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The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Leader of the Opposition who requests, pursuant to rule 4-3(1), that the time provided for the consideration of Senators' Statements be extended today for the purpose of paying tribute to the Honourable Andrée Champagne, former senator, whose death occurred on June 6, 2020.

I remind senators that pursuant to our rules, each senator will be allowed only 3 minutes and they may speak only once and the time for Tributes shall not exceed 15 minutes.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE LATE HONOURABLE ANDRÉE CHAMPAGNE, P.C., C.M.

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, it is a privilege to stand in this chamber today to pay tribute to our late colleague Andrée Champagne.

The best way to begin is with the fact that Andrée was a force to be reckoned with. She was an inspiration, role model and advocate for women all over the world. For Quebecers, she will always be their "belle Donalda," their TV heroine for 14 years.

Her accomplishments are far too lengthy to enumerate here today, so I will try to highlight a few.

Andrée's life as a performing artist began as a 17-year-old with the famous television series "Les Belles Histoires des pays d'en haut," but she was also an animator and wonderful singer, a businesswoman dedicated to making artists' lives better. As a host, she presided over the opening ceremonies of Montreal's two greatest world events, Expo 67 and the 1976 Olympic Games.

Andrée managed to merge the two main tracks in her life, "artiste and politician," to powerful advantage. Her fierce determination to protect Quebec, both language and culture, was evident throughout her political career.

First elected as a Progressive Conservative in her riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot in 1984, during nine years in the House of Commons she served as Minister of State for Youth and became the first woman Deputy Speaker.

In 2005, Andrée Champagne was named to the Senate of Canada, where she became the outspoken soldier for linguistic minorities. She herself cited the official languages portfolio and work in the Francophonie as her greatest accomplishments.

Senator Champagne generously took me under her wing when I first arrived here in 2009. She was graceful, articulate and tenaciously passionate.

May I share with you a most memorable moment we had after her retirement. She had just returned home after a community concert where she sang accompanied by her husband Sébastien, a well-recognized pianist. She was so humble and spoke with joy, almost surprised at the enthusiasm of the audience. It gave her such satisfaction to delight an audience once again.

Andrée had many passions in life, but her love for Sébastien, her children Liliane and Patrick, and her granddaughter Laurence were her grounding forces and the inspiration to remain hopeful and to always look ahead.

Colleagues, in closing, I would like to quote from Andrée's foreword in her autobiography *Je reviens de loin...*, published in 2008:

[Translation]

My greatest desire in writing this book is to encourage you to look around you. Today and every day that you spend on this earth, take the time to share all of the love in your heart. Every breath we take is a gift.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Honourable colleagues, it is my turn to rise to pay tribute to Senator Andrée Champagne, who passed away last week.

I met Andrée in the Senate. When I was appointed to the Senate, she had been already been a senator for four years. Although she was appointed by Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin, she decided to join the Conservative caucus. That bold choice was a clear sign of her independent spirit. I must say, honourable colleagues, that I was humbled to serve alongside this woman, who had a larger-than-life personality.

Everyone knows that, before beginning her political career, Andrée was a wonderful actress, renowned in Quebec. She left her mark on several generations with her inspiring portrayal of Donalda on the series "Les Belles Histoires des pays d'en haut". However, much to her dismay, that role seemed to stick to her, and all people wanted to talk to her about when they met her was Donalda. Why did that character she played have such a deep emotional impact on Quebec viewers? In my opinion, it is because Andrée embodied that character. Andrée was not really acting when she portrayed Donalda's qualities of gentleness, wonder, determination, love, selflessness and courage. The 17-year-old actress candidly and generously revealed her true self to the public as she likely very intuitively threw herself into the role, body and soul. That is what I believe made such a big impression on the men and, especially, the women of Quebec.

Senator Champagne was a woman of integrity, she spoke her mind, and she was sure of herself. She may have looked frail or even fragile, but she showed extraordinary strength of character. She made good use of those qualities as Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons from 1990 to 1993. At caucus meetings during my tenure as Leader of the Government in the Senate from 2013 to 2015, Andrée never hesitated to speak up about issues she was passionate about and everything that mattered to her. She had a gift for exploring new perspectives and raising questions that encouraged us all to see issues from a different angle.

Senator Champagne had many qualities. Many of her parliamentary colleagues, MPs and senators alike, did not know that she had a magnificent voice. In the 1960s, she recorded a number of magnificent songs, including “Tu es venu”.

When she retired from the Senate in 2014, I concluded my tribute to her with words by the famous singer, Barbara: “Tell us, when will you be back?” This time, all I can say to our wonderful Andrée is goodbye and all the best. Thank you for everything, Senator Champagne.

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Honourable senators, I too would like to say a few words to honour the memory of one of the most famous women in Quebec, the Honourable Andrée Champagne.

Long before she got into politics, first as an MP, then as a minister and finally as a senator, Andrée Champagne became one of Quebec’s biggest television stars when she was chosen to play the role of Donalda in the televised series “Les Belles Histoires des pays d’en haut”.

As was mentioned, she was a young girl at the time, barely 17 years old, and no one could have guessed how successful that soap opera would become. For about 15 years, the character of Donalda was a national treasure.

However, this remarkable destiny also illustrates some of the stereotypes that can unfortunately apply to women. The Donalda character was completely submissive to her husband, a dreadful miser who cared only about his money and the power it gave him. The director selected Andrée Champagne because she had blond hair and light-coloured eyes. This gave her a softer image, perfect for the role of victim. That image of a sweet blonde fit her so well that she struggled to find other roles when the signature series ended, even though she dyed her hair red. The real Andrée Champagne was not a dominated or passive woman in the least.

• (1410)

She defied stereotypes by becoming a businesswoman and opening the first talent agency in Montreal. That is where she started to advocate for artists by putting an end to the era’s dubious practice of producers taking a cut of the artists’ modest earnings.

Her knack for business eventually led her to head the Union des artistes.

Then, in 1984, she entered politics alongside Brian Mulroney in hopes of amending the Copyright Act, which the prime minister did at the end of his mandate. In doing so, she was defying another of the Quebec arts community’s conventions. Ms. Champagne was a Conservative and a staunch federalist.

That’s why Ms. Champagne was so surprised when Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin offered her a seat in the Senate in 2005. She sat as a Conservative, of course, but, as she noted, she would also try to inject a progressive element back into the party.

That wasn’t the end of her troubles. On a diplomatic tour, she contracted a very serious illness and nearly died. During her recovery, she wrote a book on this ordeal entitled *Je reviens de loin...* Her key message in that book resonates as we go through this pandemic.

Today and every day that you spend on this Earth, take the time to share all the love in your heart.

I will leave you with the words Ms. Champagne used to sum up her life:

A girl who worked hard, pushed boundaries, went for it and loved a lot.

Thank you.

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Honourable senators, I, too, would like to pay tribute to former senator Andrée Champagne.

Canada has lost a great lady, but it is not just Canada. Quebec, the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, which she represented for nine years in the House of Commons, Quebec’s arts community and Quebec’s television viewers are mourning this great lady who without question left her mark on history.

She was in public life for 64 years. That’s right, 64 years, because up until last autumn she was still involved in politics. I had the opportunity and privilege to be with her during her last public appearance, when she attended the nomination of the Conservative candidate during the last election campaign in her riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

The stature of this woman is easily ascertained by her many accomplishments.

In the arts, as my colleagues mentioned, she became one of the great stars of Canadian television with a single role, that of Donalda, in the series “Les Belles Histoires des pays d’en haut”. She played this role for 14 years, from 1956 to 1970. The television series was so successful that it was broadcast and rebroadcast for more than 50 years on Radio-Canada.

Imagine. The show was broadcast for 50 years. She had time to become the vice-president of the Union des artistes, then an MP, and finally a senator. Throughout this time, the character of Donalda remained on television. No other Canadian artist can be attributed such a performance.

I now want to talk about Ms. Champagne's achievements beyond her career as a performer.

