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Friday, March 22, 2024

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,  
Speaker

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## THE SENATE

Friday, March 22, 2024

The Senate met at 9 a.m., the Speaker in the chair.

Prayers.

### SENATORS' STATEMENTS

#### THE HONOURABLE DAVID RICHARDS

**Hon. Pamela Wallin:** Honourable senators, thank you for this opportunity to say a few words about our colleague, to highlight and recognize a rare and special moment. It's not just about the stories he has told. This time, his own story has taken pride of place.

A stunning, compelling and powerful documentary entitled *The Geographies of DAR*, or David Adams Richards, has just captured the Best Canadian Film prize at Le FIFA 2024, the forty-second edition of the International Festival of Films on Art in Montreal.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Wallin:** This follows a win at the New Brunswick film festival as well.

It was written and directed by Monique LeBlanc, and it is a story told in his own words and in his own voice. For those of us who attended the showing here in Ottawa, well, it took our breath away. The story of his muse, his inspiration, is a story of the people and the land of the Miramichi. It is central to his work. As David says, the characters come from the soil. They're like the trees and, in a certain respect, they cling to that river and soil. Well, so does David.

He was born in 1950 in Newcastle, New Brunswick, the third of six. After giving up on his highly unlikely dream of a career in the NHL, he found his calling at the age of 14. He was going to be a poet, and he set out to shape a life of extraordinary purpose.

He finished his first novel at the age of 20, *The Keeping of Gusties*. He found other writers and read Faulkner and Brontë and Dostoyevsky and said of himself that he was truly "... nothing more than a thug with Tolstoy in my pocket."

In 1971, however, he put his most convincing talent to work as a crafter of words. He put it to good use, convincing the beautiful Peggy McIntyre to marry him. It was, by his own admission, the smartest move of his life. They remain today soulmates, best friends, partners and fellow bikers, as in motorcycles.

There must have been a short supply of men in the Miramichi.

He has viewed his community always as a place to carry out a life of service. After more than 25 books, for which he has won the Giller Prize and Governor General's Literary Awards, sometimes both for fiction and non-fiction at the same time, he has won the Order of New Brunswick, the Order of Canada and too many more to list.

His books — you know the titles — include *Mercy Among the Children*, *River of the Brokenhearted*, *Nights Below Station Street*. He remains through it all gracious, humble, witty, opinionated, talented and kind. He has never broken faith with his first friends nor with the land from where he came, which are his roots.

He said that he knew that earning a living as a writer would be hard. At times, he thought he would be better off if he had become a plumber. It probably wouldn't have worked out. So, today, you sit amongst us as a poet, a novelist, a playwright. You write short stories, essays, polemics and thousands of wise words.

David once said that there is no worse flaw in a man's character than wanting to belong, but it's not true. You belong to that community of wordsmiths, and now you have chosen all of us as your community in this chamber. We are proud and we are rewarded that you can be part of our lives.

I want to end with a quote. These are not David's own words, but I think they capture today, the moment, and reflect his life: "Work hard in silence, let success be your noise."

Colleagues, let's make some noise for our colleague.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

#### FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

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

Honourable senators, I want to acknowledge the Anishinaabe people and the members of the next generation who are here with us today.

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to the landmark decision handed down by the Supreme Court of Canada on February 9, 2024, regarding An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, which you knew as Bill C-92. Thank you so much.

As senators know, Indigenous children are overrepresented in provincial child protection systems. In 2021, in Canada, 53.8% of foster children were Indigenous, although Indigenous children represent only 7.7% of the overall population of children in Canada. These children are placed with families who don't speak their language, know nothing about their history, and so on.

Senators will also recall that Quebec disagreed with the form of the act and went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court's ruling has now put an end to the debate, because the court unanimously declared that the act is constitutional. I thank the Supreme Court.

Opitciwan, my Atikamekw granddaughter's community, was the first to implement a law, and we are already seeing results. Thanks to that law, since 2022, the placement rate for children between the ages of zero and four years dropped by 10%. That is a lot.

I will quote Ms. Petiquay, Director of children's services in her community, as follows:

All of the children, 100% of them, are in Atikamekw foster families, where they can speak their mother tongue and retain their culture . . . .

That is important. Also, and most importantly:

Children feel more heard, more respected.

Personally, I think we need to move towards a positive approach of supporting and working with families. That said, it is also our duty to remember that we need to look at the financial considerations as well. That is important, because we want to keep the federal and provincial governments from passing the buck.

• (0910)

Things aren't going to change overnight. It will take time, and there will be a transition, but the important thing is to remember that we have our children's best interests and well-being at heart.

*Tshinashkumitnau.*

**Hon. senators:** Hear, hear!

[*English*]

#### VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Anil Arora, Chief Statistician at Statistics Canada. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Omidvar.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

[ Senator Audette ]

#### ANIL ARORA

##### CONGRATULATIONS ON RETIREMENT

**Hon. Ratna Omidvar:** Honourable senators, I rise to pay tribute to an extraordinary leader and public servant. Anil Arora is the Chief Statistician at Statistics Canada, which he has led for eight exceptional years. He retires on March 31 and leaves a transformed Statistics Canada in more ways than one.

First, under his leadership, the agency embraced new technologies. It was the first government agency to migrate its data to the secure cloud. It now uses satellite imagery, crowdsourcing, scanner data and wastewater sampling to provide us with an updated and more reliable picture of Canada and Canadians.

Second, in our time of need during COVID, Mr. Arora helped steer the agency through a spike in data needs to develop new protocols and processes that allowed Health Canada to establish contact tracing, which helped the senators in this chamber as we reviewed and debated our responses to the crisis.

Third, he led his agency in successfully implementing and completing the 2021 census, in spite of the fact that — because of COVID — the 2021 census program had to change course at the last moment and go completely contactless in order to meet pandemic protocols.

Because of his leadership, we now have new windows into life in Canada. He has led the Disaggregated Data Action Plan that we in this chamber often call for, but he has also led the Census of Environment, the Quality of Life Framework of Canada and the Business Data Lab. He has worked with Indigenous communities to help build data capacity and literacy and improve access to their own data.

As you can see, he is an alert and responsive leader, and I have experienced this first-hand. In 2021, I put out a challenge on Twitter to the charitable sector on gathering data. Mr. Arora saw this — clearly, this was a time Twitter worked — and through his leadership, a crowdsourced, voluntary survey was conducted. For the first time, we had an adequate picture and evidence upon which I could base my legislative proposal Bill S-279.

I was privileged to be in the room when Mr. Arora delivered the 2023 Manion Lecture. I urge you all to go online and watch him tell the story of Canada based on evidence and not opinion. To those who think Canada is broken, he says, "Look again."

Mr. Arora leaves Statistics Canada in excellent shape. It is best in class among agencies like it in the world. Please join me in thanking Mr. Arora for his steadfast and inspired leadership for our country.

##### NURSING RETENTION TOOLKIT

**Hon. Joan Kingston:** Honourable senators, I rise today to bring attention to an important announcement made earlier this month by Dr. Leigh Chapman, Chief Nursing Officer of Canada. The release of the *Nursing Retention Toolkit: Improving the*

*Working Lives of Nurses in Canada* is part of ongoing efforts to support and retain members of the nursing workforce using practical strategies and tools.

With more than 450,000 members, nurses are critical to Canada's health care system. Nurses are currently facing increased workloads, high rates of burnout, stress, anxiety, depression and, in some cases, abuse.

This toolkit draws on evidence-based practice, lived and living experiences of front-line nurses and insights from nurses at all career stages, including nursing students. It provides an opportunity for employers and health authorities to work together to develop standardized programs across health care organizations and systems in Canada.

It also provides an opportunity to focus on collaboration, and to work together to find economies of scale by identifying initiatives that can be scaled up and spread to different organizations and jurisdictions.

The initiatives also provide a range of approaches for nurses and employers in a variety of settings to work together to implement strategies that best suit the circumstances of their nursing workplace.

The Nursing Retention Toolkit focuses on core themes with corresponding initiatives that nursing employers can implement to help improve retention. The themes include — flexible and balanced ways of working, organizational mental health and wellness supports, professional development and mentorship, reduced administrative burden, safe staffing practices and leadership that engages front line nurses in clinical governance and infrastructure.

Each of the core themes is underpinned by the values of respect, anti-racism, anti-oppression, transparency and accountability. The toolkit will be shared widely throughout Canada's health care system.

As Canada's Chief Nursing Officer concludes:

Nurses are the backbone of our health care system, yet too many in Canada are struggling with their mental health, experiencing burnout, distress and feeling overworked, and unappreciated, causing them to leave their jobs. This toolkit provides nursing leadership and health system administrators with an opportunity to contribute first-hand to making changes in our health care system, including improving mental health and wellness supports for nurses so they can stay mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy, and so that they can keep caring for us.

Thank you, *woliwon*.

[Translation]

#### THE HONOURABLE PERCY MOCKLER

**Hon. René Cormier:** Let me begin by congratulating our colleague, David Adams Richards, and Acadian filmmaker Monique LeBlanc on her remarkable documentary.

Honourable senators, on the occasion of Francophonie Month, I'm honoured to pay tribute to a colleague who, unfortunately, will be leaving us in a few weeks. I would like to thank the Conservative caucus for giving me the opportunity to speak this morning.

The great Percy Mockler was born in 1949 in the small town of Saint-Léonard, in northwestern New Brunswick's independent Republic of Madawaska, just weeks after Newfoundland entered Confederation.

According to a legend that has been circulating in Acadia since his birth, the day little Percy took his first steps, he fell into a bucket of blue paint. There's a song that goes, "The sky is blue, awake! A new day dawns," and, from that moment on, the young man grabbed life by the horns with such passion and determination that he soon became a hugely influential leader in his region and our province.

The Honourable Percy Mockler was elected to the provincial legislative assembly in 1982 and went on to hold just about every possible cabinet portfolio. He served as Solicitor General, Minister for Human Resources Development and Housing, Minister of Family and Community Services, Minister of Transportation, Minister of Intergovernmental and International Relations and Minister responsible for La Francophonie. I first met the Honourable Percy Mockler when he was the Minister of Wellness, Culture and Sport.

Colleagues, his office was a beehive of activity, a gathering place for Acadian sports fans, artists, entrepreneurs, activists and advocates. The big screen TVs in his office, with the volume on full blast, did justice to our national sport.

In between phone calls, he would go in and out of his office with his usual energy. A devoted public servant once told me, "Don't worry, it might not seem like it, but he's listening to you."

She was right. Percy Mockler was always attentive and very attuned to the world of arts and culture. His love of Acadia and his unwavering public commitment were unmistakable. As the most Acadian of all Brayons — and the most Brayon of all Acadians — he was, and remains, a consummate politician to the people of New Brunswick, Acadia and Canada.

His appointment to the Senate by the Honourable Stephen Harper in 2008 came as no surprise. When I entered the upper chamber in 2016, Percy was extremely generous to me. The can of paint I fell into at birth was rainbow-coloured, and so I wasn't sure what kind of reception I would get in this place.

Well, Percy soon reassured me when he told me that a blue sky and a rainbow are a great combination.

• (0920)

Percy's deep compassion and humility were moving, as always. He is a true gentleman. At the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, he provided unfailing support during the study of Bill C-13, seeking to amend the Official

Languages Act. As Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, his sense of fairness and his diligence were always appreciated by his colleagues.

