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(HANSARD)

Friday, March 26, 2021

The Honourable GEORGE J. FUREY,
Speaker

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(Daily index of proceedings appears at back of this issue).

Debates Services: Josée Boisvert, National Press Building, Room 831, Tel. 613-219-3775
Publications Centre: Kim Laughren, National Press Building, Room 926, Tel. 343-550-5002

THE SENATE

Friday, March 26, 2021

(Pursuant to rule 3-6(2), the adjournment of the Senate was extended from March 23, 2021 to March 26, 2021.) [Translation]

The Senate met at 11 a.m., the Speaker in the chair.

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Hon. Leo Housakos: Honourable senators, every year, Greeks and Hellenes across Canada and around the world come together to observe the date that celebrates Greek independence.

For Hellenes, “*elefteria*,” the Greek word for “freedom,” is the essence of the human spirit, in allowing it to grow and prosper. Democracy, from the Greek words “*demos*” and “*kratos*,” means “strength of common people.” These are the foundations upon which our modern-day democracies stand. In the words of a great leader: “Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth.”

On the symbolic date of March 25, 1821, the birthplace of democracy armed itself for a national rebellion against the Ottoman occupation of their land. For 400 years, the Greek people were reduced to second-class citizens in their own country, and they struggled under the tyranny and oppression of the Ottoman regime. The Greek heroes, who for nearly a decade endured the struggle of fighting an unequal battle, eventually triumphed and regained their independence, and with that, restored democracy to its birthplace.

Today, 200 years later, on the special bicentennial anniversary of Greek independence, we recognize the unmatched sacrifices of those who fought for the preservation of democracy, with a deep admiration and gratitude for their courage and resilience. The success of the Greek Revolution of 1821 remains an inspiring testament to freedom and an important chapter, not only in the history of Greece, but in the history of the world as well.

As Canadians, we celebrate and honour our permanent ties to Greece through our preservation of and commitment to our democratic values, ideals and institutions. Furthermore, we acknowledge that our nation would not be what it is today without the invaluable contributions and accomplishments of the Greek-Canadian community, which is recognized for its inspiring history and rich culture.

On this momentous 200-year milestone, I would like to take this opportunity to extend the warmest of wishes to the Hellenic Republic of Greece, and to the members of the Hellenic community across Canada and the world over.

Thank you, colleagues.

LINGUISTIC DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Honourable senators, Francophonie Month is drawing to a close. It was an opportunity to think about our identity, what unites us and what still divides us. For a long time, the accent issue was a source of distress for me. I grew up in two different countries, Canada and France. As a result, I was insulted as a student in school and as a journalist for the way I speak French. I was seen as “that damned French woman,” a snob, a colonizer and an elitist because, as I was told, I spoke French in a hoity-toity way, with a French accent from France. Yet, I never tried to speak with any particular type of accent.

That is my little story of privilege, which, I am aware, is nothing compared to the real discrimination faced by francophones around the world. This linguistic discrimination is known as glottophobia.

In the 1960s, to be hired as an announcer at Radio-Canada, a person could not have a strong Quebec accent. There was therefore a major disconnect between our public broadcaster and the people. Things have changed in favour of our national affirmation, but not everywhere. I have met francophone journalists outside Quebec whose career progress has been halted because of their accent. I have seen others do everything they could to lose their regional accent in order to get into the industry. What is even more ironic is that immigrants from France often had a better chance of being hired in the media than francophones outside Quebec.

Accents reveal our roots. They are profound identity markers, but we have a strong tendency to make quick, irrevocable judgments about people based on what is most obvious: their accent. *La Presse* quoted French linguist Philippe Blanchet on the subject:

Depending on how you pronounce words, people may consider you untrustworthy, irresponsible, poorly educated, or not presentable to clients or the public.

In France, the melodious accents of the north and south, much like the foreign accents of northern and western Africa, are ridiculed. In the public sphere, the accent of the Parisian elite is considered the standard of proper speech, and it is associated with knowledge, power and intellectualism. The consequences of this are significant: 16% of French people surveyed a year ago said they had been victims of hiring or career discrimination because of their accent.