Although men were the ones calling the shots on television at the time, she launched a casting agency in the early 1970s to help young actors get roles and decided to get involved with the Union des artistes, of which she was an active member until she got into politics. Artists in Quebec have her to thank for Le Chez-Nous des Artistes, a retirement home for artists.

Her political career came next. She was looking to reform the Copyright Act, so former senator Jean Bazinqui invited her to join Brian Mulroney's team in the 1984 election.

She was elected as member of Parliament for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, and Mr. Mulroney then appointed her minister of state for youth. She went on to serve as deputy speaker of the House of Commons and interim chair. She was the first woman to hold that position.

In 2004, she attempted to win back her riding of Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot. When she was unsuccessful, prime minister Paul Martin appointed her to the Senate, where she became the chamber's first senator from Saint-Hyacinthe.

Senator Champagne never stopped fighting in this place. Among the topics close to her heart were the French language and minority rights. Her dedication was the reason she was chosen to be president of the Assemblée des parlementaires de la Francophonie.

Ms. Champagne was a fighter. She was also a performer. I want to thank Ms. Champagne for everything she did for the French language and for minorities. I especially want to thank her for gracing us with such wonderful television moments over the years.

[English]

Hon. Jim Munson: Honourable senators, since I only have about a year to go here, I've been thinking about a lot of senators I've worked with over the last years, including Mike Forrestall, Sharon Carstairs, Norman Atkins and, of course, Andrée Champagne.

[Translation]

I had the pleasure of working with Senator Andrée Champagne in committee. It was a rewarding collaborative experience. She was always a lively and curious ray of sunshine. It was a joy to work with her.

Senator Champagne passed away on June 6. Many of you may not be aware of her fascinating career. She was a renowned actress in Quebec and French-speaking Canada. For 15 years, she played Donalda on the television series "Les Belles Histoires des pays d'en haut". She was a popular star. She was also a singer,

host and business woman who worked to advance the cause of artists and to improve their living conditions. A staunch federalist, she got involved in politics in 1984 and became the member of Parliament for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot in the Mulroney government and then a member of his cabinet. After the Conservative government was defeated in 1993, she returned to acting on the small and big screens.

In 2005, Prime Minister Paul Martin invited her to sit in the Senate, where she was very involved in files concerning linguistic minorities and the Francophonie. She was also elected president of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie in 2013. She retired from the Senate on June 17, 2014, and received the Order of Canada in 2017.

I want to extend my condolences to her family. I was privileged to have the opportunity to work with her.

[English]

I am also sure that Andrée is having a little smile and chuckle at my beautiful speaking of the French language. Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable senators, people in French Canada and Acadia know Andrée Champagne as an artist, first and foremost. Originally from Saint-Hyacinthe, she captured the imagination of generations of francophones in her starring role as Donalda in a popular Radio-Canada television series called "Les Belles Histoires des pays d'en haut". She took on the legendary role at the age of 17, and it has been a part of her ever since, so much so that we came to believe the actor was the character, a submissive woman and a victim of fate.

[English]

At that time, families would gather in front of their television screens to be moved by the sad and wretched life of this woman who could not live out her love story with her handsome Alexis and who, to save her father from bankruptcy, agreed to marry a man consumed by greed. Many of us, women in particular, were dismayed by the inability of this citizen from Sainte-Adèle to escape her fate and live life to the fullest.

• (1420)

In this case, this illustrates how much fiction can diverge from reality. When she entered politics in 1984, those who knew Andrée Champagne only from the small screen discovered that she was a strong and determined woman who seized life by the horns to become a seasoned Quebec and Canadian politician, unafraid of standing up for her beliefs and taking her place as a citizen.

[Translation]

Unlike many of you, I did not have the privilege of knowing Ms. Champagne while she was a senator. However, as an Acadian, I clearly remember her dedication to defending the rights of Canada's linguistic minorities. Although she herself was not from a minority community, she demonstrated tremendous sensitivity to linguistic minorities in her role as deputy chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, which she

was a member of for several years. Over the course of her many appointments, important studies were undertaken, especially on the subject of francophone arts and culture in minority communities and CBC/Radio-Canada's linguistic obligations. Now that we are in urgent need of a more modern act, her powerful intervention and dedication are just as relevant and inspiring today as they were then.

That being said, perhaps Ms. Champagne's most meaningful legacy was the creation of the Chez-nous des artistes, a residence for artists over 50, many of whom are financially insecure.

[English]

At a time when many elderly people are living in unacceptable precarity, when the living conditions of artists are increasingly unpredictable and when the recent victory of francophone parents in B.C. for French-language schools sadly brings to light the many challenges still faced by linguistic minorities in Canada, Ms. Andrée Champagne's contribution to our country resonates strongly and will continue to inspire us for many years to come.

[Translation]

Thank you, Andrée Champagne.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I would ask you to rise for a moment of silence in memory of our late colleague.

(Honourable senators then stood in silent tribute.)

[English]

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize World Refugee Day. I rise every year to acknowledge this important day, and I will continue to do so until I retire from the Senate. I do so because the situation for refugees, always dire, is more so today because of the advent of the COVID crisis. As we know, the virus knows and recognizes no boundaries. It moves easily from place to place, from person to person, from country to country and from traveller to traveller.

Even as it has devastated the lives of so many in Canada and brought our society to a standstill, I want us to imagine for a minute what it has done to the already precarious lives of the 70 million forcibly displaced people in the world. We have been asked to shelter in place, but what happens if you don't have a place and you don't have a shelter?

The unsafe, unsanitary, crowded conditions in many camps around the world, such as in Cox's Bazar, make them a fertile ground for the spread of the virus. The density of the living arrangements makes it impossible to quarantine or to maintain any kind of social distancing. The primary victims are, sadly, women and children, since they constitute half of the population of the displaced.

Disease now further complicates an already precarious life for those who are fleeing from armed conflict; violence; persecution; and human rights abuses, including torture, sexual assault and exploitation. As borders have been shut down, their choices for safety have been cut off. Globally, as of the end of May, 161 countries had fully or partially closed their borders, and 99 of them were making no exception for people seeking asylum.

Our own country is among them. We have closed our borders to all asylum seekers, outside of a very few, and many will want to keep these borders closed or tightened. I believe that we can be both safe and be compassionate. I also want to have hope, and I see points of light.

Asylum seekers in Quebec have stepped up and provided much-needed care for parents and senior citizens in long-term care homes. Across the country, it is asylum seekers who, alongside others, are working in meat packing plants, warehouses and grocery stores. Day in and day out, they risk their own lives in order to keep us safe. I believe we owe them our appreciation, either by moving them towards naturalization or by taking other steps to make them stable.

We also need to hear from authentic refugee voices. It is not enough to do for them; it is important to do with them.

[Translation]

CHANTEL MOORE

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Honourable colleagues, for those of you who haven't already done so, I invite you to read the statement issued by the Parliamentary Black Caucus. I wholeheartedly support it, and I hope other senators will do the same.

I would now like to read a statement on that subject on behalf of Senator Dyck. I have translated certain parts of her remarks.

[English]

On June 4, in Edmundston, New Brunswick, Chantel Moore, a petite young First Nations woman, was shot and killed by a police officer in the course of a wellness check.

Deepest condolences to her mother, Martha Martin, who said:

Instead of planning a celebration of accomplishments, I've had to go and plan a funeral for my daughter. It's a pain I'd never wish to inflict on any person. . . . We want justice to make sure this never happens to another Indigenous woman or any person.

[Translation]

Sadly, Chantel Moore is now one of the 1,200 Indigenous women and girls who have gone missing or been murdered over the past 30 years. The rise in violence against Indigenous women and girls was first documented by Amnesty International in 2004, then by the Native Women's Association of Canada in 2005 in a report entitled *Sisters in Spirit*. After a decade of denials, the RCMP finally

published a report in 2014 acknowledging that the number of missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls was much higher than previously reported.

