



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION



45th PARLIAMENT



VOLUME 154



NUMBER 13

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

CONTENTS

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

Publications Centre: Publications@sen.parl.gc.ca

Published by the Senate
Available on the Internet: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

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

Prayers.

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Pursuant to the order of June 12, 2025, I leave the chair for the Senate to resolve into a Committee of the Whole to consider the subject matter of Bill C-5, An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act. The Honourable Senator Cormier will chair the committee.

[English]

ONE CANADIAN ECONOMY BILL

CONSIDERATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On the Order:

The Senate in Committee of the Whole in order to receive such witnesses as may be determined according to the process established in order to consider the subject matter of Bill C-5, An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended and put into Committee of the Whole, the Honourable René Cormier in the chair.)

The Chair: Honourable senators, the Senate is resolved into a Committee of the Whole to continue its study of the subject matter of Bill C-5, An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act.

Honourable senators, in a Committee of the Whole, senators shall address the chair but need not stand. Under the Rules, the speaking time is 10 minutes, including questions and answers, but, as ordered, if a senator does not use all of their time, the balance can be yielded to another senator.

The list of all currently confirmed witnesses for the Committee of the Whole on the subject matter of Bill C-5 today was distributed to senators electronically with the Scroll Notes, and the pages can provide senators with that list upon request.

The committee will first hear from Geoff Wood, Senior Vice-President, Policy, Canadian Trucking Alliance; Goldy Hyder, President and Chief Executive Officer, Business Council of Canada; and Sean Strickland, Executive Director, Canada's Building Trades Unions.

(Pursuant to the order of the Senate, the witnesses were escorted to seats in the Senate Chamber.)

The Chair: I would like to thank you for being with us today. I would ask you to make your opening remarks.

Geoff Wood, Senior Vice-President, Policy, Canadian Trucking Alliance: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Senate today. It's a true honour.

My name is Geoff Wood, and I am Senior Vice-President, Policy, with the Canadian Trucking Alliance, or CTA. I'm also joined today by my colleague Lak Shoon, Director, Policy & Industry Awareness programs.

As background, the CTA is a federation of provincial trucking associations. Our membership totals approximately 5,000 trucking companies that operate in excess of 100,000 trucks and employ approximately 250,000 Canadians who are directly committed to supporting our supply chain and our country.

Fair competition, safety and compliance and law and order are critical components that must remain in place and be strengthened to ensure that Canada's trucking industry remains strong.

Our intent here today is to let you know loud and clear that we support the removal of interprovincial trade barriers. Saying this, while we need to remove barriers, it must be done with mechanisms that work for the trucking industry and that do not have unintended consequences such as a lessening of road safety, negatively impacting fairness and compliance in the industry, allowing a further entrenchment of the underground economy in the industry and adding additional confusion and complexity to the enforcement of regulations.

We felt that it is important that the Senate understand the current status of the industry, so I will give you a few points on that.

The industry is experiencing its worst economic conditions in over 40 years. The underground economy is running amuck in the industry primarily with respect to labour and tax non-compliance, and we have been in a 10-year battle to bring law and order back to the industry. It has been a slow go, and we have had very little support from governments.

With respect to trade barriers in 2023 and 2025, the CTA put together an interprovincial trade barriers report. Highlights of this include aligning road maintenance standards between jurisdictions, the need for more rest areas for truck drivers and commercial drivers on the national highway system, the twinning of Highway 185 in Quebec and the development of an effective system of oversight and accountability for truck safety amongst the provinces and territories.

The oversight piece for truck safety is the glaring concern we have. From our perspective, it is a trade barrier in that there is too much mobility in terms of trucking operations. Having the ability to go jurisdiction shopping when their safety record in one jurisdiction gets in bad shape only to be allowed to open up in other jurisdictions. This allows unscrupulous companies to constantly search for the least restrictive regimes that have little or no accountability.

This is directly related to challenges with jurisdictions not following National Safety Code standards 7, 14 and 15. Those standards are out of date and need to be revamped.

Although the truck safety piece needs to be addressed, from our perspective, mutual recognition is not the answer for our sector. In this instance, mutual recognition is why we have the situation we do today with truck safety. There is little consistency, little information sharing amongst jurisdictions and little accountability and authority for jurisdictions to deal with carriers from other jurisdictions. The CTA has been asking for fixes through established protocols since 2009. In 2023, because of the attention paid to the barriers, we have added this to our list.

The Canadian Council of Motor Transportation Administrators, or CCMTA, has been directed by the council administrator to address this issue, but from our perspective the process is too slow and won't be completed until 2027. We need political commitment and political will from the federal government, provinces and territories to get this done in a much shorter time frame.

With respect to the building Canada act, we understand this act's goal is to accelerate projects that are in the national interest. Our comment on this is that we need significant attention paid to the oversized and overweight permitting regimes for trucking since critical materials, cargoes and heavy equipment needed for these nation-building projects will be transported by trucks that require special permits.

To ensure any delays are mitigated, this will require the removal of all trade barriers related to these movements across all the provinces. This will also require proper, sustained investments in permitting regimes and personnel within the jurisdictions.

In most cases, the issuance of permits is held up or delayed because of ongoing road construction that does not allow passage of oversized loads, inaccurate information for those construction sites, a lack of staffing levels and a lack of appropriate IT systems to process permits. While we have a host of issues, whatever changes are made in the future, they must be done in a manner that will not jeopardize road safety or damage provincial or territorial highway infrastructure.

• (1410)

Most importantly of all, and if there is one take-away to be learned from our testimony today, it's this: As we start these nation-building projects, there will be government procurement. As part of this, we want to ensure the enforcement of labour rights, protections and laws by trucking companies that are part of government procurement. Governments must ensure that no

elements of the underground economy and no organizations that practise labour misclassification are eligible to participate in these projects. To be clear: From our perspective, if you want to work on these crucial projects for our country, then you need to comply with all labour and tax obligations and follow all other rules that apply to trucking.

We have concerns with respect to other ongoing procurement processes in which we don't believe the appropriate checks and balances have been addressed and there is no willingness to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. It is a pleasure, and I'm happy to take any questions.

Goldy Hyder, President and Chief Executive Officer, Business Council of Canada: Distinguished senators, thank you for your service. Before I begin my remarks, let me just acknowledge the importance of the upcoming National Indigenous Peoples Day on Saturday.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the importance of Bill C-5, the one Canadian economy act. It is, indeed, an honour to be here.

Each day, I have the privilege of representing over 170 business leaders who employ more than 2 million Canadians and create roughly 50% of the country's GDP. Founded in 1976, the Business Council of Canada, or BCC's mandate is to help strengthen the country's economy, social fabric and democratic institutions.

My work takes me around the world where I have the honour to meet with Canada's customers — both those we have now, and those we want more of in the future. I have to be honest with you. The last many years have been a challenge. I am asked repeatedly about how a country like Canada — blessed with resource wealth, world-class talent and sophisticated capital markets — struggles to provide its trading partners with the goods they need to feel safe and secure, and to prosper.

At the same time, Canada's economic and national security is under siege. Protectionist policies continue to grow, and our democratic institutions continue to be threatened. Our allies and trading partners face the same headwinds and, now more than ever, are seeking to lock in safe and secure supplies of energy, food and critical minerals.

Our world-class resources — whether it's uranium, nickel, potash, grain or oil and gas — compete in global markets. Unfortunately, we're losing market share. Once one of the top-ten suppliers of many minerals and agri-food products, we're losing out to our competitors, many of which are in countries with weaker environmental standards and less respect for the rule of law.

In regard to energy, our story is one of unfulfilled potential. Liquefied natural gas, or LNG, provides a striking example in which policy missteps and onerous regulatory barriers have kept Canada shackled and unable to reach its full potential, leaving us on the sidelines as other countries take the role that should have belonged to Canada: that of an energy supplier to the democratic world. Despite having been blessed with enormous natural gas

reserves and shores that border on three of the world's four oceans, Canada has struggled to build the right infrastructure to move its energy products and resources to tidewater.

Merely two months ago, S&P Global released a study demonstrating that it takes over 20 years to discover, approve and build a mine in Canada, ranking us amongst countries with the longest lead times in the world. This must change.

Bill C-5 can enable us to leap out of the starting block, allowing Canada to finish first in the global race for trade. Our view is that this bill and the powers assigned with it are appropriate to these challenging times. It provides a bold framework for governments to come together and work with the private sector and Indigenous communities to identify projects of national significance.

Let me assure you that the private sector is ready to do its part to invest in and build a strong and prosperous Canada. Our track record is second to none, and our ability to produce resources responsibly in cooperation with First Nations is Canada's competitive strength. Importantly, Indigenous rights and the duty to consult remain permanent features in Canadian law. Our members have made great strides over several decades to build a strong foundation of trust with First Nations through goodwill and enduring partnerships in major projects. We stand ready to move forward with them today.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn't explain the BCC's overwhelming support for what this bill is trying to accomplish: to create the conditions for freer trade in Canada and remove interprovincial trade barriers.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Hyder. I respectfully ask you to conclude.

Mr. Hyder: The margin for policy error is very low, and numerous world leaders have called on Canada to help meet their demands for affordable and reliable clean energy and technologies to augment their domestic supply.

Now, we have the chance and opportunity to answer their call. Therefore, I urge you to unite and pass this bill. Thank you.

Sean Strickland, Executive Director, Canada's Building Trades Unions: Thank you, senators, for the opportunity to share our perspective today regarding Bill C-5, the one Canadian economy act.

My name is Sean Strickland, and I am the executive director of Canada's Building Trades Unions, or CBTU. I am here to represent the voices of over 600,000 unionized skilled tradespeople, members of international unions, who work in more than 60 different trades and occupations, and whose lives and livelihoods are dependent on major projects being built in every part of Canada. I am joined today by my colleague Nathan Carr, Public Affairs Manager at CBTU.

Senators, time is of the essence. As job-killing tariffs put a strain on Canada's economy, we must move forward with nation-building projects that can redefine our economy and secure our economic and energy independence.

For too long, Canada's lack of regulatory efficiency has created unacceptable delays in moving projects forward and getting the men and women of the skilled trades to work and providing well-paying unionized jobs for construction workers across the country.

The creation of a major projects office, a streamlined "one project, one approval" process and the coordination and consolidation of ministerial, departmental and intergovernmental processes are long overdue. Simply put, it takes longer to have a project approved in Canada than it does to build one. That is unacceptable.

A prime example of this need for change is the Trans Mountain Expansion Project, or TMX. Construction took just over five years; approval, more than a decade. Thank heavens the Canadian government purchased the existing pipeline, financed its twinning and saw this project through, because today the export capacity of our energy to more reliable trading partners is a key strategic asset that is securing our economic sovereignty during this uncertain time.

There are projects from coast to coast and every point in between that can, and should, move forward with an expedited approval process. From LNG Canada Phase 2 in Kitimat, B.C., exporting even more liquified natural gas to reliable trading partners, to critical mineral mining projects in the Ring of Fire in Ontario, to clean hydroelectric projects like Gull Island in Newfoundland and Labrador, to small modular reactors that can be used right across the country to help create and build an east-west electrical grid, the nation-building projects are there if the regulatory environment can support streamlined approvals. That's why we are supporting this legislation and urge you to pass it quickly.

Canada's Building Trades Unions also recognizes that this legislation isn't perfect. We have heard from the voices of Canada's Indigenous peoples that they are worried their treaty rights could be put at risk. We share their concerns and urge the government to uphold their treaty commitments and to continue making Indigenous peoples full partners in these nation-building projects.

We also believe skilled trades workers should share in the benefit. We believe that any time the Government of Canada makes an investment to help crowd in private capital, it should be conditional on good wages and benefits, prevailing wages, as well as apprenticeship requirements and local and Indigenous hiring obligations similar to what the government has done with the Clean Economy investment tax credits, or ITCs.

• (1420)

Interestingly, according to recent polling conducted by Abacus Data, 84% of skilled trades workers agree that these conditions on taxpayer-funded projects are necessary. These measures aren't nice-to-haves; they are essential to nation-building project delivery and economic prosperity. It is a guarantee of opportunity for everyone in Canada, regardless of who they are or where they come from, so they can find meaningful, well-paid jobs while building up Canada.

With respect to the interprovincial labour mobility changes, we welcome them even though the Red Seal trades are already recognized federally through a process that, although imperfect, works well for the skilled trades. We urge the government to work with the provinces to harmonize health and safety certifications on construction work sites to improve labour mobility and productivity.

Finally, we need to ensure that we are putting to work every Canadian who wants to find a career in the skilled trades. That means sophisticated labour market data tied to major projects — such as how many specific trades are required, when and where — so that we can optimize jobs for Canadians and help move our tradespeople to where the work is.

We also need to see continued support for the Union Training and Innovation Program, or UTIP, and strong apprenticeship requirements so that anyone who is willing to put on a pair of boots and get their hands dirty building up this country can do so with the full support of our unions and the government.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you, senators.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Strickland. We will now move on to questions. As many senators wish to ask questions, I respectfully inform the witnesses that senators appreciate concise answers to their questions.

Honourable senators, I thank you for indicating to whom your questions are addressed.

Senator Housakos: Welcome to the Senate, gentlemen.

The Canadian Trucking Alliance has raised the alarm over the mounting economic pressures in the sector, including unsustainable cost inflation and the sharp reduction in fleet size and workforce. At the same time, industry stakeholders are calling for long-term predictability to inform capital planning and workforce investment. Yet many of these concerns appear to remain unaddressed in Bill C-5.

Given these economic headwinds, does Bill C-5 offer the predictability and support that companies in the trucking industry need to make long-term investments in equipment, labour and compliance? Would the inclusion of sector-specific implementation timelines or structured transition frameworks help provide the certainty required to stabilize and grow the industry?

Mr. Wood: Thank you, senator, for your question. From our perspective, we see this as a big-vision bill and big-vision thinking, and we're here to support wherever the bill goes and to support our country. Without getting into the details, we're here to support. There are some challenges, but we feel that with the right discussions and partnerships, we can do the right thing. Our job is to support these projects and support the economy, and that's what we're here to do, senator.

Senator Housakos: Would you have any amendments or recommendations that are more concrete rather than just aspirational for Bill C-5, addressing the trucking industry's immediate economic challenges while enabling long-term planning? Long-term planning and stability in decisions when it comes to long-term investments are very important in your business.

Mr. Wood: If I were to get into the level of detail, I had some of that in my remarks. I think it's about ensuring a level playing field and ensuring that we are supporting the provinces and territories. At least in our world, the majority of trucking operations are guided by the provinces and territories. There are two specific issues: the truck safety piece and the oversize/overweight dimensional piece. I think if those things are not in the bill, that is something we would want to see. Again, I haven't read the bill in detail. But those are two components for us that we would like to see.

With respect to the role of federal government departments, from our perspective, labour non-compliance and tax non-compliance are significant challenges for the industry. As this bill moves forward, as long as there are protections with respect to those two issues, we think that's a good thing.

We have had significant challenges in the last 10 years. The industry is in rough shape, and it is primarily because the underground economy has been able to flourish and there has been a lack of oversight, particularly from the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, and Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC — the tax side and labour side — which has allowed unscrupulous operations to lower their operating costs to gain market share.

From our perspective, as compliant operators — it is very difficult to run a compliant trucking operation these days — we need more oversight. We need more commitment from the federal government, particularly the CRA and ESDC, to do the right thing and protect law-abiding truckers and employees. Those are some of our thoughts, senator. I have gone into a little bit more detail, but hopefully I have answered your questions. If there is any follow-up required for this group, I'm happy to do so.

Senator Housakos: No, thank you very much. It is refreshing to have non-politicians answering questions because the answers are very fulsome. I do appreciate that.

The reality is we are facing time constraints and parliamentary constraints. Our newly elected government obviously would like to have this important bill in place before July 1. We don't have a lot of manoeuvrability for amendments.

My question is to Mr. Hyder who knows his way around Ottawa and government very well. Mr. Hyder, are you and the industry comfortable that we can use regulatory changes to strengthen this bill in order to compensate for some of the elements that are missing in it?

Mr. Hyder: Well, if you're asking me: Is the bill perfect? No. No bill has ever gone through here perfectly. We can't let perfection be the enemy of the good here. This is an existential moment. These are not normal times that we are in. We are facing a legitimate threat — if I can call it that — to our very sovereignty, our ability to defend ourselves and our ability to have economic prosperity and growth where we control our controllables and not allow someone else to do that.

These are not normal times. These are extraordinary times, and that's why we feel that this bill has the right objectives and the right intentions that we can work with in order to execute against its vision of how we can build more things in Canada.

Frankly, any C-suite who has the duty, as the board would, regarding final investment decisions will look at things not in the context of a single bill. It will look at it in the much broader construct of where we find ourselves. What you are seeing here is a willingness to sit down and work with our premiers, our provinces, Indigenous groups and the federal government, because truly this is a moment for all good men and women in the aid of this country to come together to find a way forward to do what Canadians just had an election about, which is the following: How do we take control of our controllables, how do we diversify and how do we take control of our own sovereignty and not be beholden to a single customer, whom we cannot blame for letting us be in that place? We're responsible for doing that. We are fighting tariffs tooth and nail with Americans as we have imposed them on Canadians for decades, which is what interprovincial trade barriers are. We're the ones who didn't build the infrastructure going east and west. When Europe came calling and other countries came calling, we said, "No business case," and sent them home.

It is incumbent upon us to seize this moment to diversify and build the infrastructure. Canada has no apologies to make. Canadian business has no apologies to make. We're proud of the record we have with Indigenous communities and the work we have done with municipalities and provinces in Canada. Has it always been perfect? Of course not. Over the last several projects, if you look back at LNG Canada, within two years we were able to get that done. Cedar LNG with its Indigenous partnership with TC Energy was able to move forward in the two-year frame. If the will is there, the way is there.

Senator Housakos: Part 2 of Bill C-5 enables the federal government to fast-track infrastructure projects deemed to be in the national interest. However, given the vital importance of predictable investment in transportation corridors for the trucking sector, how might the politicalization of project selection through opaque criteria or inconsistent engagement — the lack of guidelines, benchmarks, et cetera — deter private investment in the industry? What mechanism should be put in place as a safeguard to ensure trucking stakeholders are meaningfully consulted and that the projects that are prioritized align with the industry's needs rather than just offering politically expedient decisions of the moment?

Mr. Strickland: Who is that question for?

Senator Housakos: Any one of you can take it on.

Mr. Strickland: It applies to trucking. Just generally, in response to your question, senator, Canada has a history of major projects — a highway — and a litter of major projects that never proceeded.

• (1430)

I remember 15 years ago there was over a dozen liquefied natural gas, or LNG, proposals to get LNG from Alberta to the B.C. coast. I remember Energy East, a major project for an oil pipeline to go to Eastern Canada and the Saint John Refinery, which is the largest refinery in Canada right now. There are all kinds of other examples of projects that got bogged down in lack of regulatory efficiency. For my stakeholders, the challenge with that is that we hear the promise of a great project, "Go and get your people, go sign up your apprentices," and so we go out and we sign up our apprentices and the job doesn't happen. Then we don't have any place to put the apprentice to work.

The fact that we're creating this one project, one approval process, our recommendation is to have labour market data attached to that — how many tradespeople do you need, when and where? We can go out and recruit, we can find the apprentices, but we need to know the certainty of these projects. We need to have that kind of certainty. I think this bill is the first time in a long time in Canada that we will have much more project certainty.

Some of it will be politicized, sure, but I think right now, we have to meet the moment. The moment is showing Canadians coming together and the great expectation of the Canadian people that our politicians come together too.

Senator Hébert: Gentlemen, it's good to see business and workers' representatives sitting side by side, supporting the goals of this bill and also sharing the common objective of building up the Canadian economy. We have to commend you for that.

Mr. Hyder, you wanted to discuss the Canadian internal trade aspect of the bill, so I will give you this opportunity with my question, if you allow me.

I think that you see Bill C-5, from what I saw in your public statements, as an important step to lifting the barriers to trade between provinces. But I want to hear from you, do you think that Bill C-5 will be sufficient to achieve this goal? And if not, what other tools or initiatives should we put in place so that we make sure that this time we will succeed? We've been talking about this for quite a while.

Mr. Hyder: For once, I'm going to say that the pressure will come from the public. Never has the public been more awoken to the absurdity of these interprovincial trade barriers than they are today. These are dinner topic conversations happening around Canadian households, so I believe the Canadian public will expect and demand our federal, provincial and territorial governments to do exactly that.

There are two tracks, as you know, senator. With the federal government, obviously between now and July 1, there's an intention to bring down the federal ones, non-national security related, but ultimately bring down the ones that are federal. The provincial governments, there are agreements, intentions to cooperate and to collaborate being announced, but I will be candid, I have had to speak with many a premier who has decided to carve something out, and that's where the slippery slope begins.

We need to exert that pressure as Canadians, and I expect that will be the case because, as I said, the irony is not lost that we are going to the Americans to bring down tariffs with unclean hands when we're imposing them on ourselves, which is effectively what interprovincial trade barriers represent. They are suffocating our GDP by up to 4%. The calculation for each barrier is you're paying another 7% more than you need to be. Canadians are paying 7% more at a time of inflation and economic stagnancy that they can't afford to do. It's a great opportunity for the public to continue to keep the pressure up on all of us to bring them down for once and for all.

Senator Hébert: I want to hear you also, Mr. Hyder, on labour force. As we know, when you want to build up major infrastructure projects, you need workers. We know that many industries are facing a shortage of labour. Do you hear from your members that the new immigration goals set up by the government could compromise the realization of these major projects or could affect industries?

Mr. Hyder: Thank you for the question. It is certainly top of mind that the loss of generational consensus on immigration is a grave concern to employers. We rely heavily on a talent workforce, much of which is comprised from immigrants. Our birthrate is 1.3 today, and we need the labour force to be able to build. Artificial intelligence is not going to help build a pipeline. We still need the labour force to be able to do the heavy lifting that it takes to build infrastructure.

One of the things that we have tried to do is put more of an emphasis on skills, re-skilling, accreditation. Again, foreign skills accreditation is a great example of a productivity decline because we duped people to coming here on the basis of their education, skills and qualifications, and then somebody says, "But not here. You can't be a nurse. You can't be a doctor. You can't be an engineer." We've got to reconcile that to ensure that the people we're letting in the country can do that.

I don't mean in any way to dismiss the importance of refugees, humanitarian or temporary foreign workers or all of that. There are roles that each one of those play and they do contribute to the economy.

Having said that, more economic migrants absolutely can participate and help grow our economy. We need to increase the percentage of economic migrants coming into Canada to regain the lost confidence that Canadians have over the last several years to say that we've lost control and they are now scapegoating to say, "I can't drive on the roads because there's gridlock or crime has gone up or the affordability issues." We have to blame somebody.

We have to work together to reclaim the consensus on immigration, and one of the ways to do that is to show Canadians we're bringing in people who are qualified, who are working and they intend to work for 30 to 40 years to contribute to the economic pie to pay for the social programs that Canadians expect to be there.

I would certainly urge the Senate to look at that issue very closely because it is probably most paramount to our economic growth and prosperity.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you, gentlemen, for being here and for all that you do for Canada.

Mr. Hyder, in your view, does Bill C-5 effectively address Canada's two long-standing economic challenges, which are low productivity and weak competition? How will this legislation help move the needle on either front?

Mr. Hyder: Thank you for your question, senator. Every members' meeting, we survey our members, these chief executives of over half the Toronto Stock Exchange. Every single time when we ask them, "What's the most important issue that we can be working for you on," it has always been regulations. Regulations are the things that are standing in the way.

You want to talk about competition; if you go to Japan, Korea, they don't charge you for the spectrum, but our telecommunications companies have to pay here for spectrum. That money at cost is being passed on to the customer so the rates are higher.

If you talk to an airline and ask, "Why isn't an American, low-cost airline going across the border from Seattle or Buffalo," it's because a \$1 ticket becomes a \$175 invoice, all driven by government regulations and taxes which are being collected.

We're not competitive. We have to be honest with ourselves. We're having a hard time speaking to Canadians truthfully and candidly about the kind of country we can afford today. It is why we champion economic growth. It is through growth — including the elimination of interprovincial trade barriers, which are the lowest hanging fruit to bring about growth — that will allow us to be able to do the kinds of things that Canadians expect us to do.

The productivity issue is one that many of my members would dispute the premise of the question because with the greatest of respect, it includes public sector. Our view is if you separated the private sector from the public sector productivity, you would find that it's in the private sector DNA to invest in R&D, to innovate and to grow because they are competing hard to stay ahead of their competition who is trying to beat them or drive them out of business.

But if you lump the two together, our productivity works lower. Most chief executives will tell you that they are constantly thinking about innovation, productivity gains and efficiencies so they can compete with the global community in which we find ourselves.

The bill may or may not get to that directly, but in spirit, the intention of just collaboration, the message that we're sending that we will work together to try to overcome the confederation that we are and get stuff done, that will go a long way. This thing called the internet is available everywhere.

Everyone has learned that we had to nationalize a pipeline to get it built. We haven't built anything for a very long time. I've often said, if we were founded today, we would probably be a European Union because there would be no national highway or national railway. It would be almost impossible to build by the rules and regulations we have imposed on ourselves. That productivity gain is available if we're able to get out of our own way and build things in this country in all directions.

• (1440)

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer. It is very encouraging.

I was very impressed with the fact that you said your network covers 50% of the country's GDP. That's amazing. We're honoured to have you here today.

Could you share insights on the consultations conducted with your network and with the private sector prior to introducing this bill? Are they generally supportive of the model proposed in Bill C-5? What is their reaction? Are they supportive of that? I'd like to hear from you with respect to the 50% of the country's GDP.

Mr. Hyder: That's an excellent question. I will give my members the respect that they are owed, given that they are thinking daily about deploying capital that belongs to other people — shareholders. To do that responsibly, they would like to do it in democracies, and they would like to do it in Canada, but capital doesn't have that requirement. Capital goes where it grows, and so as they look at Bill C-5, they see directionally, and they see good intentions and goodwill. I was in Saskatoon with the Prime Minister and the first ministers, and you could feel the sense of coming together.

But, with the greatest of respect to our elected officials, you cannot legislate the deployment of capital. You can do everything else, but you cannot make anyone invest in your country. Your job — the job of legislators — is to create the conditions in which that can happen.

So as far as Bill C-5 goes, we are definitely mindful that there are other things. "Irritants" is probably not the right word because these are big things, to say we're going to build infrastructure to get energy in particular to markets like Japan, Korea and so forth that are running coal plants so that we can get them LNG as a transitory fuel to bring emissions down but also have a tanker ban, Bill C-69, an emissions cap and clean-fuel regulations. This pancaking of regulations is what deters that final investment decision made at the board level. The response

is to say, "Hang on. I can do a lot more with this money somewhere else, where I don't have these pancakes of regulations. They are welcoming me, and capital goes where it's welcome." We need to address that.

Senator Osler: Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today. My question is for Mr. Strickland of Canada's Building Trades Unions.

In your opening remarks, you spoke about harmonizing health and safety standards to protect workers. The Canadian Cancer Society agrees and has stated that, for example:

There's a federal measure banning asbestos in products, but provinces allow up to a certain per cent of asbestos in products. So that would mean that despite asbestos being banned in products for some years now, you could have asbestos return to products. That's not good.

Minister LeBlanc was here yesterday, and he spoke about harmonizing different provincial standards to avoid duplication and to not settle on the lowest common denominator. As this government looks to its future work, what are the pitfalls to avoid, and what are some best practices when harmonizing standards to best protect the health and safety of workers?

Mr. Strickland: Thank you very much for that question.

In your question, you hit the nail on the head. When we have the Red Seal Program right across Canada, it works reasonably well, but there are some discrepancies between the numbers of hours required to achieve a certificate of qualification for any specific trade; they are different across the country. So if we're going to look at harmonization, we want to rise to the highest standard. We want to rise to the highest in-school portion. We want to make sure we are creating the best tradespeople we possibly can in Canada. Those are things that need to happen within the Red Seal Program itself.

Also, within the Red Seal Program, you have the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship that is made up of all the provincial directors of apprenticeship. Not all trades are recognized as Red Seal trades in every province. That makes it difficult for some trades to travel from one province to another, because it is not necessarily recognized as Red Seal. Sometimes, it makes it easier to travel to one province to another, but then the standard is not as high, so there is not nearly the uniformity of quality with respect to tradespeople.

Those are some things that can change that aspect of the certificate of qualification and the compulsory nature of some of our trades.

I also mentioned in my remarks — and thanks for picking up on it, senator — that one big thing that gets in the way of our productivity for construction projects is that our safety certificates aren't recognized from one jurisdiction to another. For example, if you have a working at heights diploma — which is required in Ontario before you get deployed to a construction project — if you get dispatched to a big job in Alberta, you have to obtain another working at heights certificate. If you get

confined space training and go to another province that doesn't recognize that confined space training from the first province, you have to be trained again.

Often, workers with very similar levels of safety certification get dispatched to big jobs in the oil patch, or big infrastructure projects like Site C, and they are in classrooms for another week or 10 days, taking certifications they had taken previously in their home province.

Senator Robinson: My question is for Mr. Wood of the CTA. We are here today to talk about Bill C-5, the one Canadian economy act, whose first part aims to remove interprovincial trade barriers.

