts to get the best plane for the RCAF at the right price. The government position is that it has been consistent in its promise to replace Canada's existing fighter jet fleet through an open and transparent process. It is the position of this government that it has done the right thing in that regard by making sure we had the right number of jets to meet our NATO and NORAD commitments, and that explains the increase in the number of jets to 88.

Therefore, the government's position and objective remains the same: to get the best plane for the RCAF at the right price and with the most economic benefit to Canada.

Senator Plett: If Lockheed Martin and Boeing didn't ask for it, who would the Liberal government say is "the industry"? I would like that answered.

Additionally, in January, it was revealed that your government will not conduct any testing of new fighter aircraft under cold-weather conditions. Leader, we are an Arctic country, and this is a procurement worth approximately \$19 billion. Why wouldn't your government conduct cold-weather testing to make sure you are getting the best aircraft for the Royal Canadian Air Force and for taxpayers?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. I will make inquiries with regard to the cold-weather testing; I'm not in a position to answer that.

With regard to industry partners, my information is that three fighter planes are in the running: One is Lockheed Martin's F-35, another is Boeing's Super Hornet and the third is Saab's Gripen.

SUBMARINE MODERNIZATION

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is a continuation of what the opposition leader was asking.

Government leader, moving from the Royal Canadian Air Force to the Royal Canadian Navy, a report from the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence in 2017 noted:

The current fleet of . . . submarines is inadequate to provide an effective presence in three oceans . . .

We are an Arctic and maritime nation. The committee's observation has since been proven to be 100% correct. In all of 2019, the Royal Canadian Navy's fleet of submarines spent a total of zero days at sea due to repairs, maintenance and work on long-term upgrades. Therefore, the government's defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, makes no mention of the replacement of Canada's current fleet of submarines, though the life of the current fleet is being extended by one additional life cycle.

Senator Gold, why hasn't your government come forward with a plan to replace the current fleet of submarines in the Royal Canadian Navy?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The government's position on its three coasts, and the Arctic in particular, has been clearly set out in a number of documents. It remains committed to doing what is necessary to ensure that Canada has the proper presence in the Arctic and on all coasts to maintain and protect our sovereignty.

I will have to make inquiries as to the status of the question of the submarine fleet. I would be happy to report back when I get the answer.

Senator Martin: We are noticing a pattern of words and commitments when we need to see concrete action and timelines.

Nearly all of Canada's middle-power allies are investing in their submarine fleets. Australia, Norway and the Netherlands have submarines that are about the same age as Canada's, and they have all initiated replacement processes.

Senator Gold, if your government does, indeed, plan to replace our submarines, would you advise this chamber of the timeline for this replacement? Would you also make inquiries and let us know the anticipated cost of extending the existing Victoria-class submarines for an additional life cycle?

Senator Gold: Thank you. It would be my pleasure to do so.

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNITIES AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

GAS TAX FUND

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. In the last federal budget, the government recognized the need to quickly address the municipal infrastructure maintenance deficit with a one-time doubling of the Gas Tax Fund. Unfortunately, the government insists on excluding municipal properties from the program. A municipality cannot modernize its firehouse, city hall or municipal garage with gas tax revenue. This situation is causing problems for small municipalities.

What's more, unlike bigger cities, small municipalities cannot transfer money to other projects to make the most of the Gas Tax Fund. This initiative for municipalities creates a lot of problems for small municipalities, and municipal officials would like to be able to decide for themselves which investment projects take priority.

The government already has a lot on its plate right now with the coronavirus, reconciliation with First Nations and a teetering global economy. Shouldn't the government leave it up to the municipalities to freely establish their priorities for the Gas Tax Fund?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. It's an important question, especially for the municipalities, and I understand their concerns.

As you said, between 2005 and 2014, the purpose of the Gas Tax Fund was to support the municipalities. The previous government had added five new categories to the fund in 2014, and we added another 18 categories of projects. The eligible categories are extensive. They include a number of things, such as public transit, roads, local bridges, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, recreation facilities, disaster mitigation, capacity building, and so on.

Unfortunately, city halls and municipal garages are not eligible, because as I mentioned, the fund is not intended to pay for basic municipal operating costs. It's also worth noting that Quebec is also responsible for administrating the federal Gas Tax Fund through its own gas tax program. In fact, Quebec's department of municipal affairs is responsible for the municipalities in such a context.

[English]

PRIVY COUNCIL

SUPPORT FOR ALBERTA

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

As many of you will know, the price of oil crashed earlier this week in the greatest price loss since 1991 as a result of a political dispute between Saudi Arabia and Russia. Oil fell again today, with Brent crude now trading at US\$35.95. West Texas Intermediate, the index price in Alberta — US\$33.15 — fell further today on the news that Saudi Aramco is increasing capacity.