• (1110)

In November of last year, an elected representative from southern France, Christophe Euzet, got a bill through first reading that would make discrimination on the basis of accent a criminal offence punishable by three years in prison and a

\$70,000 fine, which is the same penalty that applies to discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender or disability. The goal was to initiate a change in attitude.

That definitely makes us think about our own prejudices.

[English]

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

Hon. Victor Oh: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak out against the surge of hate that has done significant harm to Canada's Asian community. Diversity is one of Canada's greatest strengths. Countries around the world look to us as a model of inclusiveness. This, in turn, has made our nation one of the best countries in the world to live in and to immigrate to.

I believe I have a duty to stand here before the chamber to give voice to the experiences of my Asian community and condemn the escalation of anti-Asian sentiment. Sadly, anti-Asian racism has a long history in Canada. However, the latest anti-Asian sentiment has been carelessly instigated by individuals and organizations since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Allow me to share some frightening statistics: Vancouver police data shows a 717% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes since last March. Here, the Ottawa police recorded a 600% increase in hate crimes toward Asians from 2019 to 2020. Many other Canadian cities have also reported these surges, with incidents ranging from verbal and violent attacks to the vandalization of Asian-owned businesses.

Our U.S. neighbours have also witnessed the same rise in violence. New York Police Department, or NYPD, data shows hate crimes motivated by anti-Asian sentiment surged by 1,900% in 2020. Last month, a man of Asian descent was slashed across the face while riding on the New York City subway because of his race. It is a sad reality that people of Asian descent have to face the threat of racist attacks in their everyday lives.

I believe we are in a moment of reckoning where we must all take a stand. This must stop. My community is experiencing misguided harassment and enduring threats and intimidation. Even I, myself, as an honourable senator, have been targeted here at the foot of our beloved Parliament Buildings. I was intimidated and assailed with racist slurs not long ago.

To my fellow Asian Canadians, I ask you to continue to be brave, speak up and voice your concerns. To my colleagues, I ask you to amplify your outrage and condemn these disturbing acts of hate.

There is no tolerance for any form of racism in our country. We must work together as Canadians to stop this violence and hate. Thank you. *Xie xie. Gam-sa-ham-ni-da.*

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Senator Miville-Dechéne]

[Translation]

TRIBUTE TO CARMEN GIBBS

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable senators, every year, when March comes along, it brings with it a renewed energy and many things to celebrate, including the long-awaited spring, the International Day of La Francophonie, World Poetry Day and World Theatre Day. Tomorrow, March 27, we will mark the 59th edition of World Theatre Day.

Every year, these celebrations are a perfect opportunity to remember how the arts enrich our lives and to highlight the invaluable contributions made by artists and cultural workers to the well-being of our society.

Today I would like to pay tribute to someone who has spent over 20 years working to improve artists' living conditions and help develop Acadian society.

Carmen Gibbs, Executive Director of the Association acadienne des artistes professionnels du Nouveau-Brunswick, is a kind-hearted woman of action and conviction who is also a committed activist. She is one of those special Acadian and Canadian citizens who help advance our society and transform our communities.

This is a woman with boundless energy who brings people together. She loves artists and loves life. She took the helm of that association when it was still young and new and has helped shape it into the mature organization it is today.

During these 20 years, she has surrounded herself with passionate people and has worked on exceptional artistic and cultural projects, mobilizing the driving forces of Canada's Acadian and Francophone societies.

This dedicated visionary was behind one of the biggest initiatives in Acadian society, the États généraux des arts et de la culture, a francophone arts and culture summit, which led to the development of a true roadmap for ensuring the cultural advancement of the Acadian people.

Carmen Gibbs was able to bring together leaders from every sector of society, including elected members, citizens, officials, and people young and old, who all sat around the same table for several years envisioning Acadia's cultural future. She always says that when politicians and civil society really work together, we can accomplish great things.

