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Thursday, June 5, 2025

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,  
Speaker

## CONTENTS

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

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## THE SENATE

Thursday, June 5, 2025

The Senate met at 1:30 p.m., the Speaker in the chair.

Prayers.

[Translation]

### SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I have the results of the vote for the Speaker pro tempore. Pursuant to rule 2-4(1), I am pleased to announce that the Honourable René Cormier is the new Speaker pro tempore.

I am sure you will join me in congratulating him and wishing him every success in his new role.

I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly thank the Honourable Senator Ringuette, who has held this position since December 2020. Her professionalism and commitment have been greatly appreciated, and I would like to highlight the importance of her contribution throughout her tenure.

### SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE

#### EXPRESSION OF THANKS

**Hon. René Cormier:** I would like to take this opportunity to thank my esteemed colleagues for the trust they placed in me by electing me to this important position.

[English]

Colleagues, thank you for your trust. I assure you I will undertake this task with rigour and energy. As legislators, we have a responsibility to give sober second thought to all questions before us. Therefore, when sitting in the Speaker's chair, I will make sure that our deliberations are done in a way that serves all of you.

[Translation]

I want to close by sincerely thanking Senator Ringuette for her incredible dedication and telling her how grateful I am to her.

[English]

### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

#### MOTION TO EXTEND TODAY'S SENATORS' STATEMENTS ADOPTED

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, I move that for today's sitting, Senators' Statements be extended by three minutes.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

### SENATORS' STATEMENTS

#### THE LATE HONOURABLE MARC GARNEAU, P.C., C.C.

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, I rise today with deep sadness to pay tribute to the life and legacy of the Honourable Marc Garneau.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, as many of you know, Marc Garneau dedicated his life to serving our country. He graduated from the Royal Military College of Canada and earned a doctorate in electrical engineering from the Imperial College of Science and Technology in London in 1973. He then began his career as a naval officer, first as an engineer and then as an instructor. Just a few years after joining the navy, Marc was promoted to the rank of commander at the Canadian Army Command and Staff College. However, he was only there for a short time because he was quickly sent back to Ottawa and chosen to become one of the first six Canadian astronauts.

[English]

After completing astronaut training, Marc made history as the first Canadian astronaut to fly in space as a payload specialist on Shuttle Mission STS-41G. Following stints as the deputy director of the Canadian Astronaut Program and as a capsule communicator, or capcom, in Mission Control during shuttle flights, Marc embarked upon his second and third space flights, spending over 677 hours in space.

While many may have rested on their laurels, that was not Marc. He continued to serve his country as the president of the Canadian Space Agency and later represented his community as the Member of Parliament for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount for 15 years. He was my member of Parliament for that period.

[Translation]

During his political career, Marc Garneau served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Transport. In those roles, he introduced and helped pass many important pieces of legislation, such as the Air Passengers' Bill of Rights, the Safer Skies initiative and the Oceans Protection Plan. These instruments will no doubt continue to improve life in our country for decades to come.

[English]

On a personal note, I had the privilege of getting to know Marc and his family over many years; we were literally neighbours on the same street in Westmount in Montreal. I want to extend my deepest condolences to his wife, Pam, his family and his many friends during this difficult time. They were very gracious in sharing Marc with all of us during his many decades of service to our country. I know Marc's legacy and service will continue to inspire millions of Canadians to reach for the stars.

Thank you, colleagues.

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

### D-DAY AND THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, on behalf of the Conservative caucus, I extend our condolences to the Honourable Marc Garneau's family. He was a great Canadian and a gentleman among gentlemen when it came to this place.

Honourable senators, June 6 — tomorrow — is a date that is etched in our collective memory. It is the anniversary of D-Day and the beginning of Operation Overlord, which was 81 years ago. At dawn on June 6, 1944, the English Channel delivered thousands of soldiers to the shores of Normandy, united by a single mission: to defeat the Third Reich and restore freedom to Europe.

Among the 150,000 Allied troops who launched the assault, more than 14,000 were Canadians. Young men from across the country, many barely out of adolescence, answered the call of duty with extraordinary courage, and on that day, their names became forever engraved in history. They crossed the ocean to liberate a land they had never seen in the name of the values they held dear, which are liberty and democracy.

• (1340)

As they landed on the beaches of Normandy, they knew that every step forward would be a victory wrested under the deadly fire of MG42s and against the fortification of the Atlantic Wall. But they held the line. They advanced slowly and painfully, every metre gained at the cost of their blood, sweat and courage. In that hell of fire and steel, they lifted the wounded, carried the dying and picked up the weapons fallen from their brethren's hands. Yet in the heart of that violence, the best of humanity rose up: courage, solidarity and brotherhood. What they endured is beyond our imagination, but their humanity still lights our path. Thousands never returned. Their sacrifice was the price of our freedom and the freedom of generations to come.

In Normandy, the silence of the graves still echoes with the roar of battle. Each headstone reminds us of what Canada gave so that the world could be free again. Today, war once again knocks at Europe's doors. As Russia prepares a new offensive against Ukraine, we stand with the Ukrainian people who embody the same spirit of resistance as our soldiers did during Operation Overlord.

The memory of D-Day is more than a commemoration. It is a reminder that peace and democracy are never guaranteed and they must be defended at any cost, including blood. That memory compels us to support those who defend their sovereignty and to honour — here in this chamber — the Canadian soldiers who gave their lives so that we can speak freely today and every day. To those who serve and those who never returned, we honour your sacrifice with eternal gratitude. Lest we forget.

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

**Hon. Marty Klyne:** Honourable senators, tomorrow marks the eighty-first anniversary of D-Day, a turning point in the Second World War and a day when Canadian courage bent the arc of history.

On June 6, 1944, more than 14,000 Canadians landed on Juno Beach in Normandy. Among the first ashore were the young men of Saskatchewan's The Regina Rifle Regiment, now The Royal Regina Rifles. Because so many of them were farmers, they were affectionately nicknamed "Farmer Johns," later shortened to "The Johns." As they fought through one fierce engagement after another, their proud battle cry "Up the Johns!" became one of the most famous rallying calls in the Canadian Army. Today, "Up the Johns!" is also a ritual of raising glasses to acknowledge those who served in The Royal Regina Rifles and to celebrate their bravery, spirit and camaraderie.

Landing at Nan Green, the western sector of Juno Beach, they encountered fierce German resistance. Under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel F.M. Matheson, some 520 soldiers pressed forward under fire, destroying fortified enemy positions and fighting their way through the town of Courseulles-sur-Mer.

And they didn't stop. With unbreakable will, they advanced inland through Revers, reaching Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse — their final D-Day goal — by the next day. In doing so, The Royal Regina Rifles became the only Allied unit on D-Day to reach and hold its designated objective.

On June 7, in this small Norman village, they repelled a brutal counterattack by the 12th SS Panzer Division, a battle that helped secure the Allied beachhead and the future of Operation Overlord. But success came at a heavy cost. The Rifles suffered 44 killed and 64 wounded on D-Day alone. Over the next 55 days of continuous combat, hundreds more were killed, wounded or declared missing in action.

Senators, the legacy of The Royal Regina Rifles lives on — in the history books, in a free Europe, in the Canadian Armed Forces and in our hearts. So too does the courage and sacrifice of all Canadians who served in the Second World War.

The bravery of our soldiers, sailors and flyers shaped the world today, throwing back the Nazi scourge and preserving the freedoms that we hold sacred. But the price they paid reminds us that war is never without terrible cost in blood, grief and lives forever changed.

[ Senator Gold ]

Tomorrow — and always — we remember them. Lest we forget. Up the Johns!

**An Hon. Senator:** Up the Johns!

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

### VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of military representatives from each branch of the Canadian Armed Forces (Navy, Army and Air Force) and Canadian Armed Forces Health Services, who are or have been attached to units that participated in the D-Day landings. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Patterson.

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

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

[Translation]

### D-DAY AND THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY

**Hon. Rebecca Patterson:** Honourable senators, on May 8, 2025, Canada and the world celebrated the eightieth anniversary of the victory in Europe over Nazi fascism. This victory would not have been possible without the efforts of the Canadian, American and British armed forces during the Battle of Normandy, the Allied invasion of France.

[English]

Now referred to as D-Day, June 6, 1944, saw the largest amphibious landings in history along five French beaches, as the Allies attempted to break through Hitler's Atlantic Wall. It was Juno Beach where Canadians took the lead. The fighting continued for a further 12 weeks as the Battle of Normandy, signalling the beginning of the end of World War II.

Some of the ships, regiments and squadrons that smashed headlong into that battle are represented here today by members of the Canadian Armed Forces who currently serve with or have served in units that can trace their history to that day. I want to highlight three units involved with D-Day that have an Ottawa connection today.