Senator Mockler, dear Percy, words are not enough to thank you for your contribution to Acadia, to our province and to our country. To say that we will miss you is an understatement. I have no doubt that the sky will continue to be blue and the sun will shine for you and your wife, Suzanne, your children and your loved ones. See you soon, dear colleague and friend. I look forward to seeing you under the blue sky and all the colours of the rainbow back home in Acadia.

Thank you.

[*English*]

#### THE LATE JEANNINE GERMAINE DEVEAU

**Hon. Mary Coyle:** Honourable senators, earlier this week you heard me pay homage to the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, a proud St. Francis Xavier University, or StFX, alumnus. I rise today to pay tribute to another StFX leader, Ms. Jeannine Deveau — Auntie J, as her Antigonish county family, Jeannine and Bill Gunn and their daughters Lisa, Heather and Audrey, refer to her. Ms. Deveau was an accomplished academic, a successful investor and also a transformative philanthropist. I first met Bill — in whom Ms. Deveau entrusted her philanthropic endeavours — in New Delhi.

Jeannine Deveau grew up in Arichat on Cape Breton Island. After graduating from St. Francis Xavier in 1944, she obtained her Master's in Nutrition at L'Université de Montréal, where she worked as a professor for 30 years.

Her nephew Bill describes her as an elegant, sophisticated, eminently adaptable woman, with a good sense of humour, who was devoted to her family. She did not live extravagantly.

Growing up in Arichat, Jeannine Deveau played with the local Indigenous and African Nova Scotian children. She didn't understand why they didn't attend school with her and didn't have the same opportunities as she did.

Later in life, she was moved and saddened by the information coming out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and by the hard truths of what had gone on in the Dartmouth Home for Colored Children. She was aware of the related, broader societal issues and the inequities faced by people of African descent and Indigenous people in Canada.

The now late Jeannine Deveau — this daughter of Arichat — has given a total of \$22.5 million to St. Francis Xavier University. Quite an investor she was. Her support includes the Jeannine Deveau Education Equity Endowment, which was established to remove barriers to post-secondary education for Indigenous and African Nova Scotian students. To date, 800 scholarships have been awarded, with wraparound services also provided.

[ Senator Cormier ]

Her funding also supports the Deveau Centre for Indigenous Governance and Social Justice; the Black Student Success Centre; Kiknu, the Indigenous student centre; the Elder-in-Residence; the Circle of Abundance at the Coady International Institute; X-Project; the John Jerome Paul Chair in Research for Equity in Mathematics Education; Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian nursing students; and the McKenna Centre's Racial Justice Leadership Grants, among others.

When asked why she wanted to do this, she replied, "It's the right thing to do." The educational inequalities were not fair, and since she could do something about it, she would.

Colleagues, let's take inspiration from this visionary woman, applaud her generosity and her wisdom and emulate her example. *Wela'lioq*, Jeannine Deveau. Thank you, Jeannine.

#### VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of participants in the event Model Senate 2024.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

#### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 5, 2023-24

#### FIRST READING

**The Hon. the Speaker** informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-67, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

(Bill read first time.)

(Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on March 20, 2024, the bill is placed on the Orders of the Day for a second reading later this day.)

[English]

## APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 1, 2024-25

### FIRST READING

**The Hon. the Speaker** informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-68, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

(Bill read first time.)

(Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on March 20, 2024, the bill is placed on the Orders of the Day for a second reading later this day.)

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## QUESTION PERIOD

### PUBLIC SAFETY

#### FIREARMS BUYBACK PROGRAM

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Government leader, in 2021, the Trudeau government told Canadians the cost of getting this unnecessary Firearms Buyback Program up and running would be \$8.8 million. Last fall, I put a written question on the Order Paper asking for more information about this program. An answer was provided on Wednesday. This time I only had to wait six months to get an answer instead of three years.

The response says the Trudeau government has already spent \$41.9 million on this program; not worth the cost, leader. This is a boondoggle, and it hasn't even begun.

Leader, how can your government have spent \$42 million on this? How many firearms have they bought back?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. It is hard to put a price on the value of a life, but every gun that is not in circulation, that cannot be used to create and to cause injury to individuals or their families is worth the investment. In that regard, the Government of Canada's firearms legislation and the series of bills that we in the Senate have passed, admittedly over the objection of some members, are designed to keep and make Canada and Canadians safer. In that regard, it is worth the cost, and this government will continue to do what it can to protect Canadians from the scourge of gun violence.

**Senator Plett:** I clearly read into this that my answer is zero. In December 2020, the Trudeau government hired — whom else? — consultants to provide advice on how to run this boondoggle. Canadians were told IBM's contract was worth \$1.2 million. The answer is it is worth over \$2.2 million, in fact. This is what they've spent on it.

Leader, do you commit to tabling a full breakdown of the \$42 million in the Senate Chamber so Canadians can see exactly how their tax dollars are spent?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for your question. First of all, you should not assume that my answer was "zero."

• (0930)

**Senator Plett:** What is it?

**Senator Gold:** If I may continue, honourable colleague, once again, the investments that Canada has made and will continue to make, both in the design and the implementation of the buyback program and all other measures associated with its program to reduce the scourge of gun violence, are justified and in the best interests of Canadians.

[Translation]

### JUSTICE

#### JUDICIAL REVIEW

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Leader, you indicated earlier this week that the former justice minister, Mr. Lametti, had relied on the opinions of two retired judges to order a new trial in Justice Delisle's case, but you're still refusing to disclose more information about those opinions. However, leader, he was found guilty by three courts of justice, with full evidence and in a proper adversarial context.

Can you tell us the names of those two retired judges? On what date did they provide those opinions to the minister, and in what form? By what process or criteria were those retired judges chosen by the minister to provide their opinions?

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

Colleague, as a former government leader in the Senate, you are very familiar with the rules governing legal opinions solicited by the government. They are protected for reasons of good governance.

That being said, the decision remains the prerogative of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. As I explained a few days ago, based on the information I have, Minister Virani does not intend to disclose the details of those legal opinions.

**Senator Carignan:** Leader, you are correct. I know the rules very well; the opinion belongs to the government and it is up to the government to decide whether to waive solicitor-client privilege or not. It has the discretion required to do so.

That is why this decision both harms and discredits the administration of justice. In fact, that is what Patrick Michel, Quebec's Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions, thinks.

Do you agree that the lack of government transparency contributes to this perception?

**Senator Gold:** I will make my answer simple: No, I do not agree.

[English]

## INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### PHARMACEUTICAL DRUGS

**Hon. Stan Kutcher:** Senator Gold, it appears that, in spite of the federal government's investment in rebuilding Canada's pharmaceutical industry following COVID-19, drug companies in this country actually spent less on in-house research in Canada in 2022 than they did the year before. This "deinvestment" is part of a pattern that this industry has established in Canada: abandon in-house fundamental research, mine the work of Canadian scientists and charge high drug prices to Canadians. Can you please tell us what the government is doing to counter this pattern?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question, senator. The government remains firmly committed to supporting cutting-edge technologies and approaches to accelerate drug recovery and to develop new drugs and treatments for the benefit of Canadians. One example of this is the \$49 million investment that the government has made through the Strategic Innovation Fund for the creation of the Conscience Open Science Drug Discovery Network. This is a collaborative, pan-Canadian network that aims to address gaps in the development of potential drugs and therapeutics, particularly in the areas of traditional market failure, such as antivirals for pandemic preparedness, medicines for antimicrobial resistance and medicines for rare and pediatric diseases.

Colleagues, I've also been informed that Conscience, this network, is expected to work with 27 key partners representing non-profits, academia and industry, including Canadian AI organizations and the pharmaceutical industry in this direction.

**Senator Kutcher:** Senator Gold, could you please ask the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to provide us in this chamber with a written answer that details the strategy, the evaluation and responsibility framework that his department has developed to ensure ongoing, robust pharmaceutical industry investment in fundamental research — not the network but the pharmaceutical company investment, please?

**Senator Gold:** Senator, thank you for the question, although, respectfully, I think it might have been more appropriate to have submitted this as a written question.

That said, I will bring this to the attention of the minister, and I would be happy to facilitate a discussion between you and the minister on this subject.

## IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

### VISA APPLICATION PROCESSING

**Hon. Ratna Omidvar:** Senator Gold, my question is about Gaza. It has been over two months since the government initiated a new temporary visa for Canadian citizens and permanent residents to secure visas for their families in Gaza.

As of Monday, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, IRCC, has informed us that only 14 individuals have successfully completed the application and have been subsequently approved for entry into Canada — just 14. This is at a time when Gaza is facing imminent famine. Can you please outline why the uptake in the approval has been so minimal?

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

While movement out of Gaza remains very unpredictable, Canada continues to work with its partners on the ground to facilitate the safe exit of Canadians, permanent residents and, of course, their family members. The challenge remains, colleagues, as we all know, that Canada simply does not determine who, when or how many individuals can cross the Gaza Strip and cross Rafah. This is a challenge. The government will continue to work at every level and make every effort to ensure that extended family members and others who qualify are able to leave Gaza.

**Senator Omidvar:** Thank you, Senator Gold, for that answer, but those individuals who do leave Gaza and find their way to some safety in Egypt are then informed by IRCC officials that the application form must be completed in Gaza. So here they are, they have fled to some safety, and they are being told, no, go back to Gaza to complete your application to meet the criteria. Do you understand this? I don't.

**Senator Gold:** This is a challenge. Thank you for raising it. This is my understanding: IRCC is unable to collect biometrics at the application state, so they have implemented a multi-stage process to collect enhanced biographical information while applicants are still in Gaza. This was what they did, as you'll recall, with regard to Afghanistan. This then allows IRCC to initiate the security screening process, and it's followed by biometric collection and screening in Egypt. In that regard, IRCC is doing what it can to eliminate this obstacle.



## HEALTH

## HIV TESTING

**Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler:** My question is for Senator Gold.

The number of Canadians with HIV is on the rise. My province of Manitoba has almost three times the new diagnosis rate, and Saskatchewan has four times the new diagnosis rate compared to the national average. Self-testing for HIV meets people where they are and provides a safe way for them to be tested, yet federal funding for HIV self-testing kits will run out at the end of this month, March 2024.

Senator Gold, the government has stated it wants to end HIV as a public health concern by 2030. What is the plan to improve access to HIV testing?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question, senator. It's an important one.

My understanding is that the Public Health Agency of Canada is continuing to explore options to make HIV self-test kits available to community-based organizations after March 31 of this year. The Public Health Agency of Canada will continue to work closely with CATIE, the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange, which is an online HIV resource that can connect individuals to counselling and other HIV services, as well as — to your point — to help find testing sites and HIV organizations.

**Senator Osler:** Thank you, Senator Gold. Discrimination against and stigmatization of people living with HIV remain significant barriers to accessing prevention, treatment and support. More than 16,000 Canadians diagnosed with HIV are not actively engaged or represented in the HIV care continuum. Individuals need to access care without fear of judgment or discrimination.

• (0940)

Senator Gold, what is the government's plan to raise national awareness, correct misconceptions and reduce the ongoing stigma surrounding HIV?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for raising this important point. In another life, I worked with a group from the Canadian Bar Association to author the first report on the legal implications of AIDS. This goes back to 1986, so I date myself in my answer.

The Government of Canada, in addition to the investments it's making to support those living with HIV, will continue to do its part to communicate the importance of treating all Canadians, regardless of their medical situation or circumstances, equally.

## FINANCE

## FIRST NATIONS BANK OF CANADA

**Hon. Marty Klyne:** Senator Gold, I was pleased to see the announcement of the \$100-million participation agreement between the First Nations Bank of Canada and the Canada Infrastructure Bank that was announced earlier this month. I look forward to the First Nations Bank of Canada playing a managing role in the distribution of funds for infrastructure projects within Indigenous communities.