Earlier this week, our committee heard from Minister Freeland. She mentioned she wants to remove some of the barriers that truckers face in this country. One of the interprovincial trade barriers our farmers and ranchers face is the lack of consistency in truck weight limits. The fact that the impact of these restrictions is most pronounced in rural routes further highlights the impact on Canadian agriculture. Truckloads of fruits, vegetables and other farm products bump into this patchwork of weight restrictions as food is sent to market. This inefficiency inevitably translates into increases in food prices for Canadian consumers.

Your association highlighted weight restriction issues in the 2023 report you mentioned in your opening remarks. Are you working with governments to harmonize these restrictions across the country?

Mr. Wood: Thank you for the question.

The short answer is that yes, we are. There are a host of options we have been exploring with the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety to look at what it would cost to level the playing field with respect to weights and dimensions. It is looking at the cost to infrastructure and weighing that against the productivity benefits and the benefits you raised with respect to the movement of agricultural products.

It's on our radar, we have had some initial discussions and we are looking at initial numbers to figure out how we do that.

Senator Papatello: Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today. I appreciate the positive nature you are bringing to your commentary today with respect to this bill.

My question is for Mr. Strickland of Canada's Building Trades Unions. You mentioned these health and safety certifications. It seems to me that working at heights is going to require the same level of safety whether you are in Newfoundland or Ontario, so I can't see it being a really big hill to climb to smooth out the kind of certificate that looks nearly identical in each province. I'm not sure if that is a regulatory item that could be added that you may recommend — a regulation that takes your best-case training for heights, hazardous materials or arc flash, whatever that is — to make that so.

I do have an issue around how you are going to manage the shortage of tradespeople required, because once we start announcing — if we can announce these projects and where they are going to be — they won't all be in the same province. People will need mobility, but you won't have enough. Regarding some of the great work you have done in getting more women into the building trades, what can you do to enhance that relatively quickly and get more women — and more people from racialized communities who don't tend to go into the building trades — so you can up those numbers?

Mr. Strickland: Thank you for the question, senator.

In answer to the second part of the question, specifically, I said in my opening remarks that if there is federal money attached to any of these projects, there should be labour conditionality. Labour should be prevailing wage. That means you need to pay union wages — which means it's restricted to unions — top wages, health and welfare, full benefits, with industry and training funds and so on. You also need to have mandatory minimum apprenticeship.

I often deal with owners and large buyers in construction, and we tell them they need a 10% mandatory minimum of apprentices. We signed an MOU with the First Nations Power Authority where we agreed that, of that 10%, 50% are going to be from Indigenous populations. Similarly, we do that for women, Black folks, Indigenous people and people of colour — visible minorities. So, of that 10% mandatory minimum, we can make half of that 10% come from visible minority populations so we can attract more women and diversified populations to the trades.

• (1450)

Ways to help achieve that are through government policy and procurement that I just mentioned. There's also the Canadian Apprenticeship Service program that was put into place very successfully. That needs to come back to help ensure a supply of apprentices and journeypeople. There was an incentive for contractors to hire apprentices — first-year apprentice at \$5,000; \$10,000 if they hired an apprentice from a visible minority. So there are lots of different ways in which we can work on attracting more visible minorities into the trades.

But the biggest thing we need — I just want to put this trades shortage in context. Trade shortages in Canada are not for all trades and all regions at all times. It's episodic. Right now, we have high unemployment in Toronto because the multi-residential high-rise industry is collapsing. We have high unemployment in Newfoundland and Labrador right now. We have unemployment increasing in B.C. because of Site C coming off and liquefied natural gas coming off. We have employment friction in Toronto and in Windsor right now because of the layoffs in steel, aluminum, automotive — our members do all the maintenance in those plants.

So we have to look very carefully at our labour force, and that's why I'm advocating strongly for sophisticated labour market data to be attached to the approval process for these projects. Proponents must say how many tradespeople they need

and when and where. Then we can manage it. We can bring in the apprentices. We can diversify. We can get more women into the trades. But we need that information up front, senator.

[Translation]

Senator Gerba: I've already received an answer to part of my question, so I'll reformulate it for Mr. Strickland.

Bill C-5 seeks to facilitate labour mobility and harmonize interprovincial trade. As such, it will give businesses, especially big businesses, some real opportunities.

I would like to know what you recommend or what you consider doable with respect to procurement and government contracts. Are there measures or practices that should be implemented to ensure that Bill C-5 can establish standards that will enable companies owned by minorities, women and immigrants to access procurement opportunities with government and big business?

[English]

Mr. Strickland: Thank you, senator, and absolutely. The government put into place for the Clean Economy investment tax credits an incentive for hydrogen, small modular reactors and carbon sequestration. The Senate passed that bill, that in order to achieve your maximum tax credit of 30% you had to meet labour standards, and those labour standards were prevailing wages, the best wages that were available in the sector — which are construction members wages — and mandatory minimum apprenticeship requirements.

I think similarly for this major projects database and one approval process for one project, labour standards and apprenticeship requirements need to be put into place.

Moreover, I think that because of the nature of these projects that are going to occur from coast to coast, two years ago, the Senate also passed the Labour Mobility Deduction, which was something our group has been advocating for 30 years to provide an incentive for tradespeople up to \$4,000 to move from one location to another to go to work, not on a permanent basis but on a semi-permanent basis. Our members often get shipped out for three weeks on, two weeks off in various locations across the country, and if those travel costs aren't covered by their contract, they have to incur those costs on their own. This is an impediment to labour mobility across Canada.

Now we have \$4,000 in place if the worker has to travel more than 150 kilometres. We're proposing that get increased to \$10,000 and decrease the travel zone to 120 kilometres. That will also encourage greater labour mobility across the country when those costs are not covered by the contract.

So I think there's a whole bunch of different things that can be done to encourage labour mobility right across the country.

Senator Klyne: My question is for the Business Council of Canada. As I understand, the council is comprised of chief executives and entrepreneurs of over 170 leading Canadian companies in every sector and region of the country, and I have to assume that many of those members will be preparing to bid

on the government contracts to come from Bill C-5. On that assumption, of those contracts, many of those will be subject to the government procurement set-aside program.

Are you preparing or assisting and advising your members on how they will have to, when they reach that government procurement set-aside program, provide an Indigenous participation plan?

Mr. Hyder: Thank you for your question, senator. The individual companies will be working on that individually as project by project. They compete with each other even though I represent them all.

I think evidence shows that the projects that have been successful have been so because of Indigenous participation from an equity perspective.

I will have you know, senator, that the Business Council of Canada led the charge for the Indigenous Loan Guarantee Program in part to address this very question — to enable Indigenous communities, particularly those that may not have any corporate history, to be able to seek equity participation and equity partnership in projects, and yet to help businesses de-risk that because when you don't have any history, we don't know what we're measuring it against.

The hope is to never have to use the loan guarantee. It's there as a backstop in the event something doesn't go right. To acknowledge this current government, it doubled it in a matter of weeks of being Prime Minister I think. It was doubled, which we applaud, because it will just encourage more opportunities for Indigenous participation and Indigenous equity and programs that we feel is one of the fastest ways to come together to find a way to build stuff in this country again.

[Translation]

Senator Henkel: My question is for the Business Council of Canada representatives. Small and medium-sized enterprises, SMEs, were hit hard by the pandemic, and they continue to operate in an uncertain economic climate. These SMEs often run up against biases and perceptions that hinder their ability to access financing and so on. In addition, SMEs don't have the human and financial resources to participate in public tender processes.

In light of that, how does your council intend to support meaningful SME participation in the projects of general interest that Bill C-5 will enable once it's in force?

[English]

Mr. Hyder: Thank you, senator. Again, I'm pleased to say that our organization, actually going back to the pandemic, has been working extremely closely with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Indigenous business chamber and others particularly for this reason because the reality is, as COVID demonstrated to us, when big businesses do well, the supply chain does well; and if big businesses are withdrawn from the economy, the supply chain suffers. That's why we needed support programs during the pandemic because big businesses were able to effectively send

their employees home and enable them to be able to work from home, but there went the restaurant, the dry cleaner and the coffee shop. Because without that connectivity between big business and smaller businesses, the smaller businesses end up suffering.

They are our partners. They are our supply chain. They enable us in many ways. So when I say “We’re in it together,” we’re absolutely in it together, and so it’s a sense of when big business does well, it allows the small businesses to do well as well because they benefit from the growth that’s going on. If they are struggling, it’s frankly because, as I mentioned earlier, we have a pretty stagnant economy. If it wasn’t for population growth, we’re basically 0% to 1% growth. That’s anemic growth. That should happen by accident in a country like ours. We should be aspiring to that 3%, 4%, 5% range. And it’s available to us, as I think all of us have alluded to in the course of our comments, if we’re simply able to get out of our way and continue to partner with the Indigenous communities, with small businesses, with women-owned businesses, and the entire community can do that together is our sense.

• (1500)

[Translation]

Senator Henkel: You didn’t quite answer my question.

We know how complex and difficult it is for SMEs to compete when it comes to answering calls for tenders, whether for contracts with government or big corporations. How do you plan to help these SMEs survive now that they are once again bearing the brunt of all our financial problems? Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Hyder: My intention was to answer the question as I have, which is that when big businesses do well our supply chain does well, and the supply chain is small businesses. That’s the response.

I will say that in specific projects it is possible. At a local community level, where you have a consortium that’s being put together, it would be good business practice to engage those smaller businesses locally to be a part of your response to any kind of RFPs or opportunities that emerge.

We’re talking here about multi-billion-dollar projects, so it will require large businesses to lead the way. When they do well the community does well, and within that community are the small- and medium-sized enterprises.

[Translation]

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

I’m interested in labour mobility among construction workers too, especially in Quebec compared to the other Canadian provinces.

I concede that far fewer workers from English-speaking Canada come to work in Quebec than the reverse, even workers with their Red Seal certification, because they have to go through the extra administrative step of obtaining a work permit from the Commission de la construction du Québec.

In practical terms, how do you propose to break down barriers between the provinces and get these big projects off the ground?

[English]

Mr. Strickland: I’m pleased to say that the Commission de la construction du Québec, or CCQ, has begun discussions on recognition of certification from other provinces just as recently as the last couple of weeks.

I also understand that the premier has indicated his willingness to talk about recognition not only for construction trades but for other professionals as well. If that kind of recognition would happen, that would allow for more mobility in and out of Quebec.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: If you take Quebec out, is the mobility question resolved? Because it doesn’t seem to be for construction workers; it seems to be a big problem. I also want to hear from your colleagues on both sides of the equation.

Mr. Strickland: Outside of Quebec mobility is not as much of an issue for us because we have the Red Seal Program in place.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: What percentage of construction workers have this Red Seal? Give me a little portrait.

Mr. Strickland: I could get back to you on that, senator, but over 50%. Our workers are mobilized to work on major infrastructure projects right across the country. For example, in Alberta when they have their turnaround season — they shut down to do all the maintenance — almost half of those 5,000 to 8,000 workers come from out of province. Those workers all have to have Red Seal to be able to work on those projects.

I can get back to you with more sophisticated data on that, but in order to work in the unionized construction industry and guarantee your economic security in Canada you need to have your Red Seal.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Mr. Hyder, I would like you to give me your point of view on this manpower mobility issue.

Mr. Hyder: Thank you, senator, and I certainly agree with my colleague. There’s a difference between mobility and availability, and I think what we’re seeing is a little bit of both.

I represent at least six of the largest builders in our country. When I speak with the CEOs of those organizations, and especially when we’re talking about housing — something important and near and dear to the hearts of Canadians — what I hear is that we lack plumbers and the availability of electricians, and we can’t find drywallers or project managers.

Some of that may be a mobility question. They may be in another province unemployed and they're not able to move to Toronto or wherever it is that we need them.

It could also be an availability question, which goes back to the issue mentioned earlier about immigration and making sure that attracting the skills that we need for today and tomorrow is done in a way in that is driven by labour data, as has been pointed out.

We need to distinguish between availability and mobility. It's a combination.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: This is a question from my colleague Pat Duncan. What are you doing to get the manpower back? For example, line workers are very specialized in the U.S. They would be needed in Canada for those big projects. Are you trying to bring them back?

Mr. Hyder: That's a very good question, because I'm hearing more and more from members that there is absolutely an opportunity to attract skilled talent from the United States. Whether it's in institutions, where I just heard an entire lab was scooped up by the United Arab Emirates. People in the university were afraid: Many of them were immigrants and they didn't know if they would be able to do their jobs or not so they simply up and moved because they were sought after.

If you're short of skilled labour and you know where to go and get it, you will compete for it. The issue for us, more broadly, is we talk about labour mobility within Canada. Our dream would be labour mobility within North America. We would love to see a trusted employer program that says that I employ people in Canada, the United States and Mexico. More often in those other countries, for population reasons, but I can't move anybody around inside my own company.

Senator Petten: Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. I would like to direct my question to Mr. Strickland. Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro recently signed a new framework agreement with Hydro-Québec for the sale of power generated at the Churchill Falls Generating Station.

This agreement also involves the co-development of two more energy projects on the Churchill River. Over its life, this agreement will result in more than \$225 billion in total revenue to my province.

It will also generate thousands of jobs, with an average of 3,000 jobs during construction and a peak of 5,000 direct jobs. Due to the tariffs imposed by the United States, Churchill Falls has gained even more importance in terms of Canada's energy security and sovereignty.

How might projects such as Churchill Falls, which is an example of interprovincial collaboration, benefit from the labour mobility which would be implemented by Bill C-5?

Mr. Strickland: We are very excited about the project, more broadly known as Gull Island. We've had preliminary meetings with our colleagues in Newfoundland and Labrador building trades and with building trades of Quebec and with Hydro-Québec. It's a very ambitious project. They're set to break ground in 2027.

For us, the labour mobility side, if we had the greater incentives that I talked about in terms of increasing the labour mobility tax deduction — something separate from this bill — would help attract labour to that project.

In terms of some of the professional designations, I think you'd have to look at some of the engineering designations that might be recognized in Quebec from other provinces.

For the trades, it wouldn't be much of an issue at all, as long as we have the right kind of contracts and working conditions that will attract labour to that site and that project at a time when, hopefully, there are other major infrastructure projects under way in Canada as well.

This is going to be the problem. This is going to be the challenge. That is why I always bring it back to this sophisticated labour market data. Churchill Falls and Gull Island is a prime example of our building trades needing to know how many people you need, when and where and what trades. Once we have that information for that project and others, then we can manage that by making sure we have the certifications, the training, and making sure everyone is there on time to help build the project.

Senator Yussuff: Thank you, gentlemen, for being here and making yourselves available.

Goldy, let me start with you. Obviously, I think in the context of this bill the external threat to this country has never been more apparent. If it's lost on somebody, they're clearly not paying attention.

Given the two aspects of this bill is asking our premiers to do something they have been reluctant to do for decades — maybe 100 years or more. There seems to be an acceptance that we need to move faster.

• (1510)

At the same time, the Prime Minister is saying — along with our premiers — that we need to build the infrastructure so we can actually take advantage of this moment of our history.

How would you characterize, in the greater context, that our country needs to accept the challenges we're faced with? It's not like anything I've seen in my lifetime. More importantly, how can this bill actually help to compensate Canadians for what they are fearful of, which is rising unemployment? The opportunities for maintaining the lifestyles we've enjoyed in this country will diminish if we can't find the collective will to make these things happen within a short period of time.

Mr. Hyder: Thank you, senator, for the question. I think you've captured the moment that Canadians are feeling right now. We've never experienced what we've been experiencing over the last 100-plus days. In many ways, we can say thank you, Mr. President, for waking up Canada and for uniting us, east and west, French and English, urban and rural. Up until yesterday, we all cheered for the Edmonton Oilers. I suspect this is a moment when Canadians are feeling galvanized in terms of recognizing that we have an opportunity here. It's not a threat; it's an opportunity to take control of our own destiny, to leverage all our resources from coast to coast to coast. If we don't do that and extract their full value, you can't blame anybody else. We have only ourselves to blame.

The corresponding benefit of this is growth. The very thing causing some of the anxiety to Canadians with regard to affordability and some of the challenges we're facing — such as our social infrastructure and our health care system — is paying the consequences for a lack of growth. So, here's this gift, the opportunity to take control over our own destiny, grow our economy and stabilize our relationship with the United States, because as much as we may be feeling things, geography is not going to change. We have to stabilize that.

I think that Canadians genuinely hold the view that it's time to diversify and that we need to create more customers and more markets so that we can obtain the full price for our resources. The day the TMX was completed, the barrel price rose six dollars in Canada. Some of that money went back into taxes to support health care and better infrastructure and better social infrastructure.

To the credit of the Prime Minister, the linkage between the macroeconomy and the microeconomy is now part of the public discourse. We hadn't heard that for a long time. The connection between an economic growth strategy and how it links to the social foundation of our country is being openly discussed. I really believe that Canadians are expecting their elected officials to seize this moment — not for themselves as much as for their kids and grandkids and what they will be leaving behind for them.

Senator Yussuff: You talk a lot about the Red Seal certificate program and your members to a large extent. It is a mystery to Canadians that your members receive an incredible amount of training that comes from your own infrastructure. Could you elaborate so that senators can appreciate the incredible number of resources the building trades invest into training their members to make sure they are qualified to do these things?

By the way, we are in a building that you helped reconstruct and renovate so that we can be here now.

As a final point, this bill has an important element: How do we bring in those who have not traditionally been in the building trades to make sure that they have a future and that they are encouraged to participate in this kind of employment? We are struggling to inspire more people to see this as a career going forward.

Mr. Strickland: Thank you for the question, senator. First of all, training is in our DNA. The unionized construction industry has been in North America for over 150 years. Our DNA comes

from the tradespeople of Europe and guilds that helped construct some of the most beautiful buildings and cathedrals in the world. The plumbing in Rome, the aqueducts — those were built by skilled tradespeople. So it's in our DNA to train people.

In Canada, we have over 200 union training centres that are managed jointly through a joint apprenticeship training trust between the contractor, the employer and the trade union. So we're able to manage and understand the training requirements of our industry. If there's new technology, innovative approaches to building, new green building systems and our contractors are bidding on that and securing those bids, they come back to the union hall, and we train our workers on how to install that.

Our industry invests over \$500 million of our own money through our collective agreements into those training centres. That's what we do.

The Chair: Thank you, sir. I'm sorry that I have to interrupt you, but the time is of the essence.

Senator Smith: Mr. Wood, truckers are at the front line of Canada's supply chains, navigating the real-world effects of fragmented regulations, infrastructure bottlenecks and policy decisions made far from the highway. Could you share with us what you're hearing directly from the truckers on the road? What are their biggest top three concerns when it comes to regulatory differences, infrastructure gaps or the potential impacts of Bill C-5 on their routes and livelihoods?

Mr. Wood: From our perspective, the number one issue is the proliferation of the underground economy and the fact that a number of laws on the books aren't being enforced, particularly with respect to Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, and Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC. That's our number one issue.

Senator Smith: Can any assistance be put into place to protect drivers, other than further regulations and policies?

Mr. Wood: Yes. Bring back the issuance of T4As for contractors and a 10- or 15-year moratorium on enforcement. That needs to come back immediately. With respect to infrastructure, the twinning of Highway 185 in Quebec will open up a host of opportunities for the most efficient truck configurations in Canada to travel unfettered from the Port of Halifax to Windsor to support our supply chains.

With respect to other infrastructure pieces, we will be publishing an infrastructure report. I saw the final draft; it will be out this week. We will share it with the Senate. It highlights infrastructure needs in all the jurisdictions.

But, at a high level, we have seen an underinvestment in our national highway system. We would like to see all jurisdictions — including the federal government — step up and support that national highway system. It is designed to improve interprovincial trade and provide safe highways and rest areas for our truck drivers.

Senator Smith: Can you identify the areas of the national highways where you want that initial focus?

Mr. Wood: Yes, it is identified. There are provincial- and territorial-specific recommendations in the infrastructure report.

Senator Smith: Do you have examples of them?

Mr. Wood: For example, Highway 11/17 in Northern Ontario and Highway 185 from Sudbury to Quebec.

Senator Smith: Can you give us an idea of geography so we can actually understand those numbers?

Mr. Wood: Highway 11/17 in Northern Ontario is currently built to 1955 standards.

Senator Smith: Wow. Where does it go to and where is it from, so we can understand? I need your help. You're exciting me.

Mr. Wood: Highway 11/17 runs from North Bay or Sudbury to the Manitoba border. It is about 1,800 miles. We use metric here, so it's significantly more in kilometres. But, again, it's a major east-west trade corridor. I give credit to all the premiers and all the ministers in the federal space for recognizing trucking as important and for including us in the pilots.

We have a lot of work to do, but we have a lot of what we feel are important or ready-made solutions to bring to the table. We're here to support this group, the House and all the governments in our country to do the right thing.

Senator Smith: Do you already feel that your voice is being heard?

Mr. Wood: We do in some respects, senator, but not in others, with respect to non-compliance and lack of enforcement, particularly at CRA and the ESDC. We have been dealing with this for 10 years.

Senator Smith: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Honourable senators, the committee has been hearing from the witnesses for 75 minutes. In conformity with the order adopted by the Senate, I am obliged to interrupt proceedings in order to proceed with the second panel.

On behalf of all senators, thank you for joining us today to assist us with our work on this bill.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Honourable senators, we will suspend very briefly to prepare for the second panel. We will resume at 3:25 p.m.

(The committee was suspended.)

(The committee resumed.)

• (1520)

(Pursuant to the order of the Senate, the witnesses were escorted to seats in the Senate Chamber.)

The Chair: Honourable senators, the Senate is resuming in Committee of the Whole to continue its consideration of the subject matter of Bill C-5, An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act.

The committee will now hear from Anna Johnston, Staff Lawyer, West Coast Environmental Law; Daniel-Robert Gooch, President and Chief Executive Officer, Association of Canadian Port Authorities; and Chief Shelly Moore-Frappier, Temagami First Nation.

I would like to thank you for being with us today. I would ask you to make your opening remarks.

Shelly Moore-Frappier, Chief, Temagami First Nation: *Meegwetch.*

Kwe kwe, senators. I want to acknowledge Grand Council Chief Debassige who has yielded me her time to appear. I am the Chief of Temagami First Nation, located on Bear Island in Lake Temagami, and have inherent rights within 10,000 square kilometres in the Temagami bioregion. Specifically, 7,000 years in our homeland as a distinct people is the source of our inherent rights. Only we have those rights.

Our responsibility is to the lands, animals, waters and all beings within our traditional territories. It is how we have maintained our nationhood and our territorial imperatives over millennia. We are still here with our rights and sacred responsibilities intact, and we are not going anywhere.

Canada continues to speak about nation-to-nation relationships and reconciliation. This legislation does the opposite. It asserts power over First Peoples, our resources and our rights. It was developed without us. It vaguely addresses our constitutional and treaty protections, and if passed, it will further entrench unilateralism as the default method of governing First Peoples.

Bill C-5 is not reconciliation; it is a betrayal of it.

The duty to consult has never been enough. It has always placed the burden of proof and advocacy on First Nations to defend our own rights, often with limited resources and no guarantees. Now Bill C-5 proposes to remove even our ability to trigger that duty. That's not progress; it's regression right back to the Doctrine of Discovery where we do not have a right to exist.

It proposes a future where extractive projects can proceed with vague consultation, without transparency and without respect. In our territory alone, we face more than 12,000 mining claims — claims staked without our consent. And Bill C-5 clears the path for more of the same.

Worse still, we are seeing economic threats and tariffs being used to force our compliance. When we assert our rights and our jurisdiction, we are painted as obstacles to Canada's national interest. That is a dangerous narrative and a dishonest one.

This is economic coercion. This is not how treaty partners behave. Canada, you have a fiduciary responsibility to protect us. This is not how a just nation behaves. This is not honourable.

Let me be clear: First Nations want prosperity. We want clean energy, strong infrastructure and safe, thriving communities. We want opportunities for our children and grandchildren to lead in this country, not merely survive it.

I remind this committee and the government that only First Nations can create the certainty that investors are looking for. There is no long-term success — economic, environmental or social — without us at the table as full sovereign partners.

We are not trying to stop progress; we are trying to be a part of it. Bill C-5 bypasses not just our nations, but also bypasses the very Constitution that Canada claims to uphold. Section 35 of the Constitution binds the Crown to recognize and uphold our rights. However, it has never guaranteed the protection of our rights. It has never ensured true consent, and this legislation moves the interpretation of those rights even further from their original intent.

The principles of a nation-to-nation relationship are not being adhered to, and that is unacceptable.

• (1530)

When I read this bill, I see a government more interested in economic speed than in moral responsibility. This isn't just policy. It's a world view that says the Crown always gets the upper hand.

This is about profit over principle. This is a Trumpian approach to bulldoze, deregulate and distract. What is at stake is not just policy, but our relationship with the land and our right to exist as distinct peoples with our own laws, languages and legal orders.

What this bill threatens is not only our sovereignty, but the very sacred relationship between us and our homelands. You cannot legislate that away. We do not accept unilateralism.

When we say "land back," we do not mean ownership in the colonial sense. We mean a return to our responsibilities to steward, protect, govern and be in the right relationship with creation.

I remind you we are ready to move forward together. If Canada is serious about reconciliation, then it must start acting like a treaty partner. The honour of the Crown is not just ceremonial; it is the moral foundation of your relationship with First Peoples. That honour is on the line.

Withdraw this bill. Rebuild trust. Come back to the table, and let's finally move together.

Meegwetch.

Anna Johnston, Staff Lawyer, West Coast Environmental Law: Good afternoon, senators. Thank you for this opportunity to speak today. I am appearing on behalf of West Coast Environmental Law, but my comments have also been endorsed by environmental organizations from across the country, including the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the David Suzuki Foundation, Ecojustice Canada, Environmental Defence, Equiterre, Greenpeace and the Sierra Club Foundation.

We are deeply concerned about Bill C-5, both its contents and the breakneck speed at which it is being rushed through Parliament. Yes, Canada needs big, transformative investments in projects that benefit Canadians, and ensuring that environmental assessment and regulatory processes are efficient is a laudable goal. But Bill C-5 takes us backwards, not forward, and uses a sledgehammer to fix a problem that needs a screwdriver. Frankly speaking, it is an assault on science and democracy.

You heard yesterday from Josh Ginsberg and Martin Olszynski about concerns respecting the "Henry VIII" provisions, the deeming provisions and the general end run around environmental, health and safety standards. We echo those concerns; instead of repeating them here, I will focus on two additional disturbing aspects of the bill.

First, it turns the principle of informed decision making on its head by allowing cabinet to make major project decisions before doing any environmental reviews. For more than half a century, the way we have made decisions about major projects in Canada has adhered to the basic principle that we should look before we leap. Bill C-5 does away with that principle and, instead, will have cabinet leap into decisions and then ask, "What happens now?"

It lets cabinet approve projects without any information beyond the basic information that proponents elect to give them. That "decide now, think later" approach ignores decades of experience and throws the principle of informed decision making out the window. It's like building a house and then calling an engineer to ask if it's safe.

Second, it shuts the public out of decisions that affect them and would allow cabinet to withhold key information about projects and their consequences. The public would not be entitled to things like the details of the project; any scientific, technical or safety reviews; and the advice of responsible ministers and if and why the superminister has decided to follow that advice.

So if a highway were designated for fast-tracking just blocks from your home, the minister wouldn't have to give you any information beyond its name and a brief description. You would have no say in whether, where or how the highway is built.

If the goal is building projects that are in the national interest, shouldn't we be looking to the public, Indigenous peoples and science to help identify what those projects should be? Instead, Bill C-5 allows those decisions to be made by politicians and could be solely based on the lobbying of private interests.

Public engagement is not red tape; it makes projects better and helps get buy-in on decisions.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, yes, we need big, transformative investments in things like renewable energy, wind and an east-west electricity grid.

However, economic uncertainty can't be used to shut the public out of decisions that affect them or run roughshod over Indigenous peoples' rights. Science can't be sidelined in the interest of getting shovels in the ground.

It is not in the national interest to do an end run around the Constitutional separation of powers — as you heard about yesterday — or the laws and processes that safeguard Canadians and the environment we depend on.

Bill C-5 was as ill-conceived as it was hastily drafted. We encourage you to work with the House of Commons to send it back to the drawing board and deliver Canadians a law that works.

We support calls from Indigenous peoples to ensure the bill respects Indigenous rights and authority. Additional changes we would like to see are deleting the "Henry VIII" sections that would let cabinet, rather than Parliament, decide when and for whom laws apply; amending the deeming power to ensure that decisions and conditions meet or exceed environmental, health and safety standards; requiring the minister to make all information publicly available and provide opportunities for meaningful participation; shortening the period that cabinet can designate these projects from five years to two; and, finally, amending clause 24 so that there is an independent review of the bill's performance by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, not a self-review by the minister.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions.

Daniel-Robert Gooch, President and Chief Executive Officer, Association of Canadian Port Authorities: Good afternoon, senators. I'm president and CEO of the Association of Canadian Port Authorities, which represents all 17 Canada Port Authorities owned by the federal government but operated at arm's length of government. It is a pleasure to be with you and to see so many familiar faces.

[Translation]

Canada's port authorities play a vital role in facilitating our global trade. While most goods destined for the United States are transported by rail or by truck, trade with more distant markets is conducted by sea. More than 80% of global trade happens by sea, and Canada is no exception. Three-quarters of Canadian exports go to the United States, but most other exports are shipped by sea.