On behalf of the people of Alberta, what assurance can the government give the people of Alberta that Canada will take concrete actions to support Albertans in this time of economic crisis?

• (1440)

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and for underlining the impact, especially on Alberta but elsewhere in Canada, of the falling oil prices. The government has been working with all of the provinces and, indeed, the territories for some time, and as senators know, has been engaging with, in particular, the premier and others in the province of Alberta to explore the different mechanisms whereby federal assistance can be provided to both the provinces and the citizens of Alberta who are feeling the pinch, if that's not too modest a word, of what is happening.

I'm advised that these discussions are continuous and under way. It's a volatile situation, to say the very least. But this government is committed to doing what it can within its capacity to assist the provinces and the people of Alberta.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Thanh Hai Ngo: Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate. Tension between Canada and China has been high for some time. Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, jailed since December 2018, were only recently given access to lawyers.

Our canola seed exports to China have been blocked for a year now. The Huawei chief financial officer is still fighting extradition to the U.S. from Vancouver. Yet, despite all this, last

October, Canada sent a large delegation of 114 athletes, 57 coaches and supporting staff to the Military World Games in China.

Senator Gold, given the serious ongoing dispute between our two countries, why would Canada send a delegation to China for a sporting competition, and why did the government hide its participation until after the event was over?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and ongoing commitment to focusing our attention on these issues.

Our relationship with China is multifaceted, complex and, quite frankly, difficult. It is the position of the government that we have to work on many different fronts and in many different ways to ensure the best outcomes for Canadians and for Canadian interests, and those don't often lead you to only one track in our relationships with this large and important country. The position of Canada with regard to China and elsewhere in the world is to engage where one can engage constructively in the hope that that will facilitate the more difficult and important conversations on challenging issues such as the ones you mentioned — the detainees — but also the economic issues that are hurting our Canadian farmers. Canada is pursuing a complicated and complex multifaceted strategy with a complicated partner and country in the world.

Senator Ngo: Thank you for your explanation, but Senator Gold, could you please make inquiries and let us know who made the decision for Canada to attend these games, when it was made and what the involvement of Global Affairs Canada was in arriving at the decision to send a delegation to China?

Senator Gold: I will make such inquiries. Thank you for your question.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

CANADIAN NAVY

Hon. Norman E. Doyle: Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate also, and it concerns navy recruitment.

It was recently reported that the Royal Canadian Navy has a shortfall of about 850 members. While the navy's commander says this amount is manageable now, it may not be later on if the navy is called upon to increase its operations.

In a fall 2016 report, the Attorney General's office found that recruitment targets were lower or significantly lower than the numbers needed and were based on National Defence's capacity to process applications and enroll in training new members.

Senator Gold, what are the recruitment priorities of the Canadian Armed Forces? Can your government assure Canadians it has a plan to ensure all existing and future navy vessels will be fully crewed? If so, could you table that plan in the Senate?

[Senator Gold]

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): That's a very good question — thank you very much. It's the position of the government that its navy and Armed Forces require the recruitment and retention of the best and brightest that Canada can offer, and there is a challenge that we face in many areas.

Let me point to one. For example, within the Canadian Armed Forces generally, the number of women make up too small a percentage of the members of the Armed Forces. The government has been working hard with the Armed Forces to meet an internal target of at least 25% female force, which is above the UN standards. The government is making progress and working hard to attract new recruits.

I can only add that the government remains committed to ensuring our forces have the human resources and other resources capable of serving Canada's best interest.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader. Senator Gold, yesterday I asked you about four-year-old Amira, the little girl stuck in an orphanage in Syria. I asked about what steps your government is taking to reunite her with her only family here in Canada.

Senator Gold, you spoke about the difficulty of providing consular services inside Syria. While I can appreciate that our consular office in Damascus is closed, the office in Beirut is open for business.

If Amira's uncle was able to travel from Canada to Syria and make it inside the orphanage to see his niece, what is proving so difficult for Canadian consular officials to do the same? We know Global Affairs has confirmed Amira's identity and they have signalled that she is entitled to citizenship, so what is the problem? What is taking so long for Global Affairs Canada to get this little girl, who I assume is probably very terrified, back with her friends, loved ones and family in Canada?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. I can only imagine what it must be like for that little girl and others to be living through what she is living through.

I'm advised that our consular officials are making every effort to provide assistance to her. I do not have detailed information about the particular challenges they have been facing. I will certainly make inquiries and report back.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, our consulate is open in Beirut. It should probably be even easier for them to get over there and give assistance to this little girl, if her uncle was able to get there.

Just over one year ago, we saw a smiling Chrystia Freeland, then Global Affairs minister, as she welcomed Rahaf Mohammed al-Qunun to Canada at Toronto's Pearson Airport. The plight of

the Saudi teenager, who was fleeing her family, had taken over social media, and within days she was granted permanent residency here in Canada. At that time the minister said:

. . . where we can save a single person . . . that is a good thing to do.