HMCS *Ottawa* was a Royal Canadian Navy destroyer which escorted the invasion forces across the English Channel. The present-day HMCS *Ottawa*, the fourth of her name, is a Halifax Class frigate that continues to sail around the globe in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, as well as Asia-Pacific diplomacy and as part of our campaign against terrorism.

In 1944, HMCS *Ottawa* may very well have been escorting members of The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (Duke of Edinburgh's Own) machine gun regiment. Today, the Camerons are an infantry regiment with close ties to the City of Ottawa, both sharing the same motto: ADVANCE.

Also, 412 Squadron — part of the tactical air force on D-Day — swept the skies for fighters and escorted bombers. Today, 412 Squadron operates as the VIP transport and medical evacuation squadron based right here at the Ottawa airport.

Speaking of medical evacuation, I would be remiss if I did not mention the valiant efforts of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps field ambulances who landed alongside the assault forces providing first aid and casualty collection on Juno Beach as the battle raged on around them.

Senators, upon our summons to this chamber, we are granted the title of "Honourable." But I would suggest an act no more honourable than the voluntary offering of one's life — one's very future — in defence of something greater than oneself. That is what so many of our fellow Canadians did on D-Day.

Private Leslie Neufeld of Saskatchewan was one of them. In his letter to his family — written on June 4, 1944 — he lets them know:

We know our job well. We have been trained for all conditions & circumstances. We have a fair chance. . . . If anything should happen to me, do not feel sad or burdened by it, but take the attitude of "He served his country to his utmost."

Private Neufeld was one of the 359 Canadians killed on Juno Beach.

In remembering their sacrifice, let us also remember our responsibility to uphold the values they fought for, to care for those who have served or continue to serve, and to support the families who bear the horrible weight of that service.

On this anniversary of D-Day, may we rededicate ourselves to that duty. Lest we forget.

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

### LONDON, ONTARIO—WALKERTON VICTIMS OF TRAGEDY

**Hon. Marty Deacon:** First, thank you to my colleague for sharing and giving me his spot to make a statement today. I'm very grateful.

Honourable senators, I rise today with a very sad heart to mourn the loss of five promising young lives on Friday, May 23 in a tragic traffic accident near Dorchester, Ontario, outside of London. All five were from the small community of Walkerton, Ontario, which is about an hour and a half from my home in southwestern Ontario. As with any small community, it's hard to find a person not touched by grief through such a horrible event.

• (1350)

Those lost were Mat Eckert, beloved teacher and coach, and students Olivia Rourke, Rowan McLeod, Kaydance Ford and Danica Baker, each an incredible individual attending Walkerton District Community School. The loss of one life in a small community is devastating; this is incomprehensible.

Coach Eckert, just 33, was loved by his school community, his students and the lacrosse team he coached in Owen Sound. He was also well-known for capturing the interest of his students in the classroom.

Olivia, aged 17, was described by her family as “a light in our lives – full of kindness, laughter, dance, song and love.”

Rowan, aged 17, was described as bringing energy, compassion and dedication to children’s programming in her after-school work, which supported many local families.

Kaydance, aged 16, was described by her family as an immensely adored daughter and a proud and loving big sister who excelled in athletics and the shop programs at her school.

And Danica, also 16, was said to have a spirit that “. . . lit up every room and every volleyball court she stepped on to.”

All continue to be described as great students and great siblings — young girls with character and commitment to their community.

The response from the community and country has been overwhelming. As Prime Minister Carney noted, this is an “unimaginable loss that no family, no classmate, no school should ever have to endure.”

Canadians are holding the Walkerton community in their hearts. On Saturday morning, on a cold and windy day, I made my way to Walkerton to pay tribute. As I laid flowers and running shoes at a memorial service on Saturday — which we were invited to do — I felt the overwhelming impact of this tragic event and the long healing process that will be different for each person. I know through my experience with similar events as an educator and superintendent that healing will take a very long time, not only for family and friends, but for the community as a whole, particularly those young students at Walkerton District Community School.

In a small community, the high school is a hub. Families, students, teachers and administration are all grieving while trying to return to calm and a sense of normalcy. Student learning will take a back seat and all will be grateful to see the end of June, typically a time of celebration.

The shock, denial and anger will move through each individual at a different pace. These students’ age, this stage of life, this time of year — the loss of five is more than one can endure. Over time, those leading this critical event must get their own support.

Colleagues, please join me in acknowledging this tragic loss, these five lives and the healing journey that will continue. Thank you.

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

## VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Greg and Chris So. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Woo.

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

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

## EID AL-ADHA DAY OF ARAFAH

**Hon. Salma Ataullahjan:** Honourable senators, today, I rise to mark two occasions: Eid al-Adha, a sacred occasion that will be observed by 2 billion Muslims around the world tomorrow, and the holy day of Arafah that is being observed today, when pilgrims performing the hajj spend the entire day standing or sitting around the Mount of Mercy asking God for forgiveness.

This year, there are 2 million pilgrims visiting the holy city of Mecca for the annual hajj, one of the five Pillars of Islam. The culmination of the hajj is marked by Eid al-Adha, which literally means “Feast of Sacrifice.”

Eid al-Adha is a celebration that marks the test of faith of the prophet Ibrahim, who showed extraordinary courage and trust in a higher purpose, even when faced with great personal sacrifice. This is a story recognized by all Abrahamic religions, when the prophet Ibrahim — or Abraham, as he is called in the Torah and the Bible — was commanded to sacrifice one of his sons, either Ishmael or Isaac. This is a story that teaches us about the strength it takes to put our faith above all else.

Muslims around the world take this as an occasion to reflect on faith, sacrifice and solidarity. At its core, it reminds us of the importance of placing others before ourselves and choosing compassion over comfort and duty over convenience.

As parliamentarians, these are values we recognize well. We are called to serve, to listen, and often to make sacrifices on behalf of those we represent. Eid al-Adha offers us a timely reminder that leadership is rooted in service and true strength lies in humility and moral conviction.

This celebration also calls us to ensure that no one in the community is left behind. We share our blessings with those in need — neighbours, strangers and the vulnerable. It is a powerful expression of social responsibility and inclusive care.

In Canada’s richly diverse society, Eid al-Adha gives us the opportunity to recognize and honour the contributions of Muslim Canadians, who continue to enrich our communities and institutions, including our own, the Senate, where we now have six sitting senators who represent the almost 2 million Muslims in our country.

On behalf of my Muslim colleagues and fellow Senators Al Zaibak, Gerba, Mohamed, Ravalia, Yussuff and myself, Eid Mubarak. May this day bring peace to your homes, joy to your families and renewed purpose to us all. Thank you.

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

### SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

**Hon. Margo Greenwood:** Honourable senators, I am honoured to rise for the first time in this new Parliament. While the Senate was suspended, I was given the opportunity to participate in parliamentary diplomacy and engage with parliamentarians from around the world. Perhaps the most common theme I saw and heard was the global plight of children.

Nearly one in five children lives in a conflict zone. According to UNICEF, since the start of the war in Gaza in 2023, at least 15,000 children have died. Tens of thousands have been displaced, and countless children will be left with permanent disabilities, amputations, PTSD and other mental health issues.

Food security organizations report that 93% of children in Gaza are at risk of famine while humanitarian aid continues to be blocked and disrupted. Children in Sudan and many parts in the Global South are also suffering from famine and malnutrition, resulting in stunted growth and death.

During Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, Russia abducted at least 20,000 Ukrainian children in areas under their control, although this number is likely much higher. These children have been assigned Russian citizenship and forcibly placed in Russian homes, and some will never see their families again. They have been stripped of their heritage, their language and their connections to their lands. Many of these children have been subjected to maltreatment, violence and sexual exploitation.

I cannot help but reflect on my own family's experience. My father, like many other Indigenous children of his time, was taken from his home. He and others were stripped of their identity, culture and language. Because of my father's experience with residential school, he never taught me Cree, and I live with the reality of that loss to this day.

I have shared some international examples of children suffering, but we as Canadians are not immune from these challenges. A new report from UNICEF ranked Canada nineteenth with respect to child well-being. Children continue to live below the poverty line and face food insecurity and inadequate housing, and Indigenous children continue to be removed from their families by child and family services at disproportionate rates.

So, colleagues, what can we do as senators? In my world, we often use the phrase "for the next seven generations." How will my actions impact seven generations from now?

When we meet in this hallowed chamber, let us be mindful of how our decisions will impact children in Canada. Each time we meet in committee, let's ask ourselves this question: How will this study or bill impact a child living in my community? Thank you.