[English]

It is the role of Canada's port authorities to facilitate this trade by building and maintaining the infrastructure on which private partners operate in Canada's ports and by managing the busy marine traffic travelling in and around our ports.

While private operators also invest in port infrastructure, port authorities are responsible for providing land, road and waterside access as well as utilities and other enabling services in addition to their own infrastructure investments.

Last year, we surveyed our member port authorities about their infrastructure needs between now and 2040. They identified at least \$10 billion in projects over that period, but only about 40% of those have confirmed funding.

Of that total, \$5 billion in investments is planned over the next four years, and that's just for projects we know about. Total needs through 2040 could require as much as \$21 billion. These investments are aimed at improving efficiency, fluidity and digital systems; expanding capacity; rehabilitating aging infrastructure; and strengthening the resilience of the overall network.

Our survey was conducted before the current U.S. trade actions and the federal government's push to diversify global trade. While Canada's port authorities may lose business under the Trump administration, there are also opportunities.

If Canada shifts even 6% of trade from the U.S. to overseas markets, some ports will quickly reach capacity. Action is urgent, not only for Canadian businesses, but because global competition is intensifying. For example, U.S. container ports have attracted 32 times more committed investment than those on Canada's Atlantic and St. Lawrence coasts.

Canada's port authorities welcome the federal government's steps to streamline project approval for national interest projects, which we see as just one piece of what the federal government is signalling will be a broader reform agenda.

We participated in a technical briefing last week and understand the federal government is working closely with provincial and territorial premiers to identify which projects will be reviewed under the streamlined process proposed by Bill C-5. With \$5 billion in active projects through 2028, our members have initiatives in every region that are likely to be considered.

Some national interest projects are already well known, are advanced in their planning and have been mentioned by Minister Freeland, such as port projects in Vancouver, Montreal and Saint John. These and many others are the subject of discussions between the ports, their premiers and the federal government.

For projects under the Bill C-5 framework, we recognize that departments and agencies will still need to do significant work to meet tighter timelines. But creating a central office for national interest projects, front-loading key decisions, establishing a centralized list of conditions and setting a two-year approval timeline are promising steps towards greater predictability for major investors. The bill also sets an aspirational pace and approach for federal and provincial entities involved in reviews and permitting. That we welcome.

• (1540)

Canada Port Authorities, or CPA, share the federal government's commitment to environmental protection and Indigenous reconciliation. We also believe these goals can be met more efficiently through reforms that maintain strong standards for assessment and consultation while allowing for faster reviews. While the current focus is on nationally significant projects, a more efficient process should ultimately benefit all projects by removing duplication, increasing predictability and streamlining decisions.

Even with ambitious reforms and renewed federal infrastructure funding, including the \$5 billion trade diversification corridor fund announced in the recent Speech from the Throne, modernizing the Canada Port Authorities model remains essential. Canada Port Authorities need greater financial agility to fund their share of infrastructure. This includes reform to enable greater collaboration, modernize borrowing rules, expand revenue-generating activities, greater flexibility to partner with public and private sectors and other measures to boost financial capacity and competitiveness. Border and policing services must also align with the reform agenda.

To conclude, with Bill C-5, Canada Port Authorities believe the Government of Canada is signalling a commitment to bold trade diversification goals and the policy changes needed to support them. Canada Port Authorities are ready to help deliver. I'm happy to take any questions.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gooch. We'll now proceed to questions. Since we have so many senators who wish to ask questions, I respectfully ask the witnesses to provide concise answers to the senators' questions. That would be appreciated. Honourable senators, please specify to whom your questions are addressed.

[English]

Senator McCallum: My question is for Chief Moore-Frappier.

Environmental rights and responsibilities are fundamental elements of Indigenous law, and acknowledging them would mark an important step towards reconciliation with Aboriginal people. The right to a healthy environment is an integral element of our collective identity. There is an urgent need to improve Canada's poor environmental performance and preserve this country's magnificent landscape, natural wealth and biodiversity.

It is vital to protect Canadians' health from environmental hazards such as air pollution, contaminated food and water and toxic chemicals.

Chief Moore-Frappier, we know that First Nations are understandably concerned about many aspects of this bill given the fast-tracking it represents for extractive projects and the unavoidable sidelining that will occur to First Nations' concerns.

A profound concern exists around the "Henry VIII" clauses. Within these clauses, extraordinary powers are granted to the government to alter laws through regulations, thereby bypassing the role and function of Parliament. The various laws that can unilaterally be exempted include vital legislation such as the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the Impact Assessment Act and, most critically, the Indian Act.

Given the honour of the Crown and the government's fiduciary responsibility to First Nations, do you think those responsibilities can be reconciled with the approach taken within this legislation? Do you think these clauses allowing the exemption of certain laws is opening a can of worms that would lead to litigation on various fronts, ultimately resulting in slower project approval times and greater uncertainty for investors?

Ms. Moore-Frappier: Thank you for your question. Absolutely, I think that we need to acknowledge our legal orders, and this would absolutely slow down major projects. This is talking about meaningful engagement, and when we don't have meaningful engagement, things are going to happen. Things will slow down.

I said in my opening remarks that we have over 12,000 mining claims staked in our territory. For us to address all of those — we work with about 120 different proponents at any point in time — we do not have the capacity to deal with all of that. We have one person in our department who is looking after those relationships, and that speaks to the level of the capacity that we have to even address what is happening now on the ground.

To take any levers away that we have to get the duty to consult and to have that working for us is not going to be good. It will start with legal challenges. This will become a legal matter, absolutely, because there are huge impacts on our lands and our constitutional rights as well. I hope that answers your question.

Senator D. M. Wells: Thank you, panel, for appearing before us today. I have a question for Mr. Gooch.

The Terminal 21 project at the Port of Trois-Rivières has been under federal environmental review since 2015, with an extension granted until next month, July 2025. It's been delayed in part due to the discovery of eight rare mussels — not eight species of mussels, eight rare mussels — in 2022, which triggered additional studies. Meanwhile, the costs have soared and the port is already operating at full capacity.

Do you believe that the current regime as structured under the Impact Assessment Act has become too burdensome or complex to allow for the efficient implementation of essential infrastructure projects?

Mr. Gooch: Thank you for the question. I can't speak to the specific case in Trois-Rivières. I'm not informed on it, and I'm not, quite frankly, authorized to speak on behalf of individual ports. But what I would say is getting project approvals moving forward more quickly, more streamlined, without trying to water down what is actually being done has been a priority of Canada Port Authorities since long before the trade war.

If I were here with you this time last year, I would be talking about the need to speed project approvals forward. One specific project that I know has been spoken about here is Roberts Bank Terminal 2 in Vancouver. It's been over 10 years. We can't be competitive as a trading nation if it takes 10 years to move major projects ahead.

Senator D. M. Wells: Thank you for that. Are there any opportunities going elsewhere or are they just dropped from the map?

Mr. Gooch: It's a bit of both. Certainly, the U.S. has attracted far more investment than Canada, and we compete with the U.S. for some traffic. The traffic that we compete with the U.S. for is actually at risk due to the measures that President Trump has indicated he's going to bring in. The competitiveness of those ports is very top of mind for the port industry right now.

Senator D. M. Wells: Thanks very much for that. These missed opportunities due to the inefficiencies that are built into the process, what do you think the cost of that is to Canadian ports or to Canada?

Mr. Gooch: That's a fantastic question. I don't know that we've quantified it, but the cost is that private investment will go elsewhere. If you're a global organization in the ports sector, you're not just considering Canada or the U.S. for where you're going to put your money, you're looking all over the world.

When projects take longer, well, construction costs are subject to inflation, and we've seen tremendous inflation over the last 5 to 10 years. Even under the existing processes, the delays associated with approvals for National Trade Corridors Fund applications have meant that the cost of a project a year or two later when those approvals come through and when the project is announced, they have already surpassed what was put forward when the funding application was put in.

There are a lot of costs, and part of it is missed opportunity. The other increased cost is the cost of inflation associated with bringing these projects to market to begin with.

Senator D. M. Wells: And bringing them in too late. Okay, thank you for that.

Ms. Johnston, I have a question for you. In your June 16, 2025, statement, you described Bill C-5 as anti-democratic notably because it would allow cabinet to approve projects before their

impacts were fully assessed. However, the bill makes it clear that such projects remain subject to all existing federal laws, including the Impact Assessment Act.

• (1550)

In this context, could you explain how the process proposed in Bill C-5 would violate democratic principles if a full environmental assessment is still required before any concrete implementation?

Ms. Johnston: I have a couple of clarifications: First, the Impact Assessment Act still applies to designated projects, but without seeing the schedule of what's going to be deemed in the national interest, they might not all be subject to an impact assessment. The Impact Assessment Act only applies to a handful of projects. It only actually triggered one assessment last year. For example, if it were an intraprovincial highway, it wouldn't go through an impact assessment.

My concerns around democracy are mostly twofold. First, there are the issues that you heard about yesterday from Josh Ginsberg and Martin Olszynski around infringing on that separation of powers by having the executive be able to effectively amend laws when really only Parliament should be able to do that. And then there's also building this decision-making structure and the review structure in a way that really shields it from just about any likely successful review, except maybe around section 35 rights, which then carves the law out of the judiciary's oversight. I have a real worry about the separation of powers.

Also, when I talk about democracy, I'm talking about participatory democracy. When we have the federal cabinet making decisions to approve projects before they have engaged the public in those key decisions, and then they are maybe just engaging them on how to fix certain issues through an environmental assessment, that — to me — is a real erosion of the democratic norms, where the public should be engaged in major decisions that affect them.

Senator D. M. Wells: Thank you for that.

Do you think this makes the new process ripe for court challenge? Obviously, there would be further delays and further costs.

Ms. Johnston: Yes, I worry about that. Also, there could be protests, like what we saw under the 2012 rules when the federal government attempted to gut Canada's environmental laws or amend Canada's environmental laws in the name of streamlining. Part of what that did under Bill C-38 was have a new Canadian Environmental Assessment Act that imposes directly affected tests so that not everybody could participate in an assessment. Particularly around pipeline projects, we saw a lot of protests, because people —

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Johnston.

Senator Simons: Mr. Gooch, my question is for you. I recently had the privilege of visiting the Port of Vancouver and had a tour of the Burrard Inlet port area. As an Alberta senator,

I'm particularly attuned to the fact that the ports of Prince Rupert and Vancouver are absolutely essential for Alberta's continued success in a united Canada to bring its goods to market.

I noted when I was at the Port of Vancouver that there seemed to be things that could be done in the port that would make it easier, for example, to transport more oil without building a new pipeline. What are the projects that could be enacted where you think there would be consensus with municipalities, with provinces, with Indigenous communities and with environmental groups? Do you think that it's possible to get a consultation and consensus before the project begins?

Mr. Gooch: Thank you for the question, senator. I'm not sure I could get into that level of engagement on specific projects. After hearing from Privy Council Office officials last week, my understanding is that there is an expectation that a lot of the projects that will be put on the schedule are actually fairly far along. Roberts Bank terminal 2, as I mentioned earlier, has been going through consultation and permitting for over 10 years. They are awaiting Fisheries permitting, which would perhaps take a couple of years.

Obviously, we're talking theoretically here, but the projects that I mentioned, such as in Contrecoeur, Roberts Bank and Saint John — and there are many others — have already been through a lot of consultation and permitting exercises and reviews. At the Association of Canadian Port Authorities, these are not necessarily all new or completely unheard of projects. A lot of them are quite well known and well down the road of eventually being approved, and this is a way to hopefully bring those times ahead.

Senator Pate: My first question is for Ms. Johnston, and my second is for Chief Moore-Frappier.

Your organization is quoted as saying:

Deciding to approve projects before making sure they are sound is like building a house and then calling an architect to ask if you got it right. . . .

Can you please describe how the project approval process under Bill C-5, in addition to what you already have said, would differ in terms of safeguards for the environment as well as rights for Indigenous peoples and others affected by the projects?

Chief Moore-Frappier, what steps would be necessary to ensure that this bill upholds the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as First Nations, Métis and Inuit governance and environmental well-being?

Ms. Johnston: Thank you. It's a good question. It effectively switches the decision on its head.

Customarily, whether it's through an impact assessment or a regulatory review process, officials would talk to Indigenous peoples, talk to the public, talk to departmental experts, get information from the proponent, do their own analysis, get independent expertise and knowledge and then make a decision. The bill flips that around. They make the decision and then they start gathering information — minus, of course, talking to the public.

Instead of having the information inform the "whether," the information informs the "how," as the Prime Minister said in announcing the bill. The problem, of course, is that the "whether" is a really important question, and it's not necessarily because projects are inherently bad. If you, for example, have a wind farm that is directly in the pathway of a migratory bird flyway, maybe we don't actually want that wind farm right there. Having the review process before the decision helps us ensure that we're getting it right the first time around.

Ms. Moore-Frappier: Could you repeat the question for me, please?

Senator Pate: What steps would be necessary to ensure that this bill upholds the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as First Nations, Métis and Inuit governance and environmental well-being?

Ms. Moore-Frappier: It would be looking at consultation first before we are looking at moving forward. It's taking a step back and having that kind of meaningful consultation with us to move it forward. *Meegwetich*.

Senator Galvez: My question is for Ms. Johnston and for Chief Moore-Frappier.

Bill C-5 currently does not provide any opportunity for public participation, and it says the decision to add projects to the schedule to allow them to be fast-tracked does not have to go through the usual Canada gazetting process, which allows the public to comment on regulatory decisions like this.

Knowing that Canadians not only deserve but will also definitely seek to have a say about an infrastructure that will directly affect them in exactly the same situation as Indigenous people, do you think the government — under the present form of Bill C-5 — can ensure that the public will be meaningfully engaged in project review?

If you have an opportunity to improve the bill, what would you recommend?

Ms. Johnston: Thank you for the question. It is important to note that this bill is largely permissive. It certainly doesn't preclude the minister or the office that it talks about establishing from engaging the public, but my concern lies in the fact that there's no requirement for public participation, so some improvements that we would like to see would be including explicit requirements. First of all, delete the provisions that say that the listing and the decision statement will not be subject to the Statutory Instruments Act so that there is an opportunity for a basic comment period through the gazetting process. But then add some provisions in to provide some basic transparency so that a detailed project description, the analysis and the information that the minister receives and relies on, as well as the reasons for departing from the advice of any of the ministers will be made public, and then a second provision should require him to ensure that there are at least two opportunities for meaningful public participation. One around the listing and then one around that decision document with conditions would go a long way to assuage my concerns that the public is being shut out of this process.

Ms. Moore-Frappier: I think it goes back to looking at engagement: What does that look like in working with First Nations? Each nation has their own protocols.

It is about that relationship which the government needs to be better at building in regard to having that move forward in a way that is respectful, and it is not an afterthought. That's very important as we move forward. *Meegwetch.*

• (1600)

Senator Prosper: Welcome, panellists. My first question is for Chief Moore-Frappier.

You talked about economic threats and tariffs being used to force compliance. When you assert rights and jurisdiction, your nation and your people are painted as obstacles to Canada's national interest, which is — as you mentioned — a dangerous and dishonest narrative. You referenced that, in part, as an "economic coercion."

But you also mentioned that First Nations want prosperity and opportunities for their children and grandchildren in this country, that they can create the certainty investors are looking for and that you are not trying to stop progress, they just want to be part of it. There was a previous panellist who said that we have to meet the moment, and you propose that we need to withdraw this bill and rebuild trust.

How do you feel we need to meet the moment in terms of rebuilding trust with First Nations people?

Ms. Moore-Frappier: That's a loaded question. That's a lot of undoing, but I think that it starts with a meaningful relationship and engagement. I'm going to repeat myself over and over again, because that is what we're asking. Just bring us to the table. We were not even being asked to the table, and we need to be asked to the table, because you will find that we have a great number of amazing thinkers, legal scholars and economists. All these people can bring solutions and work with the government to find a better way forward.

This is about our relationship and the responsibility to us, and I think that Canada can do better. You have an opportunity right now to say, "Let's start a process that can help us move together through this and not do what we have historically done, which was to use a paternalistic way of going about things with the attitude that Canada knows best. We have our experts and we want to move forward with you. I will leave it at that. *Meegwetch.*"

Senator Prosper: Thank you, Chief.

My next question is for Ms. Johnston. You mentioned in your opening comments that this process around Bill C-5 is not an independent review, but rather, a self-review. I would like to hear your thoughts in that context of a self-review. How do you think that would impact or feed into the notion of good faith and meaningful consultations with First Nations groups?

Ms. Johnston: I am concerned particularly when we think about projects that won't go through impact assessments and won't have that external engagement built into them. When information is being mainly considered in-house, and, officials

go and talk to a community and then come back, there are opportunities for dialogue. As the Chief was just saying, it is about relationships. But if most of the work is being done in this closed-door, internal government way, then it raises a lot of concerns to me that even if officials attempt to consult with nations those opportunities for meaningful dialogue may not be present in the same way that they are when review processes are open and transparent and there is a two-way sharing of information.

Senator Quinn: My question is for Mr. Gooch. Welcome, Daniel. As you mentioned, ports handle a lot of cargo. It is the real transition point between water and land, principally rail and road. Those transition points are very important for the overall trade agenda.

How will the provisions provided under Bill C-5 help ports as they evolve in fulfilling their role? Could you talk a bit about what you see as benefits and concerns?

Mr. Gooch: The biggest benefit we see is that this seems to be a signal from the Government of Canada that we need to do things more efficiently and move projects forward. Canada's port authorities are arm's length of government, and so they work hand in glove with government in terms of the types of projects that are going to benefit Canada from an economic perspective. These are not for-profit organizations; they are there for the benefit of Canada.

As I said earlier, the timelines associated with projects have made us uncompetitive. It shouldn't take 10 years to move a project forward. We have some tremendous projects that have been designed and are moving along, but it is taking them a long time to get there. If we are successful in diversifying our global trade, which, as the Prime Minister has stated, is one of our top priorities, then the increase in exports to foreign markets — Europe, Asia, Latin America — will all go by sea. We need to ensure that Canadian ports have both the container capacity and the bulk-goods capacity to support that increase in exports that we're hoping to see in overseas markets.

The single study that I have seen says — as I indicate in my notes — that a 6% success in diverting our exports to overseas markets will result in ports starting to become full. That then adds costs and extends timelines, making Canada less competitive, resulting in both shippers and Canadian customers potentially looking elsewhere.

Senator Quinn: Thank you. I want to raise a second question: Ports across Canada have made significant strides, not only including direct stakeholders in strategic project proposal development, but also embracing inclusion approaches with supporting communities, interest groups and — importantly — Indigenous communities. We have heard from several witnesses over the last day or so — including today — about their concerns with respect to issues around consultation, for example.

What do you do in terms of working with your members to ensure that all that work that has been done to build that relationship with communities, including Indigenous communities and having them involved, isn't lost? How do you work with your ports to ensure that this is strengthened and not weakened as we work our way through these legislative initiatives?

Mr. Gooch: As an association of the 17 CPAs, we provide a forum for members to learn from each other. It is fair to say that some of our ports have done an exceptional job in building relationships with Indigenous communities. For example, 27 nations were on board with the Roberts Bank Terminal 2. Prince Rupert is doing tremendous work in Indigenous engagement and bringing Indigenous nations into the business that they are growing there. CEOs across the country are learning from that, in part, because they are arm's-length organizations of the federal government. A culture around consultation and inclusion with the community has been growing for quite some time, and members are seeking to learn from each other about how to do it better.

Senator Quinn: My last question is this: Does your association work with provinces to ensure that they are aware of the importance of port priorities from the overall national trade perspective? How do we make that link from a port to the province to the national agenda?

Mr. Gooch: We don't engage at the provincial level. That's something that our members do directly. They have strong relationships with the premiers. In talking to our members over the last month or so, I know that Minister Freeland has been meeting with many of them and stressing that the federal government is going to be working with the premiers. That is pleasant news because the members have already been quite engaged with the provinces — not just their own provinces but also neighbouring provinces. The Prairies provinces care very much about the capacity of the ports on the West Coast because that is how their exports are shipped out to world markets.

It is fair to say that discussions at the provincial level have been happening quite extensively. So the projects most likely to move forward would be well known to the premiers and hopefully have their support.

• (1610)

Senator Wilson: My question is for Mr. Gooch. First of all, it is very gratifying to hear Terminal 2 mentioned several times in the context of delegate presentations given I spent 10 years working on that project and know how difficult it was to get across the line.

If you get out of the spotlight of the high-profile projects like Terminal 2 and Contrecoeur and also the expansions in Prince Rupert, what I would see is, in aggregate, nation-building projects that would be eligible candidates maybe for this — pardon me? Sorry, our leader was trying to signal something to me.

I see some smaller projects in the aggregate as nation building, and those are like gateway projects, road and rail debottlenecking projects along trade corridors both in the vicinity of Canada's

ports but also across the country. Those projects have a broad benefit, and it is widely dispersed. In my experience, there is not adequate funding available to get those things built, yet port authorities have been asked to carry the burden on that and try and arbitrate who will pay for them.

Have you had discussions with the government about how those projects will be funded in the context of the prioritization under Bill C-5?

Mr. Gooch: Certainly, we are pleased to see a commitment for an additional \$5 billion through the trade diversification corridors fund which was announced in the Speech from the Throne. But you are correct, not everything will be funded through government funding, and shouldn't necessarily be.

If I was here last year, again, my priorities wouldn't just have been on getting projects moved more quickly. They would also have been on greater flexibility for port authorities and how they could find projects.

As Canada Port Authorities, ports are restricted in several ways in terms of how they can operate financially. They have strict borrowing limits which are written into letters patent. It can take years to have those changed. They are usually far less than the capacity of what a similar organization would have if they were a private sector organization or even an airport authority — I represented airport authorities for 15 years — trying to modernize the rules around borrowing so that ports can be a little bit more nimble, more agile in leveraging the power of their balance sheets to open up financial capacity.

There is also for some ports — not necessarily everyone — greater flexibility in the business activities that they can engage in to generate revenue to support critical infrastructure investment. If a port wanted to build a facility on the water and put a tower of offices above that, they may run up against restrictions on their activities. Really, there are a set of restrictions we think are worth modernizing in terms of how ports are able to operate, how they are able to generate revenue and how they are able to access borrowing to fulfill the mandates they have. Not everything is a big, sexy project with a ribbon to cut, and it is all important work.

Senator Francis: This question is for Chief Moore-Frappier. Yesterday, I asked Minister Alty why the federal government included the Indian Act as one of the laws that it could override under Bill C-5. Her response was that this would allow cabinet to suspend certain provisions in consultation with First Nations, but no further details were provided. Should we be concerned that granting cabinet the unchecked authority to exempt the Indian Act or parts of it could strip away critical legal safeguards that protect reserve lands and resources? Does this not create a real risk that current or future governments could undermine self-determination by, for example, bypassing band councils?

Ms. Moore-Frappier: I don't understand how that could be considered because you were specifically speaking to essentially usurping our rights. That can't happen. We can't support something that will create this unilateral decision making and having us not a part of the decision-making process.

Because that is partially a legal question, I'm going to defer to Mr. Bellefeuille as well.

Fred Bellefeuille, Lawyer, Anishinabek Nation: Good afternoon. The Indian Act hasn't engrained our treaty and Aboriginal rights necessarily. There is no attached duty to consult to changes to the Indian Act. So it becomes a real threat to grant executive powers, this authority to amend the Indian Act.

We have seen over and over again these kinds of issues get bogged down in court, including the Indian status issues that have been in the courts for decades now. Thank you. *Meegweetch.*

Senator Francis: Thank you.

Senator Cardozo: My question is for Ms. Johnston. I want to focus on the "Henry VIII" clauses which give the executive power to override various acts of Parliament. There is a list in Schedule 2 of Part 1, but, in fact, section 20 also says they can amend that list at any time and amend acts as I understand it.

You have endorsed the idea of big projects being done, and the purpose of the bill is to help big projects happen. I look at the parliamentary calendar. The House rises this week and then we look at the bill next week when we come back. Really, the best time to have the bill amended is this week in the House of Commons. I expect you are talking to our colleagues in the other house.

If this bill goes ahead, do you see this slowing things down? Do you see court cases happening? Do you have any other ideas about how we could have big projects and not have the delays that a lot of governments and businesses have complained about?

Ms. Johnston: Maybe I'll start with the second part of the question. One of the things that I wish I saw in this bill was the implementation of the many tools that we know can help make processes more efficient and more effective. Independent review panels have been used in Canada for 50 years to build credibility, to bring in independent expertise and to do meaningful engagement.

There is a project that I like to refer to often that went through an assessment. It's called the Voisey's Bay nickel mine in Labrador. It went through an independent review panel assessment back in 1997. It took the panel under two years to review the project. What they found was that the communities were generally on board with the concept but were quite concerned that, as designed, the project would only last for about eight years because the proponent wanted to maximize production as quickly as possible.

Through the assessment, the proponent agreed to lower the production capacity and extend the lifespan of the project. It is still operating to this day. It just went through an expansion and it employs hundreds of people. That's all done under two years.

In B.C., they model the use of working groups that bring communities, the proponent and experts together to focus assessments on the key issues. There are tools that exist in the

toolkit. I'm not quite sure why Parliament didn't opt to employ some of those known tools that tend to not just lead to more efficient assessments but also more credible and rigorous results.

I think because they didn't choose to go that route, like I mentioned earlier, I'm worried that shutting the public out of decisions that affect them will lead to protests. Deciding that projects are in the national interest before talking to the public and before having meaningful consultation with Indigenous peoples could lead to lawsuits and more protests. We have heard statements coming out of First Nations saying this may lead to another Idle No More. That is incredibly disruptive and not nation building. I have a lot of concerns that this bill will end up inadvertently having the opposite effect than its goals.

Senator Cardozo: They could still approve projects and still abide by the rules? They could choose not to, but one could hope that they still abide by the laws, right?

Ms. Johnston: They could. I don't know why they would give themselves the power to circumvent these laws if they didn't intend to use them. Some of the projects that have been put on the table or talked about as being candidates for nation building, there are some species at risk concerns. I think species at risk is probably the greatest concern.

But one of the things that my friend from ports talked about was the Fisheries Act permitting requirements. That's actually set out in regulations. An amendment that constrained the "Henry VIII" power to only allowing cabinet to amend regulations would still allow them to address those Fisheries Act issues which are causing some permitting delays without giving the executive what is effectively parliamentary powers.

• (1620)

There are amendments that I think would be able to achieve the goals the government is attempting to without creating this —

Senator Cardozo: Can I bring this to the House of Commons in the meantime?

Ms. Johnston: Yes.

Senator Senior: Thank you all for being here. I would like to direct my questions to Ms. Johnston and Chief Moore-Frappier.

Over the past weeks, I'm sure many of us have received hundreds of emails from concerned citizens about this bill. There are two key concerns that I have identified. First, the bill would weaken environmental oversight by expediting approval for major projects without robust environmental assessments — you have discussed that — potentially leading to irreversible harm to endangered species, ecosystems and communities. Second, the bill would undermine Indigenous rights as it lacks provisions to ensure the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous communities or meaningful consultation about potential infringements upon rights and traditional territories.

Earlier this week, we heard that there are several factors that the Governor-in-Council must consider when amending or deleting national interest projects. These include the extent to which national interest projects can strengthen Canada's autonomy, resilience and security; provide economic or other benefits to Canada; advance the interests of Indigenous peoples; and contribute to clean growth and meeting Canada's objectives with respect to climate change.

Do you think this is possible in a sped-up process? Do you think it is possible, as we have been informed, for some of these processes or steps to be done simultaneously to save time?

Ms. Moore-Frappier: The short answer is no.

I like the language about advancing the interests of Indigenous peoples. However, this is about meaningful consultation. This is about free, prior and informed consent. This is about having us at the table not as an afterthought but during the planning, so I think that we're not going to stand for it. I think that if this bill goes through, you are going to see a lot of legal challenges, protests, rallies and so on that are going to have the exact opposite effect of what you are trying to do.

It is essentially creating chaos if you choose to continue moving forward in the way that you are. But you still have the opportunity to walk it back a little and do it right, and that's what I would implore you to do. *Meegwetich.*

Ms. Johnston: I would add that another one of my concerns, from an environmental perspective, is this desire to have decisions made in two years. It doesn't mirror the reality of the time it takes to study effects; it doesn't mirror the reality of what often causes delays in permitting.

Assessment and regulatory processes are intended to overlay project planning. It is an iterative process, and proponents often don't have the technical information that, let's say, Fisheries and Oceans Canada needs in order to issue an authorization. However, this bill says, "We're going to issue that within this decision statement this minister is going to give to proponents. Regardless of whether we have the information, we no longer have to meet the standards that exist in various environmental laws." What that will mean is that conditions won't be binding. They'll be a requirement for a proponent to come up with a plan at a later date, and that plan won't be subject to the same kind of scrutiny that it would have been in the actual permitting process.

The haste and the arbitrary two-year timeline don't reflect the practical nature and reality of how permitting works. They don't reflect the fact that there has been a lot of negative experience in Canada with these loosey-goosey conditions around coming up with a plan or planning to make a plan down the road.

[Translation]

Senator Hébert: My question is for Mr. Gooch.