In order to promote artists, she became a producer of one of the key cultural events in the Canadian Francophonie: Les Éloizes, an awards gala that recognizes the work of Acadian and francophone artists and that is held at a different location every year, bringing the event to the people.

She firmly believes that the arts are indispensable for developing and moulding engaged citizens, so she launched core projects in partnership with the education sector.

Her unwavering solidarity has led her to forge fruitful alliances with organizations in Quebec and throughout the Francophonie.

As you can see, honourable colleagues, Carmen Gibbs is part of every cause, every battle and every accomplishment.

I had the great privilege of working with her for many years, and I witnessed her persuasion skills first-hand. I should warn all of Canada's elected officials and public servants that if you are meeting with Ms. Gibbs, make sure you are well prepared and have clear answers for her. In other words, brace yourself, because her persuasion skills are unlimited.

Carmen Gibbs is above all a caring woman with a great love for her fellow citizens and for life. She is a hard worker, but she also lives life to the fullest, because she has the invaluable gift of being able to perfectly balance her love of work and love of life.

Carmen Gibbs, thank you for your contributions to our society, and long live the Association acadienne des artistes professionnels du Nouveau-Brunswick.

[English]

TRIBUTE TO YUKONERS WHO HAVE PASSED

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, I respectfully address you from the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

Canadians have suffered immeasurably over the past year with the loss of family, friends and loved ones. These losses are especially keenly felt in our smaller communities when there is an empty seat at the governance table or when the notes of a beloved fiddle player have gone silent.

The Yukon, although spread over a vast area, is small in population, and in recent weeks we have come to miss too many members of our community. My time to speak about these losses is too brief to mention everyone. I ask forgiveness from the loved ones of those to whom I am unable to provide their due.

Darius Elias served the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation of Old Crow as their MLA in the Yukon Legislative Assembly from 2006 to 2016. Like his mother Norma Kassi, Darius was one of the most articulate and passionate defenders of the Porcupine Caribou herd. He left us far too soon. He left secure in the knowledge that U.S. President Joe Biden had suspended the availability of oil and gas exploration leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or ANWR. The refuge is the cradle of life for the Porcupine Caribou herd and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

The Southern Lakes caribou also lost a champion in February with the passing of elder Art Johns Sr. Art was of Tlingit and Tagish heritage. A game guardian providing leadership on the Southern Lake caribou recovery program, Art shared his experiences, skills and stories with hundreds of children with the Caribou in the Schools program.

Hundreds of lives were touched, and many expressed their appreciation for the dedication and passion of the late educator Millie Jones. Millie was born in Whitehorse in 1932 and spent her life in the Yukon, with the exception of her studies when she

became a third generation Yukon teacher. Her home was in Carcross, and the Carcross-Tagish First Nation adopted Millie Jones as a wise elder.

Though I am not certain he would refer to his elder brother as wise, Senator Dan Lang would tell you that his late twin brother Archie Lang was born first.

Archie's career as an entrepreneur included time at the Caribou Hotel in Carcross until, at 25, he bought the Watson Lake Hotel.

• (1120)

In December 2002, Archie followed Dan into politics, serving as the MLA for Porter Creek Centre in the Yukon Legislative Assembly until 2011.

Archie was a much-loved family man, entrepreneur and storyteller.

Colleagues, as I said at the outset, Canadians have lost so many. Yukoners also mourn the losses of too many who have left us too soon.

Our heartfelt gratitude to the families who shared them with us as we offer our deepest sympathy. Darius Elias, Art Johns, Millie Jones, Archie Lang and others. You have moved on to the spirit world. Your contribution to the Yukon — the gift of your presence — will not be forgotten.

Mahsi'cho. Thank you. *Günáłchìsh*

PASSOVER

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, why is this week different from all other weeks? The Jewish holiday of Passover begins tomorrow evening at sundown. It is a festival of freedom, hope and promised new beginnings. It is a holiday where families gather together to sing songs and tell stories of the deliverance of the enslaved Jews from bondage and persecution.