Can you elaborate on how this particular project aims to address infrastructure challenges within Indigenous communities and what specific types of projects will benefit from this funding?

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

My understanding is that the agreement will provide for a broad and long list of infrastructure programs to be funded, and this would include everything from broadband projects, roads and energy infrastructure to water and waste water management, housing, commercial and industrial developments. This is very important work that First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities will benefit from because they will be able to get loans more quickly and more easily.

**Senator Klyne:** As a supplemental question, Senator Gold, the CEO of the First Nations Bank of Canada, Mr. Bill Lomax, suggested in a CTV article that this agreement will provide accessible financing for projects ranging from large-scale developments to smaller initiatives, as you just outlined. Could you provide us with some assurances that this fund will, indeed, do just that?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for your question.

It is my understanding that both the Canada Infrastructure Bank and the First Nations Bank of Canada have, indeed, stated that the agreement will cover both large-scale and smaller-scale infrastructure initiatives. However, it is important to note that, to a considerable degree, these infrastructure projects tend to be larger in scope, but it does cover all sizes of projects.

**Senator Klyne:** Thank you.

## ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

## PARKS CANADA

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Government leader, in December, the Trudeau government actually paid marksmen from the United States and New Zealand to fly around in helicopters and shoot invasive deer on Sidney Island, British Columbia. Parks Canada says the cost for this to Canadian taxpayers was \$834,000. They confirmed 84 deer were culled, which works out to about \$10,000 a deer.

Even worse, the Trudeau government permitted these foreign hunters to use restricted AR-15 rifles equipped with prohibited silencers and prohibited 30-round magazines, all while they are taking firearms away from Canadian hunters.

Leader, why did the Jagmeet Singh-Justin Trudeau government think this was a good idea?

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

I do not have the information underlying the need to engage in this culling of deer. I will make an assumption — which I rarely do in this place — that it was based upon proper and appropriate input from the authorities on the ground, whether provincial, territorial or federal.

In that regard, I will certainly raise your concerns about the cost and other matters with the relevant minister.

**Senator Plett:** There is no justification for this, leader. None. They will never fix the budget, and they have no common sense. To top it all off, Parks Canada also confirmed that 20% of the deer culled by the foreign hunters were the wrong species of deer.

The Prime Minister proves time and time again that he is not worth the cost, doesn't he, leader?

**Senator Gold:** I think the answer to that question is, "No," but I congratulate you, honourable colleague, on managing to get in three or four of your catchphrases with a very brief question.

**Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** You mentioned proper input, and the question is: Why were the local residents — B.C. hunters — not consulted on this? My question also concerns the invasive deer cull in December.

I strongly suspect, if given the chance, local B.C. hunters would have gladly paid for tags or permits to participate in this cull instead of having Canadian taxpayers bear the cost of \$834,000. This could have provided food for their families, and they wouldn't have fired semi-automatic rifles from a helicopter while doing so. I also suspect local hunters would have shot the correct species of deer.

Leader, if the government was intent on going ahead with this, why were local B.C. hunters not asked to participate?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for your question. It's a fair question. I will certainly add that to the question that I will address to the minister.

**Senator Martin:** Leader, Parks Canada has said that the second phase of the cull will take place between this coming fall and the spring of 2025. Given the waste of money and the utter lack of common sense displayed so far, is the Trudeau government considering any changes to the next phase of its deer cull on Sidney Island?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you. Once again, I now have an even longer list of questions that I will address to the minister, and I undertake to do so.

## CARBON TAX

**Hon. Leo Housakos:** Senator Gold, on April 1, your government plans to again increase the carbon tax — a carbon tax that has contributed absolutely nothing to hitting your environmental targets, yet has contributed to creating inflation and an historic high cost of living that is pummelling young Canadians, such as those who are up here in the gallery, who are having a hard time buying homes. It has created a record number of Canadians lining up at food banks.

When is your government going to stop being ideological about this and understand that this thing isn't working? When will your government, once and for all, spike the hike, axe the tax and put an end to this April Fool's joke?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** In my tradition, we are accused of answering questions with questions. The government will answer your question, and then I will pose one of my own.

The government has no intention of retreating on putting a price on pollution, which is the most market-sensitive, effective measure to address the existential climate challenge that we and our planet is facing.

My question to you is: When will the opposition stop misleading Canadians? It is clear by third-party validators that the price on pollution has a negligible impact on the price of food, a negligible impact on inflation and it is not, in any sense, contributing to the real problems that many Canadians are, indeed, facing, and properly so. It is wrong and it is regrettable to instrumentalize the suffering of Canadians who are struggling to put food on their table by misleading them with regard to the impacts of the price on pollution, which independent non-government —

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, Senator Gold.

**Senator Housakos:** Senator Gold, what's regrettable is that this government is pummelling young Canadians. This carbon tax is creating inflation. That's the only thing that has come out of this, and not a single time have you hit any of your environmental targets. That's the reality.

Even Prime Minister Jean Chrétien always said, "Any good prime minister will acknowledge when it's time to change and something isn't working." Change your mind and understand that this isn't working.

I'll ask a simple question for you: Ever since you've implemented this carbon tax, how much revenue has your government collected off this carbon tax? Tell Canadians how much and how negligible it is.

**Senator Gold:** One of the things that is important for Canadians to know — and I have said it on many different occasions — is that most of the revenue that has been collected by the carbon tax is returned to Canadians.

A family of four in Alberta will receive, on average, about \$1,800 a year. A family of four in Manitoba will receive approximately \$1,200 a year. A family in Newfoundland and Labrador will receive close to \$1,200. That's where the money is going. It's going back into the pockets of Canadians.

• (0950)

## FINANCE

### ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Leader, on March 30, 2021, I put a written question on the Senate Order Paper, asking how many middle-class jobs were created in Canada by the inept Trudeau government giving the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank \$250 million. It remains unanswered on our Order Paper.

My office submitted an access to information request to the Department of Finance seeking any documents they produced in relation to my Order Paper question. A response was recently provided. It appears work was done on an answer, but it has all been redacted or withheld. Leader, it's been almost three years. Why is this Trudeau government still hiding the answer?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Colleague, thank you for your question, and again, on many occasions, our office has done everything it can to transmit requests for information and encourage that information be provided in a timely fashion. Although I am gratified with the recent tabling of many dozens of answers, it is still an unacceptable situation that senators should have to wait so long. That is why this government supports — as I have said publicly in this chamber and before our Rules Committee — a change to the *Rules of the Senate*, to bring us more in line with the practice and rules of the House of Commons and ensure that when senators pose their legitimate questions to the government, they get an answer in a timely fashion. I will continue to push for that.

**Senator Plett:** We all know why I haven't received the answer. The Trudeau government sent \$250 million to a bank controlled by Beijing's Communist Party. They received nothing in return and don't want to admit it in writing. The access to information response shows that in 2021, the Department of Finance was instructed to answer my question within a reasonable time frame. Is three years reasonable, leader?

Canadians deserve better.

**Senator Gold:** Three years is not a reasonable time frame, senator. I stand here to answer as best and as transparently as I can, and when I disagree with either the premise of your questions or, indeed, even the assertions that you make, I'm not shy to say so. But when I do agree with a situation that is not appropriate, respectful of the Senate, I also stand here.

You'll recall, senators, that though I represent the Senate to the government, I also represent the government to the Senate, and in that regard, I will continue to push for timely responses to your questions.

## MINISTER'S TRANSPORTATION

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Leader, this past July, a reporter asked Minister Freeland about the impact of the Prime Minister's carbon tax on residents of Prince Edward Island. She responded by saying in part:

. . . I don't actually own a car because I live in downtown Toronto. I'm like, I don't know, 300 metres from the nearest subway. I walk, I take the subway . . . .

When it was later pointed out to Minister Freeland that she has a taxpayer-funded car driven in the Greater Toronto Area, or GTA, she said this was ". . . peddling blatant misinformation."

Documents released in January show the minister billed taxpayers around \$10,000 for limos and taxis in the GTA.

Leader, are her expense claims misinformation?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Again, senator, thank you for your question. There is clearly a difference, if I may state the obvious, and as your question revealed, between whether there is a minister's car available for her in Toronto and whether she has claimed, as we all do, legitimate expenses associated with parliamentary work.

The price on pollution measure has a different impact on individuals depending on where they live and whether they have access to public transportation. Those of us who live in big cities have an easier time avoiding using cars than those in more rural areas or smaller communities. Again, the price of pollution does provide important rebates to everyone who lives in a province, like P.E.I., that has not decided to put a carbon pricing regime in place.

**Senator Plett:** It was reported in January that Minister Freeland billed just over \$3,000 for limo and taxi rides and \$6,736 for separate trips using her official chauffeur. Leader, isn't it hypocritical for the minister to lecture Canadians who cannot afford to pay for gas, and who will pay even more in carbon tax as of April 1, when she spends thousands of their hard-earned dollars on limos and taxis?

**Senator Gold:** It is not hypocritical for the Minister of Finance, or any minister or parliamentarian, to do their work, and it is not inappropriate that legitimate expenses associated with our work be compensated and covered by our budgets and taxpayers.

The fact remains, colleagues, that the price on pollution is an appropriate measure that has rebates built into it to mitigate the impacts on individual Canadians.

## PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

### COST OF EVENTS

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Leader, it turns out three affordability cabinet retreats taken by Prime Minister Trudeau and his ministers cost taxpayers a lot more than originally thought.

The *National Post* reported the three-day cabinet retreat in Vancouver in September of 2022 cost \$471,000. Documents provided to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation through access to information show another three-day Trudeau cabinet retreat in Hamilton in 2023 cost \$305,000. A three-day affordability retreat in Prince Edward Island in August 2023 cost at least \$485,000. This adds up to over \$1.3 million, and not all of the expenses have been disclosed yet. How is this affordability, leader? Is this worth the cost?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. The measures that the government has put in place to assist Canadians are working; they are helping. Canada is building more homes thanks to programs designed to create incentives and streamline processes for the construction of the much-needed homes and rental accommodations that Canadians seek.

The measures that Canada has put in place to assist with other aspects of the cost of living — from the very important measures to provide affordable daycare, so that working parents can be free to work and know that their children are being well taken care of, to the first steps toward a Pharmacare program to provide free contraceptives and so on — are discussed at such retreats, and they are to the benefit of all Canadians.

**Senator Plett:** If we want to talk about building homes, \$1.3 million would have built at least four homes in many parts of our country.

Senator Gold, last month I asked how much Prime Minister Trudeau and his cabinet spent on their most recent affordability retreat in Montreal. Last month I asked you, so what did you find out, leader? Do we have to force through some other mechanism to get the answer?

How much did the Trudeau cabinet spend on their fourth affordability retreat while Canadians used food banks in record numbers and searched Dumpsters for food?

**Senator Gold:** Again, thank you, senator. I don't have an answer for you with regard to the most recent cabinet meetings in Montreal, which I had the privilege of attending. But once again, these meetings are where the government takes the time to hear from experts and stakeholders and discuss amongst

themselves how to best move forward to assist Canadians, who continue to be challenged and need the support and help that the government provides.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-13(3), I would like to inform the Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate will address the items in the following order: third reading of Bill C-34, followed by second reading of Bill C-67, followed by second reading of Bill C-68, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

### INVESTMENT CANADA ACT

#### BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

**Hon. Clément Gignac** moved third reading of Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act.

He said: Honourable senators, it is my pleasure to speak today at third reading of Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act.

