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Thursday, September 25, 2025

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, September 25, 2025

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

Prayers.

[Translation]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

THE HONOURABLE SANDRA PUPATELLO

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the distinct honour to rise today to introduce the fifth and final member of the Government Representative's Office: Senator Papatello. Her title will be Chair of the Government Representative's Office.

[English]

Senator Papatello brings more than 30 years of experience in public service to her new role, including over 15 years at Queen's Park. Her corporate leadership and community engagement will be invaluable and indispensable assets to the team.

As Canada undertakes this important economic transformation, a former Minister of Economic Development and International Trade, Senator Papatello is well placed to communicate the challenges we face and to create linkages between the provinces, territories and Indigenous Peoples.

With the addition of Senator Papatello to the Government Representative's Office, or GRO, we now have a strong voice for Canada's largest province, and we ensure that the GRO has members representing all the regions of our country.

Senators, I believe it bears repeating: My role is not just to be the Government Representative in the Senate but also to be the Senate's representative to the government. Our team of five will contribute to these important responsibilities by strengthening the ties that bind the GRO with your offices.

This chamber is brimming with knowledge, expertise and political insights, and it is my wish that the GRO will help you and the government make the most of your wisdom to draft and adopt the best legislation for Canadians.

[Translation]

Over the past few days, I have met with all the Senate groups that were kind enough to invite me, and I have taken note of your suggestions and observations on how we can improve our work in the Senate and be more effective. I appreciate your openness and I assure you of mine in return.

Finally, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate our Speaker, the Honourable Raymonde Gagné, on having the tremendous honour of the insignia of Knight of the Legion of Honour bestowed upon her by the President of the French Republic.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Moreau: This award is richly deserved and highlights your remarkable role as a pioneer in defending and promoting the French language in minority communities, both here in Canada and elsewhere in the world.

On this wonderful occasion, I would also like to wish a happy Franco-Ontarian Day to everyone celebrating the 50th anniversary of their flag today. Thank you.

[English]

ELEANOR MITCHELL

Hon. Paul (PJ) Prosper: Honourable senators, on Saturday, September 27, I will be in Potlotek Mi'kmaw Nation. I will be there to honour Eleanor Mitchell. At 83 years of age, Eleanor is Potlotek's last surviving member of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School.

Eleanor, like many other Indigenous children, was subject to a cocktail of government policies and legislation that sought to tear apart the Mi'kmaq's most fundamental institution, the family unit.

The Shubenacadie Indian Residential School opened in 1929. Eleven years later, the federal government implemented a centralization policy throughout the 1940s. Centralization often involved the forceful removal of Mi'kmaw families from once-independent and self-sustaining communities. Government thought it was better to manage Indians from two communities rather than many.

Annie and John Batiste, Eleanor's parents, were forced to leave Potlotek through centralization. In dire need of reliable work, her parents brought her to the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School. She was 6 years old.

Three years later, Eleanor reunited with her family. She later married William Mitchell, and they raised their children in Boston. In 1992, with her children grown, Eleanor returned to Potlotek to take care of her aging mother.

Colleagues, there are many heroes among us, people who have the ability to traverse life's adversities and hardships, to shift their life path from surviving to thriving.

We all need people like Eleanor. They are all living examples of reconciliation through resilience. Reconciliation does not mean that Indigenous people want to be pitied. What Indigenous

people need is the wisdom, compassion and understanding that enabled you to flip the switch from surviving to thriving in your own lives.

Eleanor's story reminds us to view life as a privilege. Yesterday morning I was reminded of this privilege. I was told that my sister Joan had transitioned into the spirit world earlier that morning. In memory of Joan, I would like to quote Chief Crowfoot, who was on his deathbed at the time. He said:

In a few more moments I will be gone. It is from nowhere we come and it is to nowhere we go. What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow that runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.

Rest in peace, Joan. Wela'liq. Thank you.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Samra Zafar. She is accompanied by John Rothschild and Meseret Haileyesus. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Hay.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1340)

DR. SAMRA ZAFAR

Hon. Katherine Hay: Honourable senators and distinguished guests, today we are joined by a woman whose story is not only remarkable but also revolutionary, brave and inspiring. Dr. Samra Zafar is a living testament to the power of resilience, the strength of the human spirit and the promise of Canada.

This is her journey: from a forced marriage as a young teenager in Pakistan to arriving in Canada being married and trapped, to becoming a teenage mother with no outside support whatsoever — enduring years of domestic abuse — to knowing that she had dreams, thereby asking why she, too, could not live her dreams. Determined to have her own future, she secretly saved money — loonies and toonies at a time — pursued her high school diploma while raising two daughters and then graduated from university with the top honour: 1 in 60,000 students at the University of Toronto.

She did not stop there. She completed her master's degree and then decided in 2020 to pursue medicine. Today, she is a resident psychiatrist, a globally recognized speaker and a passionate educator, using her story to uplift others and spark change.

Her bestselling book entitled *A Good Wife: Escaping the Life I Never Chose* and her latest book entitled *Unconditional: Break Through Past Limits to Transform Your Future* chronicle this transformation with raw honesty and emotional depth. Samra

shares not just the pain she endured but also the strength she discovered, offering us all a road map to healing and empowerment.

In Canada, Samra found not just belonging but also purpose and her dreams lived.

This country's commitment to human rights, inclusion, immigration and opportunity gave her the space to rise, and she used that platform to lift others with her. She speaks boldly on mental health, authentic leadership and equity across Canada and globally. Through her advocacy and storytelling, Dr. Zafar empowers women and all people to break through barriers and find their dreams. She reminds us that lived expertise needs to have a voice at every table, every committee, every study and every piece of legislation that we deliver in the Senate.

My friend Dr. Samra Zafar is more than a hero. She reflects the best of what Canada can and should be — a place where courage is cultivated, voices are amplified and every person, whatever their path may be, can write their own story. Let us celebrate her journey, honour her contributions and continue to build a Canada where every Samra has a chance to rise.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of our former colleague the Honourable Jean-Guy Dagenais.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

LEANNA MARSHALL

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, I acknowledge the soul work of artist Leanna Marshall in her work entitled *Zaagi'idiwin: Silent, Unquestionable Act of Love* and the movement forward that comes from her teachings and the jingle dresses that she designs.

Our story as First Nations Peoples on Turtle Island has a long history. Today, I share with you an intersection where people meet to understand and explore the essence of relationships, of the deeply personal stories of connection, disconnection, then reconnection and the pain of loss — yes, I am talking about the Red Chamber. It's my deep personal story that shaped my perception of my place, then no place and then limited space in my home country. It's the social inequities, resistance and sorrow that taught me the importance of compassion and forgiveness that ultimately help to move forward to a new and more affirmative

place of being for me but also, more importantly, for the collectives whose voices I bring to the floor — and also a more affirmative place for the senators who support the work we do.

Here is our journey together on Orange Shirt Day:

our voices are vibrations
travelling a path from heart to heart
it is up to us to decipher meaning
like ancestors who had visions Seven Generations ago
tune into the reverberation
narrative stored in our DNA
memories linked to our histories
stories filtered through generations
healing stitched in fabric
hope gathers in jingle dresses
fabric gathers stories along lines of jingles
like treelines along the shores of Lake Superior
with each jingle a story is remembered
like roots running in the earth gathering strength
a full moon story
a residual memory
from life at residential school
a painful moon connects broken families
a crying moon carries the hurt
as a young girl endures pain from wicked hands
a praying moon enlightens
as a young girl's pain is remembered
with a grandmother's voice
a jingle is stitched for every day at residential school
in each stitch, jingles heal a grandmother's journey
back to a full moon of hope
there's no shortcut or bypass
the only way is to find your voice
the voice finds strength with each telling
the chords thread and stitch our lives
Remember —

— remember this, senators —

— and honour
voice, story, self.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

LATIN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, next week marks the start of Latin American Heritage Month in Canada — a time to celebrate the vibrant cultures, histories and contributions of over 1 million Canadians of Latin American origin.

From Mexico to Argentina, from the Caribbean to the Andes, the Latin American community brings with it the richness of more than 20 countries and has become an integral part of our multicultural mosaic. Whether through music, dance, community, leadership, entrepreneurship or the sharing of languages and traditions, Latin Americans are helping to change the Canada of today and also the Canada of tomorrow. The Latin American

population has tripled over the last 25 years. Young, dynamic and diverse, this community is building bridges from coast to coast to coast.

[Translation]

Latin American Heritage Month is an opportunity to recognize and highlight the many ways in which Latin Americans enrich our country. From the performers who bring our stages to life to professionals that drive our institutions forward, volunteers who strengthen community bonds, and inspirational elected officials, Latin Americans are making a real difference in every sector. All too often, however, these contributions go unnoticed, as if they were invisible. Today, however, and for all of October, we have decided to celebrate, recognize and pay tribute to them.

We should also point out the striking parallels among Indigenous peoples from all over North and South America. Both share a history of resilience, traditional knowledge, and deep respect for nature. Thank you, Senator McCallum. I really enjoyed your speech.

From the Amazon rainforest to the Canadian boreal forest, our responsibilities are closely related: We have to protect the land, water and species that migrate freely across borders, whales and marine mammals, birds like ducks and geese, and even butterflies like the monarch. By protecting biodiversity and working together with Indigenous peoples and Latin American communities, we are strengthening not only our cultural ties, but also our shared future.

[English]

Friends, next week, we will have a party on Thursday, October 2, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. I know many of you have been there, but this is a special invitation to all the new colleagues who have joined us. I invite you to join Latin American Canadians from across the country for the Latin American and Hispanic Day on the Hill at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building. Come live and experience the Latin American type of living and celebrate our community. Thank you. *Meegwetch. Gracias.*

• (1350)

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, I rise today with a deep sense of duty. On September 25, not only are we celebrating Franco-Ontarian Day, but we are also commemorating a historic milestone, specifically the 50th anniversary of the very first raising of the Franco-Ontarian flag.

As many of you know, my mother tongue is neither French nor English. This often leads me to be especially attentive to issues related to language rights, and I'm particularly concerned about the challenges associated with protecting minority languages.