A decade of pressure from families, the public and parliamentarians led to a national inquiry, which documented the increased violence against Indigenous women and resulted in 231 calls for justice, issued in a report on June 3, 2019.

Exactly one year later, Chantel Moore was killed by a police officer in seemingly unjustified circumstances. In the interim, the government failed to bring forward an action plan in response to the NIMMIWG report.

[English]

To make matters even worse, the RCMP Commissioner, Brenda Lucki, who promised to “examine the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, and prevent and eliminate further violence,” contradicted herself last week on the existence of systemic racism in the RCMP. This is unacceptable.

Senator Dyck concludes:

How many more Indigenous women and girls have to be killed before the federal government and the RCMP recognize and understand that individual racism and/or indifference and institutional systemic racism are root causes of the violence enacted against Indigenous women and girls?

[Translation]

FRENCH EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Hon. René Cormier: Colleagues, in its historic ruling of June 12, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, the Fédération des parents francophones of that province and the co-appellant parents in an important case concerning funding for French-language education in Canada.

• (1430)

For 10 years, these organizations and individuals have claimed that French schools in that province have been underfunded relative to English schools, which constitutes an infringement of section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the section on the minority language of instruction.

The highest court in the land agreed with them and affirmed that British Columbia has a constitutional duty to provide equivalent education in both official languages.

[English]

Today, I want to pay tribute to the francophone parents from that province who argued with such resolve that their children should have the same rights as the majority.

[Senator Dalphond]

Colleagues, whereas Canada prides itself on having a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, an Official Languages Act and a Human Rights Act, how can there still be such disparity between our educational systems? Troubling examples of inequities were brought to light during this legal saga: francophone children enduring bus trips that were twice as long, schools without libraries or gyms, or gyms so poorly heated that the children would exercise in their jackets.

[Translation]

For 10 years, some Canadian children did not have access to education equivalent to that provided to the majority. For 10 years, in addition to dealing with the challenges of parenthood, men and women had to devote time, energy and resources to simply gain recognition for fundamental rights in our country.

Today, we thank them. Thanks to their determination and commitment, these parents are giving their children, minority language communities and all Canadians a priceless gift because all provinces and territories are expected to respect section 23 of the Charter.

[English]

During this pandemic, we have come to realize, more than ever, how much we need well-educated and well-trained citizens to face the challenges of the future. For this to happen we must ensure substantive equality of educational opportunity for all.

[Translation]

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Let us ensure that in future our country lives up to that declaration.

Thank you.

[English]

ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, the enactment of Bill C-81, the Accessible Canada Act on June 21, 2019, almost one year ago, marked a historic moment for Canada, as this was Canada's first national accessibility law.

For decades, Canadians living with disabilities have voiced the need for federal legislation to address the unique challenges that they face in their daily lives. The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, which studied the bill extensively, heard from a broad range of advocacy groups and umbrella organizations, all who echoed a similar message: It was time for Canada to prioritize accessibility efforts.

The purpose of the Accessible Canada Act is to not only identify and remove, but also prevent barriers to accessibility that hinder persons with disabilities from achieving their full and equal participation in society. Federally regulated entities such as Parliament, telecommunications and transportation are obligated to prepare and implement accessibility plans to ensure the creation of a barrier-free Canada by January 1, 2040 — a

timeline that originates from an amendment introduced by the Social Affairs, Science and Technology Committee. This legislation also designated May 31 through June 6 as National Accessibility Week. At the beginning of this month, Canadians from all walks of life were able to celebrate National Accessibility Week for the first time, albeit virtually.

Despite moving towards a positive direction, Canadians with disabilities continue to face a growing number of barriers in their daily lives. In fact, persons with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated the obstacles they experience.

A survey released by the Canadian Council of the Blind on May 6, 2020, on the impacts of COVID-19, identified the challenges confronting the vision loss community. Survey respondents reported feeling stressed about their inability to access a doctor or health care practitioner and to meet their financial obligations. Many were worried about the added stress from the pandemic on their mental health.

Honourable colleagues, the concerns and insights of Canadians living with disabilities should not be left unheard. We must remember the objective of the Accessible Canada Act, which is to ensure that Canadians living with disabilities can enjoy a society free from barriers to inclusion. In light of this monumental anniversary, let us reaffirm our commitment to creating an environment that allows Canadians with disabilities to maintain their health, safety and most importantly dignity. Thank you.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TAXPAYERS' OMBUDSMAN

2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT TABLED

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Annual Report 2019-20 of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman, entitled *Transformation through Disruption*.

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie: Honourable colleagues, you received an email with a statement by the Parliamentary Black Caucus. This document presents a substantive action plan divided into five sections. You all received it more than 24 hours ago.

Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 14-1(3), I ask for leave to table, in both official languages, this statement against discrimination and systemic racism in Canada presented by the Parliamentary Black Caucus.

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

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: Leave is not granted.

[English]

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO RESOLVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO CONSIDER THE 2020-21 MAIN ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A)

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, notwithstanding any provisions of the Rules or usual practice:

1. the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole at the start of Orders of the Day on Monday, June 22, 2020, to consider the expenditures set out in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, and in the Supplementary Estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021;
2. the Committee of the Whole receive the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P., President of the Treasury Board, accompanied by one official;
3. the Committee of the Whole rise no later than 125 minutes after it begins;
4. the witnesses' introductory remarks last a maximum total of five minutes; and
5. if a senator does not use the entire period of 10 minutes for debate provided under rule 12-32(3)(d), including the responses of the witnesses, that senator may yield the balance of time to another senator.

[Translation]

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 Monday, June 22, 2020, at 6 p.m.;

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, if a vote is deferred to that day, the bells for the vote ring at the start of Orders of the Day, for 15 minutes, with the vote to be held thereafter; and

That rule 3-3(1) be suspended on that day.

• (1440)

[English]

BILL TO AMEND THE CANADA ELECTIONS ACT AND THE REGULATION ADAPTING THE CANADA ELECTIONS ACT FOR THE PURPOSES OF A REFERENDUM (VOTING AGE)

FIRST READING

Hon. Marilou McPhedran introduced Bill S-219, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Regulation Adapting the Canada Elections Act for the Purposes of a Referendum (voting age).

(Bill read first time.)

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

(On motion of Senator McPhedran, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

QUESTION PERIOD

THE SENATE

DIVESTMENT OBLIGATIONS

Hon. Denise Batters: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Senator Gold, Prime Minister Trudeau appointed you as his Senate government leader in January. The media reported in March that you had not yet

complied with your financial disclosure and divestment obligations under the Conflict of Interest Act. It is now five months since you became Senate government leader, and the Ethics Commissioner's website states your compliance process is still incomplete. Where is this at?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you so much for the question. I have been in regular contact with the Ethics Commissioner and his office. I am in the process of complying with all that I'm required to do, which includes putting my assets in a blind trust and resigning from the relevant corporate directorships which I have held. All the paperwork is in place except for the final version of the blind trust. I was assured by the commissioner's office that I'm in compliance in terms of the process. Please rest assured I will be in full compliance as soon as they receive the paperwork.

Senator Batters: Senator Gold, during the past five months, you have been the Senate government leader for the Trudeau government. Have you recused yourself from any debates, discussions, decisions or votes in this Senate chamber, at any Senate committee, at cabinet meetings or in any negotiations regarding legislation with other Senate leaders?

Senator Gold: I have not.

[Translation]

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LAND

LAND DECONTAMINATION ORDER

Hon. Claude Carignan: At the end of the day, being the Leader of the Government in the Senate doesn't pay much. Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Today I want to talk to you about a very big problem with the dry-waste management site operated by G&R Recyclage, on land belonging to the federal government in Oka, on the territory administered by the Kanesatake band council. The band council allowed this company to use this land and the company was given permission to operate a dry materials sorting centre by Quebec's Ministry of Sustainable Development in 2015.