I think the government should really look into this particular case. The media has been trying to draw attention to it. This little girl, I think, deserves our assistance, and I think there is no excuse for Global Affairs, but they have to act, and act soon. I would rely on you, government leader, to get back to this chamber with a timeline of what Global Affairs Canada is going to do in this particular case.

Senator Gold: Thank you. I will do my very best. I can only empathize with the family but also underline that the security situation is challenging, notwithstanding that we may have a consulate open there. There are many challenges for officials. I will do my best to get the information and report back, and I hope that what I can report back is satisfactory.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I would like to return to the issue of fighter jets. This government has delayed the replacement of the air force's current fleet of 40-year-old fighter aircraft for so long that now there is an impact on other aircraft that also need to be replaced.

Former RCAF commander Lieutenant-General Hood noted that the air force cannot obtain the new refuelling aircraft it needs unless it first knows the type of fighter jet they will be refuelling.

• (1450)

This delay means that the air force's refuelling aircraft, the KC-130H is now so old that they may be withdrawn this year. That retirement will effectively cut Canada's refuelling tanker fleet in half and leave a grant total of two old Airbus A310 Polaris tankers in service. That means two aircraft to cover the whole of Canada.

Senator Gold, will the air force be forced to retire its old tankers this year? Will these aircraft be replaced, and when will this decision be made?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. The three-month delay the government announced for the proposals — that is a delay to the end of June 2020 — is at the request of industry, but, more importantly, will not affect the timelines for the contract award and delivery. The three-month extension for the proposal is there to ensure that the process that the government follows is open, fair, competitive and ensures that those who bid on the replacement jets are treated fairly and can put forward their best proposals.

Senator Plett: Of course the main players in the industry are saying they didn't ask for this.

[English]

Senator Gold, the A310 Polaris aircraft are now so old that the Royal Canadian Air Force is almost alone in still flying them, in company with countries like Iran and Yemen. When Air Transat recently retired its own A310s, they went straight to the scrap heap.

If the government doesn't care about the effectiveness of the air force tanker fleet, perhaps it will care that the current tankers are energy inefficient. In fact, the new aircraft Air Transat bought are 36% more energy efficient than the aircraft they replaced.

Leader, will your government absolutely commit to replacing these tankers no later than 2026, which is the current plan?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. To the extent there is a plan in place to replace these, I can affirm that the government is committed to that plan, but I'm not in a position to give you a guarantee as to the actual date of delivery.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE ESTIMATES, 2020-21

NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY
MAIN ESTIMATES AND MEET DURING SITTING
AND ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of March 10, 2020, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine and report upon the expenditures set out in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021; and

That, for the purpose of this study, the committee have the power to meet, even though the Senate may then be sitting or adjourned, and that rules 12-18(1) and 12-18(2) be suspended in relation thereto.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

GIRL GUIDES OF CANADA BILL

PRIVATE BILL—SECOND READING—
DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer moved second reading of Bill S-1001, An Act respecting Girl Guides of Canada.

She said: Honourable senators, it is my honour to speak to Bill S-1001, An Act respecting Girl Guides of Canada. Girl Guides of Canada is an organization that is very close to my heart, and I will get to that in a few moments. I have also come to learn that many honourable senators in this chamber also hold this organization near and dear.

I would like to begin today by taking you all back to the year 1909, when girls in England demanded to take part in the Boy Scouts rally organized by Lord Baden-Powell at the Crystal Palace in London. These girls saw what the Boy Scouts were doing and wanted to have the same opportunities. Lord Baden-Powell was impressed by their tenacity and initiative, so he asked his sister Agnes to create a program just for girls.

[Translation]

That was the day girls launched the guiding movement, which provides opportunities for girls to get together, discover what's important to them and try out a range of activities they can't do at home or at school. The movement created a space where girls took the initiative to discover what was important to them. Right from the start, these girls were seeking out new experiences.

Guiding debuted in Canada a year later. By 1912, there were units in every province, and many of Canada's most progressive women joined forces to create the Canadian Girl Guides Association.

[English]

I ask for all your assistance in getting this bill to become law. In the last session I had introduced this bill, and it died at third reading. Senator Dalphond had amended the previous bill, and these amendments are now an integral part of this present bill. These amendments include that the Girl Guides of Canada will follow the rule that all corporations have provisions to say that the directors are personally responsible or liable for up to six months of unpaid wages and salaries, as stated under section 146(1) of the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act.

Today, honourable senators, the Girl Guides of Canada consists of 75,000 girls strong, supported by 20,000 women from coast to coast to coast. From their very first meeting, there was a deal to have an all-girl organization where they could make choices, have a voice of their own and put their ideas into action.