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

• (1400)

[Translation]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### JURY DUTY APPRECIATION WEEK BILL

#### FIRST READING

**Hon. Lucie Moncion** introduced Bill S-226, An Act respecting Jury Duty Appreciation Week.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

[English]

### ARAB HERITAGE MONTH BILL

#### FIRST READING

**Hon. Mohammad Al Zaibak** introduced Bill S-227, An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

## CRIMINAL CODE

### BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

**Hon. Yvonne Boyer** introduced Bill S-228, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sterilization procedures).

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

## ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

### NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO REFER PAPERS AND DOCUMENTS FROM THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT AND BY THE INTERSESSIONAL AUTHORITY

**Hon. Judith G. Seidman:** Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament and by the Interseasonal Authority be referred to the committee.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, before proceeding to Question Period, I would like to remind you that, pursuant to the order adopted yesterday, during Question Period, main questions and responses are limited to one minute each, and are followed by a maximum of one supplementary question per main question, with these supplementary questions and responses being limited to a maximum of 30 seconds each. In all these cases the reading clerk stands 10 seconds before the time expires.

### FINANCE

#### BALANCED BUDGET

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly promised to balance the operating budget within three years, distinguishing it from capital spending. The problem is this, government leader: While expenses can reasonably be categorized as operating capital, neither the Main Estimates nor the public accounts make any such distinction for revenue. This means the government can allocate revenue however it likes and claim that the operating budget is balanced. That's not fiscal discipline, of course; that's fiscal and accounting creativity.

Canadians elected this government to deliver real solutions, not reheated slogans. Leader, when will the government present an actual plan to balance the budget in full — not just the parts it chooses, but a fully balanced budget?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. The government is taking a number of steps to improve the Canadian economy, and that will redound to the benefit of all Canadians including our balance sheets.

As the Prime Minister has said, the government will present a much more comprehensive, effective, pragmatic and ambitious budget in the fall. It's important that this be done right, and that's what the government is planning to do.

**Senator Housakos:** Government leader, in 2024, 75% of total revenue came from personal and corporate income taxes and, of course, the GST. There's no objective way to split that between operating and capital budgets. I think most of us know that. This makes the promise to balance the operating budget little more than a fiscal mirage.

Of course, I remind everyone that Canadians elected Prime Minister Carney with great hope. Will the government commit to giving Canadians a credible, comprehensive plan to balance a full federal budget and show that it intends to get there, and soon?

**Senator Gold:** The government has identified its plans for both presenting a comprehensive budget in the fall and reducing the growth of government, as well as many other measures in order to balance the operating budget. It stands by those commitments.

### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

**Hon. Elizabeth Marshall:** My question is also for Senator Gold. Senator Gold, the Prime Minister has acknowledged that the federal government's operating spending has been growing at an unsustainable rate of 9% annually. He promised in the Throne Speech to bring it to below 2%, but the government's Main Estimates for this year tell a different story. They show a significant increase in operational spending compared to last year. The Main Estimates for this year have increased 8%, but operating spending has increased more than that — certainly not at the 2% commitment included in the Throne Speech.

How can the government explain the significant increase in operating spending in the Main Estimates, given its commitment to what it calls a new fiscal discipline?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. This is a new government that has been in power for a very short time. It has an ambitious program that it is rolling out, the details of which are familiar to all members in this chamber. The estimates will be the subject of study in this chamber as they will be in the other place, and further opportunities will be available to honourable senators to obtain detailed responses to those questions.



**Senator Marshall:** Thank you. Senator Gold, there are many Canadians who are concerned about the country's fiscal position. What should we, as Canadians, expect four years from now? Will this be another broken promise?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for your question. Canadians can expect that today and every day hereafter this government will focus intensively and intently on improving the economic situation for Canadians across this great country. On two recent occasions, Parliament voted its confidence in this government, and this government will continue to work hard for all Canadians.

## GLOBAL AFFAIRS

### RUSSIAN SANCTIONS

**Hon. Donna Dasko:** My question is for Senator Gold.

In February 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Canada and its partners in the G7 and EU froze the equivalent of C\$425 billion of Russian state assets. The majority of these assets are managed by Euroclear, a security depository based in Belgium. There is at least C\$22 billion held by Euroclear in Canadian banks.

The EU must vote every six months to renew the freeze, and a Russia-friendly regime like Hungary could veto renewing the freeze this July. This would mean that the frozen assets, including Canada's share, would immediately be returned to Russia.

On May 22, the G7 finance ministers and central bank governors meeting in Banff stated:

... assets in our jurisdictions will remain immobilized until Russia ends its aggression and pays for the damage it has caused to Ukraine.

Can the government provide absolute assurance that these assets —

• (1410)

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. I want to be clear that Canada stands resolute in its commitment to supporting Ukraine as it defends its sovereignty and independence in the face of Russia's brutal war of aggression.

With regard to your question, I can confirm that the government is committed to the statement from the G7 finance ministers and central bankers. The government is also committed to working with allies to continue to coordinate support to promote the early recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine.

**Senator Dasko:** The Canadian government has the ability to independently freeze the C\$22 billion held in the Euroclear Canadian accounts so that if the EU fails to extend the freeze

the funds will remain frozen. This can be done without new legislation. Will the government undertake to do this as a guarantee?

**Senator Gold:** As I have stated, the government is committed to continuing to work with its allies to deliver on its promises and support for Ukraine.

### CONFLICT IN GAZA STRIP

**Hon. Yuen Pau Woo:** Senator Gold, on May 19, the Government of Canada joined with France and the U.K. to oppose the expansion of Israeli military operations in Gaza. The three countries threatened targeted sanctions if Israel did not cease its military offensive, lift restrictions on humanitarian aid and halt the expansion of settlements in the West Bank.

Since then, the Israeli government has not only continued its onslaught but has also severely limited the amount of aid going to Gaza, which has been described by the UN as the "hungriest place on earth." What sanctions will the government impose and when will this happen?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** The government remains committed to relief and rebuilding efforts in Gaza. We will continue to work with partners to ensure that aid reaches Palestinian civilians who desperately need it.

The government's position on the conflict has been longstanding and has not changed. It is committed to ultimately achieving a two-state solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

It continues to call for the release of all hostages held by Hamas, to affirm there's no role for Hamas in the future governance of Gaza and to call for a ceasefire. It will continue to work with its allies to help bring an end to the suffering of all peoples in the region.

**Senator Woo:** The government continues to utter threats without consequences. The same statement says that Canada supports Israel's right to defend itself but that its recent escalation is "... intolerable ..." and "... wholly disproportionate." In fact, the situation has been intolerable and disproportionate for more than 18 months.

Senator Gold, does the Government of Canada now accept that Israel has exhausted its right to self-defence and that the international community has to step in to prevent further violations of international humanitarian law, including genocide?

**Senator Gold:** That is not the government's position.

## TRANSPORT

### RAIL INTERSWITCHING

**Hon. Todd Lewis:** My question is for Senator Gold.

On page 14 of the 2025 Liberal Party election platform, the government committed to:

Help Canadian farmers get their goods to market at low cost, particularly in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. . . . by extending the Extended Railway Interswitching pilot by three years. . . .

When can we expect the government to act on its campaign commitment?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Senator, welcome to the Senate of Canada. With regard to your question, the government is working with the provinces, as you know, and will continue to act immediately to assist citizens in all respects.

With regard to the question of the timetable, I don't have a specific answer for you, but the government remains committed to delivering on this initiative, and I'll raise this with the minister at my first opportunity.

**Senator Lewis:** Thank you, Senator Gold. Competitive shipping rates are important, not only for the agricultural sector but for all commodities, many of which are facing uncertainty because of trade and tariffs. I'd like to see the government go further and make the pilot permanent. Could you please pass that on to the minister as well?

**Senator Gold:** I'd be pleased to pass that on.

## CANADIAN HERITAGE

### CBC/RADIO-CANADA

**Hon. Andrew Cardozo:** My question is for the Government Representative. First, I wish to thank you for your words about the Honourable Marc Garneau as we reflect on the life of this wonderful Canadian.

When our country and identity are under threat, the presence of national institutions is more important than ever before in maintaining and building our sense of nationhood. Chief among those institutions is CBC/Radio-Canada, which serves to enhance our sense of who we are. In the recent election, two parties promised to defund the CBC. The Liberal Party promised to update its mandate and increase the funding by a modest amount.

Do you agree that at this time the CBC/Radio-Canada has a critical role to play, and is the Liberal government still committed to this objective? When will we see plans for the mandate review and funding?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your questions and your continued advocacy regarding this important matter.

As you pointed out, senator, CBC/Radio-Canada is one of Canada's great institutions, almost a century old, and represents a concrete and very real foundation for the maintenance and nourishment of Canadian culture. It belongs to all of us as Canadians, who rightly have high expectations of their public broadcaster.