However, in the time that this company has been operating on federal government land, it has had a number of violations, including burying unauthorized materials such as asphalt shingles, gypsum, wood, plastic, metal, glass, cardboard and mattresses. Furthermore, some have noted a resurgence of smelly black water flowing into the surrounding area. Samples of the water tested above a number of standards and criteria, which means that it could be harmful to humans and to the environment.

The company has received a number of notices of violation, and Quebec's Ministry of the Environment recently ordered the company to correct these numerous violations.

My question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate is as follows: Elected municipal officials in Oka, Saint-Placide and Mirabel asked the federal government in March to ensure the restoration of the land occupied by G&R Recyclage in order to protect the health and well-being of residents and neighbouring

communities and prevent an environmental disaster. What has the federal government done to date to respond to this very legitimate request from the municipalities?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for that question and for informing me of that situation. I must admit that I was not aware of it. I will do some research and get back to you with an answer as soon as possible.

[English]

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

Hon. Gwen Boniface: Honourable senators, my question is to the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, I'm asking this question on behalf of Senator Boyer.

As you are aware, Jordan's Principle is a child-first and needs-based principle used in Canada to ensure that First Nations children living on and off reserve have equitable access to all government-funded public services. The government of first contact pays for the service and resolves jurisdictional payment disputes later. When a request is submitted to Jordan's Principle, Indigenous Services Canada considers the needs and circumstances of First Nations children, which could be cultural, social or economic.

According to the Indigenous Services Canada website, Canada's obligation under Jordan's Principle is to ensure substantive equality in the provision of services to the child, to ensure culturally appropriate services and to safeguard the best interests of the child. This requires Canada to provide all First Nations children on and off reserve with publicly funded benefits, supports, programs, goods and services in a manner and according to a standard that meets their particular needs and circumstances on a substantively equal basis with non-First Nations children.

Senator Boyer has taken interest in the case of a 7-year-old First Nations girl who did not consent to the genital exam that the emergency room doctor performed on her. The girl's parents believe that racial profiling was a factor in the doctor's decision to conduct this exam. She suffered and has continued to suffer health and other negative impacts from this experience.

The family lodged a complaint. The College of Physicians and Surgeons has now sought review of the college's decisions. The family has also brought a human rights complaint.

My question, on behalf of Senator Boyer, is this: Is it the Crown's view that there are some health-related costs for First Nations children that Jordan's Principle cannot or should not cover, and why?

How does the denial of the request align with the reasonable assessment of the child's best interests, right to equality and access to public service and the promotion of her substantive equality as a First Nations child?

Is it the Crown's view that it is acceptable for low-income First Nations children to have no meaningful or practical recourse when they experience racial discrimination while seeking health care, including when that discrimination has ongoing negative impacts on their health and access to services? If it's not the Crown's view, how does the Crown propose that this family can seek accountability and remedy what she experienced without legal funding?

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, irrespective of the importance of questions that are asked, and many of them are very important and often very sensitive, we do have a list of senators who want to ask questions. That list is decided before we come into the chamber. When you're asking a question — I have asked this before and I will ask it again — limit it to one question at a time, not 5 or 10 within the same statement.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. I also want to thank Senator Boyer who reached out to my office in advance to advise me that the question was coming. I have been advised that the Government of Canada is and remains committed to ensuring that no First Nations child faces barriers due to discrimination in receiving the support or service that he or she needs. The government continues to work with its partners to advance the well-being of Indigenous children. I have made inquiries about these questions, but unfortunately do not yet have the response. I will report back to this chamber as soon as I do receive the response.

[Translation]

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

CORRUPTION OF BORDER SERVICES PERSONNEL

Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. A confidential briefing note obtained by the CBC shows that Canada's security services informed the Minister of Public Safety, Bill Blair, that organized crime is corrupting Canada Border Services Agency officers, mostly so it can smuggle drugs and weapons into the country.

• (1450)

You can see that this is extremely serious, particularly since we know that the most recent decisions on gun control that were announced by Minister Blair do nothing to address weapons that are in the hands of organized crime. Furthermore, I have to say that, if the Prime Minister had taken the information from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service seriously, perhaps the lives of the 8,200 people who died as a result of COVID-19 could have been saved. Leader, can you tell us whether the information related to the possible corruption of border officers was taken seriously and what measures were taken by Minister Blair?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I can assure you that the government takes all allegations of corruption or inequality in relation to the institutions under its jurisdiction very seriously, and Minister Blair and the government will continue their efforts diligently.

Senator Dagenais: As I'm sure you're aware, leader, the vast majority of our border officers do a magnificent job. Since CSIS first informed Minister Blair, do we know how many people are working on monitoring our borders and how many people have been investigated for potential links to organized crime?

Senator Gold: Thank you for the question. I don't have those figures before me, but I will make inquiries.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT

Hon. Jim Munson: Honourable senators, we were in a state of euphoria last year — and I was struck by Senator Seidman's statement today on accessibility — when, if you remember, we had unanimous consent for the Accessible Canada Act. There was a lot of talk about it, front and centre. It was part of being very proactive on “Nothing about us without us.”

I'm a little astounded today as we listen to the government's approach to disability. On June 5, they announced a one-time payment of \$600 to Canadians with disabilities.

Think about this, Senator Gold. Under the disability tax credit right now, there are a number of disability groups that do not receive any tax breaks. That includes autism and the diabetes community; they are still fighting for it. They came before the Social Affairs Committee to fight for it and still haven't received anything there.

So we have the \$600. I have no idea where that number came from. It arrived 14 weeks after the CERB program was announced. There are differences in the House right now; it hasn't come to us because they are still fighting over it. The disability community is still waiting for it. Why has it taken 14 weeks to roll this out?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. I'm advised the government still remains and is committed to helping persons with disabilities maintain their health, their safety and their dignity as it is challenged even more so during these difficult times.

All senators know that the bill that includes this provision — not only for this one-time grant to persons with disabilities, but also to form mechanisms so that information can be shared properly between agencies to make the provisions as targeted and inclusive as possible — has not yet seen the light of day due to negotiations in the other place. That said, the government will continue to use all of its best efforts to support persons with disabilities, including seeking ways to provide that additional funding through alternative mechanisms. It's also worth pointing

out, senator, that many of the programs this government has put into place to help Canadians through these difficult times are available to — and have been taken advantage of by — persons with disabilities, whether it is seniors, students or the general population.

Senator Munson: I'm hearing from the disability community, Senator Gold, that this is too little too late. COVID-19 has really ravaged the disability community. We don't even have the stats. Whether they are disabilities in nursing homes, disabilities at home, it is a very serious issue. I somehow feel that the disability community is not being treated in the same sense as others in this country. I really believe it's a shame, from my point of view.

Do you have any idea, Senator Gold, who came up with the \$600? Why not \$700 or \$1,000 or \$500? How does somebody get to that figure, in terms of dealing with somebody with a disability?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. I do not know why that number, as opposed to a higher or lower number, was chosen. These are complicated calculations that are always made in the context of all the programs that are in place from which people might benefit.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

HUAWEI—5G TECHNOLOGY

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader. Senator Gold, the Trudeau government continues to drag its feet on making a decision on allowing Huawei to be part of Canada's 5G network. To everyone else, this decision appears to be very clear, and we don't understand why it is taking so long to come out and do the right thing and ban Huawei.

A story yesterday in *The Globe and Mail* may be shedding some light on at least part of the holdup: Huawei is already part of our system. Your government has known it, knows it and had been sitting on that knowledge for a while. Senator Gold, when did your government know about Telus's use of Huawei equipment in their 4G network and why did the government hide that information from Canadians?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, but the premise of your question is incorrect. To the best of my knowledge, the presence of Huawei in a 4G network in and around the Ottawa area, if my memory serves me correctly, is a matter of public record. So it is not the case that the government is hiding anything from Canadians. That is without question.

This government understands the importance of protecting Canada's telecommunications systems. It is regularly engaged with the companies that provide telecommunications services on a variety of topics. It takes advice from its security experts — that's also a matter of public record — and it will continue to do so as it grapples with the decision to which you referred.