Last year my family, like many, celebrated our Passover Seder dinner via Zoom. The Seder storybook, the Haggadah, recounts with grim detail the plagues that God brought down to help convince Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go. As we faced our first COVID Passover, the recitation of those plagues — the boils, the frogs, the cattle disease — seemed particularly apt. We had no idea then how long a plague we would be facing. We never dreamed we'd be celebrating via video again this year.

Yet here we are, all waiting for the moment when we can truly be free again and our exile over. In Canada, we are lucky to hold in Library and Archives a copy of the first published English translation of the Haggadah, printed in London in 1770 when King George III was on the throne. The English text, as translated by one Alexander Alexander, is remarkably similar to the version my own family recites each year. Last year, when I visited the archives and saw that copy with its pages stained with drops of red wine poured out at family Seders hundreds of years

ago, I felt this incredible sense of continuity and connection, of the links that unite us across time and space and of a love and faith that endure in spite of all terrors.

The Likeness of this poor bread did our ancestors eat in the land of Egypt . . . all those who are in want, let them approach and partake —

— reads the 251-year-old text.

. . . at present we are here, but next year we hope to be in the land of Israel, at present we are in servitude, but next year we hope to be Children of Freedom.

The Haggadah tells a story of hope, liberty and defeat of tyranny. It promises that evil cannot endure. For many faiths and cultures, spring is a season of resurrection, redemption and renewal, and of the hope we need when all the world is at war against an invisible enemy.

[*Translation*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

THE ESTIMATES, 2020-21

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C)—THIRD REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Percy Mockler: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, which deals with the Supplementary Estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(j), I give notice that, later this day, I will move:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, March 30, 2021, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

[Senator Simons]

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 6, 2020-21

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-26, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 1, 2021-22

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-27, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

• (1130)

[*English*]

QUESTION PERIOD

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Leo Housakos: My question is for the government leader. Senator Gold, last Friday when Michael Spavor was subjected to his sham trial in Dandong, there were diplomats from several countries outside the courthouse after being blocked from going inside.

The same thing happened on Monday in Beijing for Michael Kovrig's sham trial.

I think I speak for all senators and all Canadians when I say thank you to all of those countries who sent their diplomats in a show of solidarity and support.

My question, however, is about the diplomat who wasn't at either courthouse, and that's Canada's own ambassador to China, Dominic Barton. Senator Gold, can you please tell me which genius in the PMO came up with the idea to recall Ambassador Barton right at the time he was most needed in China right in the middle of those sham trials of Mr. Spavor and Mr. Kovrig?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable colleagues, the arbitrary detention and the sham trials of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor remains a top priority for Canada, and the Government of Canada continues to work tirelessly with our allies to secure their immediate release. The Government of Canada has a responsibility to manage our relationships with China. Our chargé d'affaires was present at the trial and, again, the government is very grateful to our international partners who continue to demonstrate solidarity and support to Canada, to Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig and, of course, their families.

Senator Housakos: Thank you for the talking points, government leader, but maybe I can make it easier for you to provide a clear response to this chamber and to Canadians. Maybe it was the same genius who took the decision to call the ambassador back who also thought the two Michaels were receiving a fair trial and said that he couldn't tell because the proceedings were happening in secret.

Senator Gold, is Justin Trudeau still pondering that question that was asked to him? Does he think the two Michaels received a fair trial, or does he require still more time to think about that question?

I would like a response to that very simple question either here today or in writing. How can the Prime Minister of Canada ponder and hesitate when he's being asked a question about the two Canadians getting a fair trial in China, where all we've seen is secrecy by the Chinese government, no charges and no fair trial up to this point?

Senator Gold: On behalf of the Government of Canada, senator, I really find it deplorable, in the face of the injustice perpetrated against two Canadians — and indeed, many others in Canada — and the tireless efforts of our government and with the support of its democratic allies, that the questions that continue to be asked in this chamber — important questions about the fate of Canadians — are so tainted with rhetoric and partisan innuendo that they really do not do honour to this chamber, and they do not honour or respect the efforts that this government continues to make for the immediate release of our Canadian citizens.