While I do not have a timeline, I can assure this chamber that the government will do what it takes, and what it can, to ensure that Canadians can continue to count on a reliable source of information and entertainment made in Canada for and by Canadians.

**Senator Cardozo:** Thank you, Senator Gold. At this time in our history, there are several other cultural institutions which also play a key role in our nation, including the National Film Board, the Canada Council of the Arts, the National Gallery, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg and the Canadian Museum of Immigration in Halifax.

Given the government's plan to reduce spending, does the government recognize the benefit of these Canadian icons to nation building?

**Senator Gold:** The government is very aware of and appreciative of the important role that our cultural institutions play in all regions of Canada, as are Canadians. We hope Canadians will continue to take advantage of them and learn more about our great country.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

**Hon. Michael L. MacDonald:** Senator Gold, in August 2021, during a campaign stop in British Columbia, former Prime Minister Trudeau promised that a re-elected Liberal government would spend \$500 million to train and equip 1,000 new firefighters across the country. The funds, he said, would also be used to acquire vital equipment like water bombers and helicopters, essential tools in fighting the increasingly devastating wildfires we see every summer.

We are now four years removed from that announcement. Thousands of Canadians have been displaced, communities have burned and the toll on our environment and economy continues to grow.

Senator Gold, can you tell this chamber exactly how many of those promised 1,000 firefighters have been hired and trained and how many helicopters and water bombers have been purchased by this government since this commitment in 2021?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for reminding us, if indeed we needed reminding, of the devastation wildfires are wreaking on so many communities in so many of our provinces. The government is exceptionally grateful to all the firefighters and supports that have been mobilized across this country — and, if my understanding is correct, from beyond our borders — to assist in this important, life-saving work.

This government will continue to work with partners in the provinces and territories and in Indigenous communities to create circumstances to both help those in need and, one hopes, to build greater resilience so that we can minimize the risk of these devastating fires in the future.

**Senator MacDonald:** That's not an answer at all.

Canadians need results. If the full \$500 million has not been spent as promised, can you provide a clear breakdown of how much has been spent to date and explain what has caused the delay in delivering these urgently needed firefighting resources?

**Senator Gold:** It's an important question in terms of how we are going to increase our capacity to fight these climate-related disasters, and I will certainly raise this question with the minister.

• (1420)

## PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

### GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

**Hon. David Richards:** My question is for Senator Gold.

Senator Gold, for years my concerns about flawed bills put forward by our previous government — Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, for instance, on the carbon tax — and our defensive posture were not only dismissed but often ridiculed and rejected in the Senate. Now the very cabinet that shunned them is set to enact these very same policies which they had so glibly dismissed.

Will you say that irreparable damage has already been done?

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

I think that as we stand at this stage of our history, we have much to build upon, and we have a government in place that has set out an ambitious, bold plan to help us navigate through what is the most challenging geopolitical environment for the world — certainly for Canada — since the Second World War.

Canadians have elected a government that is focused on the economy, focused on improving the prospects for Canadian individuals, families and businesses across this country, and we'll continue to work toward that end.

**Senator Richards:** I have a quick supplementary question. Can you admit that much of the policy that the former government promoted in this chamber has bled in many ways into the horrible calamities that this country finds itself in today?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for your question. That is not how this government views the achievements of the past government, notwithstanding the fact that at this time, and given the changed circumstances in the world, the new, current government is taking steps to move us forward. This government has a plan, and it is executing that plan, and that is how it will be judged.

## CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

### INDIGENOUS CONSULTATION

**Hon. Yvonne Boyer:** Senator Gold, as you are aware, section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 affirms the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada, rights which include, among others, self-determination, land rights and the duty of governments to consult and accommodate.

Despite these legal obligations, we continue to witness provincial legislation that disregards these protections. One recent example of many found across the country, in Ontario, is Bill 5, which centralizes control over municipal boundaries and planning processes without proper consultation with affected First Nations. It is deeply troubling.

Could you please advise us what specific measures the federal government is taking to ensure that provincial legislation upholds constitutionally protected Indigenous rights and the duty to consult as meaningfully observed?

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

The inherent rights of Aboriginal peoples, which are recognized and constitutionalized in our Charter, bind all levels of government in all of their actions. The federal government has a responsibility, which it is discharging and shall discharge in areas of its jurisdiction, and the same constitutionally entrenched obligations bind those provinces acting within the exclusive areas of their jurisdiction. It is the expectation of the federal government that all governments respect their obligations as constitutionally entrenched and recognized.

**Senator Boyer:** Thank you, Senator Gold. This incident is emblematic of a broader and persistent exclusion of Indigenous voices from critical decision-making forums. Just this week, at the first ministers' meeting, an event that deliberates on matters of national importance, where critical decisions affecting all jurisdictions were discussed, First Nations leaders were not invited to participate. Such omissions not only are inconsistent with the spirit of reconciliation but also perpetuate colonial power structures that treat Indigenous governments as secondary rather than as equal partners within the Canadian federation.

**Senator Gold:** This government is committed to the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP. It is committed to working with Indigenous communities to concretize those constitutionally entrenched rights to which you refer. This government and the Prime Minister have been and will continue to be in consultation with Indigenous leaders and rights holders going forward.

## TREASURY BOARD SECRETARIAT

### POLICY ON RESULTS

**Hon. Jane MacAdam:** My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

In recent speeches and appearances, including the Speech from the Throne, the government has committed that it “. . . will be guided by a new fiscal discipline: spend less so Canadians can invest more.” The Prime Minister stated that “Government must become much more productive . . .,” including “. . . by focusing on results over spending . . .”

Senator Gold, last fall, when representatives from the Treasury Board Secretariat appeared before the Senate National Finance Committee, they highlighted that they were reviewing their Policy on Results. The Policy on Results is an important accountability tool setting out fundamental requirements for the collection and use of performance information to manage programs and assess their effectiveness and efficiency. It also highlights the importance of results in management and expenditure decision making, as well as public reporting.

Can you please provide an update on the progress being made?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question and for underlining the importance of focusing on results to this government.

This government and the Prime Minister have brought that particular focus to the work of the government and will continue to do so. I'm not in a position to comment on the work that is being done by the government and within the ministries, but I can assure this chamber that this is a primary focus of the Prime Minister and of this government.

**Senator MacAdam:** Thank you, Senator Gold. I also wanted to follow up on my Senate colleague's question of last week regarding access to the outstanding Departmental Results Report data on the GC InfoBase website. Can you provide an update on when the government will post that data on the website?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you. I'm still not in a position to provide a timeline for that, but I will continue to raise that issue at every opportunity.

## GLOBAL AFFAIRS

### SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

**Hon. Rebecca Patterson:** My question is for Senator Gold.

A few days ago, Ukraine undertook what amounts to a modern-day Trojan Horse attack against legitimate Russian military targets. No civilians were harmed. Ukrainian drones launched from container trucks deployed deep into Russia and destroyed many strategic aircraft parked at Russian air bases, some of which were over 5,000 kilometres away, including in Siberia.

The aircraft that were destroyed or damaged represent a significant portion of the Russian air force's strategic strike fleet, including types that are routinely used to probe North America, including Canada's Arctic. Those aircraft were a threat not just to Ukraine but also to Canada and NATO. Much of this success was due to the amazing new and inexpensive drone technology created by Ukraine.

My question is this: What is Canada doing to help Ukraine further develop its drone technology and get it to the battlefield in record time? And how are Canadian drone manufacturers being encouraged by the government to collaborate with Ukrainian partners so that Canada can benefit from these technological advances?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question and, once again, for underlining the heroic actions of Ukraine in defence of its territory and sovereignty.

Canada has been, from the start, an important partner to Ukraine and collaborates in many areas. I'm not in a position to share information about what measures are being discussed to deal with military matters for several reasons that this chamber will appreciate. I'd like to assure you that Canada is doing what it can in playing its part with its allies to support Ukraine in their just defence in the unjust war perpetrated by Russia.

**Senator Patterson:** Thank you, Senator Gold. I hope we take advantage of their creativity and ingenuity to help us.

Senator Gold, the destruction of these Russian aircraft significantly decreased Russia's strategic strike capability — a threat to Canada. However, more is needed. I, along with Senator Kutcher and others, was recently briefed on the Sky Shield initiative in Ukraine. Sky Shield could help provide a much-needed umbrella of protection over critical infrastructure in Ukraine, such as nuclear reactors, as well as save lives of countless innocent people.

• (1430)

**Senator Gold:** Again, Canada is in discussions with Ukraine and its allies to do its part to enhance the security of the territory of Ukraine and will continue to do so.