• (1000)

[*English*]

Over the next 45 minutes, I will do my best to convince you and every person waiting to support this bill.

I am just kidding, colleagues.

My speech will last a maximum of 28 minutes. I will do it in a very respectful way.

[*Translation*]

I would like to talk briefly about why the Senate should pass this bill. Before I proceed, I'd like to begin by thanking all my Banking, Commerce and the Economy Committee colleagues, as well as the bill's critic, Senator Carignan, for their involvement in our study of this bill. I'm especially grateful to my Progressive Senate Group colleague, Senator Bellemare, and to the committee chair, Senator Wallin, for their flexibility and their valuable advice on how to append several observations in both official languages during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill in committee yesterday at noon, just hours before the official report was tabled in this chamber yesterday afternoon. This experience gave me an appreciation of how the legislative process and the logistics of Senate business are enhancing this assembly's agility and effectiveness.

Colleagues, the Investment Canada Act is an important and far-reaching tool. It enables Canada to respond to evolving threats that could result from foreign investment, yet it protects Canada's receptiveness to beneficial international investments.

Canada is already an attractive location for foreign investment, as the most recent statistics available for 2023 show. In fact, Canada ranks third among OECD countries in terms of foreign direct investment dollars, after the United States and Brazil. Per capita, that means Canada is number one.

Despite this success, we need to adapt. The world has changed in 15 years, and global trade is becoming more fragmented. As a member of the G7, a member of the FVEY, better known as the Five Eyes, and, more importantly, as a major trading partner — and military partner, in the case of NORAD — of our American neighbours, we can't turn a blind eye to national security issues. We may long for the good old days of barrier-free trade liberalization of decades past, but we can't stick our heads in the sand.

We have to be extra cautious with respect to certain investment plans from certain autocratic countries that could possibly be concealing malicious intentions.

That's another reason why we need to modernize our legislation so it can provide foreign investors with clarity and predictability.

Our country needs foreign direct investment and international trade to enable Canadians to maintain their standard of living and fund social programs. That's why the government has chosen to take a balanced approach, and it will continue to be pragmatic in taking action on the very real issues of national security.

In return, Canada will have to remain vigilant and fight back against purely protectionist measures, which introduce economic barriers under the guise of national security. I am referring to tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum imposed by our neighbours to the south under the pretext of national security. At the same time, it is essential that the law be modernized to adapt to these new threats.

Canada remains an open economy that is the envy of the world, but our country is also increasingly the target of hostile actors.

Honourable senators, our allies, such as the Five Eyes, have adopted their own modern regimes in recent years. This update of the Investment Canada Act will provide authorities with new tools to prevent hostile actors from exploiting Canada's expertise and capacity for innovation.

For example, the new pre-implementation filing requirement will guarantee that Canada has more oversight into certain key sectors, in particular those that give foreign investors substantive access to cutting-edge intellectual property and trade secrets once the investment is finalized.

What is more, the new ministerial power to impose interim conditions during the national security review process will help reduce the risk of harm to national security arising in the course of the review itself, for example, through the possible transfer of intellectual property before the review is complete.

The proposed changes in Bill C-34 also include financial penalties in the case of non-compliance with the law. These penalties have not been updated in several decades and are no longer commensurate with the current typical value of transactions.

The bill will also enable Canada to share specific information with its international counterparts to protect common interests in matters of security by using evidence-based best practices.

Finally, the resulting amended legislation will help trigger the national security review process when the investor has been found guilty of corruption in a given jurisdiction.

Honourable senators, like many other bills passed in this chamber, this bill is not perfect, and the Senate Banking Committee added several observations. Senator Bellemare will no doubt elaborate on those observations, since she is responsible for many of them.

However, as demonstrated by the unanimous support Bill C-34 received in the other place, national security is not a partisan issue, and senators should also support this bill.

As the bill's sponsor, I thought it was important to look at how the bill evolved in the other place before it was submitted to the Senate for our consideration.

Honourable senators, this bill underwent an in-depth review by the committee in the other place, which held 12 meetings and heard from 44 witnesses.

What is more, unlike several other bills that were passed in the other place, this time, the government agreed to many amendments presented by Conservative, NDP and Bloc Québécois members in order to improve the bill that is before us today.

For our part, the Banking Committee held six meetings on this bill and heard from ten witnesses, including the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, minister responsible for the bill. The committee also produced a report and added observations, which my colleague will talk about later.

I hope everyone will agree that, taken together, these legislative changes will help Canada benefit economically from foreign investment while strengthening its ability to act quickly and decisively to address national security threats.

Honourable senators, it's been a long week. Let me therefore conclude by inviting you to support Bill C-34.

Thank you for your attention. *Meegwetch.*

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** Thank you for your kind words, Senator Gignac. It always worries me when the sponsor of a government bill thanks me for my work as critic. It makes me wonder if I've done my job properly.

Colleagues, I rise today to speak at third reading of Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, whose short title is the National Security Review of Investments Modernization Act.

The Investment Canada Act was passed a little over 40 years ago, so it does indeed need to be modernized. As I pointed out in my speech at second reading, the bill was amended and improved for the last time in 2009, under the Harper government, through Bill C-10, the Budget Implementation Act, 2009.

The economic aspect of the Investment Canada Act is certainly important, but now, more than ever, the national security component is of critical importance. In that regard, I'm very concerned about Bill C-34. Fortunately, some Conservative amendments were passed in the other place that provide additional safeguards for our national protection, but I'm still seriously concerned. Again, I don't believe that Bill C-34 goes far enough. I will return to that later.

• (1010)

Recent years have shown us that the current government takes an outrageously lax and alarming approach to Canada's security, the administration of public funds, the overuse of all kinds of consultants, the failure to enforce strict and transparent accountability, but most of all, the apparent total lack of accountability of government ministers for the many abuses committed.

In fact, this government's incredible bungling is enough to make anyone's head spin. The recent scandal involving the ArriveCAN app is only the last in a long list.

Although we generally agree with Bill C-34, our study has revealed some seriously disturbing flaws. Considering the aggressive behaviour of certain dictatorships toward Canada, including interference in our democratic process, industrial espionage and hostile takeovers of some of our telecommunications companies, why doesn't Bill C-34 make them a priority or, at least consider them in a more specific, contemporary way?

Faced with this inconsistency, all Canadians would agree that it defies common sense. Obviously, I do.

The committee heard from a number of witnesses, including Anthony Seaboyer, Director of the Centre for Security, Armed Forces and Society at the Royal Military College of Canada. Mr. Seaboyer gave us a very enlightening, but also very worrisome, presentation.

Essentially, he believes that if the bill doesn't go further, it will be partly obsolete before it is even passed. According to his testimony, his research focuses on the weaponization of information by authoritarian regimes. He said the following:

I research how authoritarian regimes target Canada with artificial intelligence . . . applications for hybrid and grey zone warfare exploitation operations of our open, rules-based democratic societies and institutions. They do this to serve their regime interests. . . . Particularly, I look at how they try to undermine democracies, and why they do this, through the weaponization of information.

In that sense, he's a privileged player, but, above all, an extremely credible one. Mr. Seaboyer considers the bill to be a good step in the right direction, but listening to his statement, given that when the bill was drafted, AI-based applications had nowhere near the data processing capacity they have today, this bill could be obsolete as soon as it passes.

Mr. Seaboyer stressed that the thresholds that trigger security reviews should be considerably lowered, that much harsher monetary penalties should be introduced for non-compliance and that all companies from totalitarian countries, such as China, Iran, Russia and North Korea, should automatically be subject to security reviews when those companies want to invest in Canada. I'll come back to each of those aspects later, but it's already clear that Bill C-34 does not meet the requirements outlined by Professor Seaboyer.

Honourable senators, we need to seriously consider whether Bill C-34 is not already obsolete.

During committee study in the other place, the Conservatives presented an amendment to ensure that a security review is automatically triggered as soon as an investment is made in Canada by a company headquartered in a totalitarian, undemocratic country. That amendment was rather nonchalantly defeated, but I believe it was crucial to Canada's security.

The government's refusal to amend the bill in this way is tantamount to denying the new environment in which we now live. Our civilizations are fighting an information war, but mostly a war against disinformation. With the advent of artificial intelligence, it's impossible to imagine the new stratagems that our adversaries will deploy to destabilize our democracies.

For example, under Chinese law, businesses in that country are required to enable the operations of Chinese intelligence services and to share any exclusive intelligence with them. If a Chinese company, of any kind, refuses to comply with the demands of the Chinese intelligence services, its leaders run the risk of extrajudicial incarceration and severe sanctions, following well-established protocols. That is what Mr. Seaboyer told us during his testimony.

He gave the example of electric vehicles that might be introduced in our countries through Chinese companies. Their prices would be well below current market prices to make it

easier to flood western markets with these vehicles. Let us not forget that electric cars are mobile data sensors. Do we really want companies based in totalitarian countries to roll out a multitude of potential spy agents in our streets? This is no longer the stuff of science fiction, honourable senators. It is on our doorstep and may have already entered our homes. We have to be extra vigilant, but unfortunately, that is not what Bill C-34 does.

Look at what happened with Hytera. I talked about it in my speech at second reading, but I believe it is worth mentioning it again to illustrate the very real possibility of potentially harmful companies intruding in our lives.

In 2017, a company called Norsat set up shop in Canada. It is still based in British Columbia. It also owns Sinclair in Toronto. The company was acquired by Hytera, which is partially owned by the Government of China and works in the critical telecommunications sector. Even though the then Minister of Industry was urged many times in the House to conduct a national security review of that acquisition, he refused to do so, and therefore there was no national security review.

In January 2022, Hytera was charged with 21 counts of espionage in the United States, and President Biden subsequently banned the company from doing business in the U.S. However, eight months later, the RCMP purchased radio frequency equipment to integrate into the communications system, giving the Chinese state-owned subsidiaries access to all the locations of the RCMP communications services. No national security review was conducted on this either.

Shockingly, Public Services and Procurement Canada has confirmed that security concerns were not taken into account during the tendering process for this equipment. This is alarming. The Liberals also failed to consult their own government's Communications Security Establishment about the contract. Instead, the contract was simply awarded to the lowest bidder.

This example should raise major concerns because of a new provision introduced in Bill C-34. The current Investment Canada Act leaves it up to cabinet, acting in accordance with certain criteria, to order a security review of potential foreign investments in Canada. However, Bill C-34 hands that responsibility over solely to the minister responsible for the act in consultation with the Minister of Public Safety. Colleagues, don't you think the Hytera example should serve as a huge, glaring red flag with respect to this new provision?

The other aspect of Bill C-34 that really bothers me is how weak the penalties for breaking the law are. They're laughable, considering what's at stake, and utterly preposterous compared to what other countries are doing. Here again, Canada is lagging behind.

Mr. Seaboyer did not mince words on the subject. Here is what he said:

. . . the level of penalties is far behind, and it's much easier to perform these attacks in Canada. The repercussions are nowhere close to those of some of our Five Eyes partners, and, to be compatible with them, we need to be much more rigorous on some levels. . . . but we certainly need to cooperate better and more optimally with them, matching more closely the repercussions they have introduced.

Mr. Seaboyer also said the following:

I was very surprised when I saw the penalty numbers. They are so low that really . . . it has zero effect.

They are so low that they have zero effect. Honourable senators, it would be difficult to be clearer than that.

• (1020)

Despite Bill C-34's many flaws, we will still vote for it in order to move a step forward.

As I mentioned in my introduction, a future government will obviously have to quickly introduce a new bill to plug the many national security holes in Bill C-34.