The Franco-Ontarian flag, created 50 years ago by Gaétan Gervais and Michel Dupuis, is not just a visual symbol. It tells a story. The green and white colours evoke Ontario's summer and winter, and are joined by the fleur-de-lys, the symbol of the francophonie, and the trillium, the official flower of my province.

This flag quickly became a symbol of mobilization and resistance, recalling the struggles for francophone education, services and institutions.

I'm not sure if I've mentioned this before, but in my former life I had the privilege of representing Canada on the international stage. Believe me when I say that one of my greatest sources of pride was the richness of our Canadian identity, of which its francophonie is a fundamental pillar.

Today, we have an essential role to play as senators: to protect minorities and to ensure that our two official languages have an equal place in our country. May this day serve as a reminder of that responsibility and as an opportunity to affirm our support for all of our fellow French-speaking citizens. Today, we also remember that what makes Canada strong is the richness of all its languages and cultures, including Indigenous languages, whose history and vitality help make Canada what it is today.

I will continue to speak in French, even if my accent sometimes betrays me, to help carry the torch for Ontario's francophone community, and I would invite you, colleagues, to do the same. Thank you very much.

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

CRIMINAL CODE

FIRST REPORT OF LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. David Arnot, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, presented the following report:

Thursday, September 25, 2025

The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs has the honour to present its

FIRST REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-228, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sterilization procedures), has, in obedience to the order of reference of June 16, 2025, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

DAVID M. ARNOT

[Senator Boehm]

Chair

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

(On motion of Senator Boyer, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[Translation]

GORE MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

PRIVATE BILL—FIRST REPORT OF BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Clément Gignac, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy, presented the following report:

Thursday, September 25, 2025

The Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy has the honour to present its

FIRST REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-1001, An Act to authorize Gore Mutual Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec, has, in obedience to the order of reference of June 11, 2025, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

CLÉMENT GIGNAC

Chair

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

(On motion of Senator Clement, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[English]

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING BILL

FIRST READING

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan introduced Bill S-235, An Act respecting the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

ANNUAL PARLIAMENTARY HEARING AT THE UNITED NATIONS:
PUTTING AN END TO CONFLICTS: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A
PEACEFUL FUTURE, FEBRUARY 8-9, 2024—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations: Putting an End to Conflicts: Prescriptions for a Peaceful Future, held in New York, New York, United States of America, from February 8 to 9, 2024.

ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS, MARCH 23-27, 2024—
REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the One Hundred and Forty-eighth IPU Assembly and Related Meetings, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from March 23 to 27, 2024.

PARLIAMENTARY FORUM AT THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL
POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
JULY 16, 2024—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Parliamentary Forum at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held in New York, New York, United States of America, on July 16, 2024.

GLOBAL CONFERENCE OF YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS,
SEPTEMBER 12-14, 2024—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Tenth IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians, held in Yerevan, Armenia, from September 12 to 14, 2024.

ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS, OCTOBER 13-17, 2024—
REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the One Hundred and Forty-ninth IPU Assembly and Related Meetings, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from October 13 to 17, 2024.

EXPERT CONSULTATION: PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT IN
DIGITAL POLICY, OCTOBER 18, 2024—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning Expert Consultation: Parliamentary Engagement in Digital Policy, held in Geneva, Switzerland, on October 18, 2024.

MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE SIXTH
WORLD CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT,
OCTOBER 18, 2024—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Second Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, held in Geneva, Switzerland, on October 18, 2024.

ANNUAL PARLIAMENTARY HEARING AT THE UNITED NATIONS:
SCALING UP ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOALS: FINANCE, INSTITUTIONS, AND POLITICS,
FEBRUARY 13-14, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations: Scaling up action for the Sustainable Development Goals: Finance, Institutions, and Politics, held in New York, New York, United States of America, from February 13 to 14, 2025.

• (1400)

PARLIAMENTARY MEETING ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIXTY-
NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN,
MARCH 11, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Parliamentary Meeting on the Occasion of the Sixty-ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York, New York, United States of America, on March 11, 2025.

GLOBAL CONFERENCE OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS,
MARCH 13-16, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians, held in Mexico City, Mexico, from March 13 to 16, 2025.

ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS, APRIL 5-9, 2025—
REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the concerning the One Hundred and Fiftieth IPU Assembly and Related Meetings, held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from April 5 to 9, 2025.

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE COMMITTEE TO STUDY
MATTERS RELATING TO THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Hon. Michèle Audette: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, in accordance with rule 12-7(15), be authorized to examine and report on any matters relating to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada;

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 15, 2029, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report; and

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit its reports relating to this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate.

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY
VOICES OF YOUTH INDIGENOUS LEADERS EVENTS AND REFER
PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF THE
FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Michèle Audette: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the Voices of Youth Indigenous Leaders events;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples as part of its study on the federal government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and any other subject concerning Indigenous Peoples during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament be referred to the committee;

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2027, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report; and

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit its reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate.

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON
THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT, 2021 AND REFER
PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH
PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Michèle Audette: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, 2021, by Canada and First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, including, but not limited to, any of the priorities raised within the Government of Canada's *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan* for 2023;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples on this subject during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament be referred to the committee;

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report; and

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit its reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate.

BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY MATTERS RELATING TO
BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY GENERALLY

Hon. Clément Gignac: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(a), I move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy, in accordance with rule 12-7(10), be authorized to study matters relating to banking, trade and the economy generally; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than December 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings until 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO FOREIGN RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE GENERALLY

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(a), I move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, in accordance with rule 12-7(6), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to foreign relations and international trade generally; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2027.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GENERALLY

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, on behalf of the Honourable Senator Moodie, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, she will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, in accordance with rule 12-7(11), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to social affairs, science and technology generally;

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit its reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate; and

That the committee submit its final report on this study to the Senate no later than October 15, 2029, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, Question Period will begin at 3:30 p.m.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of September 24, 2025, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1410)

[English]

UKRAINIAN HERITAGE MONTH BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Kutcher, seconded by the Honourable Senator Boehm, for the second reading of Bill S-210, An Act respecting Ukrainian Heritage Month.

Hon. Denise Batters: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-210. I'm pleased to make this speech during the month of September, as this bill would designate September as the annual Ukrainian heritage month in Canada.

Canada has the second-largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world at 1.4 million people. Celebrating a Ukrainian heritage month would give us an opportunity to appreciate the historical contributions of Ukrainian Canadians towards the building of Canada and to build unbreakable bonds between Ukraine and Canada through the passing down of vibrant Ukrainian cultural practices and traditions through generations. This is especially important now, with Ukraine engaged in a fight for its very survival in the face of Vladimir Putin's illegal Russian invasion.

Initiatives like this will strengthen Ukrainian cultural expression among the diaspora community, promoting support for Ukraine at a time when it needs it most. People may have become desensitized to this horrific war, which has lasted now for three and a half years. Increased discussion about Ukraine is a way to boost awareness of the conflict and illustrate the vibrant and distinct Ukrainian culture that Putin seeks to destroy.

As I have previously mentioned, the subject of Ukrainian heritage month is especially important to me as I am of 100% Ukrainian descent. I grew up immersed in Regina's thriving Ukrainian-Canadian community. Ukrainian heritage and traditions were front and centre in our family home. We celebrated Ukrainian holidays, ate Ukrainian food and were and continue to be members of a Ukrainian Catholic church. My three sisters and I danced in Ukrainian troupes for many years, attended Ukrainian school classes and even acquired some Ukrainian language skills.

All our grandparents were from Ukraine. Three of the four of them migrated to Canada through Pier 21 in Halifax. The fourth — my grandfather — was born to parents who had emigrated to Canada via Ellis Island in New York the previous year. Their immigrant stories may echo those in your own family history, regardless of ethnicity or region. They left Ukraine for a new life in North America, settling in the vast expanse of the Canadian Prairies, a land offering untold opportunity and freedom from tyranny.

Ukrainian immigrants came to Canada in three large waves in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first came in the 1890s, many of them farmers emigrating from western Ukraine to Western Canada, where land was advertised as free and plentiful. My own ancestors came to Canada during this first wave. Out of the desolate wilderness, Ukrainian immigrants cultivated not only productive farmland, but vibrant Ukrainian communities centred around religious and family traditions.

Xenophobia during World War I led to a dark and tragic chapter for Ukrainian Canadians. When the War Measures Act was invoked in 1914, Ukrainians and other "enemy aliens" from the Austro-Hungarian Empire had to register and report regularly to the police. Their basic rights were taken away, including to freedom of movement and association and, in 1917, their right to vote.

Sadly, nearly 8,600 Eastern European immigrants, around 5,000 of them Ukrainian, were imprisoned in Canadian internment or forced labour camps. After World War I ended, a second wave of Ukrainian immigrants came to Canada in the 1920s. It consisted of more farmers, but also labourers, professionals and industrial workers.

A third wave arrived after the Second World War and consisted largely of political refugees fleeing Russia and its dictator Joseph Stalin. Millions of Ukrainians died in a period of famine, violence and collective suffering orchestrated by Stalin, known as Holodomor. That, along with the aftermath of World War II, led many Ukrainians to flee persecution for the shelter of safer countries abroad, including Canada.

In our present day, Canada has continued to provide safe refuge for Ukrainians fleeing conflict in their homeland, including after Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014. Since Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Canada has welcomed nearly 300,000 Ukrainians fleeing this devastating and unjustified Russian aggression. Thank you to all the Canadians who have so kindly supported Ukrainian refugees fleeing this war, either financially or by volunteering to aid with their settlement in Canada.

Canada and Ukraine have shared a special relationship for the last 130 years, one of friendship, support and steadfast loyalty. It is a relationship forged on the common values of freedom, democracy and an unfailing commitment to optimism and hard work.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated during his historic address to the Canadian Parliament in September 2023:

The Ukrainian Canadian community is about millions of Ukrainian destinies that have become the destiny of Canada with all its diversity of communities.

Freedom-loving. Courage. Our special inner call for justice. The ability of our people to share comfort wherever they go, to build and create not to ruin or humiliate.

He continued, stating:

Ukraine and Canada are the same — we stand and we fight for life.