### ELECTION INTEGRITY

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Government leader, the recent sham elections in Venezuela, marked by political repression, mass voter disillusionment and an absurd claim over sovereign Guyanese territory have once again revealed Nicolás Maduro's regime for what it is: a dictatorship clinging to power through fraud. While other democracies have responded with clarity and conviction, Canada's voice has been conspicuously muted.

Given our long-standing commitment to defending democracy and human rights abroad, can the government explain why its response to these fraudulent elections has been so tepid and what specific measures are being taken to support the Venezuelan people?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question and for reminding us about how not only fragile our robust and real democracies are but how important it is to look more closely to see where the form of democracy may obscure governments that are not truly committed to the democratic principles we hold so dear.

I will raise this question with the minister, because I'm simply not in a position to provide details about how the government has been managing this with its like-minded allies in the democratic world.

**Senator Housakos:** Senator Gold, your government has been quick to condemn Israel, even while 56 hostages — including Canadian Israelis — remain in the hands of Hamas. Yet, nearly two weeks have passed since Venezuela's sham local elections, and the government has remained completely silent while other international democracies around the world have spoken up and condemned them.

Why is it so difficult for this Liberal government to stand up for freedom and democracy equally around the world?

**Senator Gold:** Again, senator, I will certainly raise this with Minister Anand at my first opportunity. Canada does stand with its democratic allies in defence of those liberal democratic principles that are at the foundation of our democracy and of our democratic allies.

#### THE OTTAWA TREATY

**Hon. Marilou McPhedran:** Thank you, Your Honour. I truly appreciate this fairness offered to an unaffiliated senator.

Senator Gold, I fear for innocent civilians — especially women, girls and youth who are disproportionately impacted by land mines. Since 1997, the Ottawa Treaty has banned the use of land mines across the world. As many as 165 states parties no longer use land mines. Stockpiles of more than 40 million have been destroyed. Tragically, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and now Finland have announced their intention to follow Lithuania in withdrawing from the Ottawa Treaty. Without this treaty, civilians — mostly women and children — will be killed or maimed by these indiscriminate weapons.

What is the Government of Canada doing to protect the integrity of the Ottawa Treaty?

**Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question and for highlighting the role that Canada played historically in this issue. In a previous life, I was a member of the Canadian Landmine Foundation and was honoured to be involved in that.

I do not know what specific steps this government may currently be taking with regard to those countries that have expressed an intention to withdraw, but I will certainly raise this issue with the minister at my earliest convenience.

**Senator McPhedran:** Loss of limbs and death are irreversible. Please try to obtain more specific information. My question is this: What is happening to strengthen Canada's diplomatic stance to protect the benefits of the Ottawa Treaty and stem the tide of withdrawal?

**Senator Gold:** Thank you for providing further context to the question. I will certainly raise it.

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## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### ADJOURNMENT

#### MOTION ADOPTED

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate),** pursuant to notice of June 4, 2025, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at 2 p.m.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

### NATIONAL IMMIGRATION MONTH BILL

#### SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

**Hon. Amina Gerba** moved second reading of Bill S-215, An Act respecting National Immigration Month.

She said: Honourable senators, I am speaking from the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe nation. This land acknowledgement is particularly important in the context of Bill S-215, an act respecting national immigration month. Indeed, we must remind ourselves repeatedly that Indigenous Peoples have been present in what is now Canada since time immemorial.

I am therefore deeply moved to rise before you again today to resume the process that began in the previous Parliament with Bill S-286, which died on the Order Paper.

This initiative honours the journey that many of us here in this chamber undertook, as did millions of our compatriots who came from all over the world to enrich our country with their experience and contribute to our history.

I'd like to start with an anecdote that will help you understand why this act is so important. This is one of those interactions that those of you who aren't Caucasian likely experience on a daily basis.

A few years ago, my husband was chatting with a guest during a networking cocktail before a fundraising gala in Montreal. Apparently surprised to hear my husband speak excellent French, the lady asked him where he was from.

Mischievously, my husband pretended not to understand the meaning of the question. He replied, "I'm from Laval." "No, I mean, where are you actually from," she said. "Yes, I'm from Vimont in Laval," he said.

He could see that she was perplexed and found his answer inadequate, so he finally revealed that he is originally from Cameroon. He then asked her the same question. She was very confused and asked him what he meant. That's when my husband gently reminded her that, as far as he knew, with the exception of Indigenous peoples, we all come from somewhere else. He also suggested that she ask her parents and grandparents about her own ancestors' origins.

• (1440)

As you see, colleagues, this matter is still relevant today. This anecdote and this interrogation happen all too often and are highly revealing. Interrogations like these were what prompted me to come up with a way to remember our shared status as people "from somewhere else" and enshrine it in a bill. The three clauses that make up this bill are quite simple, and so is its purpose, which is to designate a specific month of the year to commemorate the vital role that immigration has played in building our nation.

Immigration has shaped Canada. The hard work, courage and resilience of women and men from distant places have helped build the prosperous, inclusive nation we know today, a country that commands admiration far beyond its borders. In every area, from economics and science to culture, sport and community involvement, immigrants have played a vital role in major achievements that have become the pride of our nation.

One need only look at the diversity of backgrounds represented in this chamber to see the richness of this contribution, or pay attention to what's happening in each of your regions to measure, on a daily basis, the positive and lasting footprint of immigrant communities. These contributions deserve to be fully recognized, celebrated and honoured. It is time to do justice to those who, through their commitment, continue to make Canada grow.

Before going into detail about why I want Canada to have a national immigration month, I'd like to set the record straight about something. It will not have escaped your attention that there has been a lot of debate in the news about our immigration policy on an almost daily basis. Some of the arguments in this

debate are useful, even necessary. Others come dangerously close to a philosophy of rejection and exclusion that has no place in our country.

As a proud Quebecer and Canadian from an immigrant background, I can't hide the fact that this feels personal and that I'm very concerned about the extremist and populist rhetoric I hear that appears to reject all types of immigration. The hard-liners who embrace that rhetoric insinuate that immigrants are largely responsible for our country's economic and social problems, but they are wrong.

It is important to remember that our country was built by successive waves of immigration. The only difference is when people arrived. Whether we arrived centuries ago, a month ago or a year ago, we — or our ancestors — all came from somewhere else.

Even today, immigration remains essential for Canada to meet the demographic and economic challenges that lie ahead. The aging population and persistent labour shortages, particularly in several key sectors, mean we need newcomers more than ever. Just bringing them in is not enough, though. We also need to help them integrate. That's important. That's why immigration must be carefully thought out, planned and supported.

Successful integration doesn't rely solely on the efforts of immigrants themselves. The entire host society must step up. It's up to us to create the conditions that enable newcomers to flourish. We must facilitate immigrants' access to services, language training and employment, and provide them with a framework to understand the values and codes of their new home, while respecting their identity and culture of origin. Integration is a process that takes time, but when it is well supported and done properly, it becomes a powerful lever for social cohesion, shared prosperity and the loyalty of future generations.

Colleagues, it is imperative that we guard against xenophobic and populist policies that seek to divide us. Canada must remain a model of tolerance and inclusion. My colleague, Julie, asked me a number of times to let this go, but I kept going because it's important to understand the reason that led me to introduce this bill today. To succeed at this, we need to invest in improving the way we receive, retain and ensure the economic prosperity of our newcomers. We also need to invest in the immigrant selection process and hand out stiff punishments to people who traffic immigrants. Unfortunately, there are many of them.

Honourable senators, immigration isn't a burden. It's part of our history, our prosperity and our future. Bill S-215 doesn't call for more or less immigration to Canada, and it doesn't promote a particular aspect of our country's immigration policy. Rather, the bill is meant to educate successive generations of our nation's immigrants, the people who shaped Canada into a multicultural society that mirrors a multicultural world. These generations are present here, in this chamber, from all over the world, and they deserve to be celebrated.

Although I'm no historian, I'd like to briefly review the major waves of migration that have shaped Canada. This is only an overview, as I already addressed this aspect in greater detail at second reading of Bill S-286, the predecessor to this bill that unfortunately died on the Order Paper in the previous Parliament.

• (1450)

I invite you to read that speech if you would like to review that detailed historical analysis. It is important to remember that the territory we now call Canada was inhabited long before the arrival of Europeans. Indigenous Peoples had been living here for thousands of years, and Vikings are believed to have reached the coast of Newfoundland as early as 1021.

Canada's migration history is part of a long process that began when the first Europeans settled here, notably with the founding of Quebec City in 1608. After the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the country welcomed American Loyalists, followed by waves of immigrants from Europe, particularly Ireland.

At the time of Confederation in 1867, Canada had a population of approximately 3.6 million and immigration was considered essential to its development, particularly in terms of settling the West. However, its immigration policies remained selective, discriminatory even, for a long time, favouring Europeans and systematically excluding Asians, Black people and other populations.