HEALTH

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I am amazed at how many top priorities this government has where they are doing absolutely nothing.

And I also find it shameful that the government cannot answer a question when clearly this is a partisan issue, when we have Canadians jailed in China. That is partisan. That is very partisan.

However, my question today concerns the recommendation to delay the second COVID-19 vaccine for four months — again a partisan question on behalf of Canadians.

Last March, I raised with Minister Hajdu the concerns of a young woman in Ontario with cancer who was dealing with changes in her care due to the pandemic. While her doctors say she cannot currently take the vaccine, she's concerned about what a delay of four months between doses means for other cancer patients.

A study from King's College in the U.K. has found that 95% of cancer patients who received the second Pfizer vaccine three weeks after their first shot developed strong antibody responses. However, when the second shot was delayed by more than three weeks, this fell to 43% and just 8% for blood cancer patients.

Leader, she and we would like to know how your government justifies delaying the second dose of COVID-19 vaccines for cancer patients against manufacturers' advice, and please, give us something other than that this is your "top priority."

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable colleagues, the government makes its decisions based upon the scientific advice it gets from health care professionals, its advisory committees and upon the experience that is being accumulated on an ongoing basis from real-life experiences in the world. The government remains committed to vaccinating as many Canadians as quickly as possible to protect us from the virus and its variants.

Senator Plett: Leader, the government deemed people with pre-existing conditions such as cancer highly vulnerable to COVID-19, and now the same government is telling cancer patients they have to take vaccines in a manner not recommended by the manufacturers.

This is troubling, leader. Last week I raised the concerns of Canada's Chief Science Advisor, Dr. Mona Nemer, about the four-month delay. On Monday, she told CTV the people we want to protect the most, the elderly and the immune compromised, should not have their second dose delayed. Dr. Nemer said the research doesn't support this and she believes the one-size-fits-all approach needs to change.

Leader, the four-month delay was based not on scientific advice but solely on your government's poor vaccine supplies. If the vaccine delivery issues are behind us, why should Canada's elderly and cancer patients have to wait four months between vaccine doses?

Senator Gold: Honourable colleagues, as I have maintained regularly in this chamber — but I will say it again — responsibility for what doses are given over what period of time is an exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces. Indeed, each of the provinces has taken a different position with regard to who is vaccinated first and when the second vaccine will come. It is an

important feature of our Constitution and our federation that areas within provincial jurisdiction are given respect. Health happens to be one of them.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

TRANSIT PIPELINES

Hon. Bev Busson: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, Canada has so many issues at play with the United States at any given time. Pipelines are front and centre right now, given in part by President Biden's decision to stop the Keystone XL project. But also looming is the threat to Enbridge's important Line 5 pipeline. As you know well, the Governor of Michigan has effectively ordered the closure of that pipeline by May.

The impact on jobs and energy supply is serious — thousands of jobs lost on both sides of the border. According to the St. Lawrence Corridor Economic Development Commission, Line 5 supplies over 45% of the petroleum refined in Ontario and Quebec. Pearson Airport in Toronto, the busiest in our country, relies 100% on jet fuel produced by Line 5.

To replace the volume of oil moved through Line 5 if closed down, the equivalent will have to be shipped by either 2,000 trucks or 800 rail cars every day. The implications are serious and wide-ranging, both financially and environmentally.

I know that the government is seized with this issue and has strategies for working through this crisis.

Senator Gold, among the tools and tactics, might the Government of Canada consider invoking article 9 of the 1977 bilateral Agreement between the Government Of Canada and the Government of the United States Of America Concerning Transit Pipelines to press the issue of arbitration, if necessary, as a matter of international obligation?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, colleague, for your question. This is an important issue that affects the security and economic well-being of a huge section of the country, including my own province of Quebec. The government is in constant discussions with its counterparts and has enlisted the help as well of other stakeholders in Canada to make the case strongly, and is exploring all opportunities and options to make sure that the supply of oil is uninterrupted.