Girl Guides of Canada provides a unique opportunity for empowerment in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment, and provides programs that are responsive to issues facing girls. Guiding acts as a catalyst for girls empowering girls. Guiding has long played a leading role in helping girls develop the skills and

experience to try new things, with programming options ranging from innovative STEM activities to outdoor adventures and discussions on mental health and healthy relationships.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, Girl Guides of Canada offers a broad range of positive and educational programs and activities. One of these is Mighty Minds, a large-scale mental health initiative designed to help girls aged 5 to 17 across Canada develop a positive attitude toward mental health.

[English]

Listening to girls and understanding what they are facing enables Girl Guides of Canada to be responsive and work toward a better world for girls.

• (1500)

For the forty-third Canadian federal election, Girl Guides of Canada created “Voices to Votes”, a series of activities that allowed girls across our great nation to learn about the democratic process and to engage with the election.

Girl Guides of Canada is committed to being an inclusive, diverse and relevant organization for today’s girls. These values are vital to Girl Guides of Canada’s objective of providing a safe space where girls from all walks of life can become confident, resilient, independent, open-minded and fulfilled. For more than 100 years, Girl Guides of Canada has known that there are no limits to what girls can achieve when they have a chance to discover themselves and explore the infinite possibilities available to them, no matter the path they choose. The girls are encouraged and supported to continuously try new challenges.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, we all know that women and girls still face obstacles and limited opportunities.

Programs centred on girls focus on their specific needs and the social barriers they can face and encourage them to look up to women in leadership positions.

Our world is constantly evolving and growing more and more complex, yet sexism lives on. There’s no doubt that girls need an organization like Girl Guides of Canada now more than ever.

[English]

Today, girls in guiding discover who they are. The girls set their own goals. Along this path, the girls know that they can become confident, resilient and independent.

Honourable senators, guiding is in my DNA. My mother grew up as a Girl Guide and worked with Lady Baden-Powell in Kenya. She often told us stories from her adventures as a Girl Guide, going camping and being in leadership roles in Kenya. At that time, besides school, there was nothing else for her and her friends to do but to go guiding. That was the only opportunity girls had at that time.

When she moved to Kampala, Uganda as a young bride, she became a Girl Guide leader to give Ugandan girls an opportunity to excel. My sisters and I were Brownies and Guides. I was the second Queen’s Guide in East Africa. I was also a Girl Scout in Tacoma, Washington State. I learned many leadership skills from guiding.

In Canada, I have been very fortunate, honourable senators. I have learned great leadership skills, and my being a Girl Guide leader has helped my family to integrate into Canada. I have been a Brownie leader, a Girl Guide leader, a Pathfinder leader and, more importantly, I have taken girls all over Canada for camping experiences.

For many years, as a Girl Guide commissioner, I was able to encourage other young women to become leaders and hold leadership roles. Many younger women have said to me that if it were not for the encouragement of Girl Guides, they would never have been able to integrate into Canadian society as well as they have.

Honourable senators, Girl Guides of Canada has had a tremendous impact on the woman I am today. I stand before you in full support of Girl Guides of Canada and their ongoing commitment to enable girls to be confident, resourceful and courageous, but, most of all, to make a difference in this world.

Girl Guides of Canada has requested that a private bill be introduced before the Parliament of Canada to ensure its current roles and procedures as a modern organization are accurately reflected in their governing charter.

Honourable senators, the Girl Guides’ governance is formalized through a special act of Parliament titled An Act to Incorporate The Canadian Council of The Girl Guides Association, chapter 77 of the Statutes of Canada, 1917. That act has been amended twice, in 1947 and in 1961. For the most part, the governing act remains largely unamended.

In this private bill, Girl Guides of Canada seeks to modernize language to reflect Girl Guides of Canada’s goals and missions, make administrative edits to Girl Guides of Canada’s procedural provisions and to incorporate certain provisions of the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act. As I have already stated, this bill also incorporates Senator Dalphond’s amendments to the previous bill.

Honourable senators, today I ask for your support in modernizing the objectives of Girl Guides of Canada by sending this bill to committee as soon as the committees are formed. I thank you for your assistance.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Honourable senators, I won’t speak long, but I will support the bill that was debated by my colleague.

In the last Parliament — that's a long time ago — the same bill was proposed. Of course, I took an interest in it, not because I'm a former Girl Guide — I guess I won't pretend that — but I reviewed it because I like corporate law. I went through the bill as drafted. I found there was something missing in the bill. There were no protections for unpaid wages and salaries to employees. Girl Guides of Canada is a substantive organization; it has about 175 employees in Canada.