When President Zelenskyy came to address Parliament, I had the profound honour of meeting him. I was incredibly proud to welcome him to our Parliament wearing the traditional Ukrainian blouse of my *Boonya* — or grandmother — the one she had hand embroidered right before she sailed from Ukraine to her new life in Canada 100 years ago. This cultural artifact had made its way from her lifetime to mine. It was an indivisible thread linking her world in Ukraine to my own in Canada. It was the moment of a lifetime, emblematic of not only our treasured family history but of the shared values between nations and the wisdom and traditions passed from one generation to another.

This is why the celebration of our cultural heritage is so crucial. It brings us to moments like that, when we as Canadians can reflect upon the bravery our ancestors demonstrated in forging a new path and the sacrifices they and millions of immigrants made in helping to build their new country of Canada.

A national Ukrainian heritage month is an opportunity to offer our thanks to all the Ukrainian Canadians who have kept Ukrainian heritage alive and thriving in Canada for 130 years: the Ukrainian community groups, cultural associations and foundations and countless workers and volunteers who operate Ukrainian churches, schools, museums, archives, festivals, folk dance troupes and choirs, to name only some. Our Ukrainian-Canadian communities — and, in fact, all Canadians — are the fortunate beneficiaries of their tireless efforts.

It is also an opportunity to thank and remember brave Ukrainian immigrants like my grandmother, who came to Canada by herself as a very young woman 100 years ago on a big ship, aptly named the RMS *Regina*, not knowing a word of English. All she brought with her was what she could fit in a trunk.

Many thousands of Ukrainian immigrants came to Canada to clear the land and farm, often in harsh, unforgiving conditions and with rudimentary implements. Many of them first lived on the desolate prairies in sod huts. Survival alone was difficult. But they didn't just survive; they thrived, and with their work ethic, they excelled in agriculture, business, politics, sports and many other spheres of life in their new home.

These Ukrainian immigrants built bustling communities. A church was often the first major community structure they built, reflecting the centrality of their religion to their Ukrainian culture. The often breathtakingly beautiful, intricately decorated Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic churches were the hubs of the community. These were where children would become educated in the catechism of these religions, and where members of the community would attend events; sing in choirs; or serve as altar servers, deacons or priests for the congregation. They built parish halls to host Ukrainian community events and hold weddings, funerals, receptions, dances and Christmas concerts.

• (1420)

Often, the children of these communities would attend Ukrainian school to learn Ukrainian language, history and cultural traditions. Of course, I can attest to the fact that not every student was necessarily always appreciative of the many benefits of Ukrainian school while enrolled in it. I remember many Saturday mornings ruing that I was missing the cartoons that were only on TV once a week — remember that? — or the many times I had to miss the most fun elementary school classes to attend Ukrainian school during the week.

Still, we owe a debt to the teachers and parents who kept the sometimes-grumbling students attending for understanding that Ukrainian cultural education was more important to building the children's character than Bugs Bunny was.

The tradition of dance also features prominently in Ukrainian Canadian communities. Dancers, parents, teachers and group founders and organizers devote thousands of hours, most on a voluntary basis, to create the stunning performances by Ukrainian community dance troupes at significant cultural festivals and celebrations. Until recently, the many intricately decorated costumes required for these performances were sewn by parents, namely mothers. These are now more often purchased directly from seamstresses in Ukraine, which has the added benefit of supporting Ukraine in these challenging times.

The dances themselves illustrate the spirit of Ukraine come to life. They tell of Ukrainian history, love and heartbreak, warriors, survival and family.

Large Ukrainian festivals have become a key part of Canada's cultural landscape. Canada's National Ukrainian Festival in Dauphin, Manitoba, the largest in this country, celebrated 60 years this past summer. Winnipeg's Folklorama, with its sizable Ukrainian pavilion, has run since 1970. The Bloor West Village Toronto Ukrainian Festival is the largest Ukrainian street festival in North America. Edmonton's UFest, Saskatoon's Ukrainian Day in the Park and the Ukrainian Karpaty Pavilion at Saskatoon's Folkfest are other major displays of Ukrainian culture in Canada.

For 55 years, my home city of Regina has hosted an annual multicultural festival known as Mosaic, and the Kyiv Ukrainian Pavilion has been a key part of that festival's history and success. I performed with my dance groups at the Kyiv Ukrainian Pavilion at Mosaic from the time I was a small child and continued to do so throughout my teenage years, and I've attended Mosaic with my family and friends for as long as I can remember. I was honoured to represent Regina's Ukrainian community as Miss Kiev and our Kyiv Ukrainian Pavilion's youth ambassador for two years.

These massive Ukrainian cultural festivals rely on countless volunteers, including organizers, performers, parents, fundraisers, and cooks, which usually means an army of Ukrainian babas making perogies. Many of these festivals and cultural exhibitions are organized and funded by significant Ukrainian Canadian organizations, with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress being perhaps the largest. This umbrella organization consists of local, provincial and national Ukrainian groups across Canada and has existed for 85 years. It supports Ukraine, encourages leadership and advocacy within the Ukrainian Canadian community and fosters many philanthropic, heritage and cultural initiatives across the country.

Some of those initiatives include museums and exhibitions of Ukrainian culture. Notably, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has helped fundraise for the reopening of the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village near Tofield, Alberta, after that treasured cultural site was partially destroyed by fire this past spring.

The Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village is an interactive village experience of many heritage buildings, with costumed interpreters portraying daily life in a historical Ukrainian Canadian village. The devastation wrought by fire at the village is a reminder of just how important the preservation of Ukrainian Canadian heritage is. When the site's visitor welcome buildings burned down, the fire consumed many irreplaceable heritage furnishings and artifacts housed there. Sadly, the original research regarding the collection of heritage buildings was lost in the fire. Thankfully, other research materials and resources held at other locations and already partly digitized survived, as did the priceless heritage buildings so important to the site. The Ukrainian Heritage Cultural Village was closed for this summer season but hopes to reopen soon.

Much of the preservation and transmission of Ukrainian heritage, as in other ethnicities, occurs largely in the home. Grandparents and parents — but if I can say, especially mothers and grandmothers — are the guardians of family heritage. It was this way in our family. My mom was the keeper of our Ukrainian family history, our memories and traditions. She embroidered and sewed our many intricate Ukrainian dance costumes, and they were seemingly endless with four daughters in Ukrainian dance at the same time. She ferried all four of us back and forth to our frequent dance practices and performances, too. My mom and grandmothers, Boonya and Baba, taught us to make traditional Ukrainian food, following unwritten recipes they'd learned from their own mothers, including borscht; perogies, or *perohs*; cabbage rolls, or *holubtsi*; and *kutia*, a traditional wheat soup.

As with many ethnic communities, food is central to the expression of Ukrainian culture in Canada. Many of the Ukrainian dishes used in family celebrations and holidays, such as Christmas or Easter, stem from religious symbolism. For the Easter meal from the blessed baskets, for example, eggs symbolize life, butter is carved into the shape of a lamb to represent the Lamb of God, and a rich, circular bread called *paska*, served with salt, symbolizes good will and hospitality. Elements of design used to decorate Ukrainian Easter eggs, or *pysanky*, are also derived from Ukrainian religious traditions. A straight line around the egg represents eternity, dots are for the Virgin Mary's tears, and a sieve symbolizes that which divides good and evil.

Many traditional Ukrainian dishes have become so intertwined with Canadian culture that they are now also considered Canadian favourites as well. This is certainly the case in the Prairies. Perogies, *kubasa*, which is a Ukrainian garlic sausage, and cabbage rolls are standard fare at Saskatchewan community hall banquets, celebrations, including wedding receptions, and church basement potluck dinners.

So it is important that Canada take every opportunity to support and celebrate Ukrainian Canadian culture. Passing these traditions from one generation to the next, from the Old World to the New World, fundamentally changes and strengthens our own Canadian culture.

The transmission of culture can also serve as an act of defiant political resistance. Currently, Russian dictator Vladimir Putin has intentionally sought to disrupt and destroy Ukrainian heritage as a method of warfare. He outright denies the existence of a

distinct Ukrainian culture. Putin has attempted to undermine Ukrainian pride, strength and continuity because they are the very elements that have made Ukrainian resistance to Russia's aggression so constant and effective.

Putin's war on Ukrainian culture is meant to extinguish the Ukrainian spirit and memory. Like the Nazis in World War II, Russian forces destroy Ukrainian books as they invade and occupy Ukrainian territory, looting and plundering historical museum artifacts, artworks and cultural treasures. The intent is to assimilate the Ukrainian people into Russian culture and to prevent the passing of Ukrainian customs and traditions on to the next generations.

It is no coincidence that one of Putin's early acts of war on the Ukrainian people was the forced deportation of thousands of civilians and, most shamefully, the kidnapping of Ukrainian children from their families and their forced adoption into Russian families across the border. The heart of culture, the heart of identity, is the home, the family, in particular, the bond between parent and child. It is within the family that traditions are held close. It is there that culture, history and language are passed on to future generations, creating an unbreakable bond between the ancestors of yesterday and today's modern civilization.

My Ukrainian ancestors endured harsh challenges, not the least of which was seeking an unknown destiny on the unforgiving Canadian prairies. Their hopes and dreams, their optimism and their commitment to hard work and family helped forge their path in a new world. And those values were passed on to us through family celebrations, customs and traditions, through Ukrainian cultural festivals and Ukrainian religious ceremonies and practices. Thousands of Ukrainian Canadian families just like my own contributed to the building of strong communities within Canada, weaving that knowledge into the tapestry of Canada's social and cultural fabric.

That is why the recognition of a national Ukrainian heritage month is important. It is through the celebration of shared Ukrainian culture that we strengthen that link not only between our ancestors and our modern reality but also between the ancestral homeland of Ukraine and our strong and free nation of Canada.

The bravery inherent in the Ukrainian spirit is strong. In 2014, I travelled to Kyiv as part of the Canadian government's mission as an observer of Ukraine's presidential elections. I was humbled to walk the Maidan in Kyiv where, only three months earlier, brave Ukrainians stood their ground, demonstrating for democracy, and more than 100 Ukrainians died there in the struggle to force that very election.