• (1140)

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Busson, did you have a supplementary?

Senator Busson: Thank you, Your Honour; no supplementary.

[Senator Gold]

FINANCE

HEALTH TRANSFERS

Hon. Paula Simons: We will hope for better luck this time. Thank you very much, Your Honour.

Honourable senators, my question is also for the Government Representative. On Thursday, the government introduced Bill C-25, which amends the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act. The bill promises \$4 billion in additional cash to provinces for health care, including an extra \$465.3 million for my home province of Alberta. The bill also promises an additional \$1 billion to assist provinces with COVID-19 immunization, including an extra \$116.3 million for Alberta. There's also a promise of \$2.2 billion to provinces, municipalities and First Nations for infrastructure spending.

In the past, the people of my province have faced difficulties and delays in receiving COVID-relief dollars because the provincial and federal governments couldn't agree on the conditions governing these payouts. Many Albertans missed out on their chance to receive the support they needed when they needed it most.

Can you tell me what conditions, if any, are attached to the funding enumerated in Bill C-25? What guarantees can you offer that the people of Alberta will indeed receive the benefits of this funding without seeing it caught up in political squabbles between the provincial and federal governments?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The Government of Canada continues to work closely with the provinces and territories, municipalities and Indigenous communities in the face of COVID-19. Indeed, the bill to which you refer, colleague, reflects the extraordinary pressures that all orders of government and First Nations communities are experiencing and have expressed to the Government of Canada.

I've been advised that the government has been in touch with the provincial governments on the specific question of whether there is funding or what the conditions might be that are attached to this funding, but I am not in a position to provide further information at this stage.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Simons, did you have a supplementary?

Senator Simons: Yes, a simple supplementary, which is to ask the Government Representative to provide the answers at the soonest available opportunity, if he would be able to do that.

Senator Gold: It would be my pleasure.

WINE EXCISE TAX

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, my question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Gold, as you may remember, recently in this chamber I highlighted the issues facing the domestic wine industry in relation to the repeal of the excise tax exemption that is slated to take place in June 2022.

The return of the excise tax could have a devastating impact on local grape growers and winemakers in Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec and Nova Scotia. These businesses have become a source of tremendous pride in small communities. They have also impacted many of these small communities economically, as they provide over 37,000 jobs, many of which can be found in areas where job opportunities are scarce.

The exemption has had an enormous effect on the sector's ability to grow and compete against dominating international companies. In 2006, there were 86 VQA wineries in Ontario. Today, there are 183. That means 97 Ontario wineries face the payment of excise duty for the first time ever.

During an already difficult year, small- and medium-scale operations are struggling to survive as we navigate the ongoing pandemic, and are deeply concerned about the impending changes to the excise tax exemption, which could affect their ability to survive.

Without an effective replacement program that specifically focuses on 100% Canadian-produced wine, Canada is at risk of losing these small businesses that have become crucial engines of our local economies. While going without a replacement program would be devastating, implementing one that gives the dominating international companies back-end access to Canadian taxpayer dollars would defeat the purpose of a creating a replacement program in the first place.

With the hopes of receiving a more fulsome response, Senator Gold, I provided this question to you in advance. Now I ask, on behalf of those business owners, will the government create a trade-safe excise tax replacement program that focuses specifically on supporting 100% Canadian-produced wine?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and for advance notice of the subject matter.

As senators may appreciate, the origin of the dilemma and challenge is rooted in Australia's complaint to the World Trade Organization regarding federal and provincial measures allegedly inconsistent with the GATT, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which dates back, as you know, many decades now. The government has worked closely with provinces — and, of course, with the industry — to develop an agreement that settled many aspects of this challenge.

With regard to how the government will go forward to support Canadian wine producers, I do understand that there have been stakeholder submissions to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

for various support programs. The government, I am advised, is considering these proposals to support the sector as it adjusts to these challenges.