I raised the issue and my concerns with Senator Mobina Jaffer. At Banking Committee, when the witnesses appeared, I raised the question again: Why are you asking for a status that will make you different from the Canadian Cancer Society and other non-profit corporations in this country that don't have such exemptions for the personal liability of directors in case of unpaid salaries?

If they had decided to continue under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, as many corporations have done instead of asking for a private bill, the protections for unpaid wages and salaries would apply. I thought that was something that should be remedied. When the witnesses appeared before the Banking Committee, in answer to my questions, they agreed it should have been included. Further to that appearance, we agreed — Senator Jaffer, the Law Clerk's office and me — on the new wording to be included in the bill. As you know, there were some movements in this house, some bills were delayed and some sponsors were lost. When I introduced my amendment in this place, I had to read it twice. It was extensive and very boring, I must say. It was very technical, but nonetheless incorporated into the bill, but that bill died when Parliament was dissolved.

Now I am pleased to say that Senator Jaffer and I have worked together on the current bill; the bill is perfect. I support it, I stand for it and I recommend that it be sent to the Banking Committee for a short review and that it comes back with a report that will say, "approved."

(On motion of Senator Ringuette, for Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

• (1510)

[Translation]

GUARANTEED LIVABLE INCOME

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Pate, calling the attention of the Senate to the need to examine and evaluate concrete measures available to the Senate to support the implementation of guaranteed livable income initiatives and to promote substantive equality for all Canadians.

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: I decided to speak to Senator Kim Pate's inquiry not because I'm an expert on the highly technical subject of a guaranteed minimum income, but because I have personally observed some of the unintended consequences

of our income support policies. Furthermore, poverty is very costly for our society from the human standpoint and from a mental and physical health standpoint. Statistics Canada recently released a study showing that income inequality is linked to the premature death of 4,000 Canadians a year. That's equal to 110 Canadians dying prematurely each day just because they're poor. It's heartbreaking. We need to keep an open mind and promote innovative solutions.

I'm involved with a food bank in Pointe-Saint-Charles, an inner city neighbourhood in Montreal where I meet people who depend on these free groceries to make ends meet. I see sadness, resignation and some embarrassment in the eyes of these disadvantaged people, who are often grappling with complex problems. They are typically on welfare. The following quote from a food bank user reflects the general feeling of frustration:

With the money I get from welfare, once I pay the rent, I have a little over \$80 left to pay for my phone, transportation and food. How am I supposed to eat well on so little?

The situation is critical for single people and childless couples who live on last-resort benefits. This is because, over the past decade, family assistance has been increased in all manner of ways, but this isn't the case for the monthly basic benefit for single people with no limited capacity for employment, which is \$690 a month.

This isn't just the reality in Quebec. From March 2018 to March 2019, almost half the users of food banks in Canada were single people. That's a record; in 2010, only 38% of food bank users were single people.

In Quebec, if welfare recipients can manage to find temporary employment and earn more than \$200 a month, an amount is automatically deducted from their cheque. The rigid rules of this last-resort assistance thrust recipients into the vicious circle of poverty and dependence because the benefits are not enough to live on but any attempt to find a little job to live more comfortably is punished immediately. Why do we accept that these meagre amounts earned by the very poor are taxed at 100% when the income of the very wealthy is taxed at 50%?

That's why a guaranteed livable income is such a promising idea. Returning to the workforce is a tough step to take for many vulnerable people, who fear losing their safety net before they've regained their self-confidence. However, we have to be fair to lower-income workers who are also going through tough times. They too should be able to rely on some form of basic income or another, or a better work allowance in order to make ends meet. Balance and fairness between the different forms of assistance are difficult to achieve.

How can all that inform the debate on the need to support the implementation of guaranteed livable income initiatives? In every province, programs designed to help families and individuals constitute a complex architecture of inter-related income support mechanisms to which federal programs are being tacked on.

[Senator Dalphond]

Given the division of powers between the federal government and the provinces, and especially the particular complexities of the various provincial safety nets, it seems unrealistic to me to imagine that overnight we could bring in an adequate guaranteed livable income with no strings attached for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast. It's more pragmatic to look at the programs that come close to the concept of a basic income and try to go from there, programs like Old Age Security, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and the Canada Child Benefit.

Nearly 9% of Canadians, some 3,200,000 people, were living below the poverty line in 2018. This lack of money affects every other indicator, including health, education, family and access to justice. For those who believe in a more equitable society, a guaranteed minimum income is a source of hope. One-third of all income growth benefits just the 1% who are already wealthy. The labour market is in complete upheaval and some people are falling through the cracks.

We need to start considering a guaranteed livable income, and Finland's pilot project has gotten the world dreaming. For two years, from 2017 to 2019, 200 unemployed workers participated in a universal income initiative. They received \$860 per month, no paperwork required, and this amount was not reduced if the individual returned to work. The experiment, which was not extended by the government, was too short to be conclusive. According to initial assessments, the participants showed fewer symptoms of stress, less difficulty concentrating and fewer health problems. Overall, however, the participants did not show increased employment rates compared to the control group.