Thank you.

**Hon. Diane Bellemare:** I don't have a written speech, but I'm prepared to share some thoughts based on everything I have heard and some of the evidence given at the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy.

I would like to thank my colleague Senator Gignac for his kind words and his hard work. I would also like to thank Senator Carignan, the critic for this bill.

Let me put this bill in context. What does foreign investment in Canada amount to? Does it matter? My analysis of this bill is more in keeping with the context in which it is set.

To give you some idea, in 2021, the value of foreign direct investment in Canada was 3.3% of GDP. This represents an upward trend. As Senator Gignac pointed out, Canada is currently one of the world's top recipients of foreign investment.

On average, between 2012 and 2021, foreign direct investment represented 2.1% of GDP. In contrast, investment by Canadians abroad — because Canadians do invest directly overseas — represented 4.9% of GDP in 2021. On average, over 10 years, investments by Canadians represented 3.3% of GDP.

We are therefore receiving and making foreign investments, and the investments that we are making exceed the investments that we are receiving. That is rather worrisome, but I looked at

what is happening in the OECD. On average, foreign direct investments in OECD countries represent 1.1% of their GDP, and the investments that these countries make abroad represent 2.1% of their GDP.

In general, the countries invest more abroad than they receive. That reassured me a little about what is happening in Canada. However, our country's numbers are high compared to the OECD average. How does Canada rank when it comes to global investments? The investments made in Canada represented 19.7% of the GDP in 2021. This means that, whether it be a good year or a bad year, we are talking about an average of 20% of the GDP when it comes to investments made in Canada. Investments made in Canada have dropped in recent years. Foreign direct investments represent about 10% of our total investments.

That is important. We have to pay attention to that, because our prosperity depends on it, particularly since, in general, the absolute value of Canada's productivity is dropping. As a result, there is a legitimate threat to our prosperity.

Investments are important and foreign investments are a major part of that. We also need to understand that Bill C-34 amends the Investment Canada Act from a national security perspective. This bill does not include the notion of prosperity. We can come back to that.

Witnesses told us about their concerns, which can be divided into three categories. We heard testimony from witnesses who were concerned that, in the current geopolitical context of the Cold War, there needs to be a certain level of mistrust of certain foreign investments. Senator Carignan went over that.

On the other hand, we have received written criticism from others across the country who say that overly heavy bureaucratic regulations could drive foreign investment out of Canada and harm our prosperity. A balance must be struck between these two aspects. Another group of witnesses told us — and this criticism came up often in the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy — that we must be increasingly aware of capital investments that are intangible, related to data and related to intellectual property.

Senator Deacon has experience with this approach and this aspect of investment. He has told the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy many times that we need to be concerned about these intangible investments.

That dimension is absent from Bill C-34. In addition, prosperity has taken a back seat to security in this bill. That's why the committee appended various observations to its report.

First, Senator Deacon suggested adding comments about putting greater emphasis on investments in intangibles. For greater clarity about that, I would like to quote from a brief that

the committee received from Jim Balsillie of BlackBerry fame, who appeared before the committee previously. The brief stated the following:

Today's economy is knowledge-based, data-driven, and increasingly underpinned by the machine learning capital. In such an economy, FDI is extractive —

— “extractive” is the key word that's important to understand —

— where technology, knowledge and data assets, senior executive personnel, tax base and wealth effects can easily flow out of countries that receive foreign investments. Prosperity and security risks do not scale with size and type of buyer but with the nature of economic and security spillovers.

He said that we need to be careful and made the following suggestion:

It is critical that Canada builds capacity inside the Federal Government for governance of today's economy.

That's why Mr. Balsillie, Dan Ciuriak and others propose the following:

Canada needs to create a standalone agency that has the ability and expertise to examine all aspects of a transaction and provide a unified view of the costs and benefits to Ministers. Our major allies—the US, the UK and Australia—all have a single body responsible for reviewing foreign investment (CFIUS in the US, the Investment Security Unit in the UK, and the Foreign Investment Review Board in Australia), and Canada should adopt the same approach.

That being said, that is not the scope of the bill we are studying; this is a bill to improve security with respect to the current geopolitical context. That is why we have appended some observations to indicate that it would be important for Canada that we, parliamentarians, revise the Investment Canada Act more thoroughly.

• (1030)

For now, let's move Bill C-34 forward. However, in our observations, we are asking the minister to come back and report in three years' time on how well the objectives have been reached, with a view to broadening the scope of the Investment Canada Act to include not only security, but also prosperity. Given the Canadian context and our investment trends, these issues deserve particular attention.

Our observations are appended to the committee's report and they are brief. With regard to intellectual property and data processing, the observations state the following:

Your committee believes it is important to ensure that government-funded intellectual property and treatment of personal data be considered as economic net benefit factors and that forthcoming regulations reflect that.



There is also a series of minor technical comments, particularly asking that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry report to parliamentarians within three years on the extent to which this bill is achieving its objectives.

With that, I thank you and invite you to vote in favour of the bill.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Question.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.)

[English]

#### APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 5, 2023-24

##### SECOND READING—DEBATE

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate)** moved second reading of Bill C-67, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

She said: Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise today to speak as the sponsor of Bill C-67, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

This bill contains the supply requirements for the 2023-24 Supplementary Estimates (C). These estimates were tabled in the other place by the President of the Treasury Board on February 15, and subsequently tabled in the Senate later that day.

As per customary practice, once tabled in the Senate, Supplementary Estimates (C) were referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance for examination and report. I know we all appreciate the work of our colleagues on the committee who conducted that pre-study over the last few weeks.

With this bill before us today, the government is requesting the Senate's approval of the estimates that the committee has been studying. Supplementary estimates outline incremental spending requirements. These are expenditures that were either not sufficiently developed when the Main Estimates were presented at the beginning of the fiscal year, or that were refined since then to account for recent developments.

The Main Estimates and supplementary estimates and their associated appropriation bills — tabled through each fiscal year — are crucial to Parliament's oversight of federal spending, and an important part of a democratic government.

Honourable senators, while prudent spending is the government's focus, the government is making — and will continue to make — meaningful investments to improve the lives of Canadians.

In total, these estimates describe \$13.2 billion in incremental budgetary spending. Of this amount, \$4.3 billion represents an increase in planned statutory spending, which means it's spending approved by Parliament through separate legislation and which, therefore, does not require our approval at this time. Forecasts of statutory expenditures are included in the estimates documents for information only.

In these Supplementary Estimates (C), the government is seeking approval for \$8.9 billion in additional voted spending. This would bring the total voted authorities for 2023-24 to \$248.2 billion. This total amount represents a 10.5% increase in total voted authorities over last year.

Among the major voted items in these Supplementary Estimates (C) are the following: \$1.4 billion for the Treasury Board Secretariat for compensation adjustments. This funding includes \$1.2 billion for the Treasury Board Secretariat to compensate departments and agencies for negotiated salary adjustments for recent collective agreements, and \$200 million for adjustments made to terms and conditions of employment in the federal public administration. These costs arise from agreements concluded and terms and conditions updated from May to December 2023, including one-time lump sum payments.

There is \$818.1 million for Indigenous Services Canada to implement reforms to the First Nations Child and Family Services program. This funding will improve child care capacity in First Nations communities, help address the impacts of poverty and remoteness, and increase the availability of safe and adequate housing for children on-reserve.

There is \$803.9 million for Indigenous Services Canada to continue implementation of Jordan's Principle. This funding will be used to provide First Nations children with access to social services and supports, notably related to health care and education.

There is \$590.9 million for the Department of National Defence for the Canadian Multi-Mission Aircraft project. The P-8A Poseidon is a long-range, long-endurance multi-mission aircraft specializing in anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare. The scope of this project includes the procurement of up to 16 Poseidon aircraft, spare parts, training, support equipment, mission support centres, integrated logistics support, weapons and expendables, infrastructure, capability upgrades and initial in-service support.

There is \$510 million for the Department of National Defence for the Strategic Tanker Transport Capability aircraft project. The CC-330 Husky fleet will conduct multiple tasks, such as in-flight refuelling of other aircraft, the airlift of military personnel and cargo, as well as medical evacuations and the strategic transport of Government of Canada officials. This project includes the acquisition and configuration of up to nine aircraft, as well as in-service support, infrastructure to house and maintain the fleet, and training and simulation capability.

There is \$362.4 million for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration for the Interim Housing Assistance Program. The Government of Canada has committed to providing funding to help alleviate the pressures that provinces face in providing services to asylum claimants. This funding will help provinces and municipalities continue to deliver interim housing for those claimants.

There is \$284.7 million for the Department of National Defence to support NATO operations in Central and Eastern Europe. This funding will be used to scale up current Canadian military activities in Latvia under Operation REASSURANCE, including increased personnel deployment, the acquisition of supplies and ammunition and infrastructure projects.

There is \$260 million for Indigenous Services Canada for the Emergency Management Assistance Program. This funding will be used to reimburse First Nations communities, as well as municipalities, provinces, territories and non-governmental emergency service providers, for costs incurred during emergency response and recovery activities on reserves across Canada.

There is \$250 million for the Department of National Defence for military aid to Ukraine in defence of its sovereignty. This funding will allow eligible entities to purchase or provide aid, including armoured personnel carriers and medical evacuation vehicles.

And, finally, there is \$100 million for the Canada Housing Benefit to help renters who struggle to find a safe and affordable place to live.

Those are the major expenditures that senators are being asked to approve through this bill. As I said earlier, the Supplementary Estimates (C) also highlight previously approved statutory expenditures simply for information purposes.

Among the largest increases here are the following: a \$3.2-billion increase in interest on unmatured debt, primarily due to higher projected interest rates and the impact of higher inflation on real return bonds; \$576 million in fiscal stabilization for a payment to Alberta to help the province with a year-over-year decline in its revenues for the 2020-21 fiscal year; and a \$499-million increase in Canada Student Grants, reflecting enhancements to the program announced in Budget 2023.

Also reflected in this total is a \$437-million decrease to Old Age Security payments based on an updated forecast of the average monthly rate, the number of beneficiaries and benefit repayment amounts.

• (1040)

In addition to these statutory budget expenditures, there are also statutory non-budgetary expenditures that provide spending authority for all transactions that result in the acquisition or disposal of loans, investments and advances. These are forecasted to rise by \$2.7 billion, and there are mainly two related items in this category. The first is \$1.4 billion for the acquisition of shares

in the Canada Growth Fund, which is part of the \$15-billion initial capitalization announced in Budget 2022. This arm's length public fund invests in projects that help grow Canada's economy while reducing carbon emissions. The second item is a \$1.3-billion increase in student loans, which reflects changes to loan limits and eligibility requirements announced in Budget 2023.

Honourable senators, these Supplementary Estimates (C) show that the government is investing to both address Canada's priorities at home and continue our work as a valued international partner. I hope you will join me in adopting this important bill. Thank you. *Hiy hiy*.

**Hon. Elizabeth Marshall:** Thank you very much, Senator LaBoucane-Benson, for your comments. I rise to speak to Bill C-67 as the critic, and I will start off on a negative note. I haven't seen the bill — it's not posted — so I don't know how we can vote on a bill that we haven't seen. For the purposes of my speech — well, it might be there now, but it wasn't there at ten o'clock, and I was checking all night.

I've used the schedule. Bill C-67 is based on Supplementary Estimates (C). There's a schedule at the back of Supplementary Estimates (C), so that's what I'm using as the basis for my speech, but I would appreciate if somebody could look and see what happened to the bill. It should be on the government website.