The government hears the industry's concern about the uncertainty and will continue to work with stakeholders. I do not have a specific answer to your question. The government is considering all options to support this important industry.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator R. Black, did you have a supplementary question?

Senator R. Black: No, thank you, Your Honour.

HEALTH

FUNDING FOR TREATMENT CENTRE

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate.

Senator Gold, during study of Bill C-45, I toured all 25 Nunavut communities. I held town halls, spoke on the radio and met with every mayor and council. Time and time again, I heard about the need for addictions treatment and mental health support, both of which are severely lacking in the territory. When I brought these concerns to the debate, the Liberal government pledged money toward a facility in Iqaluit. Three years later, we don't have one.

In 2019, I attended the apology by this government to Qikiqtani Inuit on the part of the Prime Minister for historic wrongs, including the dog slaughter. I witnessed a pledge to provide monies requested in the Qikiqtani Truth Commission report for key programs, including those for mental health. I'm told that two years later, nothing beyond the initial money, coupled with the public apology, has been received.

My question is this, Senator Gold: In light of the passage of Bill C-7 and the automatic inclusion of those suffering exclusively from mental illness as eligible for MAID after two years, will the government deliver on these two important promises made to Nunavut prior to that provision of the bill coming into force?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Colleague, thank you for your question and for giving me advance notice so that I could make inquiries with the government.

Regarding the question of addiction treatment and a mental health facility, my understanding is that the Government of Canada is contributing up to \$47.5 million over five years, and up to \$9.7 million towards the construction and operations of the Nunavut recovery centre. I've also been advised that the Government of Nunavut, in partnership with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, is leading on the project to construct and plan for this recovery centre. I understand further that the Government of Nunavut will pursue the design process this year and aims to have the centre built by the fall of 2024.

For its part, the Government of Canada remains committed to collaborating on treatment and wellness services that are Inuit-led and build on the cultural strengths of the communities.

Regarding the Qikiqtani Truth Commission, I did inquire with the government, thanks to your advance notice, but I have not yet received an answer. When I hear back from the government, I will report back in a timely manner.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Patterson, do you have a supplementary?

Senator Patterson: That's fine. Thank you, Your Honour.

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader in the Senate.

Senator Gold, variant cases are making up a higher proportion of all new cases during our third wave of COVID-19 here in Ontario. Last Monday, Canada's Chief Science Advisor, Dr. Mona Nemer, said that studies have shown that extending the interval between doses has had a negative effect on their efficacy.

• (1150)

Given that we have not had enough supply to get people vaccinated fast enough to stay ahead of the variants, which are quickly taking hold here in Canada — and I just heard your response to Senator Plett where you said it is a provincial issue. In conversations with my provincial colleagues, they have indicated to me that they do not have enough supply of vaccines.

Given that medical professionals around the world warned that delaying the second dose may not protect recipients from variants, why is the government putting lives at risk by delaying the second dose by four months? My understanding is we're the only country in the world that's doing that.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question, honourable senator. However, I cannot accept the premise that Canada is putting Canadians' lives at risk.

First, as I've mentioned on more than one occasion, Canada's approach to the securing of vaccines has resulted in the highest number per capita of vaccines ordered in the world. Indeed, as the government has announced — the Minister of Procurement most recently — Canada continues to get increasing numbers of doses and vaccines, and will continue to do so. Most recently, an additional 1.5 million through an agreement finalized with the U.S. government.

The fact remains that the decisions to extend the time between doses are decisions that are within the jurisdiction of your government in Ontario, mine in Quebec and in all provincial and territorial governments.

We are on track in Canada to receive sufficient vaccines so that every Canadian who wishes to have one will have it long before the time that the government announced earlier. With

every passing week, the merits of the multi-pronged and multi-faceted approach to vaccine procurement are proving valid, and that is good news for Canadians.

Senator Atallahjan: Senator Gold, thank you for your response. I know we have bought the most vaccines, but buying them and having them on hand are two different things. I know that the provincial governments are struggling to get enough vaccines.