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, it's a matter of public record because the media have reported it. The government did not make it public. Steven Chase at *The Globe and Mail* makes it quite clear that your government knows that Telus is not only using Huawei equipment but is doing so right here in Ottawa, as you rightfully point out, in 83 locations and in sensitive government locations and sites, for that matter. Huawei is nothing more than an arm of the Communist Chinese regime with no purpose other than to conduct espionage, and your government has opened the door and has invited them to the table, Senator Gold. Why won't your government do the right thing and ban Huawei altogether from our 4G and 5G networks and get them out of our communications system?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question and for your ongoing persistence on issues surrounding around our relationship with China. I suppose it behooves me to remind this chamber yet again how complicated our relationship with China is, whether it's with regard to our agricultural sector that has suffered significant hardship as a result of some actions that were taken on canola but, most importantly, with regard to the Canadians unfairly detained in China and others who are subjected to horrible penal consequences.

This government remains committed to ensuring our telecommunications networks and systems are safe and secure, and will take all necessary steps to ensure that remains the case.

HEALTH

TESTING FOR COVID-19

Hon. Judith G. Seidman: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. It follows up on questions I asked last month concerning COVID-19 testing. As of June 16, 2.2 million Canadians have been tested, but our country should be much further ahead than we are in terms of strategic diagnostic testing, especially in high-risk regions and workplaces. Reliable, rapid tests that are easy to administer are crucial in this regard. In addition to a testing strategy for high-risk regions and places of work, we also need a strategy surrounding contact tracing and supportive isolation.

Leader, I remain concerned that we don't have these elements in place now as our economy is reopening and in advance of a second wave. Are there plans for Health Canada or the Public Health Agency to take leadership of an overarching national strategy for testing and tracing? If so, is there a timeline associated with its implementation?

• (1500)

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. It's a very good question. As I tried to respond last time, I share your concerns and we all understand the importance of testing and contact tracing if we are to manage these next chapters in this saga effectively.

Testing remains an important tool, even as we see the curve somewhat flattening, as we have. Notably, it's my understanding that the Government of Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada have been working with their counterparts in the

provinces and territories to develop guidelines for a national approach to testing in Canada. It's challenging in a federal system because many of the provinces — and even within provinces — are experiencing the crisis differently. In our city of Montreal, especially neighbourhoods in Montreal, it's different from most of Prince Edward Island and many other places.

I want to assure this chamber, though, that the government remains seized with its importance. It's frustrating that we can't do it faster and better, but the government is working diligently on this important issue.

Senator Seidman: Thank you for your response.

Health Canada currently has a backlog of 37 applications for testing devices awaiting approval, about a third of which are point-of-care, on-the-spot tests. We know that an application for at least one other rapid test has not been considered yet by Health Canada, despite it having received emergency approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and in Europe.

Leader, how does Health Canada prioritize the applications awaiting approval? Has there been any thought given to focusing on the approval of point-of-care tests?

Senator Gold: Thank you again for the question. I'm really not in a position to answer those specific questions. I will certainly make inquiries and endeavour to report back as quickly as possible.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

SYSTEMIC RACISM

Hon. Frances Lankin: My question is to the Government Representative and I ask this on behalf of Senator Jaffer, who is unable to be here due to COVID restrictions.

Senator Gold, the question is with respect to systemic discrimination in the federal government. I want to read you a definition of systemic discrimination: "A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity."

I looked at many sources for these definitions. Whether it was from human rights commissions or civil liberties groups, they're all very similar and they certainly convey the same understanding.

Senator, despite statements by very senior leaders in the federal public service of late, which have indicated a lack of understanding of systemic racism, we assume there is an official definition of systemic racism in use and that has been implemented by the Government of Canada. Specifically, the question from Senator Jaffer is: What has the government done to socialize such an understanding and to ensure that public service leadership addresses these issues, which are the scourge of systemic racism within our federal institutions?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you very much for that important question. As your question implies, the definition is a very important matter in these discussions because the definition may either include or exclude certain elements that need to be addressed.

Now, I've been advised that along with Canada's anti-racism strategy, which was launched in 2019, the government adopted the definition of systemic racism used by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. I will read it into the record. It's as follows:

Systemic or institutional racism consists of patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for racialized persons. These appear neutral on the surface but, nevertheless, have an exclusionary impact on racialized persons.

With regard to your second question, I note that the anti-racism strategy was also accompanied by a \$45-million infusion of funds and a new anti-racism secretariat within the Department of Heritage Canada, which is intended to lead a whole-of-government approach to addressing racism and discrimination. It builds upon other works of the government, such as the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion in the Public Service, which was created in September 2016, and so on.

I have been assured that the government is committed to continuing to build a diverse public service that reflects the Canadian population and serves as a model of inclusion. And I should add that this government has made significant progress in increasing the numbers of visible minorities within the public service.

Senator Lankin: Thank you, representative. Senator Gold, I think all of us were shocked to hear senior federal public service leaders being unable to discuss systemic discrimination, and, in fact, expressing that they have a lack of understanding. They don't really understand it.

While I have no doubt that there has been a commitment made, and I have no doubt there's progress — we all see there has been some progress — there is so much more to do. If our federal public service leadership can't, in fact, articulate what it is they're in charge of trying to eradicate within the public service, we've got a long way to go. I think people would acknowledge that.

Given the context of what we're living with right now, what will the government do on an urgent basis to start to move, through all levels of the public service, a systematic approach to eradicating racism and the painful expression of what it now seems our fellow Canadians are living through and experiencing daily?

Senator Gold: Thank you again for the question. I cannot pretend to list what the government is intending to do, as you've described, save to repeat that it is committed to doing more. The government knows more needs to be done. The government is, as we say in French, *à l'écoute*, whether it's statements and

representations from the Parliamentary Black Caucus or others. There is much to work with and the government is committed to doing what it can.

[Translation]

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. As a result of the pandemic, there is an increased risk of modern slavery, especially in the global manufacturing sector as it responds to the huge demand for masks and other PPE. Here are two examples: In South Africa, workers were literally locked inside a mask factory for several days, and in Malaysia, there have been reports of dormitories and busloads of migrants working on assembly lines for 12 hours a day without social distancing. Are we complicit in such human rights violations? When the Canadian government purchases tonnes of equipment as a matter of urgency, does Public Services and Procurement Canada check with suppliers to ensure that we aren't supporting the use of forced labour and child labour?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank the honourable senator for her question. I also thank you for the work you are doing with the All Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. I have been told that, as part of the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, which was launched in 2019, the government is taking steps to improve Canada's supply chains to ensure they do not involve activities related to human trafficking and exploitive labour.

With respect to procurement, I have been told that, number one, Public Services and Procurement Canada gathers available information in order to analyze the risk of forced labour, including child labour, in the department's supply chain. Number two, Canada's new agreement with the United States and Mexico prohibits the importation of goods produced using forced labour, which includes forced child labour.

Esteemed colleagues, modern slavery is a terrible problem that the government takes very seriously, and we will keep working to resolve it.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: If I understand correctly, the government is still looking at this issue and looking for ways to handle it. You and I both know that there was a parliamentary committee and that this has been an issue for quite some time. Countries such as Australia have already passed legislation to ensure that the public service can buy products that are free of forced labour. Are we behind the times compared to what is happening elsewhere?

• (1510)

Senator Gold: Like the government, we will ensure that measures implemented via legislation or otherwise are effective and address the serious problem you raised.

[English]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

THE SENATE

CARBON TAXES FOR FARMERS

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader. It concerns the Trudeau government's decision not to compensate grain farmers for their increased costs due to the carbon tax.

Keystone Agricultural Producers said Manitoba farmers paid about \$1.7 million in carbon tax just for the cost of drying their corn crop in 2019. Minister Bibeau thinks this is "a very small percentage in the operating costs." What is even more incredible is her department dismissed Keystone's figures and came up with their own flawed estimate.