Shipping is a key point in any discussion of export market diversification, since it is the means used to reach more remote markets. As for the saturation risk, I came up with the same rate that you mentioned earlier, 6%.

We know that east coast U.S. ports continue to pour massive investments into expanding their capacity. Canada cannot claim the title of top dog when it comes to investment. The Port of Montreal, the largest container port in eastern Canada, launched an expansion project in the late 1980s, yet it remains a work in progress. In light of this situation, Canada could lose some of its market share to our southern neighbour because of the slow pace of construction.

What three conditions might allow Bill C-5 to rise to this challenge?

Mr. Gooch: Thank you for your question. I will answer in English.

[English]

We see Bill C-5 as being, in many parts, just a framework and a signal that we need to do things more efficiently and move things forward. Certainly, regarding the processes of the various departments and agencies involved in permitting, there is a lot of work to be done as well. This is a signal to investors that Canada intends to do things more quickly and with greater predictability. I think that's essential because the private operators who do work at our ports, who invest in ports and facilities, want that predictability when they are making their decisions on investments.

The U.S. has proven to be able to do things more quickly. To a certain extent, Canada's ports compete with those ports for traffic. Between 10% and 20% of our container ports, and even higher in some cases, have cargo that is destined for the U.S. today, and it gets off the ship at a Canadian port and then goes by rail or land. We are facing penalties imposed by the U.S. on that, which is going to further damage the competitive positioning for Canada's port authorities.

The call from the Prime Minister is that we need to diversify our global trade, and quickly. Canada's port authorities really want to be part of that, and what we're talking about today is not new. We have been talking about this since I joined the Association of Canadian Port Authorities three years ago. We're pleased to see the focus. We are pleased with the framework in Bill C-5. It is clear that there are a lot of questions about how it will work in practice, and that is fair — the devil is always in the details. But we see it as an important first step and a signal of a broader reform agenda that is needed.

Senator Coyle: Thank you to our witnesses for helping us in our study of Bill C-5. My questions are for Ms. Johnston and Chief Moore-Frappier.

The government has promised to build a strong, resilient and sustainable Canadian economy and to build it urgently. A recent statement by West Coast Environmental Law on Bill C-5 indicated:

We know from past experience that rushed approvals without proper assessment of risks are a recipe for conflict, legal challenges, and future environmental disasters.

Ms. Johnston, thank you for the many things you have already offered here. My question is actually similar to Senator Cardozo's, so if there is anything you want to add, could you tell us in what ways Canada could better balance the urgent need to quickly build a strong Canadian economy, with important projects like a cross-country electricity grid, while ensuring proper project review, consultation, engagement and environmental assessment?

I will also ask my second question now. It is for Chief Moore-Frappier. Having heard from Ms. Johnston, do you believe that it is possible to accelerate and streamline approvals for large projects while ensuring meaningful engagement, consultation and assessment?

• (1630)

Ms. Johnston: Thank you very much for that question. It's a good one.

I did mention a few ways that processes can be more efficient. There are many more tools, including tools that are provided for under the Impact Assessment Act. This is one notable example that has recently occurred: There were two regional assessments of offshore wind in Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia. Those were completed maybe six months ago. They are largely considered to have been rigorous, credible and participatory, and their intention was to make the individual assessment and permitting processes for any specific projects that are proposed much more efficient. They have identified areas where wind can occur, standard mitigation measures — all the things that you would have to do on a project-by-project basis.

That's called a regional assessment. It's a tool that's provided for under the Impact Assessment Act. There's currently another regional assessment under way in Ontario's Ring of Fire, which we've heard about as being a key area of interest for critical minerals.

Those are tools that are intended to ensure that we have all the information we need so we don't have to ask proponents to do those studies for multiple years.

Ms. Moore-Frappier: Could I ask you to repeat your question, please?

Senator Coyle: Chief, do you believe that it's possible to accelerate and streamline approvals for large projects while also ensuring meaningful engagement, consultation and assessment?

Ms. Moore-Frappier: If there is a will, there is a way, but it has to be in consultation with us, prior to moving forward.

We can look at working toward supporting moving things faster, but it has to be with a relationship based on trust, because we're going to be moving at the speed of trust. If you don't have our trust, we will slow down the process, and that is a promise. *Meegwetch.*

Senator Petten: Thank you for being here today. My question is for Mr. Gooch.

I've taken the time to visit a few ports over the last few months, including the ports of Halifax, Montreal and, of course, St. John's. I'll be in Vancouver in August to visit the port there, as well. There are a few consistent themes we've heard: Our ports are being impacted by the tariffs, and while many countries are filling some of the gaps — with China, for example — the volume is less than before.

Do you see this bill helping to offset the negative impacts of the U.S.-imposed tariffs on ports across the country, including the Port of St. John's? Do you have any specific examples related to my province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Mr. Gooch: When we look at this, there is obviously the short term, near term and longer term. Bill C-5 addresses the longer term in terms of moving things along more quickly and providing greater predictability, so it's not so much about the near term.

As a country, as we work to expand the appeal for our products, services and commodities in other markets, the bill is ensuring that we have the capacity through our ports to be able to facilitate that trade.

I'm sorry, but I don't have any specific examples for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, which is frustrating, because I'm from there. However, certainly when you look at container ports, for example, the figure we have is 6%. That's not a lot if you think about all the reliance we have on the United States. Being able to avert 6% of that to international markets is not a lot, but that's when you start to see some of the ports hitting capacity.

Senator Clement: Thank you all for your comments. Mr. Gooch, I appreciated your response to Senator Quinn's question pertaining to your organization's obligations around relationship building and your plans around that. Chief Moore-Frappier, your opening remarks were stunning. I'll say *nia:wen* in Mohawk, which is the language of the territory where my home community is located, which is Cornwall, Ontario.

I want to engage, though, with Ms. Johnston because I've been reading the article on your website from June 16, 2025, which lists an onslaught of protests, rallies and acts of civil disobedience against the Trans Mountain Pipeline. There was the Mount Polley Mine tailings disaster of 2014 when the dam containing the mine's waste water failed, sending 25 billion litres of toxic waste into Polley Lake, Hazeltine Creek and Quesnel Lake; the Sydney Tar Ponds, one of Canada's most toxic-waste sites, was created by decades of failure to assess or adequately regulate a steel-manufacturing plant; and uranium contamination near Elliot Lake, Ontario, accumulated over decades of unassessed and poorly regulated uranium tailings disposal.

Ecojustice also has an article that lists Chemical Valley near Sarnia, Ontario, home to about 40% of Canada's chemical industry, and mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows.

Given that those examples occurred as a result of a loosening or lack of regulations and given that you made recommendations in your opening statement, what would be the most urgent thing to look at? You were talking about deeming and independent reviews. That's the first part.

I also want to ask you about environmental racism. We've heard this spoken about in this chamber by Senator McCallum. I just want to bring up the example of Nova Scotia's Africville. Former African Americans were denied the basic municipal services provided to White residents in Halifax. In the 1960s, the community was bulldozed as a result of this neglect, displacing residents. African-Nova Scotians still feel the impact, and I'm worried about other groups with vulnerabilities being hurt by this legislation. Soil contamination, waste sites and industrial land use disproportionately hurt areas that are home to racialized communities, recent immigrants and people with lower incomes. Senator Prosper asked a witness yesterday about codifying basic best practices, up front, in legislation.

That's a lot — all of that. Can you comment, please?

Ms. Johnston: Yes, and thank you for mentioning the blog. Here's a little promotion here: We're actually publishing a report on those disasters tomorrow, outlining them in more detail, and also giving examples of when good environmental assessment and co-governance models have led to better project decisions.

To your point about environmental racism, one of my concerns, and one of the things that we liked quite a lot about the Impact Assessment Act, is that it embeds a requirement to consider the intersection of sex, gender and other identity factors. For example, if you want to build a mine near a small community that has limited health resources, and then you bring in a bunch of workers and you house them in or near that community, there are plenty of unintended effects: housing price increases, stresses on health care systems and increases in STIs and teen pregnancies. These can all be mitigated, but you have to be looking for and understand the problem in order to avoid it.

Ontario, with Bill 5, has carved out the Ring of Fire area from any provincial environmental assessment law. If a mine were proposed that didn't go through a federal impact assessment because it's scoped just under the threshold, all of those effects wouldn't be looked at. We're talking about, potentially, massive effects for many communities up in that area.

It does concern me that, not only does this law allow for the erosion of environmental, health and safety standards, but it also doesn't have any process or standards built into the bill itself. That said, if I only had one or two key wishes, the "Henry VIII" clauses are of the greatest concern to me. So I would like to do away with those, as well as do away with the ability to deem that the conditions you oppose on documents meet the standards of other environmental laws when they really don't.

So I think it's important to make sure that through these processes and decisions we don't evade the standards that Parliament has set for the federal government decision-making processes. Those would be my top two concerns.

• (1640)

The Chair: Honourable senators, the committee has been hearing from the witnesses for 75 minutes. In conformity with the order adopted by the Senate, I am obliged to interrupt proceedings in order to proceed with the third panel.

On behalf of all senators, thank you for joining us today to assist us with our work on this bill.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Honourable senators, we will suspend for a few minutes to prepare for the third panel. We will resume at 4:47 p.m.

(The committee was suspended.)

(The committee resumed.)

(Pursuant to the order of the Senate, the witnesses were escorted to seats in the Senate Chamber.)

The Chair: Honourable senators, the Senate is resuming in Committee of the Whole to continue its consideration of the subject matter of Bill C-5, An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act.

The committee will now hear from the Honourable Lisa Raitt, former federal cabinet minister and Co-Chair of the Coalition for a Better Future; and the Honourable Brian Gallant, former premier of New Brunswick.

I would like to thank you for being with us today. I would ask you to make your opening remarks.

Hon. Lisa Raitt, P.C., former federal cabinet minister and Co-Chair of the Coalition for a Better Future: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate being here today. It's a little bit of old home week. It's nice to see so many familiar faces on all sides of the partisan divide, and I'm delighted that you invited me here due to my part in the Coalition for a Better Future. I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about Bill C-5.

As some of you may know, I am the Co-Chair of the Coalition for a Better Future, and it is a role I share with the Honourable Anne McLellan, who would have loved to be here today. But it's not that Mr. Gallant isn't great to be here as well. Ms. McLellan wanted to be here, but she's unfortunately not available, so I will end up carrying the water for both of us.

The Coalition for a Better Future brings together 140 organizations from businesses, labour groups, Indigenous leaders, civil society and more. We share one clear goal: to build a stronger, more inclusive and more prosperous Canada.

Our organization supports the intent behind Bill C-5, and we believe it can play a role in strengthening Canada's long-term economic foundations, especially if you pair it with a broader and bold strategy to drive growth, productivity and competitiveness.

• (1650)

To get there, we need sustained, long-term economic growth. That's growth that creates good jobs, supports families, lifts people out of poverty and fuels a cleaner and more competitive economy. That's the lens that we use in our scorecard.

In our scorecard, we measure progress across 21 internationally recognized indicators — covering everything from incomes to emissions to investments — against 2030 targets internationally around the world. If you would like to look at the scorecard, it's at www.canadacoalition.ca.

Unfortunately, this year's report from the scorecard has a sobering message for us, and it's this: Canada is off target. Living standards are falling. We have found that real incomes are down, poverty is up and housing remains unaffordable for many. Unemployment, particularly among immigrants and youth, is rising. Women's representation in senior management roles is actually stagnating, and Indigenous labour force participation is falling.

Canada actually now ranks near the bottom among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries when it comes to productivity. Business investments in R&D, machinery and intellectual property have actually collapsed to historic lows. That's not just a statistic; it's a signal that our economic engine is running out of fuel.

On the sustainability front, we are making progress on emissions, but it's not fast enough. Clean tech investment has stalled, and we're not future-proofing the country. All of this — the affordability crisis, weak investment and uneven growth — is happening against the backdrop of global instability, geopolitical tensions, trade fragmentation and rising nationalism. Unfortunately, from what we see in our information, our economy, as we know it, just isn't resilient enough.

When Ms. McLellan and I started the coalition in 2021, it was because, quite frankly, senators, successive minority governments were focusing on what was politically convenient rather than economically necessary. In seven elections at that time, we returned five minority governments. Having sat in a minority government, a minority government seeks very much to achieve a majority government, and some policy decisions can be directed in that direction.

What we wanted, though, was a tool that was going to be cross-partisan. That's why the scorecard metrics actually stay consistent. The 21 metrics that we identified in 2021 will be the 21 metrics that we will measure until 2030 — no shifting targets, no different guardrails depending upon who is Minister of Finance, just the data so Canadians can judge for themselves. The

truth of the matter is this: We have spent the last 20 years skating. Across governments, we have avoided the hard questions about competitiveness, resilience and sustainability, and now, unfortunately, we are running out of time. But we're not out of options. We have world-class talent, we have abundant energy resources and we have a diverse population, but we need a serious course correction, and it does have to start now.

So the question is: Are we ready to act? A bold, made-in-Canada strategy puts investment, productivity and competitiveness at the heart of the economic agenda, and that means many of the things you see in this bill before you today for study — breaking down interprovincial trade barriers, modernizing our tax system to encourage investment, supporting our rural economies and making sure that we think of our communities as economic drivers not afterthoughts. Build a pragmatic path to reduce emissions by investing in clean energy, carbon capture, nuclear, scaling renewables. Leverage our energy resources and negotiations on the world stage while preserving energy security and economic opportunity. Building affordable homes without surpassing our emissions targets and putting a real emphasis on productivity — not just talk, but action.

Canada has a future, but it has to be built with intention, and it has to be built with boldness and with the courage to take long-term risks in a short-term political culture. I know that is not easy, but I would submit — Ms. McLellan and I would submit together — that it's necessary. So we ask that people choose innovation, collaboration and action because the best chapters of the Canadian story aren't behind us.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Raitt.

[Translation]

Mr. Gallant, you have the floor for the next five minutes.

Hon. Brian Gallant, former premier of New Brunswick: Mr. Chair, honourable senators, thank you for the invitation. It's an honour to be here in the Senate, with former colleagues, friends and proud Canadians of different origins with different outlooks.

[English]

Canada is in a moment. Trump has unilaterally abdicated the U.S.'s global leadership. He has relegated the U.S.'s approach of garnering soft influence through economic collaboration to a transactional approach hellbent on coercively securing so-called wins in forced renewed trade deals.

This zero-sum mentality comes at a great cost in the form of further economic uncertainty, a lack of global action to tackle the climate crisis, deepening inequalities and increased geopolitical tensions. This moment is an opportunity for Canada to step up on the world stage. The challenges and opportunities created by this moment must be met with Canada acting strategically, swiftly and boldly. This moment is an opportunity that we can't squander.

[Ms. Raitt]

In order to do all of this, we, as Canadians, must work closer together, be nimbler and get big things done all while creating economic opportunities for all, addressing inequalities and inequities, combatting climate change and protecting our environment, improving the health and standard of living for Canadians and advancing Indigenous reconciliation.

[Translation]

There are a lot of things our governments need to be concerned about these days. In my opinion, Bill C-5, An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act, seeks to strike the right balance.

This bill proposes to remove federal barriers to internal trade and labour mobility, which will help stimulate economic growth. In addition, the bill proposes to identify and advance projects of national interest through a revitalized federal process.

This bill has raised some concerns about environmental protection.

[English]

It is my understanding, after reviewing the bill, that a project under the proposed legislation will need to go through an impact assessment and will be reviewed by regulators in order to provide the conditions that must be met for the project to move forward.

One could ask what would this proposed legislation change, then? After reviewing the bill, my humble understanding is that various federal departments, agencies and regulators will simultaneously assess a project deemed to be in the national interest instead of undergoing their respective processes sequentially. In simpler terms, Bill C-5, if passed, will create a one-project, one-review process, and this is for projects that are deemed to be in the national interest.

Having various federal departments and agencies working in parallel with each other to advance a project more efficiently and in a timelier manner for the sake of national interest makes sense to me.

[Translation]

I should add that I'm reassured by the fact that this bill seeks to make the approval process more efficient and expeditious, and doesn't necessarily seek to change the substantial work done by various departments and agencies in their project assessments.

Concerns have also been expressed regarding the impact this bill could have on the rights of Indigenous peoples.

[English]

With what I know regarding the duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous peoples, this proposed legislation would not be able to, even if it tried, to thwart the Crown's duty to consult and accommodate. Moreover, the bill specifically recognizes Indigenous constitutional rights and specifies the need to consult with Indigenous peoples on projects being considered under the proposed legislation.

[Translation]

Some people think of pipelines when they hear about this bill. Discussions about how this bill could affect the progress of several potential projects are certainly warranted.

[English]

The proposed legislation could help advance many other types of projects that are important for Canada including, if you will indulge me, some space-based initiatives. Through space-based capabilities, Canada can provide connectivity to remote, northern and Indigenous communities; secure our sovereignty in the Arctic; step up with our allies on defence and security; protect our oceans, forests and coastlines more effectively; fight and mitigate the impacts of climate change; spur innovation in R&D and so much more. There would also be some wonderful potential projects in New Brunswick that I'd be happy to add if anyone would like to chat.

• (1700)

Canada's lagging productivity, as laid out by my colleague, is one of the economic statistics that should collectively concern us the most here in Canada, given the correlation between productivity and the country's standard of living. The one Canadian economy act, if passed, will serve as a tool to help us increase our productivity and help us meet this moment. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gallant.

We will now move on to the question period. As many senators wish to ask questions, I respectfully inform the witnesses that senators appreciate concise answers to their questions.

Honourable senators, I thank you for indicating to whom your questions are addressed.

[Translation]

Senator Housakos: Welcome to the Senate, Mr. Gallant.

[English]

Ms. Raitt, welcome back to Ottawa. You've been missed. As a former Minister of Labour and a former Minister of Transport, and now vice-chair at CIBC Global Investment Banking, you've seen how federal standards and economic mobility affect both markets and, of course, workers. Do you think Bill C-5, which focuses narrowly on federal barriers to trade and labour mobility, adequately leverages federal powers to unlock national economic benefits? In your opinion, does it do enough to really tap the potential from bringing down trade barriers?

Ms. Raitt: Thank you, senator, for the question. I appreciate it. Also, congratulations on your new role. I know that you will serve well.

If I were to put on my former legislative hat, I would say that the act is drafted so broadly, one would assume that you would have the ability to do what you need to. So what it comes down to, quite frankly, is whether you have the right structures in place to make the decisions that must be made and whether you will be able to execute on those decisions.

So there is a lot of power in this act that a minister or a government or a Governor-in-Council could use, but if you don't have the appropriate pieces of infrastructure in place within the government to make it happen, then it's just a piece of paper.

From the point of view of business, that is where the lack comes from. It's the fact that, yes, government has a lot of power, and there's a lot of legislative ability, but the reality is that sometimes it's not wielded appropriately, quickly or decisively. Business seeks that certainty. The act may be one piece of it, but actually seeing the proof of the projects being approved and put in place is what will give comfort to companies around the world.

Senator Housakos: I gather from your comments that you feel that there will be a lot of politicalization in the decision-making process. From what we see, it gives a lot of power to single ministers to determine how projects are determined. What would be a better structure to put in place to make the business community more confident that the decision-making process will not be politically expedient but rather based on business models that make sense?

Ms. Raitt: It's about having more information around how the decision information is going to flow to the final decision maker. For example, senator, you may remember that, when we were in office, we had the Major Projects Management Office, which was supported by a subcommittee of deputy ministers who really shepherded the projects through the system and ensured that there was horizontal cooperation among all the departments to get those permits and authorizations in place. It eventually blows up to the final decision maker at the top, but it does so with the right amount of information.

Business can see, through the system, if there are appropriate decision-making trees within the entire process. They know who they can speak with in the process. It is not as opaque as a single decision maker making a politicized decision if you have the appropriate supports in place.

Senator Poirier: Welcome to both of you. It's an honour to see you both here today.

[Translation]

Thank you both for being here. My question is for Mr. Gallant.

[English]

My question is for the former premier of New Brunswick.

As premier, you had to manage the balance between encouraging interprovincial labour in order to increase your own workforce while avoiding losing your own skilled workers to other provinces. New Brunswickers are all too familiar with workers' mobility since we have a lot of workers who need to rely on the fly-in, fly-out jobs in other provinces for work.

In your opinion, does increased labour mobility under Part 1 of Bill C-5 risk drawing more workers away from smaller provinces like New Brunswick to larger markets?

Mr. Gallant: Thank you very much for the question. It's fantastic to see you, senator.

First, I'd like to think that New Brunswick and smaller provinces and communities can compete with anyone. In fact, I think we saw during the pandemic that Atlantic Canada was a very interesting place to be. People across the country started to see the amazing benefits that we have to offer.

Second, I want Canadians, including New Brunswickers, to feel they can have economic prosperity. I said this as a premier, and I was very careful in how I said it, but it's important to allow people to go get experience, too. That can be okay. I went to McGill for a year when I was a bit younger. It was a wonderful experience for me. Then I returned to Shediac Bridge, and look at me now. I get to come into this room — from Shediac Bridge to this beautiful chamber here.

It's okay to let people have that experience. I certainly wouldn't want anybody to stay in a smaller province simply because they can't get certified to work in another province if they have the opportunity.

It will also drive employers — including governments, which employ many people who would require these types of certifications in order to move — to pay people better and provide better conditions. That's also an added — though potentially unintended — consequence that is ultimately a positive for workers.

Is it all positive? The heart of your question, about whether we could see that impact, is a very fair one. We need to ensure as a country — along with, obviously, provinces in their jurisdictions and efforts — that we recognize that risk and take very concrete, proactive measures to try to mitigate it.

Senator Poirier: If an overflow of workers occurs, are you concerned about the potential impact on local infrastructure, like health care and housing, that relies on stable access to skilled labour? Are you concerned that, without the safeguards, Bill C-5 could unintentionally deepen regional disparities?

Mr. Gallant: Yes, that is possible, and we shouldn't be naive about potential challenges created when we move some things forward. But I would also like to think that governments, including the federal and provincial governments, can react to this; that is ultimately something that is doable and can be a positive. For example, if you open up a certification nationally, meaning that you are now able to work in another province with certification from your current province, it will be incumbent on your current province to say, "Look, we really have to recruit and retain and ensure that people are happy working here." So the

unintended consequence can come with this mitigation effort that will ultimately be a positive for individuals and also, hopefully, the province.

Again, I stress this point: I don't want to be blind to the idea that this could create that challenge. It's absolutely right to ask that. There are other policies, by the way, whether they be immigration policies or investments in education and training, that can help mitigate these challenges as well. The federal government recognizing that smaller regions, smaller provinces, could have some strain and challenges created by this — with those provinces acting on that as well — would be important.

But, again, we saw the flow of people during the pandemic go the other way a little bit for a while. It sent many people from Ontario and Quebec into New Brunswick, for example. We have a lot to offer, and we can compete for talent and for people who want to live in and be a part of our province, just like everybody else. I think all the provinces in the country believe that as well.

Senator Poirier: Are there measures that you would recommend that the provincial governments consider in order to mitigate talent overflows while supporting national integration?

Mr. Gallant: Yes. I have named some of them. It is really important to allow people to get the experience they need. I don't think we want to keep somebody in the province because we're stopping them from accessing a job or an opportunity because of certification issues. We shouldn't have that be the policy to try to grow our workforce. Paying people well, treating them well, recruiting, retaining and ensuring we have the community infrastructure they need to live fruitful lives in that community are the best ways to keep them there. Also, investment in education — including post-secondary education — and training as well as immigration policies will allow us to have the workforce we need.

I remember the time before I was premier — this was a long time ago — when I was a student leader at the Université de Moncton. By the way, that's the largest French-speaking university in North America — the largest outside Quebec, just to be clear; I wanted to see who was still listening.

• (1710)

When I was studying there, I was advocating for accessibility and affordability to post-secondary education in my role with the student federation. I remember there was a really upsetting report that came out, and Canada didn't fare very well in it overall, as they looked at 60 jurisdictions in terms of affordability and accessibility to post-secondary education. And if memory serves me right, New Brunswick was 57 out of 60.

What was really interesting is how they came to those conclusions: They looked at what it cost to obtain a post-secondary education, mostly university in that case, but it may have been college as well. How much did it cost when people were coming out of those studies? How much money did they owe? What did their debt look like? And then what types of jobs were they getting and what was their ability to pay back their debt?

Senator Miville-Dechéne: Hello, and thank you for being here.

Ms. Raitt, as you said, you are the Co-Chair of the Coalition for a Better Future, which states on its website that the growth agenda needs to be environmentally sustainable.

How does Bill C-5 fit in that definition? The building Canada act states in clause 5 that the government may consider — only consider — if a project contributes to clean growth and to meeting Canada's objectives with respect to climate change. Is it language that is strong enough for you? What do you think?

Ms. Raitt: Senator, it comes down to how I answered the question from Senator Housakos earlier, which is it comes down to the wielding of the power. The language of the bill is very broad, and it does give the minister — whoever is appointed — carte blanche in a lot of ways to determine which of the acts.

But people are going to notice what the outcomes are. They are going to notice if a government or a minister decides to do something extremely strange and avoid or disregard entire pieces of legislation that are truly important to the values of Canadians.

Canadians are still watching, and they have the capacity and ability to balance whether or not they think their government is doing a good job.

At the end of the day, the Prime Minister, the government, the opposition MPs and everyone else wants to be re-elected, so they are going to be guided by what is in the best interest. But the government obviously felt that they needed to have this very broad power, which is very broad, admittedly, and can be terrifying, because the government is basically saying, "Trust us. We're going to do a great job."

The front part of my response today in the speech was this: I hope that I set the table for the senators that we really are at a point where there is a burning platform and we have to do something. Status quo is not working. We're falling behind, and we are going to lose the things we cherish and value in this country if we don't do something on the economy.

Senator Miville-Dechéne: And what about the climate?

Ms. Raitt: The climate has to be balanced against it, without question. But without an economy, we won't have the programs available to reduce emissions without doing it right.

Senator Miville-Dechéne: I think I know the answer, but should Bill C-5 be stronger on environmental protection, and should it state, for example, that national interest projects should not increase greenhouse gases in Canada, which would be more direct?

Ms. Raitt: I think if you start making these proposals to the government in terms of attaching different kinds of conditions, then it opens the door to many other types of conditions being put on it. And it is about prioritization.

Therefore, does national significance also include this? Does it also include this? They've gone very bare bones in terms of what they have defined as "national importance" without adding on different conditions.

You can make the proposal to the government. I would expect that they're not going to accept it because they want to try to give themselves as much power and leeway as possible.

As far as the coalition goes, we don't prescribe what policy the government puts in place, but we sure as heck measure them to see whether or not they're actually putting the right policy in place.

[Translation]

Senator Miville-Dechéne: Thank you. I would like Mr. Gallant to continue this conversation.

Do you think the language in this bill is clear enough to ensure that we continue to respect our climate commitments? Having an amazing economy is all well and good, but if the planet is burning, we're really no further ahead.

Mr. Gallant: I agree with your last comment. It's important to understand that, yes, this bill will have an impact on many sectors, but it's not the federal government's plan for every single issue we have to deal with as a country. In essence, the fact that the bill says we need projects —

[English]

— that may consider Canada's objectives with respect to climate change —

[Translation]

— means that the government will be able to say publicly — or at least I hope it will — "These are our goals, these are our greenhouse gas reduction targets." I don't know if it will make that statement via legislation, but I hope it will do so publicly. That commitment will be the mechanism that makes the government accountable with respect to climate change. Some projects that may be very useful for the environment or the country could also slightly increase greenhouse gases. If we were to use the strict language that you discussed with Ms. Raitt, those projects might not move forward even if we would meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets overall.

Let's not think of this as the federal government's only plan. There will be other commitments and other bills.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gallant.

[English]

Senator Loffreda: Welcome to both of you, and thank you for being with us today.

Ms. Raitt, welcome back to Ottawa.

I believe the bill responds to some of the key recommendations outlined in the Coalition for a Better Future's most recent scorecard, which I think highlights the coalition's excellent work. Thank you for putting that together.

In your report, you identify Canada's significant productivity gap, and you emphasize that the only surefire path to sustainable growth is increasing productivity, noting that this begins with creating a more investment-friendly environment. With that in mind, do you believe Bill C-5 effectively addresses the conditions needed to make Canada a more attractive destination for both domestic and international investments?

Second, has the coalition undertaken any projections on how increased productivity could impact the Canadian economy, particularly in terms of growth, living standards and wages?

Ms. Raitt: Thank you, senator, for your question and for your warm welcome back to Ottawa. I don't often come back here.

On the last part, no, the Coalition for a Better Future does not actually fund or seek to fund any studies linking those economic factors. We rely upon other entities like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council of Canada or any of those that can track that. We look at it from the perspective of what has happened in the past couple of years and we measure against that.

On your question, though, with respect to domestic and international investment, maybe it will and maybe it won't. I can tell you that what is happening right now definitely is not attracting domestic and international investment. That is true. That is factual. We can show the measurement of that.

I hope that what is in here is enough to satisfy investors to say, "I see the certainty in the regulatory process, I see how long it is going to take me to get that permit or to get that authorization, and it is clear and apparent to me the process I need to go through." That can really help in making decisions at the end of the day.

But what they truly need to do as well is gather that other really important part of investment certainty: cooperation with our Indigenous communities and the assurance that they are partners at the table with respect to those projects. That is incredibly important. That is in here.