Putin's full-scale invasion into Ukraine in 2022 only galvanized the resolve of the Ukrainian people for their independent future. Putin initially expected the takeover of Ukraine to take three days. Yet, here we are three and a half years later, and Ukraine is still holding strong in this immense conflict. I remember watching news footage of the Ukrainians in the early months of that invasion, dancing and singing in subway bomb shelters underground as Russian bombs flew above. As they celebrated their distinct Ukrainian culture, their hope and their strength in the face of adversity, it was a testament to the

Ukrainian spirit to “fight like Ukrainians.” It was recognition of the fact that no matter the odds stacked against them, Ukrainians are committed to hope and to a free and democratic future. Their joy and celebration are proof that the evil dictator Putin will never quash the spirit of the Ukrainian people.

• (1430)

A yearning for freedom has always stirred in the Ukrainian heart. It was the desire for liberation from persecution and the desire for better opportunities for their children and grandchildren that spurred hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian immigrants to leave behind their homeland and, in many cases, their relatives to forge a brighter future in the New World.

The freedom of religion offered in democracies like Canada was especially attractive to Ukrainians suffering under an autocratic government in Russia and later under the communist Soviet Union cracking down on the freedom to worship. In some cases, they punished and imprisoned Ukrainians who dared to practise their religion.

As the friendly critic of this legislation, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention that I still think “freedom” should be specifically included in this bill. I noted this in both my second reading speech and third reading speech when we debated this bill as Bill S-276 in the last parliamentary session. I am dismayed that Senator Kutcher, this bill’s sponsor, has still failed to highlight “freedom” in this new but identically worded iteration. Freedom is a major shared value between Ukraine and Canada, and it should be listed as such.

The iconic Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko wrote in 1839:

Love your dear Ukraine, adore her,
Love her . . . in fierce times of evil,
In the last dread hour of struggle . . .

Ukraine faces a fierce time of evil now, as it struggles for its very existence against the murderous tyrant Putin. Ukrainians will succeed against adversity as they always have — whether they’re facing war or an uncertain future on a new shore — through hope, resilience and a sheer determination to survive.

Ukrainians will derive strength for their fight by holding on to their culture and traditions passed down through generations, as well as from the support from nations around the world who remain their steadfast allies, including Canada.

Ukrainians have proven time and again their willingness to risk everything to obtain freedom and democracy. That is why it’s so vital that we continue to support them in their fight for their very survival.

Sometimes that support has repercussions, such as in 2022 when Russia banned several Canadians who had been outspoken in support of Ukraine. Many Canadian politicians were on that list, and I was gratified to find that I was one of them. As someone who grew up Ukrainian-Canadian, it is an honour for me to proclaim loudly my support for Ukraine from a national platform through my parliamentary work.

As Canadians, we should take every opportunity to show our support for Ukraine and to recognize our countries’ joint heritage and destiny. That is one of the reasons why I will be supporting this bill to establish a national Ukrainian heritage month. We should take this additional opportunity to thank the stewards of Ukrainian-Canadian culture and celebrate the rich traditions and history that have helped to build Canada during the last 130 years. I hope you will join me in supporting this bill.

Thank you. *Dyakoyu. Slava Ukraini.*

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

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

(On motion of Senator Kutcher, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.)

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia moved second reading of Bill S-234, An Act respecting a national framework for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today as the sponsor of Bill S-234, An Act respecting a national framework for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. This is a bill that I believe addresses one of the most pressing yet chronically overlooked public health and social justice issues in this country: fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, commonly known as FASD.

This is a national issue that touches multiple jurisdictions and intersects with multiple systems — health, education, child welfare and corrections — and it impacts thousands of our citizens across every region, every background and every generation.

This is a subject that is particularly important to me, as I know it is to many of my colleagues here. It is a subject that I became well acquainted with as a rural family physician.

As I reintroduce this bill during FASD Awareness Month, I would like to express my gratitude to Senator Pat Duncan. Senator Duncan has been involved with this disorder’s community in the Yukon for decades, and she has shared her experience and expertise on this issue. Thank you, Pat.

I would also like to thank Senator Anderson and Senator Christmas for their sage advice as I worked through this bill. I thank all of you in this chamber for your support and consideration of this topic during the last Parliament.

Colleagues, Bill S-234 was developed through extensive consultation with the Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network which is a collaborative, interdisciplinary research network with partners across the nation.

The network brings together a diverse array of professionals: academics, specialists in women's health, individuals who are involved with criminal justice, developmental pediatricians, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and Indigenous advisers.

My thanks to Dr. Lori Cox, the Director of Eastern Door Centre in Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick, for her feedback and dedicated work in this area.

• (1440)

September is FASD Awareness Month. We use this time to create conversations, support prevention and recognize the strengths of people affected by FASD.

This is a lifelong disability resulting from prenatal alcohol exposure. When alcohol is consumed during pregnancy, it can alter the development of the brain and body of the fetus, leading to a spectrum of cognitive, behavioural and physical challenges.

Honourable colleagues, I want to be very clear: This is not an issue of morality; it is a matter of public health. People who give birth may not know that they are pregnant, may not be aware of the risks or may struggle with addiction, trauma or a lack of support.

The disorder is often misunderstood, misdiagnosed or — tragically — missed altogether, but the consequences are far-reaching and include memory impairment, poor impulse control, difficulty understanding consequences, executive function challenges, learning disabilities and increased rates of mental illness.

Estimates suggest that a relatively large percentage of Canadians may be living with FASD, making it more prevalent than autism, Down's syndrome and cerebral palsy. Yet, the level of awareness, investment and coordinated response remains far too low.

Colleagues, the purpose of this bill is threefold: to establish a national framework for FASD; to ensure consistent access to diagnosis, prevention and support services across the provinces and territories; and to recognize it as a national public health and social policy priority.

The bill does not overstep provincial jurisdiction. It does not dictate service delivery models. What it does is create the structure, leadership and federal coordination necessary to support provinces, territories and Indigenous governments in addressing FASD in a coherent, evidence-based and compassionate manner.

The bill calls for development of public awareness and prevention campaigns that are culturally appropriate, trauma-informed and accessible in both official languages as well as Indigenous languages when possible.

We need to move away from fear-based, stigmatizing messaging. Instead, we must provide honest, non-judgmental information about alcohol and pregnancy and support for those struggling with substance use, including access to addiction services and wraparound prenatal care.

The bill also encourages mandatory training for health care providers, educators and frontline service workers so that prevention is not just a poster on a wall but part of everyday practice.

Far too many Canadians with FASD go undiagnosed or are misdiagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, conduct disorder or oppositional defiance. Without proper identification, they miss out on the supports that could fundamentally change their lives and trajectory.

The bill promotes the establishment of FASD diagnostic clinics across Canada with a particular focus on underserved areas, including rural, remote and northern communities. It calls for interdisciplinary diagnostic teams that include physicians, psychologists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists and social workers.

Diagnosis is, in fact, the gateway to intervention. Without it, families are left to navigate a complex system, often being blamed for their child's behaviour rather than being supported in managing it. It does not end at childhood. This is a lifelong condition, and yet very few programs are designed to support adolescents and adults with FASD.

This bill mandates collaboration across federal departments, including the Department of Justice Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, Public Safety Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada to develop informed policies in areas that include education and individualized learning plans, youth and adult corrections, mental health services, housing and employment support, foster and kinship care, and income assistance programs.

We know from the data that individuals with FASD are vastly overrepresented in the child welfare system, the criminal justice system and among Canadians experiencing homelessness. These are not inevitable outcomes. They are the result of systemic failure, and it is our duty to act.

Honourable colleagues, it is impossible to have a meaningful conversation about FASD in Canada without recognizing the disproportionate impact it has had on many First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, in Call to Action 33, called for the provision of culturally safe, community-based, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder diagnostic, intervention and prevention services in Indigenous communities.

Today, a decade later, there remain significant gaps and disparities across the country in addressing these areas.

But, colleagues, Indigenous leaders and communities are not only affected; they are also leading innovative, culturally grounded FASD initiatives. An example of this is the Eastern Door Centre, which recognizes the importance of early diagnosis and support to change the lifelong outcomes for individuals and their families. A national framework would support scaling up and appropriately adapting such successful models across the country.

This bill affirms that any national strategy on FASD must be developed in full partnership with Indigenous Peoples, respecting the principles of self-determination, truth and reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The cost of inaction, colleagues, is staggering. Studies estimate that the lifetime cost of supporting one individual with FASD can exceed \$1.5 million, and this includes health care, education, corrections and lost productivity. By contrast, early diagnosis and support can dramatically reduce these costs, not only in dollars, but in human suffering.

FASD affects Canadians in every region, of every background and across all socio-economic groups. It affects urban and rural areas, Indigenous and non-Indigenous families and crosses all political lines.

Many challenges and opportunities to strengthen Canada's approach to FASD were recently highlighted in a report released in June 2025 by the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. This assessment of the current landscape in Canada was commissioned by the Public Health Agency of Canada. I take this as a signal of their willingness to move forward with a national framework approach to improve outcomes through prevention, education, diagnosis and supports.

Colleagues, let us be clear: This bill will not solve every challenge related to FASD, but it is an important starting point. It will establish national leadership; it will provide coordination and consistency; and it will begin to close the gaps through which too many families have fallen for far too long.

Let us recognize that individuals with FASD are not broken. They are not problems to be managed. They are citizens with rights, potential and enormous capacity if we build the systems that allow them to thrive.

Colleagues, let this bill be the moment we stop asking families to carry this burden alone. Let this be the moment where we say, "Yes, we see you, we hear you and we are ready to act."

I respectfully urge you to support this bill as it moves through this chamber and to join me in giving this issue the national attention, leadership and care it has so long deserved.

Colleagues, despite your urge to give me a standing ovation, I urge you to remain seated. Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Will Senator Ravalia take a question?

Senator Ravalia: With pleasure.

Senator Osler: Thank you for your speech.

The national framework must set out a strategy to increase awareness of the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder can be prevented by not consuming alcohol during pregnancy.

• (1450)

Can you comment on labels on alcoholic beverages warning about the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy?

Senator Ravalia: This is an issue I have had the pleasure of discussing with Senator Brazeau, who you know is working closely on this file. Jointly, we hope to come up with a strategy to include these important warning labels on alcoholic products.

(On motion of Senator Ataullahjan, debate adjourned.)