This intensive settlement created tensions with Indigenous Peoples, leading to conflicts such as the Northwest Rebellion in 1885. After World War II, Canada became a more welcoming country, ending its discriminatory laws and welcoming refugees and people displaced by war. For example, the private sponsorship program allowed thousands of refugees from Southeast Asia to come to Canada.

By the 1960s, one-third of Canadians had origins that were neither British nor French. These waves of immigration contributed to shaping a multicultural society, making Canada the G7 country with the highest proportion of immigrants.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2021, more than 8.3 million people, almost one-quarter of the population, were or had been landed immigrants or permanent residents in Canada.

Given that Canada's population is gradually aging and that its birth rate remains below the replacement rate, immigration is now the country's main driver of population growth. According to Statistics Canada projections, immigrants could represent between 29.1% and 34% of Canada's population by 2041. These numbers underscore the critical importance of having a well-thought-out, inclusive and forward-looking immigration policy.

Colleagues, through this brief look back at the history of the Canadian people, I wanted to remind you of a fundamental truth. As I said at the beginning, all of us, apart from Indigenous people, come from somewhere else. Centuries, decades, months or even days ago, we all came from somewhere else to build and populate this country, Canada.

However, we must never forget that the process of settling the land and occupying the territory has often led to the loss of Indigenous cultures, languages, traditions and lands.

Our country is therefore a product of the hopes and dreams of millions of immigrants arriving from the four corners of the planet to build a better life. Unfortunately, for Indigenous Peoples, it has meant a tragic erasure of their rights and their tangible and intangible assets.

These two realities are two sides of the same coin. They make up our history, and we must never deny that. They create a demand for justice, reparation and compensation, as well as a duty to remember that we must pass on to future generations.

Another reason I introduced Bill S-215 is the proliferation of motions and laws in this chamber and the other place celebrating the heritage of this or that community living in Canada. Colleagues, there's no doubt that the aim of these various initiatives is legitimate and stems from the same observation I made: the need to highlight immigrants' invaluable contributions to our country.

I see national immigration month as a useful wake-up call, at a time when some people have no hesitation in blaming immigrants for certain complex and difficult social situations. It could act as a showcase, an opportunity for all our immigrant groups to highlight their contributions and their communities. By bringing the new celebrations together, this national month, far from diluting them, would act as a forum for them.

It will be a forum to bring together all of these communities and celebrate them, because they deserve to be celebrated, no matter how big or small they are. It will also be a shared space to highlight the bountiful contributions, great and small, of all immigrants, no matter the size of their community.

Colleagues, I've had the opportunity to present this bill to many groups, and I've seen how much support there is for establishing a national immigration month. On May 15, 2024, my team and I held a virtual round table to hear first-hand from groups representing immigrants' interests. We brought together about 30 organizations to get their feedback on the initiative I am sponsoring.

During that very productive session, we got input from stakeholders across the country representing Canada's largest immigrant communities. The message we received was clear. All the stakeholders confirmed their support for a bill to establish a national immigration month.

Of course, the consultation wasn't exhaustive, but it was a meaningful way to find out whether organizations affected by this bill would welcome such a month.

• (1500)

We also continued our consultations all last summer, this time by phone. I asked what month would be best for the initiative. Something of a consensus emerged around November, which seems appropriate for a number of reasons. First of all, National Francophone Immigration Week takes place in November. Second, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which sets

out the fundamental principles governing in this area, received Royal Assent on November 1, 2001. I want to emphasize how important this act is, given that it governs Canada's modern-day immigration policy. Allow me to give you a brief historical overview of the key steps that led to the passage of this legislation, to show why it's so important to us.

For a long time, Canada's immigration policy favoured White immigration. Overtly racist laws excluded many applicants. You may recall the head tax imposed on Chinese migrants as far back as 1885, the almost total prohibition on Black immigration in 1911, the restrictions on Japanese and Indian immigrants, and the refusal to take in Jewish refugees aboard the *MS St. Louis* in 1939. The situation changed after 1947 with the removal of certain prohibitions, and again in 1967 with the creation of a points system based on skills, education and family ties, rather than ethnic origin.

The 1976 Immigration Act modernized the system. It affirmed the principles of diversity and non-discrimination and recognized refugees as a protected category. As a result, more than 327,000 refugees came to Canada as part of the private sponsorship program launched in 1979. Since 1980, Canada has had five major immigration pathways: independent immigration, humanitarian immigration, family reunification, assisted immigration and economic immigration. Finally, on November 1, 2001, the 1976 Immigration Act was replaced by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The new law maintained many of the principles and policies set out in the previous law, particularly the different categories of immigrants. It also expanded the family class to include same-sex couples and common-law relationships. This law is the cornerstone of Canada's current immigration policy.

The choice of November to celebrate national immigration month is based on a powerful milestone: the passage of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which came into force on November 1, 2001. This law is one of the modern pillars of our immigration policy, and associating it with this month reinforces the historical and civic scope of the initiative. It is a pillar of immigration policy, which is why it must be linked to Bill S-215, since that act is still in force today.

In addition, November is a unique time in Parliament. It's a good time to organize parliamentary activities. It usually coincides with an active period in the House of Commons and the Senate, which will facilitate political and institutional engagement around this commemoration. Aside from Remembrance Day, there's not much on the calendar in November, so there's space to give a national celebration of immigration all the visibility it deserves.

Colleagues, this bill is an acknowledgement of the generations of people who developed our country. The goal is to remind ourselves that nearly all of us are from somewhere else. By bringing together all of the activities related to celebrations, this month will strengthen support for all the motions in Parliament to celebrate our diverse communities and showcase who we are as Canadians from all over the world.

I would like to tell you all a little bit about myself. I came to Canada in 1986 with my husband. We chose to immigrate to this country to pursue our studies. My husband had received funding

from the now-defunct Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, to complete his doctorate in communications. We were supposed to return to Cameroon after his studies. However, we decided to stay in Canada to provide a better life for our four children, three of whom were born here.

Today, thanks to the various initiatives of my family members, all of whom are entrepreneurs like me, I can say that all of us have contributed to this country's prosperity. We have done it by creating jobs and taking in immigrants as foreign workers. I have been doing it here alongside you for the past four years. However, we still get asked the same old question that I mentioned at the start of my speech: Where are you from? My children were born here, in Montreal North, in Laval, in Saint-Lambert and in Lorraine, but they get asked the same question. My grandchildren were born here, but they get asked the same question. The purpose of this bill is to bring about change, to promote acceptance of the fact that we all come from somewhere else, and to convince people to stop asking this question. It may be a legitimate question, and people will not stop asking it. However, people need to be taught, told and reminded that, apart from Indigenous people, all Canadians are immigrants or descended from immigrants.

• (1510)

Colleagues, as you have seen, Canada is fundamentally a land of immigration. Immigration has shaped the country we love today.

[English]

Recognizing a month dedicated to immigration would send a powerful message to all Canadians and to the international community. Therefore, I urge you, honourable senators, to stand with me and support this bill.

Immigrants are not strangers. They are part of our nation. Immigrants are the past, the present and the future of Canada.

[Translation]

That is why I urge you, honourable senators, to refer Bill S-215, an act respecting national immigration month, to committee as soon as possible, so it can be studied and become law in Canada.

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

**Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne:** It is difficult to speak after the speech given by my colleague Senator Gerba. It was a passionate speech that came from the heart.

Of course, I too have heard the infamous question: "Where are you from?" It would be better not to ask. Sometimes someone asks out of curiosity or because they see some sort of resemblance. Quebec and Canada are multicultural now and home to many diverse communities, yet people still make missteps.

My remarks will be brief, Senator Gerba, because I cannot match your eloquence on this issue. I have no experience with immigration. I was born here, in Quebec City, into very ordinary



circumstances. I support Bill S-215 because I want this celebration to also be a time to reflect on the crucial issues raised by immigration.

This is not just a war of numbers. In the past, we did not talk about climate refugees, narco-states or the systemic violence against women in many countries.

Here, immigration often happened in waves, as you mentioned earlier: a British wave, a Chinese or Japanese wave, an Italian wave. However, these waves often came with high or low tides. At high tide, a lot of Chinese migrants would be admitted because we needed labour. Even though there seemed to be too many of them, they were still forced to pay astronomical head taxes. Chinese immigrants were shamefully discriminated against. Conversely, the Vietnamese boat people went through hell to get here, but we welcomed them with open arms. In the past two years, Canada has also taken in thousands of Ukrainians.

Since the dawn of Confederation, some people have felt there were too many immigrants, and others, too few. Things were a little different in Quebec. Between 1840 and 1930, a million francophones, mostly from Quebec, emigrated to the United States, to New England in particular. The first to leave were farmers who were no longer able to eke out a living. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, Americans were coming here to recruit workers for their textile industry. They needed labour.