Leader, I never want to hear this government claim that it makes policies based on evidence. The minister asked for evidence, received it and then chose to discount it. The minister's figures are completely out of touch with the carbon taxes already paid by grain farmers.

Will your government accept its numbers are wrong, listen to these farmers and provide them with the compensation that they deserve?

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

The government does listen to farmers. The government is well aware of the hardship that the agricultural sector generally, and indeed all sectors, are suffering because of this crisis and for other reasons as well.

The government continues and is committed to making decisions that are informed by evidence. It may not always agree with the submissions, but that doesn't mean that it disregards them. The fact is, the government has continued to invest in various supports for Canadian farmers, for producers and for exporters. This includes the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a \$3-billion federal-provincial-territorial agreement for strengthening the sector with funding for all kinds of measures; the \$1.26-billion Strategic Innovation Fund; the \$2 billion for rural infrastructure and so on.

MOTION TO FILL ANY VACANCY IN THE POSITION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE BY SECRET BALLOT FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CURRENT SESSION AND TO DISCHARGE THE FIRST REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF SELECTION FROM THE ORDER PAPER—DEBATE

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond, pursuant to notice of June 16, 2020, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practice:

1. for the remainder of the session, any vacancy in the position of Speaker pro tempore be filled by means of a secret ballot, using a process to be established by the Speaker after consulting with the Leader of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, and the leader or facilitator of any other recognized party or recognized parliamentary group; and
2. the first report of the Committee of Selection, if not disposed of before the adoption of this order, be discharged from the Order Paper.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise to ask for your support for this motion to elect the Speaker pro tempore of the Senate — that is, our deputy speaker — by a fair process that includes the participation of all senators. Specifically, this motion would authorize the Speaker to design and carry out a process for the election of the Speaker pro tempore by secret ballot following consultation with the leadership of all groups.

I would first like to acknowledge that our country is currently facing many challenges. The pandemic has caused personal and economic turmoil in households across the nation and has shown the inequalities of our health system. Recent events have also brought to the forefront issues relating to systemic racism, which demand important changes in our institutions and programs. While we must give these matters all due consideration and attention, we should not sideline discussions around genuine reform of the Senate. Reforming our institution, including the Senate, is part of the post-COVID steps that must be achieved. The motion I am proposing will be a step forward towards reform of the Senate.

Establishing a process for the election of the Speaker pro tempore by secret ballot would afford all senators the fair and equal opportunity to be considered for the role. Such a process would also respect the independent judgment of all senators to express, by secret ballot, who among their colleagues should occupy this position of trust and service to all senators.

What I am proposing today is not new. For example, Senator Ringuette, a leader in attempts to reform the process for selecting both the Senate Speaker and Speaker pro tempore positions, moved a motion in March 2014 to consider developing a way to elect both our Speaker and Speaker pro tempore.

• (1520)

Senator Ringuette said:

We, as a chamber of sober second thought, are able to analyze legislation in great detail as to how it will affect Canadians, and we engage in the study of complex issues of concern to citizens. Why are we mute to fully reviewing our operations in response to citizens' discontent?

In 2016, the Special Senate Committee on Senate Modernization further developed Senator Ringuette's proposal. In its sixth report, the committee recommended:

That the Senate direct the Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament to develop a process within the Rules of the Senate by which senators may express their preference for a Speaker by nominating up to five senators as nominees for consideration by the Prime Minister to recommend to the Governor General for appointment, and

That this process takes place at the beginning of each Parliament.

And the committee further said:

That the Senate direct the Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament to recommend changes to the *Rules of the Senate* to permit the Speaker pro tempore to be elected by senators by secret ballot.

On November 2, 2016, Senator Tannas moved that the report be adopted. He said:

These more democratic approaches to the selection of the Speaker and the Speaker pro tempore make this an important set of recommendations.

I've been here for three and a half years, and we've seen a number of Speakers pro tempore, all who have been exceptional, including our current one, but I don't have a first hot clue how that job got assigned.

I think it would be better if it was transparent and clear and all those who wanted the job and were capable of the job stepped forward and were elected by senators.

This is still a very valid argument, and I certainly support it.

Unfortunately, during the remaining two and a half years of the Forty-second Parliament, this chamber did not have the opportunity to vote on this non-government committee report. But I still share the comments of Senator Ringuette, Senator Tannas, and all the other senators who were on the Modernization Committee, that we must make that improvement.

A position of trust and institutional confidence, such as Speaker pro tempore, should not be allocated through bargaining and secret mechanisms of selection internal to a specific group. All senators should have a fair opportunity for consideration and a fair say in the matter of who is going to direct our proceedings. My motion would achieve that result until formal amendments are made to the *Rules of the Senate*. In the meantime, adopting my motion will send a signal to Canadians that we are all committed to internal reforms to enhance public trust in the Senate and its work.

In support of this approach to choosing our Speaker pro tempore, I would like to say that in the House of Lords in the U.K., the Lord Speaker, who chairs proceedings, has been an elected position since 2006. Before then, as in Canada, the Prime Minister appointed the chair of proceedings for the House of Lords. This change was made through the Constitutional Reform Act 2005. You will remember that a bill to that effect has been proposed by my colleague Senator Mercer, and is now before the Senate for consideration — Bill S-205.

In Canada, the House of Commons selects its Speaker by secret ballot. The House of Commons selects its Deputy Speaker after the Speaker announces a candidate, following consultation with house leaderships.

Here in the Senate of Canada, our current Speaker continues to do a superb job during this period of institutional change and challenges. For sure he has been doing a tremendous amount of work, especially in the last few months, to try and accommodate our need to be here, but also the need to protect the health of not only ourselves, but our staff and the people working and helping us to achieve our important functions. We owe him our gratitude and trust for his devoted service.

However, I do see merit in the ideal of an elected Speaker eventually, if we have an amendment to our Parliament of Canada Act. I would also like us to look at an idea, promoted by Senator Ringuette and Senator Tannas, to elect our Deputy Speaker, and also to eventually consider the bill of my colleague Senator Mercer.

I refer again to Senator Mercer when he introduced his bill at second reading:

In all the provinces and territories in Canada, the Speakers are elected by the members of those legislatures. Of course, the House of Commons elects its Speaker. According to the research I had completed, the data contained information on the structure of 267 parliamentary chambers in all 191 countries where a national legislature exists. Of those, only the bicameral legislatures in Canada, Antigua and Barbuda, and Bahrain appoint their presiding officers.

So we seem to be a species that is disappearing. However, in selecting the Speaker of this institution, it is important to bear in mind constitutional considerations specific to the Canadian context.

This is not the case for the position of Speaker pro tempore. Only our Rules apply and only these Rules may be amended.

As we have seen on numerous occasions, it's easy to amend our Rules or to put them aside. When there's a will, there's a way to do it.

With the motion before us today, we have the opportunity right now to act in the spirit of true reform and move in a tangible way toward the ideal that Senator Mercer has described. If we adopt this motion, this new process will represent important progress in how we do business in this chamber — as senators who are equal in all respects.

By moving in this direction, we should adopt a process that brings more legitimacy to a position of trust. We could then look at formalizing this change in the *Rules of the Senate* at a later date, as with some other needed rule changes put in place through sessional orders, such as the minister's Question Period.

While I have you here, we may also consider changing the title to “deputy speaker” rather than “Speaker pro tempore.” I did my Latin, but I don't think many people are still doing it. It is no longer part of the curriculum at school. I'm not sure people understand when we refer to the position of “Speaker pro tempore.”

In closing, colleagues, let us show that we are truly committed to reforms. Today we have an opportunity to move away from the traditional bargaining process between groups for paid positions, and to put a process in place that is wanted by all those who sincerely believe in equality among all senators and the need for reform.

I have great trust in the ability of our current Speaker, assisted by the leaders of all the groups, to develop a fair process, in due course, in order to elect our Speaker pro tempore before we resume our normal duties sometime in September.

Thank you very much for your attention. *Meegwetch*.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Saint-Germain, do you have a question? Senator Omidvar, a question?