When I spoke to some of my doctor friends last week, they informed me that they were not consulted on the consequences of delaying the second dose.

Senator Gold, will Canadians who receive the second dose four months later, after the first dose, require a booster shot?

Senator Gold: Honourable senator, thank you for your question. Although I do my best, given my role, to answer questions on the broadest range of subjects, and it's my privilege to serve in this role, I will not purport to answer a medical question. I have no expertise in that regard.

What I can tell you and assure this chamber and Canadians is that the science, as it's evolving, the advice that is continuing to be given to governments, is being taken seriously. As the experience with the various vaccines that we've approved in Canada is accumulated, both in Canada and in the world, and the efficacy of the vaccines to the emerging number of variants that we are plagued with, those decisions will be made by both the scientific communities and ultimately governments as to how to best protect Canadians in the months to come.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

IMPORT PROHIBITION ON GOODS PRODUCED BY FORCED LABOUR

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

The *Toronto Star* is reporting that since the act was amended to stop imports of products made with forced labour nine months ago, Canadian border officers have yet to seize any such products.

However, it is common knowledge that goods imported from Xinjiang, which are often manufactured by the Uighur Muslim minority, could well be produced by forced labour, in particular tomatoes and cotton products.

Our American neighbours have blacklists. When will Canadian border officers start seizing products and when will we get data on imports?

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

The government is seriously concerned about the evidence and reports of human rights violations in China against the Uighur people and other ethnic minorities. The government expects Canadian businesses around the world to maintain the highest ethical standards on human rights. That is why, in 2019, the government appointed the very first Canadian ombudsperson for responsible enterprise to promote Canada's fundamental values around the world and carry out our trade agenda.

Two weeks ago, on March 15, the ombudsperson launched an online complaints process to take complaints regarding possible human rights abuses arising from the operations abroad of Canadian companies.

Since July 2020, Canadian companies that source directly or indirectly from Xinjiang or from entities relying on Uighur labour have been required to sign an integrity declaration before gaining access to certain government services and trade support. Specifically, the declaration acknowledges that the company is not directly or indirectly sourcing products or services from a supplier implicated in forced labour or other human rights violations associated with the repression of the Uighur people or other ethnic minorities.

Senator Miville-Dechéne: Thank you for your answer, Senator Gold.

As you know, the Office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise has been harshly criticized for not having enough power to act effectively. Given the sanctions that you announced against China, can the Government of Canada guarantee that it will not import any goods made with forced labour, especially the forced labour of Uighurs?

Senator Gold: Thank you for that question, Senator Miville-Dechéne. I'm not able to answer your question right now, but I will look into it and get back to you.

[English]

FINANCE

CARBON TAX

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Senator Gold, yesterday, of course, there was the ruling in the Supreme Court on the carbon tax.

Farmers today pay about \$3 an acre in taxes; that will go up to \$4 an acre next year. It is a huge amount when it comes to drying grain. These are the people who grow and produce our food and who contribute to global food security. They had a tax increase in the middle of COVID, at the height of COVID, and the minister announced there will be another one in April.

Can you give us any assurance that there will be some kind of exemption for grain drying costs for Western farmers under the carbon tax plan?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senator, thank you for your question. The Government of Canada is very pleased that the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the measures it introduced to combat climate change, and is disappointed with the reaction of some of the provinces who opposed it, but remains committed to working with those provinces so that they can work together to put into place a proper program; an effective program to combat climate change and help us transition to a more sustainable economy.

The Government of Canada will continue to provide support, along with provinces, to the important agricultural sector. However, I'm not in a position to make a commitment on behalf of the government for any exemption from the carbon tax to which you referred.

• (1200)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Raymonde Gagné (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of earlier this day, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, March 30, 2021, at 2 p.m.

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

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(At 12:02 p.m., pursuant to the orders adopted by the Senate on October 27, 2020 and December 17, 2020, the Senate adjourned until Tuesday, March 30, 2021, at 2 p.m.)

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