That didn't stop the Ku Klux Klan from objecting to the influx of French-speaking Catholic immigrants. Thousands of hooded, torch-bearing Klansmen converged on Washington to protest against what they called the "Chinese of the Eastern States."

Let's come back to the present day. The current Quebec government feels that there are too many immigrants, asylum seekers and international students. In short, there are too many foreigners on its territory. These newcomers have unfortunately become the scapegoats for everything going wrong in Quebec. The ceaseless, aggressive rhetoric of the Quebec government and the Parti Québécois about the evils of immigration troubles me deeply.

Could this reduce Quebecers' openness to newcomers? Are immigrants really responsible for the housing crisis and the overburdened social and health services, as is so often repeated? They are undoubtedly one factor, but surely not the only one.

In my view, the use of identity-based arguments is even more harmful. Some claim that asylum seekers and temporary immigrants are a threat to the French language in Quebec. Are they really? No one can say that you pose a threat, Senator Gerba, considering your excellent French.

Are there any numbers to back up this claim? Does anyone really believe that the thousands of temporary workers on farms across Quebec who are picking crops as part of our agricultural workforce pose a threat to our language? Of all the obvious threats to young francophones, isn't the number one threat the omnipresence of the internet, social media and the English-dominated virtual world?

Don't get me wrong, I think our language needs to be constantly and positively promoted, but not at the expense of newcomers, who are already living in precarious conditions, far from home.

Quebec nationalism has not always taken a divisive stance on immigration. I still have a vivid memory of Parti Québécois MNA Gérard Godin reaching out to cultural communities in the 1970s. He sought them out. He was inclusive. He listened. He influenced the Parti Québécois vision at the time.

Let's be realistic. It's clear that both Quebec and Canada need immigrants and temporary workers. Many small towns in Quebec rely on these workers to keep businesses alive, launch new businesses themselves and give these towns a badly needed demographic boost.

This sensitive issue requires tact, moderation and kindness, all of which are sorely lacking.

I am among those who believe that Canada must remain a generous country. We must never forget that Iranians, Afghans, Sudanese and Colombians are, first and foremost, human beings who want to settle here to build a better life for themselves and their families. We have to ask ourselves this question: What would we do if we had a family and there was no future for them in our country because of poverty, desertification or other untenable conditions?

That question should be our pole star in this whole debate. Thank you once again, Senator Gerba. I just want to clarify that, when you said we had had a debate and had spoken often, it was not about immigration. We pretty much agree on that subject. What we discussed was whether tablets should be used while delivering speeches. That can be tricky sometimes.

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

**Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie:** Honourable senators, I rise today to support Bill S-215 to establish a national immigration month.

As you can imagine, as an immigrant myself, this topic really hits home for me. I thank Senator Gerba for introducing this bill that will help us remember our history and our origins and look to the future with hope.

I will spare you the anti-immigration rhetoric of today's populists. Senator Gerba was quite eloquent on the matter and Senator Miville-Dechéne said everything else that needed to be said.

In Canada, waves of migration began in the year 1021, in a place now known as Newfoundland and Labrador, as Senator Gerba so aptly explained in her historical overview of immigration.

• (1520)

Closer to the present day, the wave of Haitian immigration took place in the 1960s and 1970s. Fleeing Haiti's political and economic crises under the dictatorship of Duvalier, these men

and women came here in search of a better future. They brought a rich culture and unique skills that francophone Canada needed at the time.

Many of their achievements are documented in a book entitled *Ces Québécois venus d'Haïti*, which was published in 2007. Of the notable achievements presented in this book, we find the story of Dr. Yvette Bonny, who performed the first bone marrow transplant in a child in 1980 and who was a pioneer in all matters relating to sickle cell disease in Quebec. In the education sector, there is Professor Patrick Paultre, who established the largest research program in Canada on the behaviour of high-performance concrete structural elements under seismic loading. In the field of sports, Bruny Surin participated in many prestigious international competitions, including the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, winning the gold medal in the 400 metres in 1996. He was also delegation head for the Canadian team at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. In the engineering sector, Maxime Dehoux won the award of merit from the Association of Consulting Engineers of Canada and *Canadian Consulting Engineer* magazine for his contribution to the construction of the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope.

This list, although not exhaustive, illustrates how much their exceptional contribution continues to enrich our socio-cultural fabric.

This book also documents my own journey. I arrived in Canada on November 26, 1976, and like many immigrant professionals, I had to deal with the non-recognition of my medical degree. Once I overcame this obstacle and obtained my licence from the Medical Council of Canada in 1981, I was able to innovate in continuing education activities by developing a program focusing on medical care in the home. I subsequently wrote a book on at-home medical care, founded a palliative care home for the Laval community, and became involved with medical associations.

For just under a year now, I have been pursuing my commitment to serving alongside you all in the Senate of Canada.

Is it necessary to dedicate a month to immigration? That's the question we're going to answer.

Before I explain, let me briefly remind you of some key immigration terms, such as migration, immigration, emigration, refugees and temporary workers.

These terms are often misunderstood and misinterpreted. Statistics Canada defines migration as "[g]eographic movements of persons of a given population, involving a change in usual place of residence." Migration can be intraprovincial, interprovincial or international.

Immigration refers to the entry of people from another country. Every immigrant has first emigrated from another country.

Another term that deserves particular attention is "refugee." Under international law, the 1951 Geneva Convention defines "refugee" as a person who leaves their country due to a well-

founded fear of persecution. This person seeks refuge in another country. They can't avail themselves of the protection of their own country.

Therefore, when a person starts an asylum claim, they can't be described as an "illegal migrant," which is a term that is often used incorrectly in debates about migrants entering via Roxham Road. The proper term is "irregular migrants."

Finally, there are also "temporary foreign workers," meaning people recruited by companies to alleviate labour shortages in various sectors in Canada.

During public meetings of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, which was studying the issue of temporary and migrant labour in Canada, a number of employers said they need these workers. The Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance, for example, explained in its brief that, without temporary workers, the main challenge would be finding enough people in the surrounding regions who are willing to accept seasonal employment. Other companies confirmed these statements.

To conclude the lexical portion of my speech, please keep these definitions clear in your minds, because they can help us understand the issues surrounding this bill.

Now let us consider the importance of immigrants in our country. Are they really indispensable to Canada?

On July 31, 2024, an article published in the magazine *L'actualité* entitled "Global population decline" examined the drop in birth rates worldwide.

The article said that the population replacement level is a birth rate of 2.1 children per woman. Currently, 54% of Western nations, including Canada, have birth rates below this threshold. According to the most recent Statistics Canada data, which are from 2022, Canada's birth rate is 1.33 children per woman.

This drop in the birth rate directly affects the renewal of the workforce, that is, the number of employed individuals. The strength of the Canadian economy depends in part on the size of this working population, whose tax contributions are essential to financing our public services.

What's more, the evolution of this workforce will be increasingly influenced by aging. By 2030, people aged 65 and over will account for 23%, nearly one-quarter, of Canada's population, or more than 9.5 million people.

Given this reality, immigration is not merely a solution, but a critical necessity if our economy is to survive.

However, we must recognize that immigration should not be seen solely as a means of addressing labour shortages. It is also a strategic lever that introduces innovation, entrepreneurial spirit and cultural diversity, all of which are essential to our prosperity. Without immigration, our economy could stagnate and our international competitiveness could suffer.

This migratory movement is not unique to Canada; it is a global phenomenon. Many countries are facing similar demographic realities and are welcoming new populations to support their economies.

Honourable senators, in answer to the main question about whether we need a month dedicated to immigration, I would say that this month would be an opportunity for each of us to share our own story, our challenges, our personal and shared triumphs. It should include learning opportunities designed to convey cultural wealth in literature, music and even gastronomy. Future generations are sure to benefit.

Speaking of gastronomy, as I promised you last year, I'd be delighted to share with you a recipe for *joumou* soup, a quintessential Haitian dish inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Why November? There are some good reasons November was chosen for this recognition.

As Senator Gerba pointed out, it coincides with two significant immigration-related events: National Francophone Immigration Week and the date on which the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act received Royal Assent.

To move forward together, it is essential that we promote personal stories and celebrate the riches that each of us brings to our community.

After a brief discussion about this bill with Senator Gerba, I read about the immigration history of the Riley and McArthur families of Alberta in the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*.

• (1530)

It reminded me of some well-known stories. If you read the article, you'll learn more about some everyday immigration success stories. I think it's a good illustration of the essence of this bill, because it shows that we are all first-, second- or third-generation immigrants. I hope you will support Bill S-215 and send it to committee. Thank you.