And I hope that it takes as much time as needed to satisfy the concerns of the First Nations Major Projects Coalition and the other witnesses whom you are going to be hearing from with respect to that matter.

Senator Loffreda: Ms. Raitt, as the former Minister of Natural Resources and Minister of Transport, you may recall our Senate Banking Committee's 2016 report. I'll cut this short, but it was entitled *Tear Down These Walls: Dismantling Canada's Internal Trade Barriers*. There are some key recommendations there, including the creation of a national corridor, et cetera.

• (1720)

I mention this report because I see a clear connection between its vision and the goals outlined in your coalition's scorecard, where you put strong emphasis on closing the rural divide — prioritizing rural development has never been stronger — calling it an economic imperative.

In light of this, do you see Bill C-5 as a meaningful first step towards realizing a national corridor, one that positions rural communities essential to Canada's long-term resilience and economic growth?

Ms. Raitt: I certainly hope so, senator, but it is up to the government to actually execute on the plan they have put in front of Canadians. I hope they do.

Senator Papatello: Welcome to the chamber. I have a question for both of you; it involves your own history in big projects, recognizing that many small things can happen to make the process go more quickly but not necessarily more poorly.

For example, phrases like “consecutively processing an EA” versus “simultaneously processing an EA,” suggesting that there would be a provincial level and a federal level happening at the same time. In many instances, we have managed to take months out of a process of preparing reports.

What other experiences have you had in which you could have shortened but enhanced a process? Mr. Gallant, when you mentioned productivity, do you find that this legislation can move the needle on productivity that everyone suggests Canada is lagging in, at least, compared to our U.S. counterparts?

Ms. Raitt: My first real job was as counsel at the Toronto Port Authority. We were seeking to build a bridge from downtown Toronto to the island airport. It was my first experience with environmental assessments. It was a federal assessment.

I was a new lawyer, and I naively called a meeting with all the federal entities that had an interest in having a say on the regulation of the bridge. Eighteen people showed up in my one boardroom. That was a shock for me. I carried that with me when I became Minister of Natural Resources — the understanding that they weren't trying to leave the office to come to a meeting; they really did have mixed and separated levels of jurisdiction which they all needed to discharge in order to arrive at the right place.

Putting it under one system, one concierge, as it were, makes a lot of sense. Senator, quite frankly, the proof is in the pudding. That was in place in 2007 under the Harper government, and it continued through until, unfortunately, it was defunded in 2020.

The Major Projects Management Office has good muscle memory, I'm sure. Many people still remember it. It can serve to get us back to where we were to ensure that projects don't have eighteen people showing up in the room — maybe just one.

Mr. Gallant: First, on the former, one thing I would mention is the idea of the strategic program review — and the former minister who led that in New Brunswick is in the chamber. Priority delivery units we created at the Government of New Brunswick were one of the most helpful things from a process point of view. All it did — to your point — was that it made sure that we kept talking about the projects and moved the needle every single quarter.

We'd meet, and people knew we had the meeting. So they would try to move things before the meeting. At the meeting, political people and ministers would be in there. We would say, “What can we do to help move this? Do you need approval or guidance from us?” That alone would have shaved time off. There was no change to the substance; it was just literally focusing the mind, if you will.

On the second part, yes, this bill can definitely help with productivity. As I said in my opening statement, I think our lagging productivity in Canada should be one of our biggest concerns from an economic point of view, because it is correlated with the standard of living. Projections show that productivity is not going in the right direction for Canada in comparison to other OECD countries.

If you think about it, there are several things that will help us to be more productive. Infrastructure: It feels like this bill is geared towards getting infrastructure projects done.

Access to and deployment of capital: This bill seems to be trying to get people to invest.

Innovation: Many great projects could have innovation, of course, space-based capabilities; I'll just add that.

Regulatory framework: This is all about ensuring that there is a regulatory framework that can be done more quickly.

Markets: We need to have open markets. We need to be able to access markets with logistical infrastructure, but also be competitive so we can have our products and services purchased.

Last, not least, we need people: To your fellow senator who was speaking about that for smaller provinces, this bill does not address that as much, but, certainly, we need to ensure that provinces and the federal government realize that one other aspect of increasing productivity is investing in our people, education, training and proper, strong immigration policies.

Senator Quinn: Thank you both for being here. I had a chance to speak with both of you outside briefly. I wish to share again that it is like being the host of “The Vassy Kapelos Show” and the front bench, because we have two thirds of the front bench here today. Two thirds are excellent, thank you.

As you know, Bill C-5 provides the Governor-in-Council a number of factors to consider. One of the witnesses mentioned one of those factors already, which was contributing to clean growth, et cetera.

It also talks about strengthening Canada's autonomy, resilience and security, providing economic or other benefits to Canada, having a high likelihood of successful execution and advancing the interests of Indigenous peoples.

In your experience as a former premier and a former minister of the Crown, particularly with transport, and also as a CEO, what other factors do you think may be considered, or what should we consider in addition to those listed?

Mr. Gallant: Senator Quinn, from the wonderful province of New Brunswick, it is great to see you.

If I am being blunt amongst 100 friends here, there is no question the list is exhaustive. One of the main reasons for that is subclause 6(b) which says, "... other benefits to Canada ..."

The federal government has certainly given themselves an opening where they will be able to justify certain projects making it on this list. That should be noted.

If that weren't there, we could also have a debate about some projects that can help us live healthier and happier lives. That's obviously helpful to our economy and in other ways to the country. I won't go through the list of other things that might be important but aren't on this list.

I do think that the way in which they have structured this has given them some wiggle room to be able to insert some other projects.

That said, it is pretty clear — at least with what is said and the sentiment of the bill — that this is about major projects. It is about economic productivity. It is about infrastructure. I would think these are the right ones in that case. Again, that little part of a sentence, I think, gives them some flexibility moving forward.

Ms. Raïtt: Yes. Senator, between the preamble of the act and those factors, the government and the minister will have a lot of latitude.

If I were to say something they should consider as well — because they have the ability to consider any other relevant factor, as you said — they should bear in mind whether or not the private sector is interested in investing in it, quite frankly.

There are only so many projects a government or the Canadian taxpayer can actually support wholly on its own. The government should be taking a look at projects that are fully supported by private investors who do want to do these kinds of important national projects, and get them done, so it is not always going to be on the side of the government to have to write a cheque or provide tax credits, quite frankly. I would like them to think about that as well.

Senator Quinn: Thank you, Ms. Raïtt, for the example when you were CEO in Toronto and the 18 people showing up in your boardroom. It happens far too often.

[Senator Quinn]

Yesterday we had Ministers LeBlanc and Alty here, and they talked about the streamlining of the process, which is important. They talked about consultations as well.

Mr. Gallant, can you talk about an example when you were the premier of the province? I know we are in a different time period, but can you give an example of a big-idea project that might have gotten wheels and been delivered if we had had things like this?

Mr. Gallant: It is a great question. I am not in active politics anymore; those who have been, and many of you who are in your media training, don't want to answer hypothetical questions. I will venture nevertheless. The consequences don't feel as dire.

The topline answer would be that there would definitely be some projects that most likely would have advanced further and probably would have happened.

I wish to add — and this is really important — I think there would have been projects that would have received a "no" more quickly. And that's valuable too, right? That's important, and it goes back to one of the questions your colleagues asked.

• (1730)

The spirit and, I would suggest, the wording of the bill isn't necessarily about changing the substance of the processes and the department's agencies and regulators that look at a project. It's about getting it done quicker and getting an answer quicker, and there's a lot of value in that.

The idea that a proponent gets to know within a few months, two years at the most, that's helpful. There's the energies pipeline, which obviously many are talking about and you would know given the community you're from, Senator Quinn. The idea of the energies pipeline was discussed for years — many years — and a lot of people spent a lot of time and a lot of effort talking about it, thinking about it, trying to see if it would be possible.

Getting an answer, one way or the other, earlier would have been beneficial to everyone and people could have moved on, people could have looked to other projects if it was a no; and, of course, if it was a yes, the project would have moved forward.

[Translation]

Senator Henkel: Mr. Gallant, thank you for joining us today. I'm delighted to see you again, and it is nice to see that you are as passionate as ever.

When you were premier of New Brunswick, you most likely faced challenges regarding barriers to internal trade, which often impede collaboration between provinces and territories. What types of obstacles stood in the way of implementing some of your projects?

In your experience, what specific measures would help SMEs and entrepreneurs in rural areas — who are often ill-equipped to bid on large tenders — take greater advantage of the strategies targeted by Bill C-5?

Mr. Gallant: It's a pleasure to see you again, senator. I would say there are plenty of examples, if I can be very frank with you. When I was in office, I was one of the premiers who signed the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Honestly, I'm rather frustrated to see that there are still regulatory details that are hindering the mobility and exchange of goods among the provinces and territories, goods that Canadians are entitled to. This serves as a reminder that, although we were all at the table, ready to sign and work together, there were still little things that had to be addressed. Canadians are ready to move forward with regulatory harmonization.

I think it's very important for SMEs that we harmonize regulations because it enables them to do business in other provinces. For example, if the regulations were harmonized, an SME in New Brunswick could sell its products in Ontario and Quebec. It is easier for the big companies in New Brunswick to find ways to mitigate the problems, meet the challenges and absorb the costs associated with non-harmonized regulations than it is for SMEs. SMEs even have a hard time understanding the differences between regulations. I think that this bill will help all companies and SMEs in that regard.

[English]

Senator Klyne: My question is for the Honourable Lisa Raitt. In 2022, RBC released a report entitled *92 to Zero: How economic reconciliation can power Canada's climate goals*. The report noted that achieving net zero would:

. . . rely heavily on vital sources of capital held by Indigenous nations. RBC estimates Canada needs roughly \$2 trillion in capital over the next 25 years, much of it from Indigenous sources — or unlocked by Indigenous partnerships, including ownership.

The report notes that “Indigenous lands hold vast resources . . . to green energy systems . . .” including “. . . 56% of advanced critical mineral projects.”

With the urgency of economic development, if the government looks at prioritizing some critical mineral projects involving Indigenous lands by way of meaningful engagement and consultation, I can see substantial opportunities for Indigenous self-determination. If you've been following the procedures thus far, there are some concerns about this meaningful engagement and consultation. I'm looking for some advice on behalf of the Indigenous partners.

Do you have a recommendation for Indigenous partners as to an engagement strategy to get the table set and proactively flip that table and invite the government to lay out their engagement expectations of the government?

Ms. Raitt: Thank you very much, senator. I will say in my day job at CIBC I was very proud to be part of a team that worked on behalf of the Haisla Nation on Cedar LNG where we helped them

find the financing to be the majority owner of Cedar LNG, and that was a very fulfilling experience. I know a little bit about what it's like to try to get to a “yes” in terms of deals.

The government is giving themselves power to be able to move these national projects along, but that's only paper power. What the power really resides in is having the proponent and the Indigenous community be partners, quite frankly, and it's up to the Indigenous community if they would like to be an equity partner or they don't want to be an equity partner. It's completely their own decision making on it.

Even if you have this national priority designation, without having the meaningful cooperation, participation and partnership of an Indigenous community, it's going to be very difficult for a board to give you that final investment approval, quite frankly, because it's always going to be that part.

As First Nations Major Project Coalition Chair Sharleen Gale says, you need to have us along because we are going to actually make it a lot easier along the way. Regardless of what is said here in the act, the onus is still going to be on companies and proponents to make sure that they do what is needed to be done, and that is to work with, obtain the consent, partnership and advice of the First Nation community as they go through their process.

It doesn't happen without them. To quote JP Gladu, all roads to resources go through Indigenous communities in this country.

[Translation]

Senator Gerba: Thank you to both of our guests. My question is for you, Mr. Gallant. When you were premier, you faced frequent challenges with regard to aligning federal and provincial regulatory frameworks. The duplication of project assessments, which can be contradictory or redundant, has often slowed down the momentum of provincial governments. Is Bill C-5 comprehensive enough to help adapt to the reality of the provinces, and does it really promote effective coordination between the two levels of government?

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, senator. I think it is clear that this bill seeks more than ever to harmonize the regulatory frameworks of the provinces and the federal government to prevent duplication and redundancy. I hope it will manage to do that.

I am Canadian, and I want the regulations and protections to be the same from one province to another. In my opinion, it is the role of the federal government to ask the provinces and territories to harmonize their regulations or to pass legislation that will basically merge the provinces' processes. That is standard procedure when it comes to labour mobility. The provinces align their certification processes with those of the other provinces in the hopes that the same thing happens at the federal level.

I don't know whether the federal government will be able to do this because it needs the support of the provinces and territories. With regard to the territories, things are different because of the impact assessments. I think this will be feasible and that this bill is the most promising one we have seen in this regard, so I hope it will be passed.

• (1740)

I can tell you that I would have said the same thing when I was premier. I would have been quite prepared for the Government of New Brunswick to harmonize its regulatory framework with the federal government to build major projects, and I would have been proud to enter into negotiations with the premiers of the other provinces to negotiate with the federal government.

[English]

Senator Wilson: Given that the bill tries to deal with federal jurisdiction with respect to interprovincial trade issues, most of the issues lie in provincial jurisdiction. What would you recommend to ensure that a focus remains on this after the spotlight has turned away?

Ms. Raitt: It's up to the federal government, the federal minister in charge, to ensure that they continue to support the provinces in trying to stop themselves from having a side sheet of exemptions to these commitments to have no barriers, because you can say that you don't have interprovincial trade barriers anymore, but there could always be a side letter of the things that are exempt from it, and to encourage them to get rid of those.

Mr. Gallant: I would say that is very practical advice. I bet you that in 2017 when we signed the CFTA, there would be things today that still exist that the premiers of that day would have said, "Why does this still exist?"

Ensuring the federal government could actually play a resources role and say, "We're going to keep you all on task on this list, and we're going to help you," because I think the political will was there, and for whatever reason, it fell to the wayside, and that's why your question was so good. The feds could play a role there.

Ms. Raitt: Yes.

Senator Dean: Thank you for joining us today. We're grateful to you both for coming.

Congratulations, Mr. Gallant, on your delivery initiatives, which I had the opportunity to see close up.

We have an unrefuted estimate that removing barriers to internal trade would result in an increase of at least 4% to 5% of GDP, and that would be at a minimum. We're not going to find that anywhere else as quickly as is possible here, but the question remains: How are we going to do it? What is it going to take to get this over the line, and what are the barriers to getting there?

I would ask Ms. Raitt to start.

Ms. Raitt: We have to take the premiers at their word that they do want to get rid of interprovincial trade barriers, even where, senator, it means they may lose some employment in some of

their sectors, and that's the tough one. That's the difficult one, and that's where you end up having side letters of exemptions that this one isn't going to apply there.

Giving them the support and reminding them that the "one economy" moment is here, and it is the opportunity to do so, and to have the courage to move forward is the way to get it done. Otherwise, you're right. We're going to end up with 2%, 1% or maybe not even anything at all.

Mr. Gallant: I'll add two very quick points. We have a moment, and we can't waste it. I think that's incredibly important. I know many people are asking why this bill is moving so fast. There's a bit of an issue with the calendar, but also it's because there's a moment here. This is a minority government, which could last from 18 months to 2.5 or 3 years. It's a stronger minority with a higher number of seats, I suppose, so maybe it will be on the higher end, but there's a moment.

In fact, when you look at the legislation, we're still talking about two years. So imagine we have this moment where Canadians are on board with removing internal barriers and looking for major projects, but we continue in the same way we have been doing things, and it takes five years, which is beyond the minority government, beyond the moment, that's for sure.

The other thing I would say to your point — I think it's a very good one — one thing I've never really understood with the idea that there could be communities that lose some employment, overall the community, the province and the country will be better off because there will be other areas that will grow because of free trade within the country, which is the concept of free trade, but when we do sign agreements, at times we'll go and help those industries and say, "We know you might have a bit of a struggle, so why don't we find a package," for lack of a better term, "to help support the transition of that industry, that group, that region?" whatever it is.

I don't understand why we wouldn't do something similar when it comes to free trade within our own country if it could have the same types of impacts.

Senator Dean: What is the single greatest obstacle or barrier to making the larger part of this bill work in terms of major projects?

Ms. Raitt: Courage. Courage to make a decision and courage to put the power in the right people's hands to execute on it. That's what it comes down to.

Senator, the government plans to give itself expansive, unprecedented powers, and they should then expect to be held accountable for whether or not they build these projects, quite frankly. If Canadians are going to give them the power, they owe Canadians execution on the project. It's a heavy burden for them, and one that I hope they do not take lightly.

Mr. Gallant: I will start by saying that it's incredibly important for us to highlight that Indigenous peoples in this country deserve that the federal government should advance reconciliation, and they have the right to be consulted when their rights may be impacted, and they have the right to be accommodated. That has to be stated.

[Mr. Gallant]

I believe the federal government knows that, but I still want to state that even if they are trying to implicitly say that maybe they're going to make that go a bit differently, they can't. That's a right, and that's not going to change.

To me as, a Canadian who cares about advancing Indigenous reconciliation, that doesn't really worry me in the sense that I know that right exists and it's not going to be taken away by this law. If there is any discrepancy in people's understanding of how that has to go, that could be a barrier. It's going to be incredibly important for the federal government to realize that if they are going to identify a project as a national interest project, they had better have a task force of people going in and saying, "We know what duty to consult is. We know what's needed. We're going to go in there, and we're going to do it right. We're going to listen to the communities."

Again, as your colleague said, just because we're trying to expedite this doesn't mean that we get to say the duty-to-consult process will be different.

On the Indigenous peoples' side with regard to that question, I would like to humbly suggest that they can also say to themselves, "We need to be a part of projects. We need to feel as if we were heard, and we have our duty-to-consult rights. We are going to be ready to participate as well."

As a country, we have a bit of a moment, and if both the federal government and Indigenous peoples can say, "We don't know what the outcome of the duty to consult and accommodate will necessarily be, but we are both ready to commit to the idea that we will try to do it a bit more efficiently," meaning that resources from the federal government had better be deployed right away when there's a national interests project identified.

Senator Simons: Mr. Gallant, I'll start with you. There is no doubt that Canada is vulnerable due to our dependence on Elon Musk's SpaceX rocket system and Starlink satellite system, and it would be better, I would argue, for the country to make a project like Low Earth Orbit satellite arrays a project of national importance. Yet, I don't quite see how that fits into Bill C-5 where all the emphasis is on environmental and regulatory streamlining.

Do you see a way to make something like a Low Earth Orbit satellite array or an increased capacity to put our own satellites in space as something that could fit into this rubric?

Mr. Gallant: Senator, my former employers, the people of New Brunswick, will appreciate a lot of the questions in this chamber. My current employers will appreciate your question very much, so thank you for opening the door.

I couldn't agree more with your statement in the sense that, at the heart of it, space is critical infrastructure. Space is going to be a huge part of our defence and security ambitions. It's going to be important for our economic security. It is going to be a huge emerging industry with tons of opportunities, and if we sit idly by and don't help our innovators in the space industry in Canada to seize those opportunities, we're going to watch them pass by. That's the first part.

The second part is this: You're absolutely right to ask if a project like that could fit into this bill. My humble opinion is that it could and that it definitely should.

If you take Low Earth Orbit satellites or enhancing connectivity in Canada — but also to other countries around the world — that is a nation-building project. Providing connectivity to northern, remote, rural, Indigenous communities in Canada is an important way for us to help build our country and economic opportunity for those communities. It's also a way for us to help ensure we protect our sovereignty and the Arctic. It's a way — as I mentioned in my opening remarks — to fight climate change, protect the environment, and the list goes on.

• (1750)

I definitely think it should and could fit in this project, and my hope is that some of those projects that we're working on absolutely will fit into this.

Senator Simons: Ms. Raitt, before you were Minister of Transport, you were Minister of Natural Resources, and so the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, happened after your tenure but within the time you were in cabinet. One of the problems with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, was it was also cumbersome. In addition, it led to decisions being revoked on appeal or to so many protests that projects became non-viable.

How do we ensure that Bill C-5, in attempting to go fast, doesn't end up with projects that boomerang back because we get ahead of our skis and then find out that there will be problems?

Ms. Raitt: Senator, I would submit that it's picking the right project with the right proponent who respects the subtext of what's being said here, which is that you need to do your duties with respect to the environment and Indigenous communities at the same time if you want to have a national priority assessed and attached to your project.

That's what it comes down to. You need the right proponent who's going to do the right thing, and that will give confidence to Canadians as to this process being acceptable.

Senator Simons: We haven't talked enough about trains. How do we get trains on the national project list?

Ms. Raitt: Do you mean trains themselves?

Senator Simons: I mean trains as in, "choo choo."

Ms. Raitt: Senator, sadly, I'm very familiar with trains. Perhaps build another rail. I don't know.

Senator Simons: All right. Thanks very much.

[Translation]

Senator Aucoin: I will start with Mr. Gallant.

You really piqued my curiosity when you said that Bill C-5 will create, to use your expression, a “one-project, one-review” process. What do you think about the Pozzolan project in northern New Brunswick, in the community of Dalhousie? I imagine you’re familiar with it. These aggregates are used in the production of cement. The deposit of rock there is deep enough to last for more than 100 years. The project will require the existing quarry to be operated and rail transportation and the Port of Dalhousie to be developed.

Do you think we could use Bill C-5 to declare this project in the national interest? Despite the fact that the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada ruled that the project did not warrant a designation under section 9 of the Impact Assessment Act, could Bill C-5 be used to advance and develop this region of northern New Brunswick?

Mr. Gallant: Thank you for the question.

The federal government has provided some latitude in the description of criteria for identifying projects of national interest. Canadians will react, Parliament will react, the media will react and Ms. Raitt and I will react during our televised appearances. Precedents will be set and they will help determine the types of projects that will be identified under this bill.

I’m sure the government would be ready to authorize projects such as Pozzolan to move infrastructure projects ahead quickly. What many people are worried about is the opposite. They worry that the government will go ahead with too many projects too fast. I understand those concerns. However, I’ve already explained why I’m not worried about that. Such projects should certainly be designated as being in the national interest.

Senator Aucoin: Bill C-5 is supposed to make Canada more competitive internationally. New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province. What impact will Bill C-5 have on the protection of language rights, especially for minority francophone communities? I asked Minister LeBlanc this question yesterday. The Société de l’Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick, the SANB, is concerned that worker mobility could end up limiting their access to jobs in their language.

Mr. Gallant: It’s important to remember that this bill doesn’t reflect the entirety of the federal government’s plan. It’s very important to keep that in mind. Any project runs the risk of affecting things we hold dear. I understand that. However, my impression of the bill’s objective, after reading it and listening to the debates, is that it aims to get major projects moving quickly.

The concerns of francophone minorities are very important. If we start getting more projects that are regional but in the national interest, as determined by the federal government, we’ll have to ensure that smaller communities across the country submit projects too. That is very important.

In terms of mobility, we’re convinced that people will be able to find work in their own language. We’ve seen people go to work in different provinces and then return to New Brunswick. It’s not necessarily ideal. Some people like it, others don’t. I travel a lot. It’s not always easy. However, I don’t travel under the same

conditions as they do. Still, they managed to stay in New Brunswick because they could work in another province. There are benefits all the same.

I won’t repeat everything I said to your colleague. It’s important to bear in mind that there may be some more negative consequences. The federal government needs to work with the provinces and territories to try to mitigate the potential challenges created by this bill. No bill is perfect, and this one is no exception. These challenges can be addressed by developing programs, making investments and establishing collaborative relationships with the various levels of government.

Senator Aucoin: For a project designated as being in the national interest, the workforce could come from an English-speaking province, which would take jobs away from New Brunswickers or citizens living in other official language minority communities. These kinds of issues could arise, couldn’t they?

Mr. Gallant: Of course. These kinds of issues will still exist. This challenge must be taken into account. Then again, people from New Brunswick could also leave the province to go work elsewhere and then come back later. These are not new challenges created by the bill. Bill C-5 won’t even exacerbate the problem, because it will allow major projects to be completed more quickly. I’d like to think that these projects would have been developed anyway, but with this bill, they will be developed more quickly, which means we can focus on our economy.

Senator Aucoin: Ms. Raitt, fishing is a key economic and cultural pillar for many coastal communities in Nova Scotia and across the Atlantic region. However, concerns have been raised about the potential impact Bill C-5 could have on this sector, particularly with regard to standardizing mobility rules, the industry in general, safety standards, sustainability and licensing.

• (1800)

Although we all agree that we need standards in all the provinces, how can we ensure that these standards will be a minimum for the industry?

[English]

Ms. Raitt: I have a bit of experience in this, being the former Minister of Transport trying to regulate fishing boats on Cape Breton Island, which is never an exciting thing to do, especially when you are from there. As your colleague Senator Cuzner would know, you don’t mess with those folks. That’s not what you want to do.

I would say this: The federal government does have a responsibility because you could have different regulatory jurisdictions in terms of what is needed on a vessel and what is not needed on a vessel. “Pick one” is what I think this bill is trying to say. Pick one standard that’s going to apply to everybody, and then apply it fairly, but do so after consulting with the right people.

One of the pieces that is important in this bill — which needs to be reflected upon by Canadians and which you should take into consideration, if I may suggest — is, at the end of the day,

the individuals who are going to be picking the projects of national significance are the premiers. They are going to be the ones who are going to be consulted first by the Prime Minister and by the cabinet to determine what it is their people want. It is all tied into ensuring that you have the right regulations. Hopefully, the concerns with respect to official languages will be borne out when you are speaking through your premiers on those kinds of matters as part of the whole negotiation.

The Chair: Honourable senators, the committee has been hearing from the witnesses for 75 minutes. In conformity with the order of the Senate, I am obliged to interrupt proceedings so that the committee can report to the Senate.

On behalf of all senators, thank you for joining us today to assist us with our work on this bill.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Honourable senators, is it agreed that the committee rise and I report to the Senate that the witnesses have been heard?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the sitting of the Senate is resumed.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable senators, the Committee of the Whole, authorized by the Senate to examine the subject matter of Bill C-5, An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act, reports that it has heard from the said witnesses.

[Translation]

THE SENATE

TRIBUTES TO PAGES

The Hon. the Speaker: I will continue my tribute to the pages.

[English]

Alex Passmore will be graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science from the University of Ottawa next year. Next fall, Alex will be working as a tour guide at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France. Once he returns to Ottawa, he hopes to continue working on the Hill. Alex is immensely thankful for the opportunity to learn so much about the Senate and the democratic process over the past two years. He is grateful to the Usher of the Black Rod's office and all the pages who helped make the experience so special.

Thank you, Alex.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

The Hon. the Speaker: Nicole Bucur has had the privilege of serving as a Senate page over the last two years. This fall, she is headed to Paris in an academic exchange at Sciences Po, returning to Ottawa in the winter to continue her bachelor's degree in political science and public administration at the University of Ottawa. She is deeply honoured to have played a part, however small, in contributing to the essential work that the Senate carries out. She extends her sincere thanks to everyone — including senators, the Usher of the Black Rod's office, Senate administration, support staff and fellow pages — who helped make her time in the program such a meaningful and memorable experience.

Thank you, Nicole.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker: Olivia Vincent has now graduated with a degree in health sciences and will begin her master's degree in audiology at the University of Ottawa this fall. She is very grateful for this milestone in her journey and would like to thank everyone who contributed to making her two years with the Senate page team so rewarding and memorable.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[English]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

DEAFBLIND AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, I rise today to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Deafblind Awareness Month in Canada.

Earlier today, I had the privilege of attending a reception where we heard from incredible advocates and organizations, including the Canadian Helen Keller Centre, the National Deafblind Awareness Month Committee and the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons.

I want to thank Senator Martin who organizes the annual reception and whose leadership brought Deafblind Awareness Month to national recognition with the unanimous adoption of the Senate motion in 2015. I also want to honour those who helped lay the groundwork: the Honourable Vim Kochhar, a lifelong champion of persons with disabilities, and former senators Jim Munson, Joan Fraser and Asha Seth.

Helen Keller is probably the most well-known person with deaf-blindness, a condition which is estimated to affect around 160 million people around the world.

Awareness months serve an important purpose. They push us to move from acknowledgment to action. They can remind us that the most significant barriers that people face are not their disabilities but the inaccessible systems and structures that surround them and have yet to adapt. As a physician, I've worked with patients and families as they navigate their complex and often invisible challenges: gaps in care, policy and understanding.

Disability is too often compounded by inaccessibility when communication is blocked, when services are not designed inclusively and when health inequities go unaddressed. For those who are deaf-blind, those barriers can be multiplied. A critical lifeline for many is the support of intervenors — highly trained professionals who facilitate communication and environmental access.

Canada is a global leader in this model. We are the only country in the world with post-secondary programs to train intervenors, yet we still do not have enough of them.

The deaf-blind community is not monolithic, and there is a wide range of experiences, abilities and communication preferences. Some people communicate using tactile signing, while others use the two-hand manual alphabet, print on palm or assistive technologies. This is why inclusive and diverse support programs are essential and why it is crucial that we listen to and advocate alongside those with lived experience.

Honourable colleagues, as we celebrate June as Deafblind Awareness Month, let us also advocate for improved accessibility, including intervenor services; support organizations doing front-line work; and ensure our policies, programs and public spaces reflect the needs and voices of deaf-blind individuals in all their diversity.