Honourable senators, I will get right into my speech now while somebody goes to see where the bill is.

In order to make expenditures, government must obtain the approval of Parliament, either through an appropriation bill, such as this one, or through other legislation, such as the Income Tax Act, the Old Age Security Act or the Financial Administration Act. Expenditures that are made through legislation other than an appropriation act like this one are called statutory expenditures. Expenditures made through appropriation acts are called voted expenditures.

This bill is requesting \$8.9 billion — or I think it is — and is supported by the Supplementary Estimates (C) document, which provides some detail as to how the requested money will be spent. This bill is the fifth appropriation bill for this year. Once enacted, voted budgetary expenditures for the year will be \$248 billion, and along with the statutory spending of \$247 billion, government will have the authority to spend \$495 billion. Of the \$495 billion, \$492 billion will affect the deficit, while the remaining \$2.9 billion will be recorded as loans, investments or advances.

Last year's Supplementary Estimates (C) indicated that total expenditures for the year were \$443 billion, and when you compare it to this year's expenditures, as indicated in Supplementary Estimates (C), it's \$492 billion, which is 11% higher.

The updated statutory expenditures of \$7 billion in Supplementary Estimates (C) include a \$3.2 billion increase in interest on unmatured debt, \$1.4 billion for the acquisition of

shares in the Canada Growth Fund, a \$1.3-billion increase in student loans and a \$499-million increase in Canada Student Grants.

The interest of \$3.2 billion on unmatured debt and the \$499 million for student grants will be recorded as expenditures this year and will contribute to the deficit for the year. But the \$1.4 billion for the shares in the Canada Growth Fund and the \$1.3 billion for student loans will be recorded as assets on the government's balance sheet and will not be used in calculating the deficit, unless and until they are reduced or written off.

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat is requesting just over \$1 billion for departments and agencies for negotiated salary adjustments. This will increase personnel costs so far this year to \$60 billion, compared to \$54 billion last year, an increase of 11%. Other personnel costs approved by other legislation increased last year's \$54 billion to \$67 billion. These other costs include government's contributions as employer to various employee benefit plans. These other costs will also increase the \$60 billion recorded so far this year.

I expect — and this is my estimate, not the Parliamentary Budget Officer's — that total personnel costs for this year will exceed \$70 billion. Personnel costs have increased significantly over the past seven years, from \$40 billion in 2016-17 to \$67 billion last year. Personnel costs last year made up 15% of government expenditures.

The Public Service Commission of Canada, in its recent report, said that as of March 31, 2023, there were 274,219 employees, up 6.5% from the previous year and 40% higher than the end of 2014-15. The Treasury Board Secretariat has provided similar numbers: 271,000 employees in the core public service plus 86,000 employees in separate agencies, for a total of 357,000 employees. Compare this 357,000 employees to the 257,000 employees in the federal public service in 2015, and you will see there has been an increase of 100,000 employees over eight years.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, in his report, uses full-time equivalents in analyzing the government's personnel expenditures. His report indicated that the federal public service expanded from 335,000 full-time equivalents in 2006-07 to 432,000 full-time equivalents in 2022-23. The Departmental Plans indicate a further increase, from the 432,000 full-time equivalents last year, which was March 31, 2023, to 439,000 as of March 31, 2024.

The increase in the number of employees in the federal public service has raised several issues. For example, has the increase in federal government employees improved the level of service provided to Canadians? Why has the increase in the number of employees in the federal public service been accompanied by an increase in the cost of professional services?

In its 2023 budget, the government made a commitment to reduce the cost of professional services in this fiscal year by \$350 million. However, for this fiscal year, once we approve Bill C-67, funding for professional services has not been reduced.

Rather, funding for professional services has actually increased by \$1.1 billion, from \$21.3 billion last year to \$22.4 billion this year.

Now, it's possible that the \$350 million that Minister Anand spoke about is frozen within the \$22.4 billion, but I don't know that for sure. If so, there has still been a significant increase. If the \$350 million had been frozen, there has still been a significant increase of \$750 million in funding for professional services — not a decrease, but an increase.

Of the \$8.9 billion being requested in this appropriation bill, the Department of National Defence is requesting the highest amount, \$2.2 billion or one quarter of the funding requested. More than half of the funding is for capital projects, the largest ones being the Canadian Multi-Mission Aircraft project, the Strategic Tanker Transport Capability project, both of which Senator LaBoucane-Benson mentioned, as well as the Canadian surface combatant project.

Now, \$590 million is being requested for the Canadian Multi-Mission Aircraft project. It was a major project identified by the 2017 strategic policy review of the Department of National Defence. This is the first funding request for this project. The estimated cost for its acquisition, project management, infrastructure and contingencies exceeds \$5 billion, so we can expect many more funding requests in the future for this project. Major in-service support of the fleet is expected to be over \$10 billion.

• (1050)

The government announced the replacement of the 14 aircraft in its Aurora fleet with the Poseidon aircraft in November of last year. The Aurora fleet has been in service for more than four decades and faces significant obsolescence challenges. It has been deemed difficult to maintain and will be removed from service in 2030.

The government has indicated that it will purchase 14 of the Poseidon aircraft with options for an additional 2. The first delivery of the new aircraft is expected in 2026, and final delivery is expected in 2027-28. As Senator LaBoucane-Benson mentioned, the government's website states that the Poseidon aircraft is an “. . . enhanced long-range, long-endurance multi-mission aircraft specialized in anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare . . . .”

The second large project, for which the Department of National Defence is requesting funding of \$509 million, is the Strategic Tanker Transport Capability project.

Last June, the government awarded a contract for the acquisition of a new fleet of nine Husky aircraft, which would include four new and five used aircraft. This aircraft will conduct multiple tasks, such as in-flight fuelling of other aircraft, military personnel and cargo airlift, medical evacuations and, as my colleague said, “. . . strategic transport of Government of Canada officials.” I don't know what that means, but that's from the website.

The new aircraft will replace the Polaris aircraft, which have been operating since 1992. The acquisition and conversion costs of the new aircraft are estimated to be \$3.6 billion. We will see more requests for funding for that project.

The government's level of military spending has been criticized, especially in light of the fact that it has not reached NATO's funding target of 2% of GDP. In addition, a number of years ago, the government made a commitment to update its 2017 defence policy. The promised update has never materialized.

The 2017 defence policy indicated capital spending of \$163 billion over a 20-year period from 2017 to 2037. The department recently increased the \$163 billion to \$214 billion over the same 20-year period.

However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has determined that the department never delivers on its spending commitment; rather, it revises its plans to push spending further into the future.

For example, under the 2017 defence policy, capital spending this year, 2023-24, was projected to be \$11.1 billion. When the 2022 update was released, capital spending was revised downwards to \$10.8 billion. But when you look at Bill C-67, you will see that the department will have funding of only \$7.2 billion. We've gone from \$11.1 billion, down to \$10.8 billion and now down to \$7.2 billion. But that's not the end of the story.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has indicated that for the period between 2017 and 2023, there was a cumulative shortfall of almost \$12 billion between what the government actually spent on capital projects and what was originally planned in the 2017 defence policy. In addition, although the funding provided for capital projects through appropriation bills has never been at the level indicated in the department's capital plans, historically, the department has not even spent all of the funding approved in appropriation bills for capital projects.

I will now move on to public debt charges.

The Department of Finance indicates additional interest costs of just over \$3 billion on unmatured debt, bringing the year-to-date total to just over \$36 billion. Also disclosed are other interest costs of \$1 billion, bringing these other interest costs to almost \$5 billion.

Because interest costs are statutory payments authorized by the Financial Administration Act, it is expected that public debt charges will exceed the amounts reported in Supplementary Estimates (C).

The Fall Economic Statement, which was released in November, indicates that public debt charges will be \$46.5 billion this year — \$2.6 billion more than the \$43.9 billion estimated eight months earlier in Budget 2023. Public debt charges have consistently been underestimated by the government in the last number of years.

For example, in Budget 2022, the government estimated that public debt charges for this year would be \$32.9 billion. The *Fall Economic Statement 2022* increased the \$32.9 billion to \$43.3 billion, then to \$43.9 billion in Budget 2023, and again in

November's Fall Economic Statement to \$46.5 billion. Public debt charges have increased every time the government has tabled a budget or a fall economic statement. In recent years, there hasn't been a decrease — only increases.

Interest on the debt has increased due to the increase in interest rates and the increase in the amount of government borrowing. For example, in March of 2015, government's market debt was \$649 billion. At the end of last year, it had risen to \$1.259 trillion and is expected to be \$1.349 trillion at the end of this year, which is double what it was in 2015. If you include the Crown corporation debt, at the end of this month, government's overall debt is projected to be \$1.660 trillion.

Under the Borrowing Authority Act, the ceiling for borrowing is \$1.831 trillion. Since borrowing is projected to exceed this amount in 2025-26, the government will have to request parliamentary authority to increase the ceiling — probably in April's budget or in the fall fiscal update in November.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has indicated that debt service charges as a percentage of revenues increased from 7.8% last year to 10.2% this year. Similarly, November's fiscal update indicates that public debt charges as a percentage of GDP amounted to 1.2% last year, increasing to 1.6% this year and 1.8% next year. The fiscal update also indicates that public debt charges as a percentage of total expenses were 7.4% last year, 9.5% this year and are projected to increase to 10.1% next year.

Interest and debt are on an upward trajectory. As public debt charges increase, it crowds out funding that could be used for other programs. Public debt charges are now one of government's most expensive programs.

The Department of Employment and Social Development Canada is requesting \$273 million, of which \$37 million is for the onboarding of Old Age Security under the Benefits Delivery Modernization programme.

The Benefits Delivery Modernization programme is the largest IT project undertaken to date by the federal government. It commenced in 2017 at an initial cost of \$1.75 billion and was scheduled to be completed by 2030. The estimated cost has increased twice since then and is likely to increase again. As of April 2022, the cost had increased 43% to \$2.5 billion. In a recent article, the *National Post* reported that the department was going to approach the Treasury Board with a new request of \$8 billion, but this was denied by departmental officials during a recent meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The purpose of the new system is to migrate Old Age Security, Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan benefits to a modern cloud-based platform. Currently, about 10 million Canadians receive benefits under these three programs. The new system is also supposed to transform benefits delivery and the user experience to meet the needs of diverse groups, including seniors, people in remote locations, Indigenous peoples and refugees.

Last November, Canada's Auditor General released a report on this new system. She reported that since 2017, the department has encountered numerous obstacles and delays in the implementation of the Benefits Delivery Modernization programme. For example, she said that the department revised its estimated date for migrating Old Age Security benefits to a new platform from December 2023 to December 2024, and any delays encountered during the migration may shift the completion date to December 2025.

The Auditor General has highlighted the risks associated with implementing such a large system, especially in light of the problems encountered with the Phoenix system.

• (1100)

While the \$37 million requested for this system in this bill is not material considering this bill is requesting \$8.9 billion, it is important to recognize that many of these programs have already received significant funding in past bills and will be requesting significant funding in future bills. Total funding for many of these projects will be in the billions of dollars.

Honourable senators, this bill is requesting funding for many government programs. My comments relate only to a select few programs because of their cost. There are many more programs which would be of interest to my colleagues.

I thank senators for the opportunity to speak to this bill, and these conclude my comments on Bill C-67.

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** I would have a question for Senator Marshall if she would —

**Senator Marshall:** Oh, yes.

**Senator Plett:** Thank you very much, Senator Marshall.

Senator Marshall, thank you for a speech on a supply bill that you don't have a copy of. You indeed did a good job. I'm sure better than what the government has been able to do when it's their bill.

