

And they're the reason Edmonton is proudly home to the Canadian Druze Centre and a significant population of the Druze diaspora in North America.

I guess you might say every month in Alberta is Lebanese heritage month. But I don't think anyone back home will object to having an excuse, every November, to celebrate, and I'll bring the hummus.

To Senator Cordy, I say thank you, *hiy hiy* and *šukran*.

Hon. Mobina S. B. Jaffer: Thank you, Senator Simons, for your speech on Edmonton, and Senator Cordy, thank you for your speech and also for starting this inquiry. I may have missed you saying it, but wasn't the first Muslim mosque also built in Edmonton?

Senator Simons: Yes, I think you did miss it. It opened in 1938 in downtown Edmonton on a gift of land from the City of Edmonton with \$5,000 raised from communities across the West. I have to say, the original mosque was moved brick by brick and now stands in Fort Edmonton, but the Al Rashid Mosque endures as one of the largest mosques in Western Canada, throwing open its doors in times of fire and disaster. The Al Rashid Mosque has been remarkable for welcoming the homeless during cold snaps and for opening its doors to people who were fleeing the Fort McMurray wildfires. It's an extraordinarily important part of Edmonton's cultural and social community.

Senator Jaffer: May I ask a second question Senator Simons?

Senator Simons: If I have time, absolutely.

Senator Jaffer: Thank you. Senator Simons, I did mean to say that it was moved, and that it was the first mosque ever built is something that we Muslims celebrate. Of course, the women from that mosque are some of the most forward-looking, including Dr. Lila Fahlman who was sort of a matriarch of the women's movement in the Muslim community. So thank you for raising that.

Senator Simons, I think you would agree that the Muslim community is still very vibrant in the Al Rashid Mosque.

Senator Simons: Absolutely. I think those first Lebanese pioneers laid down a foundation that has allowed Muslim immigrants from around the world to come and find a home in Edmonton, whether they are coming from North Africa, East Africa or Indonesia. Wherever Muslims have come from to Edmonton, the Al Rashid Mosque community has been there to welcome them.

You mentioned Lila Fahlman. I didn't raise her in my speech for one reason, which is that her family was Syrian rather than Lebanese. I know the border is liminal, but as this was about Lebanese heritage month, I wanted to focus on Hilwie Hamdon, who was the remarkable woman who fought for the Al Rashid Mosque, which was, indeed, the first mosque in Canada.

Interestingly enough, the first mosque in North America was, I believe, in North Dakota and not in Chicago or New York as you might have expected. There was really an important Lebanese diaspora that came and filled up that whole prairie west on both sides of the Canadian-American border.

(On motion of Senator Dean, debate adjourned.)

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Pamela Wallin moved second reading of Bill S-248, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

She said: Honourable senators, I have some brief remarks on Bill S-248, the Senate public bill that I tabled last Thursday.

The bill amends sections of the Criminal Code relating to medical assistance in dying to allow individuals diagnosed with an incurable illness, disorder or disability to make an advance request for medical assistance in dying.

This bill is a result of many years of careful consideration and consultation with dozens of stakeholders, organizations, experts and those, most importantly, with lived experiences.

Last year, we passed an amendment here in the Senate to the government's bill regarding advance requests. Sadly, that amendment was rejected by the government. Still, I am proud to be trying again after another year of further consultation and study.

I wish to speak only briefly to the bill now and provide more fulsome comments when we return in the fall and have time for proper debate and study. However, I believe it is important that this bill be tabled now for two reasons. Our Special Joint Committee on MAID has been looking at advanced requests, mature minors, mental disorders as a sole underlying condition, the state of palliative care and the protection of Canadians with disabilities. We have a decade of federal reports and expert panels on these subjects, and particularly on advanced requests. They are wide-ranging and have set out recommendations in support of advance requests, but it is still unclear whether the committee will hear from further witnesses on advanced requests before the reporting deadline in October. So I am uncertain that the review will be able to examine a potential gap in the law.

• (1550)

It is necessary that we seek legal clarity on the issue. A few weeks ago, the Quebec government tabled advanced request legislation. It is a reasoned bill based on the recommendations of the Quebec all-party committee on the end of life. This report and subsequent bill established a framework and a timeline for advanced requests, outlined requirements for a registry and for the process of updating an advanced request and its notarization.