A similar project conducted in Ontario in 2017 also came to an end too soon. For two years, 4,000 underprivileged people received a guaranteed annual income of \$17,000. According to a survey of 217 recipients, three-quarters of those who had a job at the beginning of the program continued to work. Half of those who left their job went back to school in the hopes of earning a better living. Participants said they were in better health, less anxious and less depressed. More than half reported an improvement in their housing situation, and three-quarters said they were eating healthier.

These are encouraging indicators, but we still don't know the more long-term effects of a guaranteed minimum income for the most underprivileged.

I want to come back to the decisions that were made in Quebec, the society that I'm most familiar with. To date, Quebec has taken things step by step. In 2017, a Quebec panel of experts on guaranteed minimum income rejected out of hand the idea of fully implementing a guaranteed basic income program. According to panel members, reform would be too costly and unfair and could discourage people from working.

The advisory group recommended improving the existing system to address issues. For example, it suggested making a single payment comprising welfare payments, the solidarity tax credit and an enhanced work allowance, as well as additional coverage for those going through a transition who aren't eligible for welfare.

Sylvie Morel, an economist at Université Laval, says that a universal benefit would certainly help remove the stigma of being on welfare. However, she also wondered if some public services and programs could be cut to cover the cost of a universal livable income. Would Quebec's network of affordable child care centres and the availability of social housing be compromised?

Here's an interesting approach. In 2018, as part of its strategy to end poverty, the Government of Quebec passed Bill 173, a good example of a guaranteed livable income. The idea was to increase welfare benefits significantly for 84,000 people with a severely limited capacity for employment. For people with disabilities, payments are going up by 40% over four years to \$18,000 in 2023, which corresponds to a basic standard of living based on the market basket measure. An inheritance or employment earnings would not affect the guaranteed income. François Blais, who was the minister of employment and social solidarity at the time, explained the purpose of the bill as follows:

• (1520)

The cheques will be individualized We recognize that it's a lot more difficult for them. If they go out into the workforce and try to earn a little income, on a part-time basis, they'll be able to keep more of that income than they can right now.

What is truly innovative is that this benefit will be paid to each person on an individual basis, regardless of his or her family status, in other words, regardless of the spouse's income, which is in keeping with a guaranteed livable income. This will help prevent isolation among beneficiaries. It could therefore be described as a universal, categorical benefit intended for people who, obviously, have the most difficulty finding employment.

As a final comment, the Senate is at its best when reflecting on long-term solutions to complex social issues. It is therefore entirely appropriate for the upper chamber to support, examine and assess the implementation of guaranteed livable income initiatives, because poverty cannot be comprehended solely through the calculations and equations of learned economists.

Poverty also undermines the dignity of human beings. Programs of last resort, as designed, give rise to biases against those who are poorest. I'm also concerned that there will be more and more disadvantaged people struggling with mental health issues who will fall through the cracks in a complex and bureaucratic system. Consider the rising rates of autism spectrum disorder, for example.

The humanity of a society is measured by how it takes care of its most vulnerable members. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Ringuette, for Senator Duncan, debate adjourned.)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

MOTION TO PLACE THIRTEENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE
DEPOSITED WITH CLERK DURING FIRST SESSION OF
FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT ON ORDERS
OF THE DAY ADOPTED

Hon. René Cormier, pursuant to notice of March 10, 2020, moved:

That the thirteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages entitled *Modernizing the Official Languages Act: Views of the Federal Institutions and Recommendations*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 13, 2019, during the first session of the Forty-second Parliament, be placed on the Orders of the Day under Other Business, Reports of Committees — Other, for consideration at the next sitting.

He said: Honourable senators, I move the motion standing in my name.

Hon. Patricia Bovey (The Hon. the Acting Speaker): Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

BANKING, TRADE AND COMMERCE

MOTION TO PLACE THIRTY-SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE
DEPOSITED WITH CLERK DURING FIRST SESSION OF
FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT ON ORDERS
OF THE DAY ADOPTED

Hon. Colin Deacon, pursuant to notice of March 10, 2020, moved:

That the thirty-second report of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce entitled *Open Banking: What it Means for You*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 19, 2019, during the first session of the Forty-second Parliament, be placed on the Orders of the Day under Other Business, Reports of Committees — Other, for consideration at the next sitting.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS IN HONG KONG

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Jim Munson rose pursuant to notice of December 11, 2019:

That he will call the attention of the Senate to the abuse of human rights and democratic freedoms in Hong Kong.