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Senator Dalphond, I agree with your proposal. I would love to hear more about it from my colleagues.

Not long ago you were a member of the independents, before you chose to move sideways to the Progressive Senate Group. I, for one, wish you all the best.

While you were a member of the ISG, you participated in a secret ballot election of the ISG's nomination of the Speaker pro tempore, to the Selection Committee. I wonder if you are basing your proposal in some small part on the positive experience of the election of the ISG nominee through the Selection Committee.

• (1530)

Senator Dalphond: Thank you, Senator Omidvar, for this question. As you know, I attended the last Selection Committee meeting on May 1. When the first report was introduced there in the absence of opposition parties — at least official opposition — it was to nominate a Speaker pro tempore. I said, and it's in the record, that I felt this position should be a position elected by all senators.

So, no, I don't agree with what was done. I think bargaining between groups to select who becomes the Speaker pro tempore, and for it to be part of a negotiation process, is no longer advisable for this place. I believe that trust belongs to all senators and not to a group.

As for the internal discussions we had at ISG; my recollection is that I never saw the results of the election. There was more than one candidate: There were three. We never heard who had how many votes. This was not a transparent process. This was clearly a process that was done without any result being communicated.

We never received the results of how many votes were for Senator Ringuette or the other two candidates. I also remember the process was changed about two times before we were called to vote, because it was a preferential system, changed for another system, and everything else.

We have to come to some rules which are transparent and provide accountability.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Dalphond, your time has expired. There are three senators who would like to ask a question. Are you asking for five more minutes to answer questions?

Senator Dalphond: Yes, Your Honour.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: I'm sorry, but leave is not granted.

[*Translation*]

MOTION IN AMENDMENT—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Senator Dalphond, you raise an important issue, and I want to acknowledge the humility you demonstrated in referring to the institutional memory of the Senate, and to Senator Ringuette's visionary text of March 2014 concerning the interventions of our Senate colleagues who are more experienced than we are. I am still a new senator. This is one of the few places where I can call myself a newbie, after three and a half years, and the fact that you arrived in the Senate after me also means I can consider you as a fellow newbie.

I think that, essentially, the principle of democratically electing a Speaker pro tempore in this institution is essential. Therefore, I fully subscribe to your proposal of a secret ballot. However, things must be done right. Your motion concerns a process that would be established by the Speaker, in consultation with the leaders and facilitators, to determine how this secret ballot would be conducted. I believe that your proposal fails to consider a fundamental constitutional right that this institution must uphold, namely the right concerning Canada's official languages.

Therefore, honourable senators, in amendment, I move:

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

1. by adding the following before the last paragraph:

“2. the senator elected to serve as Speaker pro tempore shall be required to possess the full and practical knowledge of the official language which is not that of the Speaker for the time being;” and

2. by renumbering the final paragraph as number 3.

[*English*]

The Hon. the Speaker: In amendment, it was moved by the Honourable Senator Saint-Germain, seconded by the Honourable Senator Moncion, that the motion be amended by: (a), adding the following before the last paragraph — may I dispense?

Hon. Senators: Dispense.

The Hon. the Speaker: 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.

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 “yeas” have it.

And two honourable senators having risen:

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

Senator Plett: Twenty-five minutes.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed, honourable senators, that the vote will take place at 4 p.m.?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Hon. Ratna Omidvar: Your Honour, before the question was called I wished to adjourn the debate. I missed that opportunity.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Omidvar wishes to adjourn the debate. I did not see her when she rose.

With leave of the house, we will go back to Senator Omidvar. Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Omidvar: I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Housakos: Is Senator Omidvar adjourning the amendment?

The Hon. the Speaker: Yes, debate on the amendment. Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: All honourable senators will know the amendment will have to be debated before we return to the main question.

(On motion of Senator Omidvar, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

MOTION TO RESOLVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO RECEIVE A MINISTER OR MINISTERS TO DISCUSS THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN COMBATTING RACISM—DEBATE

Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie, pursuant to notice of June 16, 2020, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or usual practice, at the start of the Orders of the Day on the sitting day following the adoption of this order, the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole in order to receive a minister or ministers of the Crown to discuss the role of the Government of Canada in combatting anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism, and ending systemic racism;

That the committee report to the Senate no later than 120 minutes after it begins;

That the provisions of rule 3-3(1) be suspended while the committee is meeting;

That the application of any provision of the Rules or previous order concerning the time of adjournment be suspended until the committee has completed its work; and

That the ringing of the bells for any deferred vote that would conflict with the committee be deferred until the committee has completed its work.

She said: Honourable senators, systemic racism exists here.

[English]

I would appreciate it if all honourable senators could wear their ear pieces. I need to be understood now more than ever. Thank you.

Black lives matter; Indigenous lives matter.

[Translation]

Please pay attention and listen to the interpretation, because as a black, francophone woman, I sometimes feel as though my voice, and the community's voice, is not being heard. How can we expect to be understood by the majority if we don't even make an effort to be systematically heard?

Today I'm calling on our Senate to resolve into a committee of the whole to study the urgent issue of systemic racism in Canada. This is a historic opportunity to address racism once and for all. I hope that no one here will stand in the way of our earning the respect of the people we are meant to serve.

Why is this urgent right now? People in the street are speaking out from coast to coast to coast, and various levels of government have already recognized, studied and received countless recommendations for ending systemic racism. A committee of the whole is just one of the many steps we absolutely must take to prevent tragic incidents like the deaths of George Floyd, Fredy Villanueva, Bony Jean-Pierre, André Benjamin, Régis Korchinski-Paquet and so many others from happening again. These brutal acts of racism came to light these past few years. They represent only a very thin slice of the racism that black Canadians experience in their daily lives. From daily micro-aggressions to the rarer, but tragically fatal, hate-filled acts we have seen in certain videos online, many white Canadians are becoming conscious of the systemic and insidious nature of racism in our country. Recent public demonstrations across Canada, as well as online campaigns, have illustrated a rapidly developing attempt to understand the causes and manifestations of this pernicious and widespread phenomenon. Canada needs to act immediately. We must turn our sympathy into action. If nothing is done in this country, we will continue to stand by helplessly as history repeats itself.

• (1540)

As the Honourable Claude Carignan said to the Honourable André Pratte, one of the aims of the Senate is to draw the public's attention to a point of view. I would add that, in this case, the public has drawn our attention to this topic. We must engage in an open and public dialogue.

The time has come to focus our energy on stamping out systemic racism. Every time we study a bill or conduct other studies in any committee, we must leave space to analyze the impact on racialized communities.

As Francine Pelletier noted in *Le Devoir* this morning:

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Mayor Valérie Plante, Montreal Police Chief Sylvain Caron, and even the Merriam-Webster dictionary all now recognize the systemic nature of racism. The death of George Floyd provided an opportunity to set the record straight.

Much like the Harvey Weinstein affair suddenly brought to light the scope of sexual assault, transforming it from a series of anecdotes into a large-scale social tragedy for women, a black man's agonizing death at the hands of a white police officer finally showed this issue for what it was: an abuse of power that is repeated over and over, as opposed to just a police mistake. It is disgraceful the way black people in the United States get stopped, arrested, beaten, jailed and finally killed. This is a well-documented fact. The same could be said for Indigenous peoples in this country. In the past three months, eight Indigenous people have been killed by Canadian police. That's no coincidence.

This may come as a shock, but unfortunately, we're still at the starting line, still wondering whether Canada has one consistent definition of systemic racism. I smiled as I read that article. It's time to get our act together and have all agencies and departments agree on one consistent definition. I hope to question the ministers to get information on the measures that have already been taken and to get a concrete plan with a timeline for putting an end to systemic racism.