HUMAN RIGHTS

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Paulette Senior, pursuant to notice of September 24, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on aging out of foster care;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament as part of its study of such issues as may arise from time to time related to human rights generally be referred to the committee;

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit its reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY ANTISEMITISM AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH SESSION TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Paulette Senior, pursuant to notice of September 24, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on antisemitism in Canada;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament as part of its study of such issues as may arise from time to time related to human rights generally be referred to the committee;

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit its reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO HUMAN RIGHTS GENERALLY

Hon. Paulette Senior, pursuant to notice of September 24, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, in accordance with rule 12-7(16), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to human rights in general;

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit its reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 15, 2029, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES GENERALLY

Hon. Allister W. Surette, pursuant to notice of September 24, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, in accordance with rule 12-7(5), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to official languages generally; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 15, 2029, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY MINORITY-LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES

Hon. Allister W. Surette, pursuant to notice of September 24, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages be authorized to examine and report on minority-language health services, including matters related to the following:

- (a) the inclusion of language clauses in federal health transfers;
- (b) population aging, including the ability to obtain health care, long-term care and home care in one's own language, which encompasses linguistic resources to support caregivers, the quality of life of seniors and disease prevention;
- (c) access to minority-language health services for vulnerable communities;

- (d) the shortage of health professionals in public and private facilities serving official language minority communities and the language skills of health care personnel in these facilities;
- (e) the needs of francophone post-secondary institutions outside Quebec and anglophone post-secondary institutions in Quebec respecting recruitment, training and support for future graduates in health-related fields;
- (f) telemedicine and the use of new technologies in the health sector, including the associated language challenges; and
- (g) the needs for research, evidence and solutions to foster access to health care in the language of one's choice;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages on this subject during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than March 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE GENERALLY

Hon. Josée Verner, pursuant to notice of September 24, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, in accordance with rule 12-7(14), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to energy, the environment, natural resources and climate change; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 15, 2029, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

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

That the sitting be suspended to the call of the chair, with the bells to ring for five minutes before the sitting resumes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (1530)

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, it is now 3:30 p.m. Before proceeding to Question Period with the minister, I would like to remind you of the time limits the Senate established for questions and answers in the order of June 4, 2025.

When the Senate receives a minister for Question Period, as is the case today, the length of a main question is limited to one minute, and the answer to one minute and 30 seconds. The supplementary question and answer are each limited to 45 seconds. In all these cases, the reading clerk stands 10 seconds before the time expires.

I will now ask the minister to enter and take his seat.

QUESTION PERIOD

(Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, to receive a Minister of the Crown, the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, appeared before honourable senators during Question Period.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, today we have with us for Question Period the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, to respond to questions concerning his ministerial responsibilities.

On behalf of all senators, I welcome the minister.

Minister, as I have noted to the Senate, a main question is limited to one minute, and your response to one minute and 30 seconds. The question and answer for a supplementary question are both limited to 45 seconds. The reading clerk stands 10 seconds before these times expire. I ask everyone to respect these times. Question period will last 64 minutes.

[Translation]

MINISTRY OF CANADIAN HERITAGE

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Welcome, minister. The Commissioner of Official Languages plays a vital role in protecting the language rights of Canadians. Last January, you extended his term by six months until July, and now it has been extended by another six months. This is reminiscent of your government's fiasco when you kept an acting commissioner in office for nearly two years while you tried to appoint a close Liberal friend, Madeleine Meilleur. Minister, are these delays happening because you are once again trying to appoint a Liberal to a position that should be impartial?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for your question. Honourable senators, I'm very pleased to be here today. I think this is the fourth or fifth time that I have appeared before the Senate as a minister since I took office in 2019.

Senator, I do not agree with you at all. Our government has done more than any other federal government for official languages in Canada. We modernized the Official Languages Act. We invested \$4 billion in official languages, which is an all-time record in Canada. For the first time in the history of the country, we met the target of 4% francophone immigration outside Quebec. Several governments tried unsuccessfully to meet that target, but we succeeded. We will be at 7% by the end of the year, and our goal is to reach 12% by 2029 in terms of francophone immigration outside Quebec, a level that will enable French-speaking communities outside Quebec to maintain and even increase their numbers. This will also enable us to build increasingly resilient and vibrant French-speaking communities across the country.

I would also like to give a shout-out to all Franco-Ontarians today as they celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Franco-Ontarian flag.

Senator Housakos: Minister, while the government is tinkering with the interim appointment of a Commissioner of Official Languages, it is doing exactly the same with the Parliamentary Budget Officer, another officer of Parliament whose term of office was extended in piecemeal fashion.

Why does your government have so much difficulty appointing officers of Parliament within a reasonable amount of time? Can you promise us that the government will appoint a new Commissioner of Official Languages by the end of the year? This is not just about money: The Commissioner of Official Languages position is very important.

Mr. Guilbeault: Senator, Canada's official languages cannot be safeguarded without investing money. I don't see how it can be done any other way. Whether we're talking about Quebec's English-speaking minority or francophone minorities outside Quebec, unless we invest in our official languages, we will miss the mark. Only historic investments will put these communities on a better footing. Of course, other challenges will remain.

To answer your question, I have extended the commissioner's term just once, considering that I was only appointed as Minister of Official Languages after the last election. As for a commitment to appoint a new commissioner by the end of the year, the answer is yes.

[English]

PATRIOTIC SYMBOLS

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Minister Guilbeault, just before we rose for the summer, I tabled an Order Paper question about the use of patriotic symbols like Canadian flags or pins by federal public servants and Crown corporation employees.

Over the summer, I received the government's response: No federal department, agency or Crown corporation, including Canada Post, has policies preventing employees from displaying such symbols at work. Yet, a Canada Post employee in Montreal was bullied and harassed by colleagues for months and even reprimanded by management simply for displaying a Canadian flag at his work station. He was forced to take it down and ultimately went on health leave.

Minister, how was this allowed to happen, especially when we should be celebrating our sovereignty and our national pride? What will you do to ensure that federal employees can proudly display the Canadian flag without fear of reprisal?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: I am not the minister responsible for Canada Post; that would be my colleague, Minister Lightbound.

What I can tell you is that, as minister for Canadian Heritage, I am also responsible for Parks Canada. People are certainly encouraged to display symbols of Canadian unity, such as the flag, or symbols representing Parks Canada, which is one of the most widely recognized and admired federal entities. I will forward your question about that specific matter to my colleague, Mr. Lightbound, because I don't have that information.

[English]

Senator Housakos: Minister, you are the minister responsible for Canadian Heritage and for defending our national identity. Minister, this employee has now returned to work but was forced to take his flag down and even change locations because of the harassment he suffered.

All Canadians deserve a clear response from you here today. Will you assure us that this employee will be free from harassment or retaliation going forward and that he and others are free to display the Canadian flag in all public corporations, Crown corporations and our public service?

[Translation]

Mr. Guilbeault: As I said just now, I don't have any information about that particular incident, so I won't comment on a matter I'm not familiar with.

MODERNIZATION OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Hon. Allister W. Surette: Hello, minister, and thank you for joining us this afternoon.

Under the accountability framework that has been in place since the modernization of the Official Languages Act in 2023, it is the President of the Treasury Board, your colleague Minister Ali, who leads the implementation of the act within the federal government, in consultation with other ministers, and who ensures its good governance. Your role as Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages is a little more specific. To be clear, your role is to advance the equality of status and the use of French and English in Canadian society in general.

• (1540)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for the question. Three sets of regulations are being drafted for the application of the modernized Official Languages Act. My department is responsible for two of them, and my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, is responsible for the third. We are working closely together. Two of the three regulations will be published in the coming weeks. We still have some work to do on the third, but it will be published by the end of the year.

Senator Surette: Since the responsibility for implementing the Official Languages Act is shared and your mandate involves advancing language equality, do you see a conflict between your role and that of the Treasury Board?

Mr. Guilbeault: Not at all. I think that the work that we have to do and our responsibilities are complementary. Our teams talk every week to ensure that the three different regulations are properly aligned so that the new version of the Official Languages Act can really take off.

[English]

BROADCASTING ACT

Hon. Paula Simons: Minister, in the period between the first and second times that you were Minister of Heritage, we passed Bill C-11. In it, we included a privacy amendment, as suggested by the Privacy Commissioner, to protect the online data of Canadians. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to us, that privacy provision was removed from the legislation mere months after the Senate voted for it to be there. That excision was only discovered in late August, by the academic Michael Geist.

Can you please tell us how those important privacy provisions came to be removed from the legislation and what steps your government is taking to ensure that such a mistake never happens again?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for the question. I don't have this information in front of me, despite this very thick binder that I brought, but I can certainly commit to you and all other senators to finding this information and providing it to the Senate.

You might have heard my colleague Minister Solomon, the minister responsible for artificial intelligence, talk recently about the necessity of working to protect Canadians' data, especially when it comes to artificial intelligence. Our government is working on this, and Minister Solomon will probably have more to say on that in the coming weeks.

Senator Simons: At the time that you originally proposed Bill C-10, the predecessor to Bill C-11, you told Canadians that it was likely to generate \$830 million a year toward Canadian cultural programming. I believe Minister Rodriguez, your successor, increased that number to \$1 billion. Could tell us how much money those changes to the Broadcasting Act have generated for Canadian production?

Mr. Guilbeault: If memory serves, when I was Minister of Heritage and Bill C-10 was tabled, I think we were talking about approximately \$300 million. That's what I said at the time, and I'd be happy to provide you with a public declaration that I made to this effect.

As you probably know, this case is in front of the CRTC. The operationalization of what was Bill C-10 and that became Bill C-11 is done by an arm's-length organization to the CRTC. We anticipate it will provide about \$200 million per year for artists and creators in Canada, and the CRTC is moving forward with the implementation of Bill C-11.

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Hon. Jim Quinn: Minister, my office has been dealing with some issues related to proposed marine protected areas, or MPAs, in the Campobello Island, Deer Island and Bay of Fundy areas of New Brunswick. When my office reached out to the Office of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, they directed us to the Secretary of State for Nature as the lead on the file, who falls under your portfolio at Heritage.