I believe it offers an appropriate balance between safeguards and respecting the autonomy of the individual. However, if this bill is passed in Quebec, there will be a gap between the exemptions for medical assistance in dying established in the Criminal Code and the advanced request framework being created in provincial legislation. That obviously creates some concerns about criminal liability and could lead to another Supreme Court challenge. So the aim here is to anticipate and avoid any federal-provincial ambiguity and to begin to look at this. A Senate committee will reassure all of us and, I hope, the Canadian public, as our goal would be to educate, anticipate, prepare and give us all time for more fulsome consideration of the legal issues.

I believe an advanced request is a right to a dignified death. Public support is already there. The government has been a bit reluctant to take the lead, so I believe this is our opportunity to do just that. This is our responsibility, as legislators, to do the heavy lifting, to look at how to provide safeguards and to create a path forward. I look forward to working with you to fix the gap in our MAID laws.

(On motion of Senator Wallin, debate adjourned.)

AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT

FOURTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the fourth report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, entitled *Senate Audit and Oversight Charter*, presented in the Senate on June 2, 2022.

Hon. Marty Klyne moved the adoption of the report.

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, the charter that is now being considered by the Senate is part of the overall work of the Audit and Oversight Committee. It's a governance document that outlines how the committee will carry out its mandate.

It has been a long road that started back in 2014 with the recommendation from the Auditor General to establish independent oversight and to retain an internal auditor. The Subcommittee on the Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets, which I chaired at the time with Senator Jaffer as my deputy chair, was charged with addressing this recommendation.

To preserve the rights of senators to be the masters of their own house, we developed a novel approach that protected our rights but also gave confidence that the best practices were employed in our work. The Auditor General recommended that the committee look at senators' office expenses only, but we believed that it would be better to have an entity that had oversight over all Senate expenditures — not just the 10% that was recommended, but 100% of the full expenditures of the Senate, now at approximately \$120 million.

In order to establish this process and, eventually, this committee, we had to develop novel approaches. Some of these were that the Chair of the Internal Economy Committee and Audit and Oversight Committee cannot be from the same caucus or group. And we have external expertise, unlike other committees that have internal expertise, in some cases by good

fortune. On the Fisheries and Oceans Committee we might have fisheries experts, on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee we might have agricultural experts, and obviously we are fortunate to have lawyers and legal scholars on our Justice Committee, but this is not mandated; it's really by chance. We are fortunate to have the opportunity of nominating and having external members that have the expertise join our Audit and Oversight Committee.

The committee is unique in that we targeted candidates with that specific expertise. I'll note that, at the time, the original steering committee was made up of Senator Downe, our deputy chair, Senator Dupuis, and me, as chair. We targeted candidates with specific backgrounds and special expertise. Through a rigorous process, we were able to have Robert Plamondon and Hélène Fortin, two highly qualified chartered professional accountants, join our committee. There is an overlap in the initial terms of these individuals so that there is continuity for the committee, and only parliamentarians on the committee can vote, although thus far we have easily and successfully worked based on discussion and consensus.

As well, the audit world is a very rules-based place, as I'm finding out, and that guides our processes as well. In the absence of external members having a vote, any member of the committee can include a dissenting opinion in any report, which is unlike any other committee that we have in the Senate.

In addition, the Audit and Oversight Committee doesn't have a code like the Ethics and Conflict of Interest Committee has, so for good governance we developed this charter, which is what is before us today. It maps out our processes, our standards and our operating procedure. The rules that we have in the Senate are a general document for all committees. The Senate Administrative Rules apply to the administration of the whole Senate. This charter is such a document for this committee. This is the only instance in the history of the Senate that a committee has developed a charter, one more groundbreaking item designed for continuity of its activities and operations.

Honourable senators, none of us should expect the Canadian public, the media, or the "abolish the Senate" crowd to applaud this significant initiative and accomplishment. Of course, we didn't do it for that reason. We did it because we needed to get it done, and we did it for the right reasons. Honourable senators, it's for this reason that our new charter is before us today and will be the guiding document that assists the Audit and Oversight Committee in carrying out its mandate. This is a novel model for a novel institution, and one for which we should all be proud. Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Renée Dupuis: Honourable senators, the first annual report presented by the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight outlines the work that the committee has accomplished since it was created by the Senate on October 1, 2020.

This special new standing committee represents a significant step forward in the Senate's history, because it is responsible for auditing and overseeing all Senate expenditures and the management of public funds allocated to the Senate as an institution and to senators as individuals. By taking responsibility for overseeing its own administration and spending, the Senate