• (1810)

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, today I rise to celebrate June as Deafblind Awareness Month, a time to reflect upon the experiences, achievements and ongoing challenges faced by individuals living with deaf-blindness in Canada. This community, despite navigating profound communication and accessibility barriers, continues to inspire us with its strength, adaptability and determination.

I would also like to honour our former colleague, the Honourable Vim Kochhar, a trailblazer in disability advocacy whose strong leadership helped pave the way for greater awareness and inclusion for people living with deaf-blindness. Before his retirement, he asked me to adopt this community, and through his inspiration, the Senate unanimously adopted a motion in 2016 recognizing June as Deafblind Awareness Month.

This recognition holds special meaning as June is also the birth month of Helen Keller, one of history's most influential and inspiring voices for the deaf-blind community. Although deaf and blind from infancy, Helen Keller's legacy as a writer,

speaker and activist reminds us all of what is possible when barriers are removed and people are empowered with the right tools and support.

We co-hosted the event today, and it was wonderful to see the community of advocates, interpreters, intervenors, caregivers and family members who support the individuals who live with deaf-blindness come together. Such gatherings are a testament to how far we have come and a reminder of the work still ahead.

Across the country, countless organizations, like the Canadian Helen Keller Centre, continue to lead the charge for inclusion, accessibility and support. Their dedication ensures that deaf-blind individuals are not only heard but fully seen and respected in every aspect of society. Thanks to their advocacy and the World Federation of the Deafblind, on June 16, just two days ago, the United Nations officially recognized June 27 as the International Day of Deafblindness.

To the families and all those involved — as I mentioned — you remind us that inclusion is a fundamental right and the foundation of a just society. Honourable senators, Deafblind Awareness Month is not only about raising awareness, it is about inspiring real change. Let us continue to build a country where every person, regardless of ability, can live with dignity, independence and opportunities. As Helen Keller's words continue to reverberate and encourage us, "... Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

[*Translation*]

BRAVO SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Honourable senators, I would like to talk to you about immigration and a moving ceremony I recently attended in Gatineau. Integrating newcomers and asylum seekers is not just about centralized, somewhat impersonal programs. It also takes openness and an effort by the host community. That is exactly what former diplomat Jacques Laberge and his group of volunteers have been doing every year for the past four years by giving BRAVO scholarships of \$1,000 and \$2,000 to deserving students.

Young students from other countries are rewarded for their academic pursuits and their proficiency in French. They then become ambassadors who inspire those arriving in the Outaouais. Each recipient recounted in French bits and pieces of their background and their challenges.

A young, 18-year-old from Iran, Mohammad Hossein Bokaei Jazi, who arrived in Canada three years ago, listed his many displacements with a great deal of humour. His family first settled in New Brunswick before moving to the Outaouais.

Unwittingly, he found himself in a regular class, even though he spoke very little French. He was lost for the first few months. Now he speaks French well and is about to start university. He played the santour, an Iranian string instrument, for us.

The Afghan sisters Haida and Madina Jabarkhil, both recipients of a BRAVO scholarship one year apart, also made an impression on me. Learning French was particularly difficult for these two young women, who spoke Pashto and Dari in Afghanistan. The pronunciation, the tonal accents and everything else is different in French. However, these two sisters clearly have an iron will. They learned the basics of French in record time. They were welcomed as refugees by Canada because their mother was a journalist. Forced into marriage at the age of 14 to a Taliban, their mother managed to divorce after seven years of physical and mental violence. Madina, who is 19, juggles university studies, volunteer work, and sewing jobs, and she makes all her own clothes. She is proud of her mother who fled a patriarchal society. She already has the vocabulary of a budding feminist. Madina dreams of going into politics here, precisely because of what she experienced in Afghanistan. She saw power being monopolized by the very rich. She came from a family with very few resources, so she has made it her mission in her new country to work for the rights of women and the less fortunate.

[English]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Ronald E. Ignace, Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator White.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

COMMISSIONER OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Hon. Judy A. White: Honourable senators, I rise today to highlight the important work of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. This is a special time for us to recognize the importance of Indigenous languages and the work of the commissioner's office for two reasons. First, June is National Indigenous History Month in Canada, and language is vital to Indigenous history and oral traditions; second, this is the Indigenous Languages Decade, which lasts from 2022-32. This decade, as designated by the United Nations, aims to inspire global action for preserving, revitalizing and promoting Indigenous languages around the world.

In Canada, the work of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages is certainly helping to advance those goals. The commission hosts gatherings and activities, generates resources, conducts research and champions innovative projects from coast to coast to coast. The commission recognizes the importance of preserving Indigenous languages and, more important, they are actively working to create a meaningful impact on the preservation and celebration of Indigenous languages in Canada.

I am pleased to welcome Mr. Ignace, the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, to the Senate today. He is a member of the Secwepemc Nation in the interior of British Columbia. A

long-time leader and innovator in his community, the commissioner has done extensive research and writing on his history, language and culture. As a Kamloops residential school survivor and fluent Secwepemctsin speaker, Commissioner Ignace is a living testament to the resilience and strength of Indigenous peoples and our languages.

In his own words:

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have a great heart. However, our spirit has been battered and bruised because the cradle of our spirit is in our languages. It is imperative we breathe life back into our languages.

Mr. Ignace, you have certainly led the fight in breathing life back into our languages.

Finally, I would like to extend an invitation to all of you here to the 2025 Global Indigenous Languages Summit that will be held here in Ottawa from August 11 to 14. It will be hosted by the commission and will feature keynote addresses, artists, educators and conversations about championing Indigenous language from all around the world. To learn more, visit waves2025.ca. We want to see you all there.

Wela'lin, thank you.

THE IRISH WAKE

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, today I am pleased to present chapter 91 of "Telling Our Story."

As a child growing up in the small fishing community of St. Bride's on the beautiful Cape Shore of Newfoundland and Labrador, I was immersed daily in all aspects of Irish Catholic traditions and culture. The music, the storytelling, the large family gatherings, the kitchen parties — and then there was the ever-popular Irish wake.

• (1820)

In today's world, when a loved one passes away and a wake is to be held, it usually takes place in a funeral home. In smaller rural communities, it can still be held at the local church. But there was a time not too long ago when a traditional Irish wake would take place in the home of the deceased or of a family member. The homemade casket would remain open for several days to give all those in the community a chance to visit the family, pay their respects and celebrate the life of the loved one.

Irish wakes involved several renditions of the rosary, the sharing of stories of the deceased and the serving of plenty of food and drink. The wake would last for two to three days, when the house would remain open to visitors all day and throughout the night.

The nightly vigil would serve two purposes. First, it provided an opportunity to show respect for the deceased. The second was a more practical purpose, especially in the days before modern medicine: It was a time to allow families to confirm the deceased was actually dead, rather than suffering from an ailment from which they could recover.

Then there was the story of Patrick and Catherine Murphy, known locally as Mr. Paddy and Ms. Kitty. Ms. Kitty did not hide the fact that Mr. Paddy was not the easiest man to live with.

One morning, after arriving home from an early mass, Ms. Kitty found Mr. Paddy as a very still form on the daybed. After several attempts to wake him up, including with the help of family and friends, everyone reached the conclusion that Mr. Paddy had gone on to his great reward. The homemade casket was brought in from the shed and, as they say in the Bible, “. . . they laid him there.”

Following a couple of days and nights of waking Mr. Paddy in the true Irish tradition, family and friends who had been chosen as pallbearers prepared to move Mr. Paddy from the house to the church for the funeral.

While carrying him out, they accidentally struck the side of the door, and immediately Mr. Paddy sat up in the casket and said, “Holy jumpins, do you think I’m dead?” He was back on the fishing grounds the very next day.

About four years later, Ms. Kitty came home from evening mass and once again found Mr. Paddy on the daybed. She said there was “not a kick in him.”

So another Irish wake was held, and following the wake, the boys once again prepared to take Mr. Paddy to the church. Ms. Kitty was walking behind the casket as they approached the front door, and she said to the pallbearers, “For God sakes, please don’t hit the door this time.”

For those of you who may not believe this story, please feel free to go on YouTube and search for the very popular and famous Newfoundland song “The Night Pat Murphy Died.”

If you are planning on having an Irish wake for yourself, just make sure that your soul has left your body beforehand.

Thank you.

[Translation]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Annie Sylfra and Alba Sanchez-Allakhverdieva, medical students at the Université de Montréal and McGill University. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Mégie.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Senator Manning]

[English]

EQUALITY FUND

Hon. Paulette Senior: I’m glad I didn’t have to immediately follow that, but it does sound like something I have heard in Jamaica once or twice.

Honourable senators, I rise today on the unceded, unsundered territory of the great Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the Equality Fund, a success story of Canadian leadership advancing gender equality in Canada and around the world.

Launched in 2019 with a \$300-million contribution from Global Affairs Canada, the Equality Fund is an innovative financing model for social change.

The Equality Fund resources women’s rights organizations and feminist movements worldwide by partnering with organizations, coalitions and networks focused on building power with women, girls and gender-expansive people, especially in the Global South. They ground their work in mutual trust, respect and collaboration.

Through strategic investments to grow the fund, the Equality Fund connects the worlds of investment, global development and policy. The result is money to fund grassroots human rights movements run by and for women, girls and trans people around the world.

After the initial contribution from Global Affairs Canada, the U.K. government joined, as did philanthropic institutions, including the Ford Foundation, building on the domestic support of leading organizations like the Canadian Women’s Foundation, where I served as CEO, the World University Service of Canada, Toronto Foundation and Community Foundations of Canada.

I was proud to be at the event when the funding was announced by the Honourable Maryam Monsef, the former Minister of Women and Gender Equality, in 2020. It was an exciting moment to see the launch of the fund that held such immense promise for social change and economic justice.

And now we know that promise has been realized. The early signals are undeniably promising. In five years, the Equality Fund has granted \$100 million to over 1,000 human rights and women’s rights organizations in 100 countries.

Its sustainable funding model intentionally engages capital markets so that a lot more money can move to where it’s most needed and to the most vulnerable, particularly in the Global South.

Honourable colleagues, it’s a double win for us. Money is invested in high-impact businesses around the world that are women-built and women-led. And the returns on investment go towards funding front-line communities, strengthening their communities on their own terms. This money is earmarked as multi-year funding that supports long-term social change.

This approach is working. The Equality Fund's 100%-gender-aligned investment portfolio has generated \$80 million in earnings since it started in 2020. That's simply incredible.

Colleagues, I ask you to join me in recognizing the tremendous work of the Equality Fund, led by Jess Tomlin and her amazing team. It is a trailblazing innovation, and every Canadian should know its name and feel proud.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AFFECT SITTINGS ON JUNE 25 TO 27, 2025, AND AUTHORIZE COMMITTEES TO MEET DURING SITTINGS FOR THE PURPOSES OF HOLDING THEIR ORGANIZATION MEETINGS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or previous order:

1. if the Senate sits on Wednesday, June 25, 2025, the sitting continue beyond 4 p.m. until the time provided for adjournment in the Rules or the end of Government Business, whichever comes first, but without affecting any continuation of the sitting that may be permitted under the provisions in the order of June 12, 2025, concerning proceedings on Bill C-5;
2. if the Senate sits on Thursday, June 26, 2025:
 - (a) the sitting start at 9 a.m.; and
 - (b) it adjourn at the time provided for adjournment in the Rules or the end of Government Business, whichever comes first;
3. if the Senate sits on Friday, June 27, 2025, it only deal with Government Business once it reaches the Orders of the Day;
4. notwithstanding the provisions of points 1 to 3, if an order for the consideration of a report of the Committee of Selection appears on the Orders of the Day for any of those days as an item of Other Business, that order be treated as if it were an item of Government Business, but only for the purposes of determining the time of adjournment or business to be considered that day under the terms of this order, as the case may be;

5. on Wednesday, June 25, Thursday, June 26, and Friday, June 27, 2025, committees be authorized to meet for the purposes of holding their organization meeting, subject to normal approval processes and the availability of necessary resources, even if the Senate is then sitting, without, for greater certainty, affecting any authority separately granted to a committee to meet while the Senate is sitting; and

6. if, on Thursday, June 26, or Friday, June 27, 2025, either the Government Representative or the Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative advises the Senate that Royal Assent, whether by traditional ceremony or written declaration, is anticipated, the provisions of rule 16-1(8) then apply, with the sitting being suspended if it reaches the end of Government Business, rather than the end of business for the day, before Royal Assent.

• (1830)

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at 2 p.m.

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 1, 2025-26

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-6, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

[Translation]

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 2, 2025-26

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-7, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

[English]

FUTURE OF CANADIAN NEWS MEDIA

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the future of Canadian news media and its long-term funding model, including that of CBC/Radio Canada.

THE HONOURABLE JUDITH G. SEIDMAN

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the career of the Honourable Judith Seidman.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gold, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson:

That the following Address be presented to His Majesty the King:

To His Most Excellent Majesty Charles the Third, by the Grace of God King of Canada and His other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY:

We, Your Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the Senate of Canada in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both houses of Parliament.

Hon. Suze Youance: Honourable senators, I rise today with a deep sense of humility and duty to speak in this distinguished chamber for the first time.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Youance: I would like to use the motion in reply to the Speech from the Throne to open the First Session of the Forty-fifth Parliament, entitled Building Canada Strong, to draw attention to certain passages that also describe the path that led me here today.

My path to the Senate was not a direct one. It was the outcome of a long-standing commitment to social justice, equity and human dignity. These same values are echoed in the section entitled "Building new relationships with the United States and the world" in the Speech from the Throne. As a firm believer in international cooperation, I hope to be one of Canada's builders.

[English]

Even in this new, quickly evolving world, I shall be ready to lead and contribute in a just-in-time manner, as my project manager self would say. My past engineering experiences have prepared me for today's urgent Canadian challenges of piloting major nation-building projects.

[Translation]

I was born into a Haitian society and I am a big believer in the transformative power of education. I had the privilege of attending some of Haiti's best schools. My education began in a primary and secondary school for girls in Port-au-Prince, where we were taught the values of sharing, courage and responsibility.

Most importantly, we were taught that we girls and women are capable of shaping our future and changing the world. The world was our oyster, as they say, and anything was possible.

I am well aware of how lucky I was in my home country. While 88% of children are enrolled in primary school, less than 1% of them make it to university, and very few of those who do are women.

I chose to study civil engineering in the State University of Haiti's faculty of science, a field that still doesn't have nearly enough women. When I started university, only 20 of the 320 students were women, and five of them were part of my cohort of 120 students. That was in 1989, the year of the tragedy at École Polytechnique in Montreal, and we felt the shockwaves as far away as Haiti.

That tragedy shook me to the core, but it inspired me to rededicate myself to engineering. My passion for the construction, safety and resilience of buildings was my lifeline all through the process of immigrating to Canada and integrating into Canadian society.

Coincidentally, I defended my master's thesis on the seismic vulnerability of churches in Quebec shortly after the major earthquake on January 12, 2010, which primarily affected the capital, Port-au-Prince. Pursuing a PhD became the obvious choice for me, as it was the key to reaching my full potential and making a meaningful contribution to my field. This choice has allowed me to overcome personal and professional challenges and discover aspects of myself that I never imagined existed.

Even today, women are still a minority in engineering. Only 13% of practising engineers in Canada and 15% in Quebec are women. Unfortunately, 45% of them report having experienced gender discrimination during their careers. These figures reflect a reality: Women often have to overcome invisible barriers to gain access to technical fields that are still predominantly male. Gender parity is long overdue.

I began my professional career with a Canadian cooperation in Haiti, working on issues such as infrastructure, energy, the environment and public policy development. These experiences gave me a better understanding of the complex dynamics of development, but also allowed me to see first-hand how fragile yet resilient Haitian communities could be in the face of adversity. I also witnessed the important connection between the Haitian diaspora and countries around the world.

• (1840)

I also had opportunities to tackle major international issues related to UN conventions, such as climate change, drought and desertification, sustainable resource management and the systemic challenges of sustainable development.

Today, what I bring with me to the Senate are my experience on the ground, my active listening skills, my knowledge of the impact of global policies, and my desire to help bring about changes that will improve people's quality of life.

[English]

Honourable senators, the Throne Speech delivered by His Majesty King Charles III, King of Canada, underlined that Canada's immigration system has long been a source of pride to Canadians and of dynamism for the economy. It was true in 1867, it was also true in 2006 when I arrived in Canada and it remains true today more than ever, as it is essential for sustaining our demographic diversity.

[Translation]

In the Speech from the Throne, His Majesty reminded us that we speak for our communities and that we represent an incredible richness of cultures, languages and perspectives.

In his speech on immigration on June 5, Senator Ravalia also said, and I quote:

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 as well, the choice was mutual and forged a strong bond based on hope, responsibility and a common goal.

Let me quote the words of the King of Canada:

While the world faces unprecedented challenges, generating uncertainties across the continents with regards to peace and stability, economics, and climate change —

— and Haiti is a prime example —

— your communities have the skills and determination to bring a wealth of solutions.

We owe it to this generation, and the next seven generations, to reflect carefully and to act in the interest of the common good.

I see my role as a senator as a demanding and profoundly human commitment. I promise to be an attentive voice, a champion of ideas and a guardian of the democratic principles that underpin our country.

To me, being a senator is more than just sitting in a prestigious institution. It is an immense responsibility to understand and speak for those who, far too often, are not heard.

My career in engineering taught me about being diligent and methodical, but also about the importance of building on a solid foundation. My experience in international cooperation taught me humility, active listening and the power of dialogue.

These two dimensions — science and humanity — will guide my advocacy in the Senate.

During the Forty-fourth Parliament, I had the honour of sitting on the Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, as well as on the Subcommittee on Long Term Vision and Plan.

I thank the Independent Senators Group for entrusting me with these important roles.

In fact, as projects of national interest start to arrive at our committees, it is important to remind you of the government's commitment to resolutely remain guided by the principle of free, prior and informed consent to ensure and advance reconciliation in this country. The creation of sustainable wealth and prosperity has to be done in collaboration with Indigenous peoples.

I also had the opportunity to participate in three parliamentary missions — in Hungary, Senegal and the United States — that showed me the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in a rapidly changing world.

These exchanges were enriching for me, both politically and personally.

I also participated in many activities through the SENGage program, which put me in direct contact with young Canadians. Their ideas, their energy and their hopes are a constant source of inspiration.

These past months have also allowed me to learn from you, my wise owls. I've learned from your experience, your expertise, but above all from the benevolent collegiality that is the strength of the Senate and that will enable us to maintain this energy in the years to come.

My professional background will be very useful in the work and studies ahead.

Yesterday's tributes to my sponsor, Senator Mégie, highlighted the challenges of linguistic duality in Canada. I realize that being bilingual and being able to rely on a multilingual team to verify legislative consistency in our two official languages is an asset.

I would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of Senator Mégie, with whom I share my director of parliamentary affairs, Nicolas Thibodeau.

Our dear colleague's departure, for mandatory retirement from the Senate, will leave much more than an empty chair beside me.

Honourable senators, I am committed to being an accessible senator who is engaged and connected to the realities on the ground. I believe in a style of politics that brings people together and builds bridges between generations, cultures and regions.

I am committed to working with passion, rigour and the conviction that every action, every word and every decision matter in building a more just, equitable and inclusive Canada.

I want to work with the current government, with all parliamentarians, with local communities, with researchers, with youth and with civil society actors to advance inclusive, sustainable public policies that are rooted in reality and consistent with the needs and expectations of all Canadians.

I will pay special attention to social justice, human rights, peace and security, poverty reduction and community resilience to climate change.

Lastly, I want to dedicate part of my mandate to an issue that is near and dear to my heart: restoring democracy, security, stability and development to the country of my birth.

Haiti is the birthplace of the first independent Black republic. It is in the midst of a multi-dimensional crisis caused by an internal conflict that necessitates international action.

We live in an increasingly dangerous and divided world. Risky geopolitical situations are emerging; some even threaten Canada's sovereignty. International trade is undergoing its most profound transformation since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The rule of law and democratic governance are under assault. In many countries, the future of official development assistance is altogether unknown. Meanwhile, Haiti is going through a critical period that could be a point of no return, according to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti.

In Haiti right now, gang violence is escalating and armed gangs are expanding their territorial control, creating chaos and undermining the state authority. Thousands of people have been killed or wounded, and there are more than a million internally displaced persons, half of whom are children who are not receiving an education.

The consequences of this crisis are manifold: cholera outbreaks, sexual violence and attacks on hospitals and schools, nearly 2,000 of which are closed in Port-au-Prince.

The forced recruitment of children increased by 70% between mid-2023 and mid-2024. They now make up more than half of gang members. In addition, approximately 5.7 million people face acute food insecurity.

As I mentioned earlier, I had the privilege of attending some of the best schools in Haiti. I therefore feel compelled to speak out when I see all these children being deprived of their fundamental right to education. I am also deeply affected when I see these young people being forcibly recruited by gangs. They face a very bleak future. Restoring the education system and reintegrating child soldiers into society without punishment will give young people the means to rebuild Haiti and its capacity to play a role in democratic governance.

Honourable senators, with the goal of building stronger economies, Prime Minister Carney made strengthening peace and security in our communities and around the world the first mission of the G7 summit.

The previous government was not indifferent to the situation in Haiti. During their meeting in March in Charlevoix, the G7 foreign affairs ministers reaffirmed their commitment to helping the Haitian people restore democracy, security and stability,

including through support to the Haitian National Police and the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support Mission and an increased role for the UN.

The chair's summary indicated that the leaders at the G7 summit in Kananaskis discussed the crisis in Haiti.

• (1850)

The United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti noted in her most recent report to the Security Council that “any effort by the Haitian Government will not be enough to significantly reduce the intensity and violence of criminal groups.”

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Youance, your time has expired. Are you asking for a bit more time to finish your speech?

Senator Youance: Yes, please.

[English]

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

[Translation]

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Youance: Thank you, colleagues.

That said, lasting change will require the contribution of Haitians themselves. The role of the international community, including Canada, must be to support and guide them, but never to take their place. Only a strong, inclusive and legitimate national effort can end the crisis. I will work to ensure that Canada and the international community live up to their commitments to restore Haiti's democracy, security, stability and development. This objective must be well recognized at all times in multilateral forums, and Canada must play a constructive and supportive role. The solutions put forward must be acceptable to Haitians and the diaspora, while respecting their sovereignty and dignity.

Honourable senators, thank you for welcoming me among you. As I said before, I'm prepared to work with you diligently, wholeheartedly and passionately to honour the trust placed in me.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

(On motion of Senator Gold, for Senator LaBoucane-Benson, debate adjourned.)

[English]

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Moodie, seconded by the Honourable Senator Coyle, for the second reading of Bill S-212, An Act respecting a national strategy for children and youth in Canada.

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I rise today as the friendly critic of Bill S-212, An Act respecting a national strategy for children and youth in Canada.

I want to begin by acknowledging Senator Moodie for her determined leadership and unwavering dedication to Canada's youngest citizens. Her advocacy has been grounded, thoughtful and sustained.

From her earlier work on Bill S-282, to the vision captured in this new legislation, she has consistently elevated the voices and needs of children and youth. Her work reminds us all that the well-being of children is a fundamental responsibility of any just society.

As the former chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, I am very aware that the rights of children and youth are often ignored, overlooked or denied. This happens not only in Canada, but across the world.

Very early in my Senate career — I had been a senator for less than one year at that time — I became an Inter-Parliamentary Union, or IPU, co-rapporteur for maternal, newborn and child health.

Working with other parliamentarians from across the globe, I led the drafting of a report that emphasized the critical role of parliamentarians in advancing the health and rights of women and children. The recommendations we made in that report include the strengthening of health systems to address child health needs, promoting integrated approaches to maternal and child health, enhancing data collection and monitoring, addressing social factors of child health and engaging communities in child health initiatives.

When I look at Bill S-212, I am reminded of this IPU report. While the report focuses on global health challenges, its principles resonate with the objectives of the National Strategy for Children and Youth Bill, which prioritizes the health and well-being of children and youth and seeks to create an environment where every young person has access to the resources and support they need to thrive.

Bill S-212 outlines key objectives such as eliminating child poverty, supporting equitable access to services and ensuring that children's rights are recognized and upheld.

The bill calls for measurable indicators of progress, ongoing consultation with a range of stakeholders, including youth and Indigenous Communities, and regular reporting to Parliament.

Its intent is to bring greater coordination and accountability to federal efforts that affect the well-being of children across the country.

Honourable senators, my 15 years of experience on the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights showed me the unfortunate situation of some children and youth in Canada. In her speech, Senator Moodie talked about the sharp rise in child poverty rates in our country. It is no wonder that at the heart of Bill S-212 lies a powerful objective: the elimination of child poverty in Canada.

Children do not choose the circumstances into which they are born, and no child in a country as wealthy as Canada should have to grow up hungry, without adequate housing or without access to the basic opportunities needed to thrive.

Poverty in childhood is not only unjust, it is deeply damaging, with long-term effects on health, education and economic mobility. Eliminating child poverty means lifting barriers that trap families in cycles of hardship and building systems that ensure every child, regardless of background, has a fair chance to reach their full potential.

Poverty in childhood is also about opportunity denied, potential wasted and futures constrained. It often leads to worse health outcomes, lower academic achievement and long-term socio-economic exclusion. Poverty disproportionately affects Indigenous children, racialized communities, children with disabilities and those in single-parent or newcomer households.

Yet, the issues that children and youth face in Canada do not stop with poverty. Over the years, the Human Rights Committee has released reports that show the bleak reality for some of our children and youth.

For example, in 2012 the committee studied cyberbullying in Canada. The findings in our report showed that, while cyberbullying is widespread in our country, there was a lack of awareness of the issue as well as a lack of resources to help not just victims and their families but educators too.

Another study that emphasized the need for systemic reforms to protect the rights and well-being of children and youth was conducted in 2017-18 when we looked into the Canadian correctional system. The report that resulted from that study highlighted concerns regarding the housing of youth with adult offenders in federal correctional facilities, as well as the housing of young offenders and children in need of protection.

More recently, the committee looked at the global crisis of forced displacement. We learned that displaced youth often experience significant mental health issues, including PTSD, depression and anxiety. The forced displacement disrupts the identities of young migrants, leaving them in a state of limbo regarding their sense of home and belonging.

These are only a few of the studies that showed the challenges faced by some children and youth in our country. The same themes come up over and over again, and the same recommendations are rehashed: clear objectives, measurable indicators and robust accountability mechanisms.

Bill S-212 mandates the creation of a national strategy that includes these things. It would also require regular progress reports, including diverse voices in consultation — those of children themselves — and proposes action plans that address both immediate harms and systemic root causes.

The national strategy envisioned by this bill should also focus on supporting other enduring values. It should prioritize respect for the central role of parents in shaping a child's development and recognize the importance of local communities as key partners in building healthy, nurturing environments.

These principles — family and community — are essential foundations for long-term well-being and must be embedded throughout the strategy. By reinforcing these supports the strategy can uphold the integrity of families and empower communities.

• (1900)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is now seven o'clock. Pursuant to rule 3-3(1), I am obliged to leave the chair until eight o'clock, when we will resume, unless it is your wish, honourable senators, to not see the clock.

Is it agreed to not see the clock?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Ataullahjan: Thank you, Your Honour.

As we consider how to improve outcomes for children, it is also important to recognize the crucial role that early childhood educators play in supporting healthy development in a child's most formative years. These professionals do more than supervise: They foster learning, build social-emotional skills and create a safe, nurturing environment that shapes a child's future.

A national strategy for children and youth should be acknowledged and support the early learning workforce by ensuring adequate training, fair compensation and inclusion in policy planning.

Valuing early childhood educators is an essential part of building the foundation for lifelong success and well-being.

Supporting youth means not only addressing well-being and poverty but also ensuring a successful transition into the workforce.

Young people face significant and ongoing challenges in entering the labour market, particularly in securing meaningful summer and entry-level employment. A comprehensive national strategy must account for these barriers by supporting job readiness programs, vocational training and clear education to employment pathways tailored to youth.

As a parent myself, I find this legislation especially meaningful. Raising a child is among life's greatest joys and responsibilities. Every parent wants to see their child safe, well and given the chance to succeed.

However, not all families have the same resources or access. This bill recognizes that reality and aims to level the playing field, not by prescribing a single path, but by ensuring that every child has the opportunity to pursue their own.

Parenting is a deeply personal experience, but it is also shaped by broader social conditions. When a family has access to affordable child care, nutritious food, safe housing and timely health care, parents are better able to focus on nurturing their child's growth and development.

Colleagues, this bill presents an opportunity to examine how we can better support children and youth through a structured, collaborative approach. A national strategy is a significant step towards fulfilling our moral and legal obligation to Canada's youngest citizens.

I support referring Bill S-212 to committee for further study where it can be reviewed in detail. The committee process will allow for a closer examination of the bill's proposals and the potential implications. We look forward to the discussions and insights that will emerge from this important work.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marnie McBean: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support for Bill S-212, An Act respecting a national strategy for children and youth in Canada. I wish to thank Senator Moodie for her leadership in bringing this important piece of legislation forward.

[Translation]

This bill is more than just a policy proposal. It's a statement of values. It reflects a moral commitment and an urgent call to action. It challenges us to face up to our responsibilities towards the most precious members of our society, that is, our children and young people.