Can you provide this chamber with some rationale for the machinery of government change that puts marine protected areas under the authority of the Department of Canadian Heritage while officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, or DFO, in Halifax are the ones handling all the regional MPA files and related consultations with local stakeholders?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for the question. I think there's probably some confusion. Maybe I can try to shed some light on this. I can confirm that as of now, the establishment of marine protected areas, also known as MPAs, remains under the purview of the Minister of Fisheries.

That being said, you are correct that as part of my new mandate, I'm the minister responsible for Parks Canada and the minister responsible for nature.

Parks Canada is now back under the responsibility of the Department of Canadian Heritage, which is where it was initially created in 1994. We work in close collaboration with different departments — like Parks Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Environment and Climate Change Canada — on conservation projects, whether they're terrestrial or marine. It's very rare that a department will work alone on a project, but for MPAs, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is the leader.

Senator Quinn: Minister, it's an important file to me from that area, and fishing is directly affected. Local fishermen's associations have not been getting answers from DFO about their concerns for at least a couple of years now.

Just two days ago, the Fundy North Fishermen's Association met with DFO on the MPA file and asked them about the machinery change. DFO said they weren't aware of what the plans were and still could not provide information to address their concerns.

I'm worried officials in headquarters and in the regions are not talking to each other, nor do they have the direction to enable them to do their job in speaking with their clients.

Minister, I think you clarified who has the lead, but is it DFO or Heritage? Who can Members of the Fundy North Fishermen's Association turn to when they have concerns that must be heard and considered? Will you commit to providing clarification for these Canadians?

Mr. Guilbeault: The lead department for the creation of marine protected areas is the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I can certainly reach out to my colleague Minister Thompson to ensure that she follows up and those fishermen get answers to their questions.

RCMP HERITAGE CENTRE

Hon. Marty Klyne: Minister, thank you for your ongoing service and for taking the time to join us to field a few questions.

My question for you is regarding the RCMP Heritage Centre, located adjacent to the elite RCMP training academy in Regina, where every Mountie has trained since 1885.

The RCMP Heritage Centre is a majestic, 65,000-square-foot facility and houses 18,000 square feet of exhibits.

In 2019, both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party committed to establishing the RCMP Heritage Centre as a national museum. In its Fall Economic Statement last December, the Government of Canada proposed \$12 million for the Department of Canadian Heritage to support the RCMP Heritage Centre, and they reaffirmed the government's commitment to transforming it into a national museum.

Minister, given the RCMP's national significance, please update the Senate on progress and next steps toward officially transforming it into a national museum.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you, senator, for your question. I was in Regina recently, in fact, where I had the chance to meet with the leadership team for the RCMP museum. They have done impressive work. Currently, the collection and land are being managed by the RCMP.

We are in active discussion with the RCMP Heritage Centre to move forward on making this happen. We're working together on a path forward for its creation.

INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION

Hon. Marty Klyne: Thank you for that. Toward telling Canada's whole story, I commend you for introducing Bill C-23, a government bill, in the last Parliament. Though it died on the Order Paper, that legislation would have ensured First Nations, Inuit and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. This change could be a major step toward answering Call to Action 79 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Sadly, an earlier version — Bill C-374, a private member's bill — was filibustered in the Senate in 2019. Would you please raise with your government colleagues the importance of reintroducing Bill C-23?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Yes, you're right, senator. Unfortunately, the bill did not make it through the last Parliament. Since I am still the minister responsible for Parks Canada and this falls under Parks, we will work with Parks Canada and colleagues to reintroduce this bill.

Next week, on September 30, is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which is the first bill I had passed in Parliament the first time I was Minister of Heritage, between 2019 and 2021.

• (1550)

[Translation]

ACTION PLAN FOR OFFICIAL LANGUAGES 2023-2028

Hon. Claude Carignan: Good afternoon, minister.

As part of the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028, \$4 billion has been allocated over five years for official languages. Of this amount, \$3 billion is allocated to your department and \$1.1 billion to 10 other departments that deal with issues related to official languages. Through the Minister of Finance, the government has instructed that budgets be cut by 5.7% in 2026-27, gradually increasing this rate to 15% in 2028-29.

I am concerned about the budgets allocated to other departments. If cuts are made, they will be made to official languages. What steps or actions have you taken with your colleagues to ensure that budgets for official languages that are not at the core of the department are not cut?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: I understand what you mean, senator. It is important to understand that the downsizing effort that the Minister of Finance has tasked his cabinet colleagues with is not a one-size-fits-all exercise. Of course conversations are being had between my team, the Minister of Finance's team, the Minister of Finance and me, and the Prime Minister. What we are trying to do is ensure that Canadians are getting more for their money. There are cases of duplication within organizations. I'm not necessarily talking about official languages, but I will give you another example from Canadian Heritage. We have Telefilm Canada, which was created to fund films.

Senator Carignan: I'm sorry. I was talking about languages.

Mr. Guilbeault: Of course. However, let me give you a quick example. Telefilm Canada funds films. The Canada Media Fund funds television. We created these institutions at a time when people watched television on TV and movies in theatres. Nowadays, everyone watches that kind of content on their phone or tablet. Do we need two institutions that do basically the same thing? Shouldn't we combine them to save money for Canadians? That's the kind of thing we're looking at now. I have certainly had a lot of discussions with the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister about the importance of delivering on our official languages commitments.

Senator Carignan: Still, will the departments, such as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, which has an \$84-million budget, be cut by 15%?

Mr. Guilbeault: I'm the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages. I'm not the Minister of Finance. We'll know the budgets for every department and Crown corporation when the budget is released on November 4.

Senator Carignan: Your budget is \$3 billion. If that budget is cut by 15%, that amounts to \$433 million. Now it's your turn. You were supposed to send your figures to the Minister of Finance in August. Where in your department did you recommend to the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister that cuts be made? You have to cut 15%. Where do you cut \$400 million?

Mr. Guilbeault: I don't share your point of view and I disagree with your characterization of this exercise. That's not exactly what the department and I have been doing. We've been working to identify areas where savings could be made and duplication could be reduced in various programs and departments to be as efficient as possible. That's what we've been working on over the summer.

Senator Carignan: You have to find 15%. You have to cut \$433 million. You have made recommendations to the Minister of Finance. For example, will you cut minority language education, which has a budget of \$752 million, or support for second language learning, which has a budget of \$428 million? Are you cutting those budgets?

Mr. Guilbeault: As I said, I don't agree with your characterization of reduced investments in official languages. I simply do not agree.

[English]

FUTURE OF SPORT IN CANADA COMMISSION

Hon. Marnie McBean: Minister Guilbeault, thank you for being here today.

As the minister who is ultimately responsible for sport, I want to ask you about the Future of Sport in Canada Commission's recently released report. The report states clearly that "Sport and physical activity are vital threads in the fabric of Canadian life." Yet it also found that the system is severely underfunded. National sport organizations are expected not only to develop athletes and grow participation but also to provide safe environments, advance diversity and inclusion and strengthen governance, all while operating with static or shrinking resources that have not kept pace with inflation for two decades.

The report calls for bold leadership and vision. Will the government commit to urgently increasing core funding for national sport organizations and national parasport organizations and also commit to developing a reliable long-term funding strategy for sport in Canada?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for the question.

I had the opportunity to meet with the commissioner and members of her team when she presented not all but many of the findings. As you know, it is very recent. We created this commission because we wanted to have suggestions and proposals on how we can improve safe sport in Canada.

My colleague Adam van Koeverden, the Secretary of State (Sport), is an Olympic athlete who knows a lot about the sector. Both he and I and the department are working with the Department of Finance to see how we can improve support for the sport sector in Canada and, more specifically, in light of safer sport for all.

Senator McBean: Yes, and we're also looking for the long-term funding strategy.

Beyond funding, the commission warned that sport in Canada risks losing its credibility and relevance if systemic issues of maltreatment and weak accountability are not addressed. It found inconsistent and opaque processes for managing complaints, with inadequate supports for athletes and participants who experience abuse, including those who participate outside of the federal high-performance system.

Will the government commit to establishing a truly independent, transparent and well-resourced mechanism to ensure safe, fair and accountable sport for everyone in Canada?

Mr. Guilbeault: As you know, the report came out two or three weeks ago, so we are still combing through it. We will obviously move toward implementing as many of the recommendations as we can.

My predecessor created the commission so that we would be able to create a safer environment for people who practise high-level sports in Canada. We will be working on that in the coming weeks and months.

[Translation]

COMMUNITY MEDIA

Hon. Dawn Arnold: Thank you for being here this afternoon.

[English]

I had the privilege of serving as the Mayor of Moncton for nine years. I can tell you that our city embodies many of the qualities that define Canada: bilingualism, cultural diversity, resilience and a deep sense of community.

We know that local journalism is the bedrock of a healthy democracy and an essential part of Canadian cultural identity, yet across this country and particularly in mid-size cities like Moncton, we are seeing the sharp decline of local journalism and community media, which are essential for reflecting and preserving our identity. This erosion of local media means fewer trusted sources for communities to learn about themselves, their institutions and their neighbours, and it leaves a gap that national outlets or social media cannot fill.

Given the urgency of this issue, what is your department's strategy for ensuring the long-term sustainability of local and community news?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for the question.

[Mr. Guilbeault]

You may be aware that we have an initiative for local journalism; the department put that forward approximately five or six years ago. I believe we introduced that during my first time around when I was the heritage minister. We have a number of different measures that we have put forward. The agreement with Google that will provide \$100 million for media across the country is another example of our government working. There are a handful of governments in the world that have put in place legislation to force web giants to invest in news while they benefit greatly from it.

Perhaps the third thing I could say is this: During the last election campaign, we made a commitment to invest at least \$150 million in CBC/Radio-Canada in the first year of our mandate and bring the funding for the public broadcaster to somewhere on par with the average in the G7. Right now, we are second-last, just in front of the United States, in terms of dollars invested per person.

One of the requirements of those increased investments in the public broadcaster is that they must invest more in local news across the country.

Senator Arnold: Thank you for that. Unfortunately, we're just not seeing it on the ground. Younger Canadians in New Brunswick — in fact, all over — increasingly get their news and culture almost exclusively online, yet much of that content comes from global platforms.

• (1600)

How is your department ensuring that regional voices, including Acadian and francophone perspectives, remain visible and accessible in the digital space rather than drowned out by outside content?