He said: Honourable senators, this is an inquiry on the human rights abuses in Hong Kong. It's my first opportunity to speak about this inquiry, and I'm hoping that a number of senators will have the opportunity to talk about this in order to build up support for the people of Hong Kong.

I would like to start by acknowledging the suffering of all persons affected by the coronavirus in this country, in China and around the world. My sympathies and prayers are with them and their families.

Honourable senators, I am lucky enough to have the freedom and choice to speak on my inquiry in this chamber. I can speak today without fear — no fear of retribution, punishment or retaliation — for expressing my thoughts or the facts. These are everyday fears for people in Hong Kong. Students and professionals, parents and children, and sisters and brothers suffer daily abuses of human rights and democratic freedoms in Hong Kong.

In 1988, I was in Hong Kong for a very happy reason: the birth of my son, Claude Mathieu, while I was CTV's bureau chief in Beijing. At that time, people were living in trepidation. People were leaving Hong Kong, but they really wanted to stay because Hong Kong was their home. But people were leaving — and it wasn't a trickle — in anticipation of its handover to China from the United Kingdom. They fled due to fears of losing human rights and the rule of law.

This immigration was further fuelled by what I witnessed a year later — and I don't need to go into the details of what was the massacre at Tiananmen Square. I have seen what abuses a government will inflict on its innocent citizens, what they do when they don't fall in line and when they fight for the democratic freedoms each of us in this chamber enjoy every day.

As we know, in 1977, the territory was handed over with a guarantee of Hong Kong having separate political and economic systems than those of mainland China under the "one country, two systems" principle.

For a while, it really seemed that it was working. Fast forward to June 2019, and history is repeating itself. Pro-democratic protests started due to serious long-term and ongoing transgressions to freedoms of religion, speech and democratic rights in Hong Kong, including the introduction of the extradition bill proposed by Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam in February just a year ago, in 2019. The bill would have allowed extraditions to mainland China and was viewed as an intentional move by Beijing to erode freedoms.

Finally, it was formally withdrawn eight months later in September, but the damage was done. Too many people had been arrested for their public opposition to the bill and had suffered at the hands of police brutality over the months of protests.

The protesters continued their demands, which are quite straightforward. You have heard them, but they bear repeating here: democratic reforms and universal suffrage, an independent inquiry into police brutality and amnesty for protest-related offences. Senators, these are simple, reasonable and fair demands. They are so commonplace for us that we barely give them a second thought. Our biggest barriers to elections access in this country are either voter apathy or bad weather.

So while this is a reminder to be grateful for what we have, it is also a call to action for us to support these rights around the world. According to Hong Kong Watch, based in the U.K., more than 7,000 protesters have been arrested since last June. Of those, almost 1,100 have had their cases brought to court and have been charged. About 550 have been charged with rioting, with only 12 sentenced. The sentencing for rioting can be up to 10 years in prison.

It is estimated that 40% of the arrested protesters are secondary school and university students. We know — we have seen the pictures — that children have been arrested too. The youngest person convicted in the protests so far is 12 years old.

While protests can often lead to vandalism and violence by a minority of those present, there is no excuse for the extreme police brutality that is taking place. The excessive violence by the Hong Kong police has led to a collapse of trust. The majority of the Hong Kong public support the protesters. In fact, 1 million people, or roughly 15% of its population, joined in the New Year's Day rally in support of the demands I mentioned earlier. I remind you that these demands are as simple as democratic freedoms and the right to fair votes, as well as an inquiry into police brutality.

• (1530)

It has been reported, honourable senators, that during crowd control responses, the police have shot rubber bullets into the faces of protesters and used thousands of rounds of tear gas and excessive force. There are scenes of people, even children, being severely beaten with batons and fists during arrests. Once in detention, there have been reports of denied access to medical attention and legal counsel, as well as reports of torture, sexual violence and unlawful strip searches.

Amnesty International is demanding a prompt and independent investigation into violations. They said this in September:

The evidence leaves little room for doubt – in an apparent thirst for retaliation, Hong Kong's security forces have engaged in a disturbing pattern of reckless and unlawful

tactics against people during the protests. This has included arbitrary arrests and retaliatory violence against arrested persons in custody, some of which has amounted to torture.

Additionally, in more than 85% of cases investigated by Amnesty International, the arrested person was hospitalized as a result of their beating by police.

Honourable senators, these events come close to home for me, and they should come close to home for you because you have probably been visited by those who walk the streets of Hong Kong and have participated in these protests. Sadly for me, I know one of the men who is now in jail, Edward Leung. I want you to remember this name.

I met Edward in June 2017 in my Centre Block office on Parliament Hill. He was a charismatic, soft-spoken and kind person. He had a suit on. He looked like most of us. He talked about how much he treasured the Canadian values of human rights, equality, democracy and multiculturalism. He expressed his gratitude and honour in meeting our Canadian veterans a few years ago at a Battle of Hong Kong commemoration ceremony. It moved him. It moved me when he talked about it. I had an uncle who served in that part of the world in the Second World War.