We often say that children are our future, but we also need to remember that they really are our present. They are living with the consequences of the decisions we're making right now. Their health, education, safety and opportunities are all shaped, directly or indirectly, by the policies we choose to implement, the investments we make and the priorities we set.

[English]

The truth is that far too many young people in Canada are struggling.

Let's start with mental health. According to Statistics Canada, in 2022 nearly half of youth aged 15 to 24 reported that their mental health was either fair or poor. Rates of anxiety, depression and self-harm are rising, especially among teenage girls and the 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. We're seeing a system under strain, and children are feeling the pain.

Then there's the reality of child poverty. Despite some progress, nearly one in five children — about 1.4 million kids — still live in poverty in this country according to Campaign 2000's 2024 report. That means going to school hungry. It means living in overcrowded or unstable housing. Poverty robs children of their energy, attention in class and hope for the future.

There's also the growing concern of online exploitation and safety. The internet has become an essential part of how young people learn. They connect and express themselves there. But it's also a space where they are increasingly vulnerable. Online sexual exploitation, cyberbullying, harassment and exposure to harmful content are rising. Yet protections, oversight and education for safe, online engagement remain fragmented and underdeveloped.

We know these challenges are not equally experienced. Indigenous children, racialized youth, children in care, 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and children with disabilities face systemic barriers that make it harder for them to access supports and opportunities. These children are more likely to experience poverty, violence, exclusion and health disparities.

These are not isolated experiences: They are patterns, deeply rooted in our society and they demand deliberate and coordinated responses. That is why Bill S-212 is so essential.

This bill calls for the creation of a national strategy for children and youth, a roadmap that would align and coordinate our efforts across jurisdictions based on the rights of children and informed by their voices.

It would require the federal government to work collaboratively with provinces, territories, Indigenous governments and civil society to bring a long-term plan that reflects the needs and realities for young people in Canada.

Right now, support for children and youth — your children, your grandchildren — is fragmented and uneven. There is no unified framework to guide our collective efforts, no shared set of indicators to measure their progress and no consistent mechanism for accountability. That is what this bill seeks to change.

I also want to take a moment to speak about something I believe must be included in the national strategy for children and youth, and that is sport and physical activity.

Sport is often viewed as optional, a luxury or simply a pastime. The reality is that, for young people, sport and physical activity are vital to health and development. Regular movement isn't just good for the body, it's essential for the mind, confidence, social connection and long-term well-being. When kids move, they thrive. When they don't, the consequences can be serious and lasting. Right now, those consequences are being felt across Canada.

According to ParticipACTION's 2024 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, only 39% of children aged 5 to 17 are meeting the recommended 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day. That means the majority of kids in this country are not getting enough movement to stay healthy. The impacts of this are alarming.

Physical inactivity is linked to increased rates of childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular issues and even some forms of cancer later in life. But it goes beyond physical health. Inactive children are more likely to struggle with mental health challenges like anxiety and depression.

• (1910)

They are more likely to have trouble focusing in school, to experience poor sleep and to suffer from low self-esteem. The effects can follow them into adulthood, reducing not only their quality of life but also their potential to contribute fully to society.

Sport, when done right, can be a powerful antidote to all of this. It builds self-confidence, resilience, discipline and a sense of belonging. It teaches teamwork and respect, and it provides a constructive outlet for stress. For many children, especially those facing difficult life circumstances, sport is not a luxury — it is a lifeline.

Yet we know that access to sport is deeply unequal. The *Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report 2024* found that youth face numerous barriers to participation. The most cited challenge is cost, whether it involves equipment, registration fees or transportation. Many families simply can't afford to keep their kids enrolled in organized sport.

Comfort is another major barrier. Girls, racialized youth and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth often report feeling judged, excluded or unwelcome in sports environments. Some describe negative experiences, from bullying and discrimination to toxic coaching cultures. Youth with disabilities, in particular, face not only a lack of inclusive programming but also physical and attitudinal barriers that shut them out before they even begin.

For girls, the gap is especially stark. According to the *Rally Report*, over 1 million Canadian girls are currently not participating in sport. While 63% of girls play organized sports weekly — compared to 68% of boys — that number declines sharply with age. By age 16, nearly half of all girls have dropped out of sport altogether. Girls from lower-income households and those living with disabilities are even less likely to stay involved.

This is not just a missed opportunity; it's a national health concern. Without early and sustained engagement in physical activity, we risk setting up an entire generation for a lifetime of preventable health problems, lower educational outcomes and diminished well-being.

[Senator McBean]

[Translation]

If we are going to have a serious conversation about a national strategy for children and youth, sport and physical activity must be part of that conversation. We must ensure that every child, regardless of gender, background, income, geography or ability, has the opportunity to play, move, grow and feel like they belong.

I hope that when this bill is studied in committee, we will be able to delve deeper into how sport and movement can be leveraged not only as recreation, but also as a public health intervention, a social connector and a right that every child deserves access to.

[English]

Colleagues, Bill S-212 is about fairness. It's about ensuring that every child in Canada has what they need to grow up healthy, supported and hopeful. The time to act is now. Our children need it. They are waiting. Let's not let them down.

Thank you.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Would Senator McBean take a question?

Senator McBean: Yes.

Senator Osler: In your speech, you talked about fairness and equity. I was thinking about how the most popular sport in the world is football, also known as soccer, and you see kids all over the world just take a ball and go out and play in a field or in the street. You also talked about how cost can be a barrier. I was thinking about how sport has become commercialized, but I agree with you on the importance of sport and activity for health.

Should a framework or strategy also take into account that equity piece in that it should promote movement beyond organized sports and include something as simple as getting outside with a ball and kicking it around the street or playing street hockey? Organized sport is a barrier for some families.

Senator McBean: Thank you for the question. I have actually done a lot of work on this, even internationally when we go to international communities. I have been involved with NGOs in Mali, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. What we tend to bring there is organized sport, for all the things that they learn through that, because the children there have a lot of unorganized sport. They just go out and play.

In Canada, as parents, it is not as if you can say to your kids, "Go outside." Well, I can't; I live in Toronto. When I was young, we were told, "Come home when the street lights come on." Now there are a lot of safety risks involved in that. There is more traffic.

I think that unstructured play is wonderful, and we need to keep building our schools with sizable yards for kids to play in, but children are participating more and more in structured sport.

The *Jumpstart* report that I referred to says that one of the largest problems is cost. One of the most popular ways for kids to get to sports is by being driven by a parent, and that is difficult if you have two parents working. I think we must have a strategy where we have programs that are more widely available — after-school programs instead of a program that you have to go and sign up for. I know at my daughter's school there are some programs like that, but we need to have more after-school programs. We can't download that onto teachers, because for the playground to be available and for there to be a program, you have to pay a third-party coach to come in and teach soccer. This is what is happening in a lot of cities.

Yes, we need to have a framework come in. There needs to be support for this. It is one of those challenges where a lot of people in health and education and sport come here. All three of those areas are managed provincially, but we need to have a voice that is structuring to bring all of these things together so that children can thrive.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Moodie, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.)

NATIONAL IMMIGRATION MONTH BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gerba, seconded by the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C., for the second reading of Bill S-215, An Act respecting National Immigration Month.

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable colleagues, I rise again to speak, ignoring the advice of my former seatmate — former Senator Braley, may he rest in peace. He said, "Don't speak too often. People will get used to the sound of your voice." I'm ignoring that advice today.

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak as the critic of Bill S-215, An Act respecting national immigration month.

I would like to begin by commending Senator Gerba for her efforts as the bill's sponsor and for her ongoing commitment to making Canada a more inclusive place for all. Senator Gerba's own journey is a testament to the positive impact of immigration.

Bill S-215 seeks to designate the month of November each year as a national immigration month across Canada, allowing us to formally recognize and celebrate the significant contributions that immigrants have made and continue to make in shaping Canada's society, culture, economy and overall strength.

Honourable senators, we are living in increasingly challenging and divisive times. The public sentiment around immigration is more negative today than I have witnessed in nearly five decades of living in Canada. That is why now, more than ever, it is important to remind ourselves that Canada is a nation built by immigrants and that immigration has shaped the fabric of our society.

Immigration, when managed responsibly, is a driving force for economic growth and innovation. It addresses labour shortages, contributes to the development of our industries and enhances our competitiveness on the global stage.

Honourable senators, my love affair with Canada began long before I set foot on Canadian soil. As a young girl in the Catholic boarding school Convent of Jesus and Mary in northern Pakistan, my world was often confined to the school grounds. But occasionally, our teachers would bring in documentaries, and suddenly our classroom would transform into a window to the world.

• (1920)

Out of all the countries in the world, it was always the documentaries about Canada — supplied by the Canadian embassy to our school — that ignited my imagination. Canada called to me. I promised myself I would visit one day.

My dream became a reality in 1980. In fact, just recently, I found myself standing beneath the same northern lights that had fascinated me as a child. When I stared up at the sky, I was overwhelmed with emotion for the journey that brought me here.

However, it is important to acknowledge that not all immigrants come primarily for economic reasons. I arrived in Canada as a bride. My husband had promised my father that we would return to Pakistan soon after, but life had other plans. The Russians invaded Afghanistan, and my hometown of Peshawar, the closest to the Afghan border, suddenly became unsafe. The war in Afghanistan crossed the border, and the streets and homes in my beloved Peshawar, known as the city of flowers, were suddenly filled with bloodshed. Peshawar became the epicentre of violence and terror.

Then came the martial law imposed by General Zia. The atmosphere became increasingly difficult and stifling for women and girls, with the rise of an ultra-conservative religious element. After much discussion, my husband and I decided that we did not

want to raise our daughters in an environment where they wouldn't flourish and thrive. By then, Canada had become home, and I realized, having lived here, I couldn't live anywhere else.

Honourable senators, my story is just one among millions of immigrants who have been welcomed into Canada and who, in turn, contribute to its prosperity and cultural richness. Canada offers a society built upon the values of diversity, equality and opportunity, providing a safe haven for individuals to pursue a better life. The opportunities here are boundless, and the values of inclusion and respect empower each of us to thrive and contribute to the broader community.

As a Toronto senator, I am profoundly proud of my city. Toronto isn't just diverse; it's a living, breathing testament to the power of inclusion. Imagine walking down any street in our city: Every other person you meet has a story that began in another part of the world. Nearly half of Toronto's population was born in another country, bringing with them a wealth of experiences, traditions, languages and perspectives.

Toronto's diversity isn't merely a statistic; it fuels our innovation, enriches our culture and strengthens our community. You can taste it in our restaurants, hear it in our music and see it in the faces of our neighbours and friends. But what truly sets Toronto apart is not just the presence of diversity but how we embrace it. I was reminded of this every time my mother would visit me from abroad. She referred to Canada as "home." She would visit my brother in the States and tell me about how safe she felt when she came to Canada. This was not just because of the politeness she encountered; it was the genuine warmth that made her feel that she belonged here, even as a visitor.

Honourable senators, designating November as national immigration month allows us to do the following: Celebrate the achievements and contributions of immigrants who have chosen Canada as their home, acknowledging how their hard work and dedication have enriched our economy and communities; educate current and future generations about the significant role that immigration has played in building our nation, emphasizing the importance of orderly and effective immigration policies that serve the interests of all Canadians; promote understanding, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of Canada, while reinforcing the shared values and principles that unite us as a nation; and strengthen the bonds of unity among all Canadians by highlighting the common goals and aspirations we share, regardless of our backgrounds.

Honourable senators, for immigration to work well, effective integration of newcomers is essential. It is important that we support initiatives that help immigrants learn our official languages, understand Canadian culture and participate fully in society. This not only benefits the newcomers but also enriches our communities. It is also important to remind ourselves that integration is a two-way street. While newcomers must make efforts to adapt to their new home, we as a host society must also be open and supportive. This mutual responsibility strengthens our social fabric and ensures that everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

[Senator Ataullahjan]

Honourable senators, I support Bill S-215, and I encourage you to do so as well. By designating the month of November as national immigration month, we have the opportunity to reclaim and refocus the narrative surrounding immigration. Let us ensure that Canada remains a place where dreams can become a reality and where people of all ethnicities and backgrounds can feel at home.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Gerba, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.)

COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Leave having been given to revert to Presenting or Tabling Reports from Committees:

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald, Chair of the Committee of Selection, presented the following report:

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

The Committee of Selection has the honour to present its

FIRST REPORT

Pursuant to rule 12-2(1) of the *Rules of the Senate* and the order of the Senate of May 27, 2025, your committee submits below a list of senators nominated by it to serve on committees and makes recommendations on the duration of membership on committees.

Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples

Independent Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Boniface, Greenwood, Karetak-Lindell, Pate and Sorensen

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senator McCallum

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Prosper and Tannas

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Audette, Francis and White

Non-affiliated

The Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson (seat designated by the Independent Senators Group) and the Honourable Senator McPhedran (seat designated by the Conservative Party of Canada)

Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Greenwood, McBean, McNair, Miville-Dechéne, Petitclerc and Sorensen

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Martin and Richards

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Black, Burey and Robinson

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Francis and Muggli

Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senator Loffreda

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senator Wells (*Newfoundland and Labrador*)

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senator Deacon (*Nova Scotia*)

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senator Klyne

Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Loffreda, Massicotte, McBean, Ringette, Varone and Yussuff

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Marshall and Martin

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Gignac, Pupatello and Wallin

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Fridhandler and Henkel

Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Arnot, Duncan, Galvez, Kingston, Kutcher and Youance

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators McCallum and Wells (*Newfoundland and Labrador*)

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Aucoin, Lewis and Verner, P.C.

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Anderson and Fridhandler

Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Boudreau, Busson, Dhillon, Ravalia and Surette

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Manning and Poirier

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Deacon (*Nova Scotia*) and Osler

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Cuzner, Francis and Gerba

Non-affiliated

The Honourable Senator Petten (seat designated by the Independent Senators Group)

Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Boehm, Coyle, Deacon (*Ontario*), Hébert, Ravalia and Woo

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Ataullahjan and MacDonald

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Adler and Al Zaibak

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Gerba, Harder, P.C., and Wilson

Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Clement, Coyle, Karetak-Lindell and Senior

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senator Batters

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Osler and Ross

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Bernard and Wells (*Alberta*)

Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Boehm, Boyer, Forest, MacAdam, Moncion, Moodie and Oudar

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Carignan, P.C., and Smith

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Osler, Quinn and Tannas

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Audette, Francis and Henkel

Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Arnot, Clement, Dhillon, Oudar, Pate, Saint-Germain and Simons

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Batters and Housakos

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Prosper and Tannas

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Moreau and Wells (*Alberta*)

Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Coyle and Ravalia

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senator Housakos

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senator Tannas

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senator Cuzner

Standing Senate Committee on National Finance**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Forest, Galvez, Hébert, Kingston, MacAdam and Varone

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Carignan, P.C., and Marshall

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Gignac, Pupatello and Ross

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Cardozo and Moreau

Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Dasko, Deacon (*Ontario*), Duncan, Kutcher, McNair and Yussuff

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Carignan, P.C., and Richards

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Al Zaibak and Ince

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Anderson, Cardozo and Francis

Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Cormier, Mégie, Moncion and Surette

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senator Poirier

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Ince and Patterson

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Audette and Gerba

Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Busson, Mégie, Petitclerc, Ringuette, Saint-Germain, Surette and Yussuff

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Batters and Wells (*Newfoundland and Labrador*)

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Burey, Downe and Tannas

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Dalphond, Wells (*Alberta*) and White

Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Dean and Woo

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senator Martin

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senator Patterson

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senator White

Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Arnold, Boudreau, Mégie, Moodie, Petitclerc and Senior

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Burey and Osler

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Bernard, Hay and Muggli

Non-Affiliated

The Honourable Senators Brazeau and McPhedran (seats designated by the Conservative Party of Canada)

Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications**Independent Senators Group**

The Honourable Senators Arnold, Cormier, Dasko, Dean, Miville-Dechéne and Simons

Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Senators Manning and Smith

Canadian Senators Group

The Honourable Senators Lewis, Quinn and Wallin

Progressive Senate Group

The Honourable Senators Hay and Wilson

Your committee also considered the duration of committee membership. Although dissenting opinions were expressed, your committee agreed to recommend that, for the remainder of the session, and notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, usual practice or previous order:

1. Except in the case of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators and the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight:
 - (a) a non-affiliated senator may, by written notice to the Clerk, place themselves under the authority of the leader or facilitator of a recognized party or recognized parliamentary group, for the purposes of making membership changes in relation to the membership of one or more committees, including the joint committees, following the process established in rule 12-5 of the *Rules of the Senate*;
 - (b) except as provided in sub-paragraph c), if a senator ceases to be a member of a particular recognized party or recognized parliamentary

group for any reason, they simultaneously cease to be a member of any committee of which they were then a member, with the resulting vacancy to be filled by the leader or facilitator of the party or group to which the senator had belonged, following the processes established in rule 12-5;

- (c) if a senator ceases to be a member of a recognized party or recognized parliamentary group because that party or group ceases to exist, they remain a member of any committee of which they were a member, subject to the provisions of sub-paragraph d), but cease to be chair or deputy chair of any committee on which they held such a position, and cease to be a member of any Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of which they were a member; and
 - (d) if a non-affiliated senator becomes a member of a recognized party or recognized parliamentary group, they thereby cease to be a member of any committee of which they were then a member, with the resulting vacancy to be filled either:
 - (i) by the leader or facilitator of the party or group to which the non-affiliated senator's seat had originally belonged, as provided in sub-paragraph a), or
 - (ii) by order of the Senate or the adoption by the Senate of a report of the Committee of Selection; and
2. Any changes to the membership of a committee pursuant to paragraph 1 of this report be recorded in the *Journals of the Senate*.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL L. MACDONALD

Chair

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

(On motion of Senator MacDonald, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS DYKELAND SYSTEM BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Jim Quinn moved second reading of Bill S-216, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-216, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada.

• (1930)

This bill is a restatement with one change of the version of Bill S-273, which passed the Senate in the last Parliament 55 to 10 but died on the Order Paper in the House of Commons with prorogation.

The only change from the bill adopted at third reading here is that an amendment to include a non-derogation clause related to section 35 under the Constitution Act, 1982, is no longer necessary due to a general non-derogation clause now included in section 8.3 of the Interpretation Act.

The potential of this change was discussed during our deliberations as that bill was under way, and it has been accepted and therefore the consequential amendments would have been made.

My intervention today is simple and straightforward: I ask for your support to send this bill to the next stages of the process.

For the benefit of those senators who are new to the chamber, I will provide a brief overview of what this bill accomplishes by using the declaratory power to transfer jurisdiction of the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System to the federal government.

Now, for familiarization purposes because many colleagues weren't sure where the Chignecto Isthmus was during our last debates on this subject, it is the strip of land predominantly along the Missaguash River forming the boundary between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The isthmus itself is a vital trade corridor that represents \$35 billion in trade, 15,000 vehicle transits per day and hundreds of thousands of people every year. The trade corridor is a choke point for a single national railway, the Trans-Canada Highway and fibre-optic lines that link transatlantic cables.

All those assets that support Canada's economic prosperity, interprovincial and international trade and communications are at risk due to flooding were it not for the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System. Perhaps of greatest importance, the dykes protect the tens of thousands of Canadians who live and work in and around the isthmus as well as the cultural and traditional aspects important to Aboriginal and Acadian communities.

What Bill S-216 does is use the declaratory power under section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution Act, 1867, to transfer jurisdiction of the dykes to federal jurisdiction. By declaring the dykeland system to be for the general advantage of Canada, it enables the Government of Canada to take a leadership role on working with New Brunswick and Nova Scotia for the rehabilitation of the dykes that date back to the 17th century to reinforce the infrastructure against rising tides and extreme weather events brought on by climate change. In this area, the tides can be up to 50 feet.

With both the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia agreeing to sign onto the \$650 million cost-sharing project with the Government of Canada to repair the dykes, this also resolves the question regarding cost, and this became a dominant theme during our last Parliament's deliberations.

In the March 22 *Telegraph-Journal* right before the election, Minister Dominic LeBlanc made an additional political commitment; this being cost sharing of any additional expenses above and beyond the traditional funding under the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund. He said:

... the deal also comes with a pledge from a future Liberal government that it will split the bill of any cost overruns for the project that will take up to 10 years to complete.

"As the project advances, a future Liberal government would want to find ways to continue to partner with the provinces and ensure that we could maintain our percentage of the total cost."

This is a welcome development, and in my mind puts to rest the question of finances.

So why this bill? Why is this important and relevant? It is not only about trade, but also about culture, reconciliation, land management, conservation and stewardship. It is about ensuring a coordinated approach led by the federal government to an area of land that is important to the country.

Colleagues, when the last time the prior version of this bill was discussed in the chamber at third reading, Senator Gold indicated:

... it's the position of the Government of Canada that this issue should not be dealt with until the court has clarified the issue of jurisdiction. To do otherwise is to pre-empt the question that's currently before the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal.

The court has made its pronouncement and it declined to answer, leaving that question to Parliament exclusively.

I note that the court declined to answer the question to determine the constitutional jurisdiction of the Chignecto Isthmus dykeland system in part based on the following premise. They said:

"We recognize our obligation to provide advice when a reference is made to this Court, however, the Governor in Council should not be using the reference process for a political purpose. The reference process is not a mechanism for achieving political ends."

Colleagues, I respect the court's pronouncement and I certainly respect the advice provided by Senator Gold.

This leads me to the main point. The issue before us is a political one. We are parliamentarians, and whether we like it or not, we are politicians. The court is saying that Parliament alone has the authority to determine whether the Chignecto Isthmus

Dykeland System is for the general advantage of Canada thus making it fall under federal jurisdiction. It is a policy decision for us to make in Parliament.

This bill has the unanimous support of both the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick legislatures. Further, it is supported by Fort Folly First Nation which wants the declaratory power to be used so that the federal government takes the lead in respecting the duty to consult with the relevant Mi'kmaq communities and leadership.

It is also supported by the Acadian stakeholders comprised of the Acadian Society of New Brunswick, the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse and the Société Nationale de l'Acadie in order to provide uniform protection of Acadian cultural and heritage sites, and it is supported by the local communities in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

In the Forty-fourth Parliament, this chamber passed this bill by a wide margin, and it was sent to the House of Commons for our elected colleagues to consider. Prorogation and the subsequent election prevented that from occurring.

Even without the knowledge of what the courts would decide, we made the decision to send former Bill S-273 to the other place. Here we are in a position where I am asking that we reaffirm this previous decision and start the process to provide the elected chamber the opportunity to debate and decide the applicability of using the declaratory power. In light of what the courts have told us, it is more important than ever that the House of Commons be granted the ability to carry out their constitutional prerogative so we may put this issue to rest.

In addition, I would again note the current and necessary policies of the government with respect to expanding our trade relationships with other countries, ensuring that our trade corridors are effective and efficient, are underscoring the importance of the bill. Having jurisdiction under the federal government will ensure that they will have the lead role bringing the two provinces together to protect the isthmus and the infrastructure that exists on the isthmus, thereby providing opportunity to maximize existing trade infrastructure, such as the Port of Halifax, and moving forward in a more efficient and timely manner.

We need to remember \$100 million a day crosses the isthmus, the vast majority coming to and from the Port of Halifax, a port well situated to handle much more cargo as those new partnerships are developed with other countries.

This is why, colleagues, I urge us to support and allow it to continue through the process that hopefully will conclude with the bill again being sent to the elected chamber.

Atlantic Canada is speaking with one voice, asking to be treated fairly and for you to understand that the Chignecto Isthmus is to the general advantage of Canada.

We often look at the Senate as a place of sober second thought in our role as senators. However, the constitutionally entrenched role of the Senate to represent regional interests is even more

important. Had this bill not been brought forward, this vital piece of information so necessary for the reasons outlined above would not have made its way to be considered in Ottawa.

The House of Commons will make a determination whether they agree with us or not, but our unique design gives us the ability to introduce Senate public bills and allows us to raise regional issues that simply cannot be heard or understood at first glance by the House of Commons. It provides the elected chamber the opportunity to carry out sober second thought — a role normally reserved for this chamber.

At this time, given the government's agenda — which is largely responding to the realities of our needing to be less dependent on our trading relationship with the United States — it is incumbent upon Parliament to consider the Chignecto Isthmus to not only be to the general advantage of Canada but also important to diversifying our trade corridors.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

• (1940)

[Translation]

NATIONAL BIRD OF CANADA BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Ataullahjan, seconded by the Honourable Senator Batters, for the second reading of Bill S-221, An Act to provide for the recognition of the Canada jay as the national bird of Canada.

Hon. Amina Gerba: I rise today to support Bill S-221, An Act to provide for the recognition of the Canada jay as the national bird of Canada.

I would like to commend Senator Ataullahjan for her work and thank Senator Duncan and many others for their insightful comments. This bill, while symbolic, is deeply meaningful and really must take flight.

In a world where we sometimes lose our bearings, it becomes all the more crucial to focus on what brings us together. National symbols are not mere emblems. They embody our identity and forge a connection between our past, our present and our future. In that spirit, I would say that the Canada jay stands out brilliantly or, to stay on theme, it is a symbol worth crowing about.

[English]

The Canada jay is a true ambassador of the Canadian spirit, as it is resilient, sociable, resourceful and always ready to share a snack with a distracted hiker.

[Senator Quinn]

[Translation]

The Canada jay does not migrate. It remains steadfast even when temperatures drop below zero. It is a true Canadian and although the Canada jay admirably embodies the national spirit, it cannot eclipse the wealth of regional symbols that compose the mosaic of our identities.

As a senator from Quebec, I would also like to note the importance of our own majestic provincial bird, the snowy owl. Its gentle, golden eyes and silent flight personify vigilance and mystery. It soars over the northern skies with an elegance that would make a state-of-the-art drone blush.

Like many Quebecers, it heads south when the winter becomes too harsh, proof that even the most hardened species know when it is time to look for a bit of warmth. While the snowy owl keeps watch from icy heights, the Canada jay joins us down to earth in our forests, our trails, our memories. Together, they form an unlikely, but harmonious duo. One is the piercing gaze of the North, the other the familiar voice of our underbrush.

[English]

Senator Ataullahjan brilliantly described the Canada jay as lively, clever, intelligent, loyal and resilient. She highlighted its presence in all regions of our country and its ability to survive extreme temperatures.

[Translation]

Senator Duncan provided a valuable perspective by talking about inclusion, representation and the deep connection between this bird and Indigenous peoples. She reminded us that the Canada jay is a natural symbol of federalism for it does not shun any province or territory.

Honourable senators, more than 100 countries around the world have designated a national bird. Some have opted for majestic species, while others have chosen more modest but equally representative birds. It is therefore time for Canada, a land of endless forests and epic winters, to launch its ornithological identity.

[English]

Honourable colleagues, this bill is ready. It has been carefully considered and is supported by experts, citizens, researchers and nature enthusiasts. It does not require further, lengthy studies. It's time to act.

[Translation]

Let's give Canada a national bird that truly represents us: humble, loyal, intelligent and very much a part of the land we call home.

[English]

May the Canada jay take flight in our collective imagination as a symbol of who we are and who we aspire to be.

[Translation]

Maybe one day, our grandchildren will learn in school that Canada chose as its emblem a bird that braves storms courageously and shares with its neighbours, just like we do. Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, today I am pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill S-221, An Act to provide for the recognition of the Canada jay as the national bird of Canada.

I would like to thank Senator Ataullahjan for tabling this bill. Like her and my other colleagues who have spoken on this, I do believe that it is high time for us to answer the call of many Canadians and bird enthusiasts across Canada and designate the Canada jay as the national bird of Canada.

As you all know, I frequently stand up in the chamber to talk about agriculture or youth leadership. Although the subject of birds may seem off topic for me, I am pleased rise this evening to speak briefly to the bill.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Alternative Land Use Solutions, or ALUS, with some of my Senate colleagues earlier in May to learn about how farmers can use nature-based innovations to create positive economic, environmental and social change. During this visit, we learned that birds could support farmers by naturally removing pests and insects, thereby limiting the need for pesticides. We even met with a farmer in Gatineau who had introduced birdhouses on his farm to encourage more biodiversity, do away with aphids and foster more sustainable farming. So farmers like birds too.

However, as Senator Ataullahjan noted, birds are not only beneficial to our environment and our ecosystem, but they also have a symbolic meaning. Countries around the world have declared a national bird to symbolize their spirit, character and charm, but Canada has yet to follow suit. Canadian bird enthusiasts have been calling for this designation to be made, and there even appears to be an agreement on the choice of bird.

Thus, I support my colleague's Bill S-221, An Act to provide for the recognition of the Canada jay as the national bird of Canada, because I believe that Canadians should have a national bird that embodies our Canadian lifestyle, culture and spirit.

Additionally, I believe that the Canada jay accurately symbolizes what it means to be Canadian, and it has a great name too. The Canada jay, previously known as the grey jay, is a fascinating, resilient and resourceful bird that lives year-round in the northern or high-elevated boreal forests throughout Canada.

As one of Canada's hardiest species, regardless of rain or shine, blizzard or frost, the Canada jay perseveres in its habitat, just as Canadians do. In fact, unlike other common birds, Canada jays nest during the late winter, even when temperatures drop well below zero degrees Celsius.