Senator Marshall, I'm just going to read something and then ask a question. Basically, I'm reading:

C-67, 44th Parliament, 1st session

November 22, 2021, to present

An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024

Short title: Appropriation Act No. 5, 2023-24

Bill type

House Government Bill

*Appropriation*

Sponsor

President of the Treasury Board

And then it says, "The text of this bill is not available."

Senator Marshall, I think you were the Auditor General in Newfoundland and Labrador for 10 years and you've been in this chamber now for a number of years. In your time as the Auditor General and as one of the best members on the Finance Committee in this chamber for many years, would you suggest this is a little unprecedented that we are asked to vote on something that we don't know what it's about and haven't been able to read?

**Senator Marshall:** I agree. I don't see how — well, I think I take exception to the fact that I'm being asked to vote on a bill that I haven't seen. I know that the blue book — Supplementary Estimates (C) — the schedule is at the back and that schedule is usually what is attached to the bill.

As a former auditor, I actually go through what is at the back of the blue book and I check it against the actual bill and the schedule. We did have an incident a number of years ago — I don't remember the details — but Senator Day was the chair of the Finance Committee, and there was something wrong with the bill that came over, but it was the actual bill. So while we had done our study of the blue book, et cetera, yes, it's a problem.

All evening I was checking the website and all morning I was checking the website. I don't know if that's there now, but, yes, you need the bill to vote on it.

POINT OF ORDER

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Your Honour, I find this frustrating beyond all measure. This is an embarrassment again to this government.

I'm standing on a point of order right now, Your Honour, because it is embarrassing. It is an insult to this chamber to ask us to vote on something that somebody with the expertise of Senator Marshall has not been able to determine what we're voting on, and here we're being asked by this incompetent government — who themselves obviously don't know what's in the bill or they would send it to us — to vote on something.

Your Honour, my point of order is this: I think we need to suspend, and we need to get a copy of the bill so that we know what we're voting on and we need some time to read this bill. So unless the government has that bill, Your Honour, I move that we suspend until we have a copy of this bill.

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate):** I first want to thank Senator Marshall for her speech. I'm grateful to be working with you on these bills.

I would like to point out that the government would have sent it to LEGISinfo days ago. It's a matter of process that happened days ago. This is really a House of Commons problem for not posting it on LEGISinfo. However, as we were speaking, from Senator Gold's email, you will receive the text. We have scanned it and are sending it out to you. I hope that during our bell — we had talked about having a 15-minute bell —

**Senator Plett:** No, longer.

**Senator LaBoucane-Benson:** Well, that's interesting. I guess we can see what happens. We will have an opportunity to read this bill and — as Senator Marshall says — compare and make sure that it is the same amount of money that is in the back of Supplementary Estimates (C), which was made available to everyone on April 15. That is a little bit of clarification of what happened.

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Let us all agree that it's regrettable that it was not posted in time, but I would like to underline for the benefit of all colleagues that, in fact, the government did submit the bill to the appropriate institution and agency in the House of Commons in a timely fashion. The responsibility to post it is not that of the government but of the House of Commons, and it is regrettable that it was not. My office, upon being made aware of this — and thank you, Senator Marshall for that — has moved with dispatch to make this available to all senators.

Once again, while it's not the government's responsibility to have posted it, we're taking the measures necessary so all senators have access to it as quickly as we can.

**Hon. Leo Housakos:** Honourable colleagues, government executive branch has tremendous privileges in Parliament, in the House of Commons and in the Senate — budgets, tools and everything — at their discretion to make sure that bills are stewarded through these institutions in an appropriate fashion. So the government does have full responsibility in making sure that bills are posted, that colleagues in this place have access to all the information.

The only thing I also want to add to Senator LaBoucane-Benson's comments, I think it's also inappropriate during a bill to expect senators at that particular moment to have access to the bill and the information we're voting on. Bells are put into place in order to give senators the opportunity to get to the chamber in order to vote. Bells of 15 minutes or an hour are not in place in order for senators to review legislation. It's incumbent on us to do that way in advance from that particular bell.

I do thank the government for taking the steps to email us the bill; we're all looking forward to. Once we make sure our due diligence has been done, then I think we can call a bell and only then.

**Hon. Pierrette Ringuette:** Honourable senators and Your Honour, you will recall that earlier in today's sitting that our Speaker has tabled these two bills, and therefore these two bills are in front of us.

I thank Senator Gold. It's not the first time. We do that very often that we send amendments and new items on the agenda by email. Just to correct the record and in regard to the point of order that has been put forward, we do have these two bills in front of us to be voted on.

**Hon. Denise Batters:** I think it would be quite helpful then, why don't we get the bill either read to us or distributed to us right in here?

I also want to bring up a little bit of history. This is not the first time that this sort of thing has happened with the Trudeau government. In fact, at the very start of the Trudeau government's tenure at the end of 2015, we had a situation where actually Senator Day noticed that there wasn't the necessary scheduled attached to, I believe, a supply bill at that time, and there was great calamity. Luckily, the Senate did its work and recognized the major error that existed there.

This is just time and again with this Trudeau government. It's unbelievable that they expect us to do this.

**Senator Plett:** Just to maybe close off the debate, maybe not, first of all, it would be entirely inappropriate for the government to send us a bill during bells. Debate is closed during bells. They are going to send us a bill during bells while debate is closed, when we cannot amend or change it. The question has been put, and we're going to have a bell. Senator LaBoucane-Benson suggests 15 minutes on something when we don't even know what we're voting on. It's highly, highly inappropriate.

• (1110)

The Leader of the Government is trying to blame somebody other than the government for this complete sham. It's beyond the pale that he would not simply accept responsibility and say, "We messed up. We will try to fix it. Let's suspend. Let's get the bill. Let's read the bill."

We don't know how we're going to vote. Now we're being asked to call a bell, have a vote and decide whether we will have a standing vote. Then, while the debate is closed, we will have the bill sent to us and read and then try to determine how we're going to vote when we come back.

I can't get my mind around the silliness of this supposedly professional government even suggesting that.

Your Honour, I have made a suggestion that I think is appropriate: We simply suspend. We get the bill, as we certainly want to read it. We want to have our finance critic, who, quite frankly, would be a much better Minister of Finance than the one we have. Maybe then we wouldn't have the sham that we have now. We want her and our caucus to look at it to determine how we want to vote.

We don't have a bill before us, Your Honour. We cannot call the question until we have the bill before us. Again, I implore you, Your Honour — after we have suspended and when we have had time, we can look at it. Who knows whether we will get time today? Maybe we'll get it sometime over the weekend. But that's my suggestion, Your Honour.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond:** With regard to the point of order that was raised, I want to ask the following question to either the Government Representative or the chair of the National Finance Committee, but I don't think he's here. From what I understand, the National Finance Committee examined the bill, had access to the blue book that we talked about earlier and was able to review it.

Can someone confirm that the committee did in fact receive the blue book and review it? If I understand the point of order correctly, the point is to ensure that the blue book that was reviewed is the one that is included as a schedule to the bill before us.

[*English*]

**Senator Plett:** Your Honour, we just received an electronic copy of the bill. Again, I ask that we suspend to the call of the chair so we can have a look at it, then come back here and vote.

[*Translation*]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I thank Senator Plett for raising that question.

[*English*]

Thank you to all senators who intervened on the point of order. I will suspend the Senate until we get copies of the bill, and there will be a 15-minute bell to call in the senators.

**Senator Plett:** Sorry, Your Honour. A 15-minute bell doesn't necessarily mean that we will only have 15 minutes to study the bill, correct? Thank you.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** We will give you time to study the bill.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (1210)

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Honourable senators, just to be certain, everyone should have received a physical copy of Bill C-67. If you have not, please raise your hand, and the pages will bring one to you.

Are senators ready for the question?

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson, seconded by the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., for the second reading of Bill C-67, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** No. I would like to stand on debate, Your Honour. Thank you.

We thank the government for sending us all a copy of the bill while we are being asked to stand and vote at the same time. "Have you received a copy of the bill? If not, raise your hand because we are voting now." It is mind-boggling what this government does and expects us to do in return. "Trust us. Do this. The budget will balance itself at the end. So don't worry; we are in charge. We know what's best for Canadians."

I want to again thank Senator Marshall for her diligent work on this. I can only say that we should be thankful that her retirement date extends past the next election, because at least we have somebody who will try to keep the government in check on their absolute wasteful spending of money.

We are voting on \$9 billion today. The National Finance Committee had one two-hour meeting on this bill. The only witness was the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Colleagues, if I calculate that correctly — and I'm a plumber, not a financial wizard — even I know that's \$74 million a minute. "You don't have a copy? No, but the Clerk has a copy." That's what we heard: The Clerk has a copy, so if the Clerk has a copy, trust him. Ask the Clerk if this is good.

**Senator Housakos:** He's a good guy.

**Senator Plett:** Senator Marshall has cross-referenced the annex and the Supplementary Estimates (C) blue book to the schedule. The numbers jibe. Obviously, in the amount of time she had, she couldn't add up \$9 billion worth in numbers. Her calculator burnt out two or three times while she was trying to do this in a hurry. Again, I trust Senator Marshall when she says that at least some of this jibes, but my instructions were "don't vote for it" because it's a fiscally irresponsible piece of legislation.

I find this so difficult. We have the Leader of the Government who insists it's not the government's fault — it's the Library of Parliament's fault. It's never the government's fault.

**Senator Housakos:** Not this government.

**Senator Plett:** The \$74 million a minute reminds me of the deer that they shoot at \$10,000 per deer. That's kind of the way this government operates.

I want to offer all of you this, because we have some time here: We will vote on the bill in the next day or so — possibly the next hour — and this is at second reading. I trust that many of these independent-minded senators are going to make an independent choice, and vote independently of what Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau are telling them to do, but we'll find out.

In between second reading and third reading, we might have some time. I asked Senator Marshall whether she would agree to this, and she said yes. We could possibly use our boardroom on the third floor, and she would do a bit of a lock-up for all of those who would like to get a true briefing on this bill. At least then you will have the correct facts and numbers, and you can vote honestly instead of simply voting the way you're told to vote.

Colleagues, I want to thank Your Honour for giving us the time to, at least, add this up. Clearly, we would still be sitting here and adding if we had waited for this document to arrive after the break week, not before. We trusted that the electronic version would be good enough, and that we wouldn't have to kill another 14 trees to obtain this, but then who cares if we spend another couple thousand dollars on killing a few trees? That's not important. Minister Guilbeault will take care of the environment in some other way.

**Senator Housakos:** The carbon tax.

**Senator Plett:** He'll add it to the carbon tax. Thank you, Senator Housakos.

Your Honour, we are prepared to call the question and let the chips fall where they may. I hope we will have enough responsibly minded people who will do the appropriate thing and tell the government, "You'd better take a sober second look because, clearly, somebody wasn't sober when you gave us this." We have done our job. In the opposition, we have certainly done our job. Senator Marshall has done her job. Now let the rest of us do our job and vote down this horrible piece of legislation.

Your Honour, with that, we would be prepared to call the question.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Question.

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Yea.

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Nay.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** In my opinion, the "yeas" have it.