As is often the case and as he wanted to have done, we took a photo together for Twitter and promised to keep working towards our common goals. Edward returned to Hong Kong and continued to be widely supported for his democratic leadership and commitment to rights and freedoms.

Edward Leung, as I said, is now in jail. He was sentenced to six years in prison in 2018 for his participation in the demonstrations and for his public support of democracy and independence.

Senators, I was updated on Edward's well-being yesterday, and I was extremely upset to learn that, earlier this month, he was moved to a Category A maximum security prison, which is reserved for the most dangerous offenders. This is no place for a non-violent pro-democratic activist.

Edward's life story, political work and his involvement in the Mong Kok protests in 2016 are detailed in the documentary *Lost in the Fumes*. *TIME Magazine* noted the film should be essential viewing for participants of the most recent protests, and they recognized Edward on their list of 100 next rising stars expected to shape the future.

As the situation in Hong Kong continues, I often think of Edward and his family, and I send them strength and support from the Senate of Canada. I hope you do too. I hope you send strength and support to all those who are behind bars in Hong Kong. They don't deserve to be there. Hong Kong is part of the fabric of this country, 500,000 of whom live here now. They are Canada as Canada is Canada, and we can never, ever forget that.

Colleagues, it is not only Hong Kong citizens who are being censored and abused. Press freedoms — something I'm familiar with after being thrown in jail a few times in China during my work there — are also being denied. Many journalists have reported being harassed and intimidated by the Hong Kong police force because of their coverage or attempts to cover the protest. Tear gas and rubber bullets have been aimed at journalists. The police have obstructed videos and pictures by shining lights into cameras, this even though journalists are easily identifiable with yellow vests, helmets and visible press identification.

The harassment doesn't seem to stop. There is now a form of self-censorship in bookstores and different places in Hong Kong. You are in trouble if you have printed or are trying to publish or sell a book that has anything to do with the government in China.

As you know, three journalists from *The Wall Street Journal* were expelled from Beijing in February for an opinion piece that they published, and now it's being reported that appropriate visa renewals are becoming difficult to obtain for foreign correspondents.

Honourable senators, history is repeating itself. We cannot sit back and watch this happen. Journalism plays a crucial role around the world. When journalists face censorship and barriers to reporting their stories anywhere, it is a threat to press freedoms everywhere.

The last Governor of Hong Kong, Lord Chris Patten, said at a lecture last month:

Around the world, liberal democracies have to stand up for themselves if their system of governance and the rule of law are to survive as the heartbeat of international politics in the century ahead. What a struggle there is in Hong Kong, a struggle in which we all have a vital stake. What happens there will affect us all. Depend on it. The defence of Hong Kong's values by its brave citizens is ours too.

It seems like the protests have been less active in the last few months, but that is only because of efforts to contain the coronavirus. As in Canada, this virus has created public concerns and reclusion.

The people of Hong Kong want the world to know they are not backing down. They still fear police retaliation and daily threats to free speech and democracy. They fear that China is abandoning the one country, two systems principle. Not even halfway to 50 years. I think it's around halfway. They want you to know they still need our attention.

As policy makers, we need to use our positions and influence to help people who are suffering. As such, a parliamentary friends of Hong Kong group will be formed in the coming weeks, and I encourage senators with a like-mindedness about human rights to join. I also invite you to participate in this inquiry and to support Senator Housakos's motion to have the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee examine and report on the situation and to speak out on social media about human rights violations and abuses happening in that great and wonderful place of Hong Kong. Hong Kong, my son's home.

Finally, I want to thank people across the world who are using their voices to support democratic rights and to stand up for press freedoms. We hear you and we support you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Donna Dasko: Will the senator take a question?

The Hon. the Speaker: He has a minute and a half left.

Senator Munson: Yes.

Senator Dasko: Thank you for your discussion today. Try to help us understand, how is it or why is it that democratic institutions in Hong Kong were not made more secure during this period, such as with press freedoms, rule of law and independence of the courts? Can you tell us why they weren't more secure and why we are looking at this situation today?

Senator Munson: If I had the answer to that question, there would be peace in Hong Kong today.

What happened is that the government in Beijing did not live up to its word with the United Kingdom and with the people of Hong Kong to abide by those principles of one country, two systems. There was an opportunity here and a breath of fresh air with so many reforms taking place in Beijing and mainland China with Deng Xiaoping and with what they called socialism with Chinese capitalist characteristics, something along those lines. There was an opening taking place.

• (1540)

At some point in time we have to take a country at its word. The Beijing government did not live up to its word.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

(At 3:41 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.)

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