That is a big undertaking. The statement of the Parliamentary Black Caucus, which I tried unsuccessfully to table in this chamber, proposes practical measures to mitigate the impact of systemic racism. In this document, the Parliamentary Black Caucus calls on all levels of government in Canada to: (1) measure the pervasiveness of systemic discrimination through the collection of race-based data; (2) assist black Canadians in providing economic prosperity to all through measures to support black-owned or -run businesses; (3) eliminate the barriers to access to justice and public security for black Canadians and Indigenous people; (4) make our public administration more effective and resilient by ensuring it actually reflects the diversity of the public it serves; and (5) recognize and support the artistic and economic contributions of black Canadian culture and heritage.

As you heard, we are calling for the collection of detailed statistical data to develop sound and informed policies affecting racialized communities.

We are also proposing economic tools that should help us critically examine the budgets presented and the government's spending. What's more, we address the reforms that are needed within the Department of Justice, the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Canadian Heritage so that we can work together to build new foundations for a more inclusive Canada.

Honourable colleagues, even the COVID-19 pandemic is opening our eyes to systemic racism. The death of Marcelin François, an asylum seeker in Canada, is a glaring example. Working in long-term care centres and seniors' homes in Montreal, taking care of our elders, cost him his life. This pandemic is having an even greater impact on racialized communities and temporary foreign workers because of the shortage of PPE and horrible living conditions they endure here, including overcrowded accommodations, a lack of water and food, and so on. Because of their misgivings about the system, these individuals are reluctant to speak out and seek care, for fear

of being deported. We therefore depend on a workforce made up of people from racialized communities who have limited protections, even when they're at the epicentre of the pandemic.

Some people say there is no urgent need to talk about racism. It's 2020. It's time to implement the recommendations proposed decades ago and dedicate adequate financial resources to do so effectively.

The reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic proves that governments can act quickly and ably in crisis. Black Canadians are in a state of crisis. It is time to act. Words and symbolic gestures, while important, are no longer enough. Black lives matter. Indigenous lives matter.

Lastly, I would remind you that this document has already been made public. Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 14-1(4), I ask for leave of the Senate to table the statement against discrimination and systemic racism in Canada issued by the Parliamentary Black Caucus. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Yes.

An Hon. Senator: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: I'm sorry, Senator, but I heard a "no." Leave is not granted.

[English]

Hon. Scott Tannas: I have a question for Senator Mégie, if she will take one.

Senator Mégie: With pleasure.

Senator Tannas: Thank you for your words. I want you to know that I support your motion; it's an important one. I want to participate in a Committee of the Whole, and I know many people here want to participate in a Committee of the Whole. I know there are many people who are not here, and can't be here, who want to participate in a Committee of the Whole.

What we would need technologically for Committee of the Whole is operating down the street in the House of Commons and has been for weeks, brought to you by the same people who serve us. If it were a matter of a few days for us, maybe next Tuesday — we are going to be here six days from now — and there were some way that we could magically have a Committee of the Whole, would you support waiting, and therefore support a friendly amendment that would incorporate the ability for us all to participate with appropriate technology?

[Translation]

Senator Mégie: Thank you, Senator Tannas. I really appreciate your proposal. I also appreciate your support for a Committee of the Whole. I think we could take our chances on Tuesday if we're sure there will be many more senators in the chamber, and we can use technology, like we have at other times when the Senate has met in Committee of the Whole right here. Thank you.

[Senator Mégie]

[English]

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): I also have a question for Senator Mégie, further to what Senator Tannas asked.

• (1550)

If, next Tuesday, we are still in the same situation we are in today, and we would need to present an amendment that would allow us to have the Committee of the Whole in the fall when we come back to ensure everybody right across Canada could participate and not just people from the Atlantic, Ontario and Quebec borders west — at least for the most part — would you agree that we might have an amendment that would allow us to come back in the fall and debate this when we could have 96 senators here?

[Translation]

Senator Mégie: Thank you, senator. You know that this is all because of COVID-19. Many committees have managed to work virtually, and I don't see why we should wait until the fall. In the fall, there won't be an emergency anymore. As you know, social media being what it is, it's all about tomorrow's news, not yesterday's. We can do it on Tuesday at the latest. However, I am sure we will be dealing with the same situation, and I think our fellow senators will understand that. Regardless of the situation or the subject of the vote, there will still be fewer of us. We are not denying them their privilege as senators, because we can always make arrangements, but I don't think we should put it off until the fall.

[English]

Hon. Frances Lankin: I appreciate the opportunity, if you will take a question. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Mégie's time has expired. I know there are at least two other senators who want to ask questions. Are you asking for five minutes, Senator Mégie?

[Translation]

Senator Mégie: Yes, please.

[English]

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Lankin: Let me say how much I appreciate the efforts you and other members of the Parliamentary Black Caucus have put into bringing these issues before us in a way in which we can, side by side with you, delve into and explore them. I would agree with you that the sense of urgency in the context we are in today calls for us to move now and not to leave this until the fall.

I also agree with Senator Tannas that it should be absolutely possible. I'm sure if there is a reason why it isn't, it would be really helpful for all of us to understand it. I know the Senate

administration has been working on this, and there should be an ability to have a virtual sitting of Committee of the Whole to allow all senators to participate.

I wanted to ask you about the end of your comments. You asked for leave to table a document. I understand from what you've said that this document is the letter that was sent to the government from members of the Parliamentary Black Caucus, which consists of both MPs and senators, and that there were a number of other MPs and senators who signed that letter in support. You referenced six or seven points. I have had the opportunity to see the letter, because I agreed to sign on to the letter, and there is a lot of additional, in-depth instructive information for all of us. As we come to prepare questions for ministers or for debates, and as there are other proposals coming forward, or Senator Plett's inquiry, it would be most beneficial for us all to have it.

I don't understand why members of the official opposition across the floor said "no" to your tabling that. Could you confirm for us what you see as the benefit of this being on the record in this chamber and for all senators to have in hand? Thank you.

[Translation]

Senator Mégie: Thank you, Senator Lankin. I would like to know what should go on the record in the event of a refusal to allow the document to be tabled. I believe it's already been entered in the transcript. I attempted to table it once and was refused. I attempted to table it a second time and was refused again. I believe it is recorded in the Senate Hansard.

As for why it's important, we have been submitting proposals for improving the situation with regard to racism, and other related issues, for quite some time. Every time there is a death or tragedy, everybody offers tears and sympathy, but nothing gets done. This document explores different areas that we could address. It is a very well-researched document that could be tabled. It could help the government develop its plan. We want a plan and action. We want more than just talk. With such a document, we are sure to get the government's attention so it can take real action with proper guidelines. Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): May I also ask a question of Senator Mégie?

Senator, there was mention of the opposition saying "no" to tabling the statement. Would you confirm that yesterday I wrote to you explaining that, in spirit, what is being articulated in the

statement is undeniable and something important that we must take notice of? However, the timing of your asking for leave — it will be entered into the records of the Senate — by sending the letter in the morning meant that we hadn't had time to look at it carefully. It's very substantive. I wanted to ask you some other questions as well.

Would you confirm that I communicated with you and also indicated the same today? You are asking again during this debate, but it's more procedural; it's not saying "no" to the statement itself. Would you confirm that I had done that? Thank you.

[Translation]

Senator Mégie: A few minutes before His Honour the Speaker called my name so I could table the document, I received a note that a page may have brought to me, but I didn't recognize your signature. I didn't know who had sent it. The note just said, "Stop, it's happening too fast, I can't vote in favour of tabling this."

This is not a vote. This is the tabling of a document. I agreed. I figured that 24 hours would give you enough time to read it. Please enlighten me. When a document is tabled, do senators have to vote on it? Not as far as I know. We table a document, and you can read it with the members of your caucus at an appropriate time. Am I mistaken?

[English]

Senator Martin: Is there still time?

The Hon. the Speaker: Unfortunately there is not, because we are going to adjourn shortly.

I want to remind Senator Tannas that he rose to ask a question with respect to a possible amendment, but no amendment has been put on the floor. When we return to this matter, Senator Tannas, if you want an amendment you will have to rise to debate and propose it.

(Debate.)

(At 4 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on February 5, 2020, the Senate adjourned until 1:30 p.m., tomorrow.)

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