*And two honourable senators having risen:*

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Now.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** We need leave in order to have the vote now. Is leave granted, honourable senators?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to and bill read second time on the following division:

#### YEAS

#### THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Al Zaibak	McBean
Audette	McCallum
Bellemare	McNair
Boehm	McPhedran
Brazeau	Moncion
Burey	Omidvar
Cardozo	Osler
Clement	Oudar
Cordy	Patterson
Cormier	Petitclerc
Cuzner	Petten
Dalphond	Prosper
Dean	Ringuette
Duncan	Robinson
Forest	Ross
Gignac	Simons
Gold	Sorensen
Greenwood	Tannas
Jaffer	Varone
Klyne	White
Kutcher	Woo
LaBoucane-Benson	Yussuff—44

#### NAYS

#### THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Batters	Martin
Housakos	Plett
MacDonald	Richards
Manning	Seidman
Marshall	Wells—10

#### ABSTENTIONS

#### THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

• (1220)

#### THIRD READING

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



Pursuant to the order of March 20, 2024, the Senate will proceed to third reading of this bill.

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate)** moved third reading of Bill C-67, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

She said: Question.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Question.

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Yea.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Nay.

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Yea.

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Nay.

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

*And two honourable senators having risen:*

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** I see two senators rising. Is there agreement for a 30-minute bell?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** The vote will occur at 12:55.

Call in the senators.

• (1250)

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Honourable senators, the question is as follows:

It was moved by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson, seconded by the Honourable Senator Gold, that Bill C-67 be read a third time.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed on the following division:

YEAS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Al Zaibak	McCallum
Audette	McNair
Bellemare	McPhedran
Boehm	Moncion
Burey	Omidvar
Cardozo	Osler
Clement	Oudar
Cordy	Patterson
Cormier	Petitclerc
Cuzner	Petten
Dean	Prosper
Duncan	Ringuette
Forest	Robinson
Gignac	Ross
Gold	Simons
Greenwood	Sorensen
Kingston	Tannas
Klyne	Varone
Kutcher	White
LaBoucane-Benson	Woo
McBean	Yussuff—42

NAYS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Batters	Martin
Housakos	Plett
MacDonald	Richards
Manning	Seidman
Marshall	Wells—10

ABSTENTIONS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

• (1300)

## APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 1, 2024-25

### SECOND READING

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate)** moved second reading of Bill C-68, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise to speak as sponsor of the appropriation act for interim supply for the 2024-25 Main Estimates.

Through this appropriation bill, the government is requesting Parliament's approval of a portion of the planned spending shown in the Main Estimates for the coming fiscal year.

Appropriation bills are an integral part of the estimates process. They serve as the vehicles through which payments from the Consolidated Revenue Fund are authorized by Parliament.

The federal government delivers a vast array of important programs and services to Canadians across the country, and it is focused on doing so prudently by ensuring that taxpayers' money is directed toward the highest priorities, such as affordability, dental care and a green economy.

Spending plans must be approved before any new money is spent. It's one of the most fundamental responsibilities we have as parliamentarians.

As honourable senators may know, the House of Commons has until June to study and approve the Main Estimates. But, of course, the fiscal year starts in just a couple of weeks, on April 1.

To address this gap, the government introduces an interim supply bill in March, which provides funding for the first three months of the fiscal year. That's what we have before us now.

This year's Main Estimates present a total of \$449.2 billion in budgetary spending — with \$191.6 billion to be voted on. For most departments, interim supply represents one quarter of the total voted authorities set out in the Main Estimates. The current bill seeks approval for spending in the amount of \$74 billion. This does not include any new initiatives which could be announced in Budget 2024. Those expenditures would be included in future estimates documents and approved through future legislation.

Some of the larger voted amounts proposed in these Main Estimates include \$5.6 billion for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; \$8.4 billion for Health Canada, including funding to expand the Canadian Dental Care Plan; and \$28.8 billion for National Defence investments, including support for Ukraine and training and equipment for the Canadian Armed Forces.

The Main Estimates also include information about statutory spending that has already been approved in other legislation. This includes \$81.1 billion in elderly benefits, \$52.1 billion for the Canada Health Transfer, \$46.5 billion in public debt charges, \$25.3 billion for equalization payments, \$16.9 billion for the Canada Social Transfer and \$11.4 billion for the Canada Carbon Rebate.

The Main Estimates also present additional information on the "Refocusing Government Spending" initiative, first announced in Budget 2023. Approximately \$10.5 billion over the next three years is being refocused toward top priorities for Canadians, like health care and housing. And this is in addition to the refocusing of \$500 million reported in the Supplementary Estimates (B), 2023-24, tabled last fall.

Honourable senators, I invite you to explore the Main Estimates, Departmental Plans and other government financial reports on Canada.ca and GC InfoBase to see how public money is used.

As these documents show, the government is both responding to immediate needs and making long-term investments that benefit Canadians, all while strengthening fiscal prudence and accountability. I urge all honourable senators to pass this important legislation without delay.

Thank you, *hiy hiy*.

**Hon. Denise Batters:** Would Senator LaBoucane-Benson take a question?

You indicated in your remarks that part of the amount was for Ukraine. Could you please let us how much and what it is for?

**Senator LaBoucane-Benson:** Thank you for that question. I have in the information provided to me the total for military defence, but I don't have it for Ukraine specifically. My office would be happy to get you that information.

**Hon. Elizabeth Marshall:** Honourable senators, as critic, I rise to speak to Bill C-68, the first appropriation bill for the new fiscal year, also called the interim supply bill. My remarks will be brief.

The government's fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31, which means that the old fiscal year ends at midnight on Sunday, March 31. Approving this bill is necessary for the government to have the money it needs to continue operating on the first day of the new fiscal year, which will be Monday, April 1.

This bill will approve a portion of the \$192 billion requested in the Main Estimates for the new fiscal year — a little over \$74 billion. The Main Estimates have yet to be approved by the House of Commons and the Senate, so the government needs money to continue operating until the Main Estimates are approved.

The \$74 billion in this bill represents what we call an advance on the money requested in the Main Estimates. That will be achieved by Bill C-68, which details the sums of money that the government requires to operate until the end of June, when they expect the Main Estimates to be approved.

If you look at the bill itself, it's quite lengthy. At the front of the bill, the funding is requested in twelfths of the amount requested in the Main Estimates because there are 12 months in the year. There are schedules in the bill, and the bill starts off by indicating that the departments and organizations are requesting three months of funding or three twelfths. The bill then lists the exceptions. Certain votes are requesting 4 twelfths; some are requesting 5 twelfths and so on, up to 12 twelfths. On average, in this bill, the government is requesting just under 39% of the Main Estimates. Last year, the government requested 45%; the year before, they requested 40%, and the year before that, around 42%.

Our Senate Finance Committee does not study the Interim Estimates, but it will study the Main Estimates, upon which the Interim Estimates are based.

As I indicated in my previous speech, it is important to realize that the funding being approved in appropriation bills, including this bill, is actually less than half the money being spent by the government. The government also has approval in other government legislation to spend money. As I've said many times before, that other legislation includes the Financial Administration Act, the Old Age Security Act and the budget implementation acts. This is the money that constitutes statutory funds for statutory payments.

While the Main Estimates for this year outline spending of \$451 billion, compared to the \$433 billion in last year's Main Estimates, the spending plan will change in April, with the 2024 budget, and throughout the year as government identifies new spending authorities.

While last year's Main Estimates outline spending of \$433 billion, the most recent fiscal projections have increased this \$433 billion to \$495 billion. This will present challenges as we try to track government spending throughout the new fiscal year.

This concludes my comments on Bill C-68.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Question.

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**Some Hon. Senators:** No.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** All those in favour of the motion will please say, "yea."

**Some Hon. Senators:** Yea.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** All those opposed to the motion will please say, "nay."

**Some Hon. Senators:** Nay.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** In my opinion the "yeas" have it.

• (1310)

*And two honourable senators having risen:*

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

**An Hon. Senator:** Now.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Honourable senators, is leave granted to have the vote now?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to and bill read second time on the following division:

YEAS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Audette	McCallum
Bellemare	McNair
Boehm	McPhedran
Burey	Moncion
Cardozo	Osler
Clement	Oudar
Cordy	Patterson
Cormier	Petitclerc
Dean	Prosper
Duncan	Ringuette
Forest	Robinson
Gignac	Ross
Gold	Simons
Greenwood	Sorensen
Kingston	Tannas
Klyne	Varone
Kutcher	White
LaBoucane-Benson	Yussuff—37
McBean	

NAYS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Batters	Martin
Housakos	Plett
Manning	Seidman
Marshall	Wells—8

ABSTENTIONS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

THIRD READING

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Pursuant to the order adopted March 20, 2024, the Senate will proceed to third reading of the bill.

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate)** moved third reading of Bill C-68, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** It is moved by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson, seconded by the Honourable Senator Gold, that the bill be read a third time.

There will be no debate.

Honourable senators, are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Senators:** Question.

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Yea.

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Nay.

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

*And two honourable senators having risen:*

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

**An Hon. Senator:** Now.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Honourable senators, is leave granted to have the vote now?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed on the following division:

YEAS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Al Zaibak	LaBoucane-Benson
Audette	McBean
Bellemare	McCallum
Boehm	McNair
Burey	McPhedran
Cardozo	Moncion
Clement	Osler
Cordy	Oudar
Cormier	Patterson
Cuzner	Petitclerc
Dalphond	Prosper
Dean	Ringuette
Duncan	Robinson
Forest	Ross
Gignac	Simons
Gold	Sorensen
Greenwood	Tannas
Kingston	Varone
Klyne	White
Kutcher	Yussuff—40

NAYS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Batters	Martin
Housakos	Plett
MacDonald	Seidman
Manning	Wells—9
Marshall	

ABSTENTIONS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

• (1320)

ROYAL ASSENT

SITTING SUSPENDED TO AWAIT WRITTEN DECLARATION

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, pursuant to Rule 16-1 (8) and the order adopted on March 20, 2024, I wish to advise the Senate that a message from the Crown concerning Royal Assent is expected later today.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Honourable senators, Rule 16-1(8) provides that after the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Government has made such an announcement:

. . . no motion to adjourn the Senate shall be received and the rules regarding the ordinary time of adjournment or suspension, or any prior order regarding adjournment shall be suspended until the message has been received or either the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Government indicates the message is no longer expected. If the Senate completes the business for the day before the message is received, the sitting shall be suspended to the call of the Speaker with the bells to ring for five minutes before the sitting resumes.

**Hon. Donald Neil Plett (Leader of the Opposition):** Your Honour, is it customary to call us back on a suspension on a five-minute bell? That's an awfully short bell. If that's customary, fine —

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Is that what you are moving, Senator Plett?

**Senator Plett:** I'm raising the question. I thought it would be a 15-minute bell. To get here in five minutes from almost anywhere seems very difficult.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** The rule says five minutes, Senator Plett.

**Senator Plett:** Hopefully, we'll be able to be here.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 16-1(8) and the order adopted on March 20, 2024, the Senate is only to deal with government business today. The sitting is suspended to await the announcement of Royal Assent, to reassemble at the call of a five-minute bell.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

[Translation]

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (1420)

ROYAL ASSENT

**Hon. René Cormier (The Hon. the Acting Speaker)** informed the Senate that the following communication had been received:

RIDEAU HALL

March 22, 2024

Madam Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of March, 2024, at 1:56 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ken MacKillop

*Secretary to the Governor General*

The Honourable  
The Speaker of the Senate  
Ottawa

Bills Assented to Friday, March 22, 2024:

An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act (*Bill C-34, Chapter 4, 2024*)

An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024 (*Bill C-67, Chapter 5, 2024*)

An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025 (*Bill C-68, Chapter 6, 2024*)

[English]

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(g), I move:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 2 p.m.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to.)

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

*(At 2:32 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 2 p.m.)*

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