[English]

**Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia:** Honourable senators, I rise today in support of Bill S-215, an act respecting national immigration month, recently reintroduced to this Parliament by my dear friend Senator Amina Gerba. Thank you for your initiative and commitment in this regard.

Colleagues, I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about something deeply personal and profoundly Canadian: the value of being an immigrant in this remarkable country. I stand before you today not only as a Canadian but as someone who chose this country and in turn was chosen by it. For me, this has created a powerful bond — one built on hope, responsibility and a shared purpose.

This bill provides an opportunity to formally recognize the immense contributions immigrants have made to our country while also reflecting on the complexities and challenges that have shaped our immigration history. It invites us to acknowledge the

obstacles that many immigrants continue to face and to celebrate the indispensable role they play in enriching Canada's social, cultural and economic fabric.

At its core, this bill reflects the values that define Canada: resilience, inclusivity and a recognition that immigration has been a driving force in shaping our nation's identity and success. By establishing national immigration month, we reaffirm that the strength of our country lies in the diversity and dynamism that immigrants bring to our communities.

My own journey to Canada in 1984 from Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, was shaped by the harsh realities of political volatility and racial and tribal tensions. Immigration for me and many others was the path to hope and new beginnings.

But the journey of immigration is not always easy. Immigrants often arrive with credentials that are not recognized, dreams that seem delayed and the emotional weight of leaving family and friends behind. These are moments of loneliness, of doubt and of questioning whether the sacrifice was worth it, but within that struggle there is also a source of strength. It teaches pliability and it cultivates humility. For many immigrants, when you've lived without safety, health care, freedom or opportunity, those are aspects of life that are never taken for granted, and on arriving here, you fight to protect these seminal features and foundations of this country. Your ability to contribute is both urgent and reflects gratitude.

As a rural family doctor in Twillingate, Newfoundland and Labrador, I witnessed first-hand how vital immigrants are to sustaining and transforming local communities. When I first arrived, Twillingate — this generous and loving community — embraced my skills, and I was welcomed with warmth and gratitude. It was this sense of belonging that compelled me to build my life there. I will forever be grateful to my community for shaping my ideas and ideals and for embedding in me the Newfoundland values of altruism, kindness and spirituality. Newfoundland and Labrador, with its vast remote landscapes, has always faced economic and population challenges. Immigrants have been and continue to be instrumental in addressing these issues. Our immigrants have contributed in essential roles including health care, academics, entrepreneurship and working in critical industries like agriculture and fisheries.

Historically, the province has been shaped by waves of migration, including the Norse at L'Anse aux Meadows on the Great Northern Peninsula; the Irish, English and French settlers who built thriving fishing communities; and the Moravian community that made a significant contribution to Labrador. Today's immigrants continue that legacy, revitalizing shrinking communities and contributing to the cultural and economic vibrancy of my province.

The cultural tapestry of my province continues to amplify and grow. More recently, my province has recognized the ongoing importance of immigration through its 2022 Population Growth Strategy, which focuses on attracting newcomers to address labour shortages and support economic growth. Its goals are to attract and retain 5,100 newcomers annually by 2026. The strategy places emphasis on attracting skilled workers, international students and entrepreneurs with the hope that they will settle permanently in our province.

While immigration is vital to our future, we must also confront the more challenging aspects of our immigration history including policies like the Chinese head tax and the exclusion of Jewish refugees during World War II. Those serve as painful reminders that Canada's immigration system has not always lived up to the ideals of inclusivity. These examples are critical for us to remember. They must motivate us to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

Bill S-215 is important because it continues to recognize that immigrants have made a significant contribution and affords all Canadians to reflect on the broader historical and cultural significance of immigration. A national immigration month will offer us the opportunity to acknowledge both the positive and challenging aspects of immigration as well as the benefits that have come through the years.

I proudly support this bill to ensure that the stories and contributions of immigrants continue to be honoured and celebrated for years to come.

Colleagues, let me conclude by quoting Her Excellency the former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson from her induction speech in 1999:

As John Ralston Saul has written, the central quality of the Canadian state is its complexity. It is a strength and not a weakness that we are a “permanently incomplete experiment built on a triangular foundation—Aboriginal, francophone and anglophone.” . . .

She continues:

It is an old experiment, complex and, in worldly terms, largely successful. Stumbling through darkness and racing through light, we have persisted in the creation of a Canadian civilization . . .

To continue her quote:

There seem to be two kinds of societies in the world today. Perhaps there have always been only two kinds: punishing societies and forgiving societies. A society like Canada's, with its four centuries of give-and-take, compromise and acceptance, wrongdoing and redress, is basically a forgiving society. We try—we must try—to forgive what is past.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Ataullahjan, debate adjourned.)

#### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-13(2), I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(At 3:40 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at 2 p.m.)

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## CONTENTS

Thursday, June 5, 2025

	PAGE		PAGE
<b>Speaker's Statement</b>		<b>Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators</b>	
The Hon. the Speaker . . . . .	137	Notice of Motion to Authorize Committee to Refer Papers and Documents from the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament and by the Intersessional Authority	
<b>Speaker pro tempore of the Senate</b>		Hon. Judith G. Seidman. . . . .	142
Expression of Thanks			
Hon. René Cormier . . . . .	137		
<b>Business of the Senate</b>			
Motion to Extend Today's Senators' Statements Adopted		<b>QUESTION PERIOD</b>	
Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson . . . . .	137	<b>Business of the Senate</b> . . . . .	142
<b>SENATORS' STATEMENTS</b>		<b>Finance</b>	
<b>The Late Honourable Marc Garneau, P.C., C.C.</b>		Balanced Budget	
Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	137	Hon. Leo Housakos . . . . .	142
<b>D-Day and the Battle of Normandy</b>		Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	142
Hon. Leo Housakos . . . . .	138	Government Spending	
Hon. Marty Klyne . . . . .	138	Hon. Elizabeth Marshall . . . . .	142
<b>Visitors in the Gallery</b>		Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	142
The Hon. the Speaker . . . . .	139	<b>Global Affairs</b>	
<b>D-Day and the Battle of Normandy</b>		Russian Sanctions	
Hon. Rebecca Patterson. . . . .	139	Hon. Donna Dasko . . . . .	143
<b>London, Ontario—Walkerton Victims of Tragedy</b>		Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	143
Hon. Marty Deacon . . . . .	139	Conflict in Gaza Strip	
<b>Visitors in the Gallery</b>		Hon. Yuen Pau Woo . . . . .	143
The Hon. the Speaker . . . . .	140	Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	143
<b>Eid al-Adha</b>		<b>Transport</b>	
<b>Day of Arafah</b>		Rail Interswitching	
Hon. Salma Ataullahjan. . . . .	140	Hon. Todd Lewis . . . . .	144
<b>Support for Children</b>		Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	144
Hon. Margo Greenwood . . . . .	141	<b>Canadian Heritage</b>	
		CBC/Radio-Canada	
<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>		Hon. Andrew Cardozo . . . . .	144
<b>Jury Duty Appreciation Week Bill (Bill S-226)</b>		Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	144
First Reading		<b>Natural Resources</b>	
Hon. Lucie Moncion . . . . .	141	Wildfire Management	
<b>Arab Heritage Month Bill (Bill S-227)</b>		Hon. Michael L. MacDonald. . . . .	144
First Reading		Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	144
Hon. Mohammad Al Zaibak . . . . .	141	<b>Privy Council Office</b>	
<b>Criminal Code (Bill S-228)</b>		Government Priorities	
Bill to Amend—First Reading		Hon. David Richards . . . . .	145
Hon. Yvonne Boyer . . . . .	141	Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	145
		<b>Crown-Indigenous Relations</b>	
		Indigenous Consultation	
		Hon. Yvonne Boyer . . . . .	145
		Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	145
		<b>Treasury Board Secretariat</b>	
		Policy on Results	
		Hon. Jane MacAdam . . . . .	146
		Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	146

## CONTENTS

Thursday, June 5, 2025

	PAGE		PAGE
<b>Global Affairs</b>		<b>National Immigration Month Bill (Bill S-215)</b>	
Support for Ukraine		Second Reading—Debate Adjourned	
Hon. Rebecca Patterson . . . . .	146	Hon. Amina Gerba . . . . .	147
Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	146	Hon. Julie Miville-Dechène . . . . .	150
Election Integrity		Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie . . . . .	151
Hon. Leo Housakos . . . . .	146	Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia . . . . .	153
Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	147		
The Ottawa Treaty			
Hon. Marilou McPhedran . . . . .	147		
Hon. Marc Gold . . . . .	147		
<hr/>		<b>Business of the Senate</b>	
<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>		Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson . . . . .	154
<b>Adjournment</b>			
Motion Adopted			
Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson . . . . .	147		