• (1950)

Like many Canadians, the Canada jay embraces the winter and does not shy away from difficulty. They are extremely resourceful and intelligent, collecting food during the warmer months to hide behind bark and on tree branches to feed themselves throughout the winter. They exemplify strength, adaptability and resilience — three qualities that Canadians hold close to their hearts.

They've learned how to take advantage of the warmer months throughout the year to thrive during the harsh northern winters. I know that some of our colleagues are very familiar with this lifestyle as well.

They are extremely curious and very friendly birds with Canadians and visitors alike. If you're in Canada jay territory and hold out a handful of berries or raisins, a Canada jay is sure to visit for a quick bite to eat.

As we all know, Canadians are known for our kindness and that we all say "sorry" a bit too much, but I believe the inviting nature of the Canada jay very closely reflects the friendly and welcoming nature for which Canadians are known around the world.

I am actually in awe of this majestic bird and its ability to withstand cold temperatures and take advantage of its landscapes and ecosystem, in addition to its curiosity and strength — just as I'm in awe of Canadians across this great country.

In 2018, the American Ornithological Society, which has authority over common names for all North American birds, voted to change the common name of the grey jay to the Canada jay. In fact, before 1947, the grey jay was already known as the Canada jay.

Dan Strickland, a retired Algonquin Provincial Park chief naturalist, who was foundational in changing the grey jay to the Canada jay, said that this bird, ". . . is part of the psyche and national character of Canada."

The Canada jay also won a countrywide contest held by the *Canadian Geographic* in 2016 to choose a national bird of Canada. Thus, it is clear that Canadians across the country are calling on us to designate the Canada jay as our national bird, and it is time for us to answer the call and pass this bill swiftly to give the Canada jay the recognition it deserves.

If Canada is to choose a national bird to represent our great nation, what better bird to choose than the Canada jay? After all, it has a wonderful name.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator MacDonald, debate adjourned.)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum moved second reading of Bill S-223, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

She said: Honourable senators, I want to thank everyone who is here. We're going into a deep topic.

Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill S-223, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

Bill S-223 deals with the enforcement of First Nations laws while its sister bill, Bill S-224, which I will speak to shortly, deals with the prosecution of First Nations laws. As the subject matter of these two bills are so intimately braided, their individual subject matters are discussed together in many of the quotes I will share.

In speaking to senators, I understand that the lived experience of facing unrelenting oppression from the federal government is an area of which many were not aware. For me, my life has been determined by the federal government from the time I was born.

This area of Canadian history was not shared with Canadians. I thank senators for letting me know that and for listening and hearing deeply because that is when we learn compassion, and I have learned compassion in this chamber.

I will start with a brief history of enforcement and prosecutions on reserves in Canada.

In the 1991 *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry*, the concluding words state:

Canada's treatment of its first citizens has been an international disgrace. To fail to take every needed step to redress this lingering injustice will continue to bring tragedy and suffering to Aboriginal people, and to blacken our country's name throughout the world. By acting now, governments can give positive expression to the public support and good will we have encountered from Manitobans during the past three years.

In November 1999, the Manitoba government appointed the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission, which stated:

Manitoba's Aboriginal people have known three different justice regimes. The first, a product of custom, negotiation and experience, developed before the arrival of Europeans during the centuries in which only Aboriginal people inhabited this part of the Americas. The second, which commenced with the arrival of Europeans in the

17th century, did not end Aboriginal law, but merely added English, Scottish and French complements in parallel with it. The third began with Manitoba's entry into Confederation in 1870. Although it has remained essentially unchanged to the present, this third regime has had a devastating impact on Manitoba's Aboriginal people during the last four decades.

Honourable senators, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 set out a three-cornered system of governance for British North America, combining the imperial Crown, its colonies and those "... Nations or Tribes of Indians ...". In 1836, Upper Canada's attorney general Robert Jameson gave evidence of the continuation of that constitutional norm. First Nations, he wrote, "... have within their own communities governed themselves by their own laws and customs."

In short, First Nations were self-governing within their recognized jurisdictions, including all internal affairs. They remained so until the Indian Act of 1869. First Nations' order of government was sacrificed to Sir John A. Macdonald's "... proclaimed assimilative duty."

In the 1857 Gradual Civilization Act, any Indian judged to be educated, free from debt and of good moral character could apply to receive land within the colony and the "rights accompanying it." This was a shift from community development to preparing individuals for enfranchisement. The government considered most problematic the insistence of First Nations holding land in common. The government stated that the refusal of band councils to authorize individual ownership destroyed "industriousness," which was the basis of all progress.

Honourable senators, in 1860, the fledgling Province of Canada assumed control of the Indian Affairs portfolio from the British imperial government. In 1867, with the British North America Act, the imperial Crown gave way to the federal, the colonies became provinces, and the self-governing First Nations remained — for a brief period — as the third order of government.

In 1869, An Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians, the better management of Indian Affairs indicated its dedication to assimilation. The two features — enfranchisement and giving communities the benefit of municipal government — meant that the act abolished traditional forms of government and replaced them with a male-only elective system largely under the control of the local Indian agent. And this happened in my lifetime. When I was born, there was an Indian agent there, and there was one there until I was 17. When I came out of residential school, I would go home for two months, and the agents were there dictating the lives of everyone.

With the Indian Act, 1876, Macdonald's government stated that the phrase "Nations ... of Indians" was no longer appropriate, for they saw Indians as children. They were akin to:

... "persons underage, incapable of the management of their own affairs" and, therefore, the government had to assume the "onerous duty of ... guardianship."

• (2000)

Through the Indian Act, it was spelled out in detail how First Nations would lose control of almost every aspect of their communities. Denial of self-determination was imposed through the act's construction of an officially sanctioned "status Indian," in effect creating the colonized Indian.

In 1887, John A. Macdonald stated:

The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.

In 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott delivered his infamous speech, justifying many of his amendments to the Indian Act:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. . . . Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department

Honourable senators, let's move to the present day. Through a former Bill C-49, the First Nations Land Management Act, which received Royal Assent in 1999 and through a former Bill C-428, the Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act, which received Royal Assent in 2014, Parliament intended to create new and enhanced law-making authorities to support the self-determination of First Nations.

One published official summary of Bill C-49 says that:

Bill C-49 would expand the range of powers that First Nations could exercise and no longer leave them at the discretion of the Governor in Council or Minister.

Meanwhile, a departmental summary of Bill C-428 states that:

Bill C-428 . . . eliminates the Minister's oversight in regards to the submission, coming into force and disallowance of by-laws and gives First Nations the autonomy and responsibility over the development, enactment and coming into force of by-laws.

Despite the intent of Parliament to enhance the self-determining, law-making powers of First Nations, Bill C-49 and Bill C-428 have instead created what has come to be called "stranded regimes" of First Nation laws that are not enforced by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and have not been subject to prosecution by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, or PPSC.

Honourable senators, in the June 2021 report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, or INAN, entitled *Collaborative Approaches to Enforcement of Laws in Indigenous Communities*, the committee heard that since amendments to the Indian Act removed the minister's power to disallow a bylaw in 2014, there is no mandatory departmental review of bylaws.

While the Public Prosecution Service of Canada only prosecutes bylaws that have been reviewed, Indigenous Services Canada now reviews draft bylaws for comment only. Essentially, the intended consequence of this 2014 amendment was to leave First Nations with an inability to enforce or prosecute the laws they had enacted, because there was not a new process put in place to address the review process that had been removed. Why wasn't this amended in the bill, given that this came up numerous times in the INAN Committee?

Colleagues, since 2014 the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have continued to refuse to enact laws made by First Nations Chiefs and councils. First Nations cannot prosecute crimes and violations being committed in their communities. As an example, some of these crimes involve drug dealing, including intoxicants, yet First Nations are unable to evict and prosecute the drug dealers even when some of these dealers are not from the community where they are committing crimes of drug dealing. However, these dealers continue to be empowered to bring drugs and alcohol into these reserves with impunity. This is happening on my reserve right now. People are unable to do anything, and the RCMP won't respond.

First Nations from coast to coast to coast are experiencing a crisis in public safety and well-being, largely driven by virtually uncontrolled drug dealing and bootlegging. The failure and refusal of the RCMP to enforce, and the failure and refusal of the PPSC to prosecute First Nation laws, including intoxicants prohibitions and trespass laws, are directly contributing to this crisis.

Honourable senators, in an April 4, 2023, CBC News article entitled "Chiefs welcome RCMP efforts to curb bootlegging in northern Manitoba, but say more needs to be done" with the byline "Manitoba RCMP say they're helping remote First Nations communities enact local bylaws" it was reported that 11 northern First Nations in Manitoba, including God's Lake, have recently declared states of emergency amid a range of social issues in their communities, including suspected drug-related deaths, suicides, inadequate emergency health and fire supports and concerns around substance use.

The article states:

Meanwhile, there has also been rising tension between RCMP and some communities.

The article continues:

Several communities like God's Lake are attempting to enact local bylaws restricting or prohibiting drug and alcohol use, and have asked for more support from government and RCMP.

A 2023 RCMP news release stated that RCMP enforcement:

... “will continue as per the expressed wishes of community leadership” in communities that have their own drug and alcohol bylaws and “have asked to make enforcement a priority.”

However, Chief Hubert Watt takes issue with how the RCMP has characterized their response to communities that want help enacting local drugs and alcohol bylaws. He said:

I think they’re just saying that because more and more First Nations are coming out and saying that the RCMP are not very effective . . . [in northern] communities.

The aforementioned 2023 CBC article further states:

The First Nation wanted RCMP involved in mandatory searches of vehicles entering the community, but RCMP won’t proactively search every vehicle due to legal limitations, according to both Watt and Phillip Kanabee, a God’s Lake band councillor.

Kanabee said:

I’ve been fighting with the RCMP for the longest time to get them to enforce the bylaws. . . We try to work with RCMP in the community but . . . the partnership is not there.

The article continues:

Police also recognize that some community bylaws around drugs and alcohol have been in place for decades . . .

Manitoba RCMP media relations spokesperson Tara Seel said in a statement that:

... our recent communication regarding enforcement in this area is in no way saying this is a new initiative.

She goes on to say:

... the RCMP, Crown prosecutors and other partners need to operate within the bounds of the provincial and federal laws — including the Charter of Rights and the Privacy Act — when investigating illegal distribution of drugs or alcohol.

Seel added:

... bootlegging enforcement has to be balanced with “a number of other public safety priorities,” including responding to violent crime.

Honourable senators, I have worked in God’s Lake for about six years as a dentist.

• (2010)

My own personal observation is that much of the violent crime stems from alcohol and drug abuse because of the lack of enforcement by the RCMP.

Colleagues, I spoke to Chief Hubert Watt previously on this issue, and he stated:

We have asked the RCMP to search for contraband every time the winter road opens, but they don’t do anything. The confiscation in March 2023 was a one-time event.

Chief Watt says if that were done all the time, imagine what they could have confiscated and the violence that could have been prevented.

The confiscation he was referring to took place in March 2023 on key roads heading into northern communities including Highway 6 and Provincial Road 373 as well as winter roads into God’s Lake Narrows, Island Lake and surrounding communities.

The RCMP said they seized 26 bottles of liquor from a single vehicle during the checkstop. They issued a total of 75 traffic tickets, executed four arrest warrants, charged one driver with impaired driving and another with trafficking under the Cannabis Act during that checkstop period.

The news release said that RCMP enforcement will continue as per the express wishes of community leadership in communities that have their own drug and alcohol bylaws and have asked to make enforcement a priority.

As Chief Watt stated that checkstop was a one-time event. It didn’t ever happen again.

While temporary measures were invoked to address COVID-19 and assist in enforcement of First Nations’ health protection bylaws, these measures did not and do not address the ongoing issue of why First Nations bylaws and laws are not being properly enforced in the first place.

Colleagues, I want to provide the statement made by Chief Heidi Cook from the Misipawistik Cree Nation in Grand Rapids to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs regarding the community’s experiences during an outbreak of COVID-19 in the winter of 2020-21:

During that time, it was expressed by members of our pandemic emergency response team, our health team and our enforcement team that we felt abandoned. We were struggling to control the spread. Our second wave reached 155 cases and close to 300 contacts. We all suffered personal fallout. I feel that we all had PTSD from the situation we found ourselves in.

We have not enacted any laws after the expiry of our emergency law. The decision was, basically, what good is the law if it’s not enforceable? As a result, we haven’t done anything since then.

People were coming into the community. They wanted the RCMP to stop people that didn't live in the community from coming in because they were selling drugs. In fact, the RCMP refused to enforce despite the temporary emergency measures.

Evidence given on May 13, 2021, by Mr. Derek Yang, Director, Community Services, Tla'amin Nation, British Columbia, states:

The short story that we want to present is that self-determination is virtually meaningless without the authority and capacity to pass and enforce laws. Many federal and provincial laws, negotiating mandates, funding decisions and approaches to enforcement undermine or weaken first nation law enforcement rather than supporting and strengthening it.

Colleagues, the problems with enforcement and prosecution of First Nations laws were known in 1999, that is 26 years ago. Twenty-six years where they have not been allowed to maintain safety and security, and where they were led to believe there would be an ongoing, long-term debate on the matter, that discussion never took place.

Twenty years later, the COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the effects of the failure to enforce and prosecute, placing lives in danger over these many years.

I wanted to let you know that when we pass legislation, even those which are perceived as well-intentioned, we see that there are negative consequences for almost every law we pass here. And First Nations are continuously hampered by the sheer magnitude and complexity of policy, the interjurisdictional gaps and other legislative limitations.

When you're trying to fight that and trying to fight disenfranchisement, you're trying to fight all these complex things, we have to correct when legislation had brought it in. They don't have the ability to do it on their own. They need to have external laws and legislation amended.

Colleagues, the final four words in each of the provisions, speaking to the prohibition of intoxicants in Treaties 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, are "shall be strictly enforced." The strict enforcement by the RCMP of First Nation laws prohibiting intoxicants is a treaty promise and treaty commitment of the Crown. The refusal and failure of the RCMP to enforce intoxicants' prohibitions, enacted by First Nations, are a breach of Canada's treaty promise and commitment, and it is also contributing to the crises of health and public safety in First Nations.

On February 3, 2023, Chief David Monias of Cross Lake in northern Manitoba wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Manitoba, the RCMP, Minister Marc Miller, Minister David Lametti, Minister Patricia Hajdu and Minister Marco Mendicino to make an urgent request to uphold the rule of law and the treaty commitment to enforce and prosecute Cross Lake Band bylaws via section 85.1 of the Indian Act.

In the words of Treaty 5:

Her Majesty further agrees with Her said Indians, that within the boundary of Indian reserves, until otherwise determined by Her Government of the Dominion of Canada, no intoxicating liquor shall be allowed to be introduced or sold, and all laws now in force, or hereafter to be enacted, to preserve Her Indian subjects inhabiting the reserves, or living elsewhere within Her North-west Territories, from the evil influence of the use of intoxicating liquors, shall be strictly enforced.

Chief David Monias wrote:

The Manitoba Court of Appeal in *R. v. Campbell*, 996 CanLII 7298 (MB CA), which case was prosecuted by PPSC, upheld the Charter compliance of both the s. 85.1 By-law of the Mosakahiken Cree Nation and of s. 85.1 of the *Indian Act*. However, to our knowledge, this was the last enforcement and prosecution of a s. 85.1 By-law in northern Manitoba — some twenty-seven years ago.

Section 85.1 of the Indian Act allows First Nations band councils to create bylaws that regulate intoxicants on their reserves. Should this law not still be in effect? Because when the bands take over they still look at that section 85.1 of the Indian Act, but they are still refusing.

On April 5, 2023, a news article by The Canadian Press entitled, "Feds back away from timeline for law to make First Nations policing essential service," stated that then-minister Marco Mendicino "... told The Canadian Press last December that the government hoped to table a bill in 2023."

• (2020)

The article goes on to say that:

This week, however, a press secretary for the minister backed away from any timeline, saying "It is too early to say when the legislation will be tabled."

As you are aware, colleagues, policing is widely considered an essential service. However, this request to recognize First Nations policing as an essential service and ensure there is adequate funding and resources to go with it has been ignored, despite the calls for recognition and reform. An essential service is typically defined as one that is crucial for public safety and well-being, and the disruption of which would significantly impact the community. It is about maintaining law and order, and protecting citizens.

First Nations deserve what other citizens are given, so is this not discriminatory?

As such, honourable senators, Bill S-223 will amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act to include the following definition of “First Nation laws”:

First Nations law means

(a) a bylaw made under the *Indian Act*;

(b) a First Nation law as defined in subsection 2(1) of the *Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management Act*; or

(c) a law enacted by a council, government of other entity that is authorized to act on behalf of a First Nation under a self-government agreement implemented by an Act of Parliament

Moreover, this bill will serve to clarify and confirm with conclusive certainty that the statutory duty of the RCMP includes the enforcement of First Nation laws and the execution of warrants that may, under First Nation laws, be lawfully executed and performed by peace officers.

Colleagues, I want to express that First Nations have not sat idly by as these ongoing problems hit their communities and endangered lives. They have gone on to create, to seek relationships, to amend laws and to propose and enact solutions.

As a key part of the ongoing efforts of Manitoba Keewatinow Okimakanak, or MKO, Grand Chief Settee, to secure the effective recognition, respect, enforcement and prosecution of First Nation Laws — MKO had successfully obtained the agreement of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Commanding Officer of RCMP “D” Division in Manitoba to enter into a protocol relating to the enforcement and prosecution of bylaws adopted pursuant to sections 81 and 85.1 of the *Indian Act*. The renewed protocol was effective as of June 30, 2023, as a two-year pilot project proposed by the Director of Public Prosecutions in a March 9, 2023, letter to Grand Chief Settee:

I further propose that my officials work with your organization and other key stakeholders during these three months to discuss the possibility of developing a broader pilot program for the enforcement and prosecution of Indian Act bylaws beyond those directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This kind of pilot would not be a permanent solution, but rather a joint opportunity to expand on the work done to date beyond the crisis posed by the pandemic. In addition, it would be an opportunity to gather evidence and experience that can then inform the development of solutions to better serve your communities in the long term.

Colleagues, it is MKO’s understanding that the two-year pilot project of PPSC, the RCMP and MKO for the enforcement and prosecution of Indian Act bylaws through the protocol is unique in Canada and applies only to those of the 23 law-making MKO First Nations that elect to participate. As there are 634 First Nations in Canada, this means that just 3.6% of First Nations in Canada have the opportunity to see enforcement by the RCMP

and prosecution of offences by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, or PPSC. Additionally, the protocol does not address the enforcement and prosecution of all First Nation laws and therefore does not address the enforcement and prosecution of a First Nation law enacted pursuant to a land code or a First Nation law enacted by a First Nation that has entered into a self-government agreement because they have the ability to do that.

This is a long speech, and it is so heavy.

I’m going to deliver the second one. It is just as long.

We work closely with the MKO and the Lands Advisory Board, and it was a concrete example of co-development in action of proposed legislation affecting First Nations. Such legislative co-development reflects, and is consistent with, Articles 19 and 38 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and, therefore, reflects and is consistent with Canada’s United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. MKO and LAB stated that the co-development of legislation by a senator and other parliamentarians with First Nations is consistent with the call for such interactions to be done on a nation-to-nation basis and consistent with the principles of reconciliation, as emphasized in the former Deputy Prime Minister’s response on December 7, 2022, to a question by Senator Loffreda during the Senate’s committee study on the former Bill C-32.

James Campbell and I attended the three-day AFN National Forum on Justice: Revitalization of First Nations Laws and Legal Orders in Vancouver this past April. It was attended by people from coast to coast to coast.

This is what I witnessed:

There were teachings that have been followed by our people that they still honour, including that one doesn’t leave until decisions have been made and that behaviour and expectation is grounded in our laws, traditions and languages.

We must be cautious that our legal orders not be overtaken by colonialism. Our laws were made illegal, unilaterally. There is a place for our laws. This is about restoring balance rather than punishment.

We are not relics of the past but living, dynamic and profound. We need to ask ourselves, “Are we perpetuating harm?”

Listen with both ears so as not to cause harm.

Living law is reasoning, not just rules. Laws are evolving and growing with us; they are living.

We have the inherent right to decide what happens on our lands and lives.

Honour our ancestors but protect those yet to come.

We need justice for earth, languages, gender, ceremonies and we must braid these all together.

We must understand what occurs when we have to enforce laws within a judicial process that is foreign to us.

Good governance and good laws are safe.

You learn justice from our ceremonies.

How did we end up with children without culture?

What is the impact of the sacredness of our laws embedded in a colonial institution?

And that is what is happening with Bill C-92 when people bring in their laws thinking it is theirs, but it is now federal law that people can get rid of or modify, and that was not their expectation.

• (2030)

First Nations are constantly given predetermined policies and laws. The assumption is that they work, but they don't. We didn't sign treaties for our demise. Justice is a belief we have. Treaties are international documents — believe in walking together.

It is critical to hold government to account. What is the promise we see in federal legislation?

Colleagues, during the recent Assembly of First Nations, or AFN, conference on justice, there were discussions on Bill C-92; enfranchisement of our women; matriarchy; women's roles in the past, present and future; human trafficking; the federal water legislation; and enforcement and prosecution of First Nation laws and bylaws.

Statements were made about how the Canadian judicial system has continuously failed us. When Europeans arrived, we didn't have institutions that put people away. There was no need. We had a system that had humanity.

As a senator, what I took from this conference was an understanding that the reality of what happened in Canada to make First Nations vulnerable — the foreign systems that were unilaterally imposed — is something that still happens today on Parliament Hill. We still don't take into account First Nations' way of being and knowing. Good governance is about safety and security for all citizens of Canada and not just to benefit a select few. Good governance is about ensuring that we have sober second thought and are not slamming legislation through.

I call on all honourable senators to fully support the self-determination and enhanced law-making powers of all First Nations in Canada. This was what was intended by Parliament through the former Bill C-428 for those First Nations who choose to exercise the law-making authority granted by the former Bill C-49, and for those First Nations under self-government agreements entered into between a First Nation and Canada.

I call on my honourable colleagues to fully support and endorse Bill S-223, to refer it to committee and to pass the proposed amendments to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act that are set out within it, which will clarify and confirm with conclusive certainty the statutory duty of the RCMP to enforce First Nations' laws.

Kinanâskomitinawow kwyes kapetameek. Thank you all for your deep listening.

The Hon. the Speaker: Will you take a question, Senator McCallum?

Senator McCallum: Yes.

Senator McPhedran: Senator McCallum, you have laid out clearly what it is that needs to be changed and why. In all your consultations, has any other way come to your attention that might remedy the very serious situation that this bill addresses?

Senator McCallum: Actually, that is in my second speech, and I will say it then, but there is no other way. We must amend the bill. In all the meetings they've had with the federal ministers, no one has wanted to tackle this. They've actually left First Nations in a very vulnerable spot. To me, it seems intentional, and I don't know why they're doing that.

What I look at is how it gives such a negative image of First Nations to the rest of Canada when they are completely unable to deal with the violence in their communities. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Patterson, debate adjourned.)

ARAB HERITAGE MONTH BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Al Zaibak, seconded by the Honourable Senator Aucoin, for the second reading of Bill S-227, An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month.

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable colleagues, I rise today to support Bill S-227, An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month.

Thank you, Senator Al Zaibak, for your many contributions to our chamber and, more broadly, to our country. As the most recent senator of Arab heritage, we welcome your commitment to the Arab-Canadian community.

Colleagues, this bill invites us not only to honour a vibrant culture but to reflect on the stories and people who shape our communities in quiet, powerful ways.

As a proud immigrant myself, I understand how deeply identity, culture and memory travel with us across oceans and across generations.

I will forever be grateful to the physicians from Libya, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Palestine with whom I had the pleasure to work. Their dedication and dignified contributions to my community left a very positive impact not only in my heart but on the well-being of my community.

For many Arab Canadians, their arrival in Canada carries with it a deep sense of hope — for safety, dignity and opportunity. But they also bring so much with them: language, cuisine, poetry, music and values grounded in family, hospitality and education.

In my work as a physician and now as a senator, I've been privileged to meet Arab Canadians from all walks of life — young people striving to make their mark, parents building a better life for their children and community leaders quietly holding things together.

I think of the Lebanese grocer who becomes a pillar in a small community, or the Syrian refugee who now treats patients in our hospitals. These are not just stories of resilience, colleagues. They are stories of contribution.

Arab culture is centuries deep, rich with history, from science and philosophy to calligraphy and architecture. But it's not just a history to be admired from afar. It lives here — in our neighbourhoods, our classrooms, our communities, our Parliament and this chamber.

I also know that celebration must go hand in hand with awareness. Arab Canadians still face barriers, stereotypes, discrimination and exclusion. So as we reflect upon the validity of this bill, we must also ask ourselves this question: Are we truly creating spaces where every child of Arab heritage feels they belong, their name is pronounced with care, their story is heard with respect and their potential is seen without limits?

Colleagues, by supporting this bill, we will be able to celebrate loudly, yes, but also listen carefully and act boldly.

To our Arab-Canadian brothers and sisters: Your stories matter. Your presence enriches us, and your heritage is not just part of Canada; it is Canada.

Shukran, thank you, *meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Wells (*Newfoundland and Labrador*), for Senator Ataullahjan, debate adjourned.)

• (2040)

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

MOTION TO AFFECT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP ADOPTED

Hon. Scott Tannas, pursuant to notice of June 17, 2025, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or previous order, the Honourable Senator Ross take the place of the Honourable Senator Smith as one of the members of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(At 8:41 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Business of the Senate | 382 |
| One Canadian Economy Bill | |
| Consideration of Subject Matter in Committee of the Whole | |
| Geoff Wood, Senior Vice-President, Policy, Canadian | |
| Trucking Alliance | 382 |
| Goldy Hyder, President and Chief Executive Officer, | |
| Business Council of Canada | 383 |
| Sean Strickland, Executive Director, Canada's Building | |
| Trades Unions. | 384 |
| Shelly Moore-Frappier, Chief, Temagami First Nation | 394 |
| Anna Johnston, Staff Lawyer, West Coast Environmental | |
| Law | 395 |
| Daniel-Robert Gooch, President and Chief Executive Officer, | |
| Association of Canadian Port Authorities | 396 |
| Fred Bellefeuille, Lawyer, Anishinabek Nation | 402 |
| Hon. Lisa Raitt, P.C., former federal cabinet minister and Co- | |
| Chair of the Coalition for a Better Future | 405 |
| Hon. Brian Gallant, former premier of New Brunswick. | 0 |
| Report of the Committee of the Whole | |
| Hon. René Cormier | 417 |
| The Senate | |
| Tributes to Pages | |
| Hon. the Speaker. | 417 |

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Deafblind Awareness Month | |
| Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler. | 417 |
| Hon. Yonah Martin | 418 |
| BRAVO Scholarship Fund | |
| Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne | 418 |
| Visitor in the Gallery | |
| Hon. the Speaker. | 419 |
| Commissioner of Indigenous Languages | |
| Hon. Judy A. White | 419 |
| The Irish Wake | |
| Hon. Fabian Manning. | 419 |
| Visitors in the Gallery | |
| Hon. the Speaker. | 420 |
| Equality Fund | |
| Hon. Paulette Senior | 420 |

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Senate | |
| Notice of Motion to Affect Sittings on June 25 to 27, 2025, | |
| and Authorize Committees to Meet During Sittings for the | |
| Purposes of Holding Their Organization Meetings | |
| Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson | 421 |
| Adjournment | |
| Notice of Motion | |
| Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson | 421 |
| Appropriation Bill No. 1, 2025-26 (Bill C-6) | |
| First Reading. | 421 |
| Appropriation Bill No. 2, 2025-26 (Bill C-7) | |
| First Reading. | 422 |
| Future of Canadian News Media | |
| Notice of Inquiry | |
| Hon. Andrew Cardozo | 422 |
| The Honourable Judith G. Seidman | |
| Notice of Inquiry | |
| Hon. Yonah Martin | 422 |

ORDERS OF THE DAY

| | |
|---|-----|
| Speech from the Throne | |
| Motion for Address in Reply—Debate Continued | |
| Hon. Suze Youance | 422 |
| National Strategy for Children and Youth Bill (Bill S-212) | |
| Second Reading | |
| Hon. Salma Ataullahjan. | 425 |
| Hon. Marnie McBean | 427 |
| Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler. | 428 |
| Referred to Committee | 429 |
| National Immigration Month Bill (Bill S-215) | |
| Second Reading | |
| Hon. Salma Ataullahjan. | 429 |
| Referred to Committee | 430 |
| Committee of Selection | |
| First Report of Committee Presented | |
| Hon. Michael L. MacDonald | 430 |
| Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System Bill (Bill S-216) | |
| Second Reading—Debate Adjourned | |
| Hon. Jim Quinn | 434 |
| National Bird of Canada Bill (Bill S-221) | |
| Second Reading—Debate Continued | |
| Hon. Amina Gerba | 436 |
| Hon. Robert Black. | 437 |

CONTENTS

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

| | PAGE | | PAGE |
|---|------|---|------|
| Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act (Bill S-223) | | Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators | |
| Bill to Amend—Second Reading—Debate Adjourned | | Motion to Affect Committee Membership Adopted | |
| Hon. Mary Jane McCallum | 438 | Hon. Scott Tannas | 444 |
| Arab Heritage Month Bill (Bill S-227) | | | |
| Second Reading—Debate Continued | | | |
| Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia | 443 | | |