Mr. Guilbeault: Senator, I apologize, but I have the answer in French here.

[Translation]

You say that you don't see them. There's a tax credit for journalism labour to better serve communities and the Canada Periodical Fund. I was talking about the initiative for local journalism. Of course, efforts are under way with the Canadian Heritage team and the Prime Minister to see if anything else can be done. The pressure on our local media is not a uniquely Canadian phenomenon. The same thing is happening around the world. More and more people are turning to the platforms to get their news, and on large language models alone —

[English]

ADVERTISING FOR SPORTS BETTING

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Minister, Senator Marty Deacon has introduced legislation designed to address advertising for sports betting, an industry whose message feeds off what for many is a destructive addiction to gambling and whose profits come from people who, in some cases, can ill afford it. Exploiting people in the hopes of an easy win is at the heart of gambling. After all, "Give us your money, and in all likelihood you'll never see it

again” is not much of a marketing slogan. As the saying goes, you are the one gambling; the house knows it will come out ahead.

The impact of sports betting can also serve as a corrupting influence among players and officials in the sports involved. You cannot legislate away human weaknesses, but you can limit the ability of others to profit from that weakness.

Given the growing recognition of this problem, does the government intend to have the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission restrict advertising for sports betting?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for the question. This is something that the government is looking into and examining the best vehicle to try and, as you rightly pointed out, limit the damage that this is having on too many Canadians.

Senator Downe: Currently, the Government of Canada doesn't allow advertising for alcohol and tobacco. Surely the fact that exceptions have been made in the past suggests that more can be made in the future. The successful campaign to restrict alcohol and cigarette advertising can provide guidance for similar efforts in this area.

A key argument when we voted on legislation for single-sport betting was that it would regulate sports betting in Canada, strengthen consumer protections to ensure the safety of those participating and bring revenue and tax dollars inside our borders to invest back into our communities. Where are the measures to protect Canadians?

Mr. Guilbeault: As I was saying, senator, this is something that myself and many of my colleagues are looking into to try and find the best vehicle to move forward.

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES ACT

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

As you know, the review and independent examination of the Indigenous Languages Act has been delayed.

I know that you've started a process to correct this situation. I'm grateful to you, but I'd like your reassurance that the correction will include a component and expertise for nations who speak French as a second language. The aim is to avoid going down the same path as before, when the members of expert committees, advisers and commissioners spoke only English and their Indigenous language. Could you reassure me by telling me that this time the First Nations of Quebec will be included in the process?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Kwe, senator. Thank you for the question. As you know, this is a very important issue. One of the things we are

most proud of is the fact that the Indigenous Languages Act is the first act of Parliament that was drafted in collaboration with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The measures taken to implement this act supported 3,000 community-based projects across the country aimed at restoring, protecting and promoting these aspects of Indigenous languages and cultures. We are preparing to conduct an independent review, and I can assure you that this work will be done in partnership with Indigenous peoples. We will consider the perspectives of all Indigenous communities, including the First Nations of Quebec.

Senator Audette: That is reassuring. We all heard that. Would it be possible to meet with the Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations? I think efforts are being made by the two offices, and I think it's important that we get a dialogue going fairly soon.

Mr. Guilbeault: Thank you. I had the pleasure of meeting him a number of times, but not since I took up my new duties. We write and text each other. I can assure you that we are going to work with the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador on reviewing the act.

[English]

CANADIAN IDENTITY

Hon. Leo Housakos: Minister, we're facing a political, tariff and economic crisis, and, obviously, if we're going to be able to overcome all of that, we're going to need unity like never before in this country.

You are the Minister of Canadian Identity; it is noted at the beginning of your very lengthy title. My question to you is a simple one: How do you define and what is Canadian identity to you?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: If I were to read my whole title right now, it would probably use up all of the 90 seconds I have with you, so I won't do that. Far be it from me to sit here and tell anyone what is or should be Canadian identity. That's not the role that the Prime Minister has asked me to play.

My role is to work to ensure that the diversity of Canadian identities — whether they are francophone, anglophone or Indigenous — are well represented and put forward as part of the fabric of our society. I can give you the example of the Canada Strong Pass this summer, where we saw record-level attendance at Parks Canada locations and national museums. We invited provinces to collaborate with us on this program, and 9 out of 10 provinces decided to participate in this project.

I was recently at a culture ministers' meeting in Regina, and everyone from coast to coast said, “We want to work with your government on more nation-building measures like this one.” That's the role that I have to play.

Senator Housakos: Minister, your government's uncontrollable immigration policy has created enough diversity, and obviously the challenges are what they are. It is very concerning when I have a minister here who can't really define what his role is.

When it is all said and done, will you at least acknowledge that the two founding people, the French and the English, along with the special status and the recognition of our Indigenous Peoples, are at the core of our heritage? Will you at least acknowledge that?

Can you please at least explain to me what your program of integration is that will enable us to create a Canadian identity that will allow us to go forward as a united country, coast to coast to coast?

[Translation]

Mr. Guilbeault: Maybe I didn't answer clearly in English, senator, so I'll answer in French. In my answer to your first question, I talked about French and English and the place of Indigenous peoples in Canadian identity. If my answer in English wasn't clear, I hope my answer in French is clearer.

Senator Housakos: Minister, you're still avoiding my question, which was very simple. Can you explain your plan to integrate millions of immigrants into Canadian society? How do you plan to create a sense of unity in this country and foster an identity within the family made up of two founding peoples and Indigenous peoples? What is your plan? What are you prepared to do? How will you create that national identity?

Mr. Guilbeault: We are doing a tremendous number of things. For example, I could mention the \$750 million that we pay each year to the Government of Quebec for French-language training programs. That represents three-quarters of a billion dollars paid every year to the Government of Quebec. Some \$4 billion have been committed to support the national strategy and to implement the Official Languages Act. I could mention the investments in arts and culture across the country in our national museums. We are doing a lot and we will continue to do so. We may even add a few new tools to our toolbox on the important question of Canadian identity.

• (1610)

Senator Housakos: Once again, minister, I'm sorry, but you explained a lot, except you did not mention anything about a strategy for integrating newcomers to Canada into the Canadian family, which has a specific identity.

With all due respect, if a government is unable to defend, let alone even explain, what our identity is, that's a problem. Honestly, so far, your explanation has been a little vague, and I'm very concerned.

Mr. Guilbeault: I don't share your point of view, senator.

SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Good afternoon, minister.

[English]

Thank you for being here today. I recently had the opportunity to attend Waves 2025, an incredible conference put on by the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. At the end of the week, Jeremy Dutcher, a Polaris Music Prize winner, performed and sang, "Our languages are going to save us and we are going to save them."

No one doubts or questions the importance of Indigenous languages. They are deeply connected to identity, culture, health, past, future. Yet, planned spending by Canadian Heritage on Indigenous languages has dropped. According to one of the presenters at the conference, Dr. Daniel Brant of Daniel J. Brant & Associates, we're talking \$118 million in 2023-24 and then just \$52 million in 2024-25. Why is the Government of Canada lowering its investment in Indigenous languages at a critical time for their preservation?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for the question. I attended that event as well. As you may know, I am the minister who created the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and nominated the commissioner and three directors.

It is important to look at where we started. When we came into power in 2015, the previous Conservative government invested annually in Indigenous languages the amount of \$5 million. Between the period of 2019-20 and 2028-29, our government will have invested \$1.4 billion in Indigenous languages in this country. Compare \$5 million to \$1.4 billion. That's the difference between our approach to supporting Indigenous languages and the Conservative government's approach.

After 2028-29, \$162 million will fund ongoing support of the implementation of the Indigenous Languages Act. As I was telling your colleague Senator Audette earlier, those programs have supported over 3,000 community-driven projects to restore, protect and promote important parts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and history.

Senator Clement: We will all carefully review the budget announcement to see how the federal government is honouring its commitments in the Indigenous Languages Act, notably, the promise to provide adequate, sustainable, long-term funding.

Indigenous communities are exploring how artificial intelligence can help them revitalize their languages, while also retaining control over their intellectual property.

Is the federal government funding language revitalization initiatives that use AI? How can the federal government collaborate with Indigenous communities to ensure their intellectual property is protected according to their values, traditions and laws?

Mr. Guilbeault: Thank you for the question. As you may know, the implementation of the Indigenous Languages Act is done collaboratively with Indigenous partners through a Joint Implementation Steering Committee, which includes representatives from the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council and Canadian Heritage. So

the federal government alone doesn't dictate or decide how the funding goes to these community-driven projects. I know for a fact that we have funded apps for Indigenous languages for phones and tablets. I don't know that we have funded AI applications yet. I could certainly ask the department, and we could provide you with that information. But the funding is delivered through 14 different Indigenous —

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Welcome back to the Senate, minister.

You are a member of cabinet. My question is not necessarily about your responsibilities, but rather about your participation in cabinet generally. Surveys show that, even recently, a vast majority of Canadians want the government to adopt policies to fight climate change. Do you believe that the government still considers climate action to be a priority, for itself and for Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Yes. I can add to that, if you like. I have many discussions with my colleagues, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Prime Minister, who, as you know, has done a lot of work on climate change. The international context has changed significantly in recent months. It is a much more challenging context. We see that here and abroad. There's no doubt for our government that climate change remains a priority issue. Again this year, we had a forest fire season that displaced tens of thousands of people. Atmospheric rivers, hurricanes and heat waves are now becoming the norm, whereas just a few years ago, they were the exception. I believe that, with a few exceptions, Canadians understand the issue of climate change, and it remains a priority for us.

Senator Dalphond: On a different matter, to get back to the questions from the senator opposite, you were asked about the announced budget cuts. Does the government intend to make exceptions for certain essential characteristics of national identity, particularly bilingualism?

Mr. Guilbeault: I have to be careful what I say. I'm not the Minister of Finance. I'm not the one drafting the budget. I can tell you that I've had many conversations with many of my colleagues about how the move to downsize by 15% over three years is not a one-size-fits-all objective with no allowances made for anything. Obviously, there will be an in-depth analysis of every department — and even of every program — to ensure that we're making fair and wise decisions that aren't detrimental to the government's core missions.

[English]

CANADIAN PROGRAMMING

Hon. Tony Ince: Thank you, minister, for coming here and giving me the opportunity to ask this question.

Minister, as you may know, the production of children's programming has been declining for several years, robbing Canadian children of shows that reflect their experiences and communities. My question, minister, is this: How is the government ensuring that Canadian children have access to high-quality Canadian programming that reflects our values?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for the question. It is a fact that we are seeing a decline in the production of kids' shows in this country. In fact, we are seeing this in most countries with the notable exceptions of the United States and maybe Britain. Obviously, one thing we can do is to ensure we have a well-funded public broadcaster. CBC/Radio-Canada is not only a broadcaster but is also an entity that will buy series from Canadian producers in French and English, including kids' series.

That is why we have committed, in the first year of our mandate, to increase the budget of the public broadcaster by \$150 million and, over a certain number of years, to bring the funding of that public broadcaster on par with the average funding of G7 nations. Right now, we're far behind the average of G7 nations in terms of investment per capita. We want to get somewhere around that average in the coming years to ensure that the public broadcaster can play this important role.

Parallel to that, we are also looking at what we can do with private broadcasters. We have a number of measures to support them. Obviously, the agreement under the Online Streaming Act will provide \$200 million per year for our creators. Some of it will go to TV. Some of it will go to music.

[Translation]

ONLINE STREAMING

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Minister, more people in Quebec today subscribe to streaming platforms like Netflix and Disney than to cable television. The discoverability of French-language content is suffering as a result.

That's why many people are saying that it's time that Radio-Canada, TVA+ and Noovo joined forces to create a single platform that would replace ICI tou.tv, Illico+ and Crave, a platform to which we could also add the NFB's treasure trove of content.

Since all these companies fall under federal jurisdiction, do you intend to promote this idea? Are you going to meet the heads of these companies to find out their positions on this issue and encourage them to join forces rather than remain mere competitors, all crushed by American competition?

• (1620)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Thank you for the question. You talked about discoverability, which is an important concept I introduced in Bill C-11.

Two places in the world do this: the European Union and Canada. Thanks to Bill C-11, since taking on this portfolio, I've met with a number of those CEOs, but not all of them. There was no talk of creating a single platform.

This is obviously something we have to pay close attention to. We can see what's happening south of the border, where the government is trying to dictate what public and private broadcasters should or shouldn't say. I think we need to be very cautious. What I can tell you is that, if these corporations or the public broadcaster decided to join forces and told the government they wanted to do that kind of thing, I'd be very open to that suggestion. I think it has to come from them and can't really come from the government.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: You don't necessarily have an opinion on the matter. Is that right?

Mr. Guilbeault: Honestly, I'm not an expert on the issue of platforms even though I'm very interested in it.

Would it be better to have a single platform? Again, I can say that I would have serious reservations about the federal government ordering them to do things that way. If they want to come to the federal government and ask us to work with them because that's how they want to do things, I'd be very open to the idea. However, it really has to come from the sector, not from us.

MODERNIZATION OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Hon. Claude Carignan: Minister, earlier you answered a question about the implementation of the Official Languages Act and deadlines for making orders to add parts of the act.

One part of the act covers the use of French in private businesses under federal jurisdiction in Quebec. When will that part of the act come into force?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: As I was saying to one of your colleagues, there are three regulations that need to be implemented. Two of the three will be released in the coming weeks, and the third set of regulations needs a little more work, but will be done by the end of this year.

Senator Carignan: What about this part of the act specifically?

Mr. Guilbeault: It will be by the end of the year at the latest. Obviously, until it's made public, I can't tell you which one or ones, but there are two coming in the next few weeks, and the third by the end of the year.

Senator Carignan: At the beginning of your presentation, you said, and I'm paraphrasing, that if we don't invest in our official languages, we will not succeed, or something to that effect. You talked about \$4 billion, but since there will be a 15% cut, we're actually talking about \$3.4 billion in investments. Has the Prime Minister excluded official languages from the budget cuts?

Mr. Guilbeault: For starters, I disagree with your characterization of what you call "cuts." Secondly, I can't tell you what I don't know. I don't know what will be in the November 4 budget. The Minister of Finance is in the process of drafting the budget, and we won't know the outcome of that process until November 4.

[English]

ADVERTISING FOR SPORTS BETTING

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Thank you, minister. Jontay Porter, a player for the Toronto Raptors, was banned from the NBA for life after an investigation by the league. Mr. Porter was determined to have been betting on NBA games, including a Raptors game, and disclosing confidential information about his health to a known bettor. A US\$80,000 bet was placed that Porter would score fewer than two three-point baskets in the Raptors' March 20, 2024, basketball game. At that game, he did not even attempt a three-point shot, leaving the game after a couple of minutes, citing illness.

There are serious concerns that games might be rigged not only by players but also by officials. Are missed calls truly missed, or are they something else? There is a lot of money at play in these games. A single NHL game, for example, can generate millions in bets. What monitoring is the government doing to protect Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: I don't have this information, senator, but I can commit to you and your colleagues to work with some of my peers to try and find that information for you.

Senator Downe: I'd appreciate it if you let us all know.

In a letter dated March of this year, your predecessor as minister responsible for Canadian Heritage acknowledged the "paramount importance" with which the Government of Canada regards concerns over sports betting advertising and pledged her cooperation in working on this important issue. Given the position of the government, what additional specific actions have you taken or do you intend to take?

Mr. Guilbeault: Again, my apologies, senator. I don't have this information in front of me, but I will commit to providing it to you as soon as possible.

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Welcome minister. I would like to continue a discussion we have had before with you, given your work on the future of the CBC. The chamber here has had a couple of debates on the future of the CBC. One of our committees has been looking at the future of local programming on the CBC.

One of the major crises we face is the funding, of course, of media, both public and private. Would you support a process of funding for media that would be at arm's length from the government, so continuing the kind of work that you have been doing and the funding you do provide through your department, but placing it at arm's length so people have more confidence in its being free from political interference?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: I would, and, in fact, we do, senator. For example, the agreement with Google, the \$100 million, is not distributed by the federal government. It is distributed by an arm's-length, independent organization. So we have no say in who receives money, how much money they receive, and I think that is a very good thing that the federal government doesn't do that. This is one example.

We want to look at whether there are other things we could do to support the Canadian media sector while ensuring that they continue to be independent, but that's one very relevant example.

COMMUNITY MEDIA

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Thank you for that. Indeed, I think that does serve a good model. I certainly encourage the continuation of the funds that come from your department, but perhaps they can also be at arm's length.

The other matter is local programming, which you talked about with my colleagues. Can that be much more fundamental to what the CBC does, so not an add-on because they have got some Google money or an add-on because they have got \$150 million, but could we really change the corporation's focus so that local programming is much more central to what the CBC does, as opposed to programming coming from the headquarters?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: Yes, it is a good question. In fact, in our campaign commitment, we said that we wanted to increase — and I spoke about the increase of funding to the CBC this year, as per our campaign commitment and over a certain number of years. We have stated that we wanted the public broadcaster to invest more in local news. In fact — I don't have it in front of me — my predecessor, Pascale St-Onge, published a green paper, and I think the objective in the green paper was to have 30 new local stations. I am not saying that this will necessarily happen, but that green paper still guides the work that my department, myself and we do as a government. We do believe that local news is essential. News generally is essential to the health of our democracy, of any democracy, but especially local news.

Perhaps another example that I could give of more independent funding is that one of the changes we want to bring forward is that the budget of CBC/Radio-Canada would no longer be voted on by the government but by Parliament, to make it even more independent going forward.

[Translation]

ADVERTISING FOR SPORTS BETTING

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Welcome, minister.

My first question follows up on Senator Downe's question about Bill S-211, which seeks to regulate online sports betting advertising. This matter now falls within your department's purview. This is a senator's bill, but the immediate consequences of the expansion of online sports betting point to a need for much stricter rules.

• (1630)

We know that private senators' bills take a while to be studied, then they go to the House, where they're likely to die on the Order Paper. Considering how important and urgent this matter is, would you be open to having your department study this bill and to having the government take steps to implement solutions faster?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: I'm always willing to discuss measures to better protect Canadians. We see this particularly in the case of online gambling for young people. It is a complex issue. Certain things are protected by Canadian law. For example, tobacco, vaping and drugs are regulated by Health Canada. Some of your colleagues mentioned the CRTC. We are trying to determine the best way to do this. I am open to discussions with you and your colleagues on this matter, to ensure that Canadian Heritage is the best possible vehicle to move forward on this kind of issue.

CANADIAN IDENTITY

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Thank you, and that is duly noted. Your new portfolio as Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture includes a wide range of responsibilities. You described part of your role as, and I quote:

... to work with people from across the country to help define and better promote our identity, and perhaps to restore a sense of unity.

I'd like you to expand on the pillars you intend to rely on to restore this sense of unity, taking into account the size of the country, its diversity, the various regional issues and regional identities, which often evolve in isolation and apart from one another, which can lead to misunderstandings —

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages: I don't think I've done so yet, but I think it's worth mentioning my full title. I'm the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture, Minister responsible for Official Languages, Minister of Nature and Minister responsible for Parks Canada. I am also the Minister responsible for Sport, Diversity and Inclusion — I think I'm missing one — and the government's lieutenant for Quebec.

Except for that last one, however, as the Prime Minister and our government see it, all of these items are part of Canada's identity, especially our official languages. I am, of course, the minister responsible for the Indigenous Languages Act, which means I deal with Indigenous cultures and languages, our natural environment and the great outdoors. As we saw last summer with the Canada Strong pass, I can tell you off the top of my head that visits to Parks Canada locations and historical monuments across the country increased by 15%. All of these are the pillars of our identity, as you mentioned. How do we work, with that as our

starting point, to strengthen this Canadian identity of ours? I think that some of the work has already been done, considering the response to what came from down south, the threat to our economy, our sovereignty and our culture, when the public's natural instinct was to pull together, but how can we continue to —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

Honourable senators, I'm sure you will join me in thanking Minister Guilbeault for his appearance today.

Thank you, minister, for your presence in the Senate of Canada and for taking part in this question period.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(At 4:34 p.m., the Senate was continued until Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at 2 p.m.)

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